

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Beryl Gordon, (202) 565-1600. [TDD for the hearing impaired: (202) 565-1695.]

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Additional information is contained in the Board's decision. To purchase a copy of the full decision, write to, call, or pick up in person from: DC News & Data, Inc., 1925 K Street, N.W., Suite 210, Washington, DC 20006. Telephone: (202) 289-4357. [Assistance for the hearing impaired is available through TDD services (202) 565-1695.]

Decided: May 6, 1997.

By the Board, Chairman Morgan and Vice Chairman Owen.

Vernon A. Williams,

Secretary.

[FR Doc. 97-12773 Filed 5-14-97; 8:45 am]

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UNITED STATES INFORMATION AGENCY

Strengthening Social Services: A U.S.-Middle East Exchange Program

AGENCY: United States Information Agency.

NOTICE: Request for Proposals.

SUMMARY: The Office of Citizen Exchanges of the United States Information Agency's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs announces an open competition for an assistance award. Public and private non-profit organizations meeting the provisions described in IRS regulation 26 CFR 1.501(c) may apply to design and conduct an international exchange program entitled "Strengthening Social Services: A U.S.-Middle East Exchange Program," for which activities will commence in 1997. The proposed program should involve participants from Israel, Gaza, West Bank, Jordan, Oman, and Bahrain who have interest, expertise, and/or policy authority dealing with persons with disabilities, and it should emphasize strengthening civil society through the improvement of services for the disabled and the linking of professionals dealing with the disabled between and among all the participating countries.

Overall grant making authority for this program is contained in the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961, Public Law 87-256, as amended, also known as the Fulbright-Hays Act. The purpose of the Act is "to enable the Government of the United States to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries * * *; to strengthen the ties which

unite us with other nations by demonstrating the educational and cultural interests, developments, and achievements of the people of the United States and other nations * * * and thus to assist in the development of friendly, sympathetic and peaceful relations between the United States and the other countries of the world."

Announcement Title and Number: All communications with USIA concerning this announcement should refer to the above title and reference number E/P-97-43.

Deadline For Proposals: All copies must be received at the U.S. Information Agency by 5 p.m. Washington, D.C. time on Friday, June 27, 1997. Faxed documents will not be accepted at any time. Documents postmarked by the due date but received at a later date will not be accepted. It is the responsibility of each applicant to ensure that proposals are received by the above deadline.

Contact for Further Information: Interested organizations/institutions should contact the Office of Citizen Exchanges, E/PS, Room 216, U.S. Information Agency, 301 Fourth Street, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20547, to request a Solicitation Package containing more detailed award criteria, required application forms, and standard guidelines for preparing proposals, including specific criteria for preparation of the proposal budget. Please direct inquiries and correspondence to Dr. Curtis Huff, telephone (202) 619-5972, fax (202) 619-4350, e-mail: CHUFF@USIA.GOV. Interested applicants should read the complete **Federal Register** announcement before sending inquiries or submitting proposals. Once the RFP deadline has passed, Agency staff may not discuss this competition in any way with applicants until the Bureau proposal review process has been completed.

To Download a Solicitation Package via Internet: The entire Solicitation Package may be downloaded from USIA's website at <http://www.usia.gov/education/rfps>. Please read all information before downloading.

To Receive a Solicitation Package via Fax on Demand: The entire Solicitation Package may be received from the Bureau's "Grants Information Fax on Demand System," which is accessed by calling 202-401-7616. The "Table of Contents" listing available documents and order numbers should be your first order when entering the system.

Please specify Dr. Curtis Huff on all inquiries and correspondence. Interested applicants should read the complete **Federal Register** announcement before sending inquiries

or submitting proposals. Once the RFP deadline has passed, Agency staff may not discuss this competition in any way with applicants until the Bureau proposal review process has been completed.

Submissions: Applicants must follow all instructions given in the Solicitation Package. The original and ten copies of the application should be sent to: U.S. Information Agency, Ref.: E/P-97-43, Office of Grants Management, E/XE, Room 326, 301 Fourth Street, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20547.

Applicants must also submit the "Executive Summary" and "Proposal Narrative" sections of the proposal on a 3.5" diskette, formatted for DOS. This material must be provided in ASCII text (DOS) format with a maximum line length of 65 characters. USIA will transmit these files electronically to USIS posts overseas for their review, with the goal of reducing the time it takes to get posts' comments for the Agency's grants review process.

Diversity, Freedom and Democracy Guidelines: Pursuant to the Bureau's authorizing legislation, programs must maintain a non-political character and should be balanced and representative of the diversity of American political, social, and cultural life. "Diversity" should be interpreted in the broadest sense and encompass differences including, but not limited to ethnicity, race, gender, religion, geographic location, socio-economic status, and physical challenges. Applicants are strongly encouraged to promote this principle both in program administration and in program content. Please refer to the 'Support for Diversity' criterion under Review Criteria for suggestions on incorporating diversity into the total proposal. PUBLIC LAW 104-319 provides that "in carrying out programs of educational and cultural exchange in countries whose people do not fully enjoy freedom and democracy," USIA "shall take appropriate steps to provide opportunities for participation in such programs to human rights and democracy leaders of such countries." Proposals should also reflect advancement of this goal in their program contents, to the fullest extent deemed feasible.

Programmatic Considerations: The objectives of the anticipated program should include the following:

- Strengthen local NGOs and other institutions which provide services to the disabled and work to integrate disabled into the broader country workforce;
- Enhance the education and career development of Middle Eastern local

staff, including relevant government and NGO professionals, working with the disabled;

- Promote international, regional, and national discussion and cooperation on policies and programs to address needs of the disabled;
- Introduce Middle Eastern disability service leaders to counterpart organizations and leaders in the United States and elsewhere in the Mideast, offering opportunities for the Middle Eastern leaders to learn from their U.S. counterparts and each other through job shadowing, short-term internships, workshops, and other activities; and
- Provide opportunities for U.S. experts to observe the work of Middle Eastern counterparts and consult with them on mutual interests.

The program should involve two or more phases, one of which would bring Mideast participants to the United States for a few weeks of workshops, site visits, internships, or other activities in pursuit of program objectives. The other phase would send U.S. experts to the participating Mideast countries for appropriate follow-on activities. Participants would likely include leaders of disability NGOs, appropriate government professionals, university faculty with relevant expertise, rehabilitation professionals, and people with disabilities. Selection of the Mideast participants who would come to the United States and timing of activities must be made in consultation with USIS posts in the participating countries.

In order to be competitive, the submitted proposal must demonstrate how the stipulated objectives will be addressed and should also provide detailed information on how major program activities will be undertaken. Beyond the immediate objectives of this exchange, USIA is interested in encouraging exchange projects which lay the groundwork for new and continuing, mutually beneficial links between American and Middle Eastern institutions and professional organizations and which will encourage the further growth and development of democratic institutions.

The grantee organization will be responsible for most arrangements associated with this program. These include organizing a coherent progression of activities, providing international and domestic travel arrangements for all participants, making lodging and local transportation arrangements for visitors, orienting and debriefing participants, preparing any necessary support materials, and

working with host institutions and individuals to achieve maximum program effectiveness.

To prepare the Middle Eastern participants prior to their arrival in the United States, the grantee organization should develop materials to be sent to USIS offices overseas for distribution to the travellers before departure. These materials should include a tentative project outline and information on American individuals and organizations involved in the program.

At the beginning of the U.S.-based program, the grantee should conduct an orientation session for the visiting participants which addresses administrative details of the program and provides information about American society and culture which will facilitate the participants' understanding of and adjustment to daily life in the United States.

At the conclusion of the U.S.-based program, USIS recommends that the group meet in a symposium to review what has been presented to and experienced by the participants and to consider how what has been learned can most effectively be applied upon the participants' return to their home countries. This symposium should also be used to begin discussion of possible collaboration among the countries represented in the program.

Programs must comply with J-1 visa regulations. USIS officers in participating countries will facilitate the issuance of visas and other program-related material.

Funding: Competition for USIA funding is keen. The final selection of a grantee institution will depend on assessment of proposals according to the review criteria delineated below. The amount requested from USIA for this exchange program should not exceed \$120,000. Grants awarded to eligible organizations with less than four years of experience in conducting international exchange programs will be limited to \$60,000. In addition, the overall budget should include cost sharing which amounts to at least 33 percent of the total program cost. Agency review of the proposed budget will benefit from the applicant's professional judgment of costs or activities in the proposal. USIA is committed to containment of administrative expenses, consistent with overall program objectives and sound management principles. Additional budget guidelines are explained in the Solicitation Package.

Applicants must submit a comprehensive budget for the entire program. There must be a summary budget as well as a breakdown reflecting

both the administrative budget and the program budget. For better understanding or further clarification, applicants may provide separate sub-budgets for each program component, phase, location, or activity in order to facilitate USIA decisions on funding.

Unless the grantee will have an audit conducted for other purposes that will include this grant, the applicant's proposal shall include the cost of an audit which: (1) complies with the requirements of OMB Circular No. A-133, "Audits of Institutions of Higher Education and Other Nonprofit Institutions"; (2) complies with the requirements of American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) Statement of Position (SOP) No. 92-9; and (3) includes review by the recipient's independent auditor of a recipient-prepared supplemental schedule of indirect cost rate computation, if such a rate is being proposed.

The audit costs shall be identified separately for: (1) preparation of basic financial statements and other accounting services; and (2) preparation of the supplemental reports and schedules required by OMB Circular No. A-133, AICPA SOP 92-9, and the review of the supplemental schedule of indirect cost rate computation. If an audit conducted for other purposes obviates the above, it should be noted in the budget submission of the proposal.

USIA will consider funding the following project costs:

(1) International and domestic travel; visas; transit costs (e.g., airport taxes); ground transportation.

(2) Per diem: For the U.S. program, organizations have the option of using a flat rate of \$140/day for international participants or the published Federal Travel Regulations per diem rates for individual American cities. NOTE: U.S. escorting staff must use the published Federal per diem rates, not the flat rate. For activities in the Middle East, the Standard Federal Travel Regulations per diem rates must be used.

(3) Escort-Interpreters: Interpretation for U.S.-based programs is provided by the State Department's Language Services Division. USIA grants do not pay for foreign interpreters to accompany delegations during travel to or from their home country. Grant proposal budgets should contain a flat \$140/day per diem rate for each State Department interpreter, as well as home-program-home air transportation cost of \$400 per interpreter and any U.S. travel expenses during the program itself. Salary expenses are covered centrally and are not part of the applicant's budget proposal. The cost

for phases of the program to be conducted abroad, during which interpreters are required to facilitate American participants, is to be covered from the grant. The grant applicant is encouraged to confirm with the appropriate USIS posts the local costs for interpreters.

(4) Book and cultural allowances: Participants may receive a one-time cultural allowance of \$150 per person, plus a book allowance of \$50. Escorts are reimbursed for actual cultural expenses up to \$150. These benefits are not available to U.S. staff.

(5) Consultants may be used to provide specialized expertise or to make presentations. Honoraria ordinarily should not exceed \$275 per day. Subcontracting organizations may also be used, in which case the written contract(s) must be included in the proposal.

(6) Room rental: Ordinarily, such cost should not exceed \$250 per day.

(7) Materials development: Proposals may contain costs to purchase, develop, and translate relevant materials for participants.

(8) One working meal per project: Per capita cost may not exceed \$5–8 per lunch and \$14–20 per dinner, excluding room rental. The number of invited guests may not exceed the number of project participants by a factor of more than two to one.

(9) Return travel allowance of \$70 for each participant which is intended for incidental and emergency expenditures incurred during international travel.

(10) Other costs necessary for the effective administration of the program, including salaries for grant organization employees while working on the project, benefits, and other direct and indirect costs per detailed instructions in the Solicitation Package.

Please refer to the Solicitation Package for complete budget guidelines and formatting instructions.

The Office of Citizen Exchanges requests cost sharing, which may be in the form of allowable direct or indirect costs. The Grant Recipient must maintain written records to support all allowable costs which are claimed as being its contribution, as well as costs to be paid by the USIA grant. Such records are subject to audit. The basis for determining the value of cash and in-kind contributions must be in accordance with OMB Circular A-110, Attachment E, "Cost-Sharing and Matching," and should be described in the proposal. In the event the Recipient does not meet the minimum amount of cost-sharing as stipulated in the Recipient's budget and the grant agreement, the Agency's contribution

will be reduced in proportion to the Recipient's contribution.

Please Note: During project activities, all participants will be covered under the terms of the USIA-sponsored health insurance policy, the premium for which is paid by USIA directly to the insurance company. USIA will provide instructions to the grant recipient for enrolling participants in this insurance program.

Review Process

USIA will acknowledge receipt of all proposals and will review them for technical eligibility. Proposals will be deemed ineligible if they do not fully adhere to the guidelines stated herein and in the Solicitation Package. Eligible proposals will be forwarded to panels of USIA officers for advisory review. All eligible proposals will be reviewed by the program office, the USIA Office of Near Eastern, North African, and South Asian Affairs, and USIA/USIS posts overseas. Proposals may also be reviewed by the Office of the General Counsel or by other Agency elements. Funding decisions are at the discretion of the USIA Associate Director for Educational and Cultural Affairs. Final technical authority for assistance awards (grants or cooperative agreements) resides with the USIA grants officer. The awarding of any grant is subject to availability of funds.

The U.S. Government reserves the right to reject any or all applications received. USIA will not pay for design and development costs associated with submitting a proposal. Applications are submitted at the risk of the applicant; should circumstances prevent the awarding of a grant, all preparation and submission costs are borne by the applicant. USIA will not fund activities conducted prior to the actual grant award.

Review Criteria

Technically eligible applications will be competitively reviewed according to the criteria stated below. These criteria are not rank ordered.

1. Quality of the Program Concept

Proposals should exhibit originality, substance, rigor, and relevance to Agency mission. They should demonstrate the matching of U.S. resources to a clearly defined need.

2. Program Planning

Detailed agenda and relevant work plan should demonstrate the applicant's ability to plan, organize, conduct, and evaluate a complex undertaking which involves international travel and collaboration among institutions and individuals to accomplish programs goals and objectives.

3. Institutional Capacity

Proposals should show that the personnel and institutional resources to be involved in the program include the thematic and logistical expertise relevant and adequate to achieve the program or project's purposes.

4. Institution's Record/Ability

Proposals should demonstrate an institutional record of successful exchange programs, including responsible fiscal management and full compliance with all reporting requirements for past Agency grants as determined by USIA's Office of Contracts. The Agency will consider the past performance of prior recipients and the demonstrated potential of new applicants.

5. Cross-Cultural Sensitivity

Proposals should show experience and insight in managing cross-cultural professional programs.

6. Multiplier Effect/Impact

Proposed programs should strengthen mutual understanding between the United States and other participating countries, should contribute to maximum sharing of information, and should promote the establishment of long-term institutional and individual linkages.

7. Support of Diversity

Proposals should demonstrate support of the Bureau's policy on diversity. Achievable and relevant features should be cited in both program administration (selection of participants, program venue and program evaluation) and program content (orientation and wrap-up sessions, program meetings, resource materials and follow-up activities).

8. Follow-on Activities

Proposals should propose realistic and valuable follow-on activities (without USIA support) which ensures that the USIA-supported project is not an isolated effort.

9. Project Evaluation

Proposals should include a plan to evaluate the activity's success, both as the activities unfold and at the end of the program. A draft survey questionnaire or other technique plus description of a methodology to use to link outcomes to original project objectives is recommended. Successful applicants will be expected to submit intermediate reports after each project component is concluded or quarterly, whichever is less frequent.

10. Cost-effectiveness

The overhead and administrative components of the proposed budget, including salaries and honoraria, should be kept as low as possible consistent with high quality management. All other items should be necessary and appropriate.

11. Cost-sharing

Proposals should maximize cost-sharing through other private sector support as well as institutional direct funding contributions. A minimum of

33 percent cost sharing is required in this program.

Notice

The terms and conditions published in this RFP are binding and may not be modified by any USIA representative. Explanatory information provided by the Agency that contradicts published language will not be binding. Issuance of the RFP does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the Government. The Agency reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposal budgets in accordance with the needs of the program and the

availability of funds. Awards made will be subject to periodic reporting and evaluation requirements.

Notification

Final awards cannot be made until funds have been appropriated by Congress, allocated and committed through internal USIA procedures.

Dated: May 9, 1997.

John P. Loiello,

Associate Director for Educational and Cultural Affairs.

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