

Books or records relating to a collection of information must be retained as long as their contents may become material in the administration of any internal revenue law. Generally, tax returns and tax return information are confidential, as required by 26 U.S.C. 6103.

Request for Comments

Comments submitted in response to this notice will be summarized and/or included in the request for OMB approval. All comments will become a matter of public record. Comments are invited on: (a) Whether the collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information shall have practical utility; (b) the accuracy of the agency's estimate of the burden of the collection of information; (c) ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; (d) ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on respondents, including through the use of automated collection techniques or other forms of information technology; and (e) estimates of capital or start-up costs and costs of operation, maintenance, and purchase of services to provide information.

Approved: July 23, 1997.

Garrick R. Shear,

IRS Reports Clearance Officer.

[FR Doc. 97-20251 Filed 7-30-97; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4830-01-U

UNITED STATES INFORMATION AGENCY

Training Programs in Canada, Germany, Greece, Italy, Turkey, and the United Kingdom

ACTION: 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 program. Public and private non-profit organizations meeting the provisions described in IRS regulation 26 CFR 1.501(c) may apply to develop projects that link their international exchange interests in Western Europe with counterpart institutions/groups in ways supportive of the aims of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs.

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."

The funding authority for the program cited above is provided through the Fulbright-Hays Act.

Programs and projects must conform with Agency requirements and guidelines outlined in the Solicitation Package. USIA projects and programs are subject to the availability of funds.

Announcement Title and Number: All communications with USIA concerning this RFP should refer to the announcement's title and reference number E/P-98-03.

Deadline for Proposals: All copies must be received at the U.S. Information Agency by 5 p.m. Washington, DC time on Friday, October 31, 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. Grants may begin February 1, 1998.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: The Office of Citizen Exchanges, E/PE, Room 220, U.S. Information Agency, 301 4th Street, SW., Washington, DC 20547, telephone: 202-619-5319, fax: 202-619-4350, Internet Address: [cminer@usia.gov] to request a Solicitation Package containing more detailed information. Please request required application forms, and standard guidelines for preparing proposals, including specific criteria for preparation of the proposal budget.

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 via the Bureau's "Grants Information Fax on Demand System", which is accessed by calling 202/401-7616. Please request a "Catalog" of available documents and order numbers when first entering the system.

Please specify USIA Program Officer Christina Miner on all inquiries and correspondences. 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-98-03, Office of Grants Management, E/XE, Room 326, 301 4th Street, SW., Washington, DC 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 adhere to the advancement of this principle both in program administration and in program content. Please refer to the review criteria under the 'Support for Diversity' section for specific suggestions on incorporating diversity into the total proposal. Pub. L. 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 account for advancement of this goal in their program contents, to the full extent deemed feasible.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Diminished resources have forced USIA to limit the scope of this announcement; regrettably, proposals for countries and themes other than the ones described below will not be eligible for consideration.

USIA is interested in proposals in the following areas and countries:

Canada: Projects should focus on a U.S.-Canada parliamentary staff exchange program.

Germany: Projects should focus on a parliamentary exchange program for U.S. and German state legislators. The program for German legislators should examine such issues as the state political process, legislative structure, federalism, school to work transition and immigration/multiculturalism.

Greece: Projects should focus on the practices and ethics of journalism. The first part of the exchange should include an in-country seminar on the practical techniques and ethical requirements needed to report stories. The program would include sessions for professional and student journalists from Greek newspapers and public and private communications/journalism schools. In the second part of the exchange up to twelve journalists and students would participate in a U.S. internship program.

Italy: Projects should focus on judicial reform. Participants should include key magistrates, academics or think tank researchers. In part one of the exchange a small Italian delegation would travel to the U.S. for a program involving meetings, shadowing, and direct observation of the U.S. judicial system. The U.S. program should focus on the U.S. white collar criminal trial process, typical case development at the state and federal levels and the administration of the U.S. judicial system, including the organization of federal and state courts, continuing education for judges and court employees, the role of court and law clerks, and the use of new technology. In the second part of the exchange American legal experts/practitioners would spend time in Italy consulting with the Ministry of Justice, the Superior Council of the Magistracy in Rome, and individual magistrate associations in Milan, Rome and Naples.

Turkey: Projects should focus on local government administration in both eastern and western Turkey. Participants should include mayors and municipal officials, who are members of the Turkish Municipal Association. In the first part of the exchange Turkish participants would travel to the U.S. for a program concentrating on administration and fiscal and management procedures and relations with the federal government. The second part of the exchange would send approximately two U.S. specialists in administration and fiscal management to Turkey to conduct workshops with regional associations in at least three

key regions (Ankara, Istanbul and Adana).

United Kingdom: Projects should focus on student political activists. The program would bring to the U.S. student political activists from Great Britain, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The exchange should concentrate on developing political and personal skills with no relations to Northern Ireland specific issues. The program might include workshops on writing and speaking skills, media, negotiation, and the American system of government. Case studies and role playing could also be included. A cultural component which would support the development of personal relationship is also be recommended.

Exchange and training programs supported by institutional grants should operate at two levels: they should enhance institutional relationships; and they should offer practical and comparative information to individuals to assist them with their professional responsibilities. Strong proposals usually have the following characteristics: An existing partner relationship between an American organization and a host-country institution; a proven track record of conducting program activity; cost sharing from American or in-country sources, including donations of air fares, hotel and housing costs; experienced staff with language facility; and a clear, convincing plan showing how permanent results will be accomplished as a result of the activity funded by the grant. USIA wants to see tangible forms of time and money contributed to the project by the prospective grantee institution, as well as funding from third party sources.

Note: Research projects or projects limited to technical issues are not eligible for support nor are film festivals or exhibits. Exchange programs for students or faculty or proposals that request support for the development of university curricula or for degree-based programs are also ineligible under this RFP. Proposals to link university departments or to exchange faculty and/or students are funded by USIA's Office of Academic Programs (E/A) under the University Affiliation Program and should not be submitted in response to this RFP.

Guidelines

1. All grant proposals must clearly describe the type of persons who will participate in the program as well as the process by which participants will be selected. In the selection of all foreign participants, USIA and USIS posts retain the right to nominate participants and to approve or reject participants recommended by the program

institution. Programs must also comply with J-1 visa regulations.

2. Programs that include internships in the U.S. should provide letters tentatively committing host institutions to support the internships. Letters of commitment from the hosts of study tour site visits should also be included, if applicable.

3. Applicants are encouraged to consult with USIS offices regarding program content and partner institutions before submitting proposals. Award-receiving applicants will be expected to maintain contact with the USIS post throughout the grant period.

Funding

Please refer to the Solicitation Package for complete package instructions.

Applicants must submit a detailed line item budget based on specific instructions in the Program and Budget Guidelines of the Proposal Submission Instructions. Proposals for less than \$75,000 will receive preference. Proposals with strong cost-sharing will be given priority.

Grants awarded to eligible organizations with less than four years of experience in conducting international exchange programs will be limited to \$60,000.

Applicants must submit a comprehensive budget for the entire program. There must be a summary budget as well as a break-down reflecting both the administrative budget and the program budget. For further clarification, applicants may provide separate sub-budgets for each program component, phase, location, or activity in order to facilitate USIA decisions on funding.

Allowable costs for the program include the following:

(1) International and domestic air fares; visas; transit costs; ground transportation costs.

(2) Per Diem. For the U.S. program, organizations have the option of using a flat \$140/day for program participants or the published U.S. Federal per diem rates for individual American cities. For activities outside the U.S., the published Federal per diem rates must be used.

Note: U.S. escorting staff must use the published Federal per diem rates, not the flat rate.

(3) Interpreters. If needed, interpreters for the U.S. program are provided by the U.S. State Department Language Services Division. Typically, a pair of simultaneous interpreters is provided for every four visitors. USIA grants do not pay for foreign interpreters to accompany delegations from their home

country. Grant proposal budgets should contain a flat \$140/day per diem for each Department of State interpreter, as well as home-program-home air transportation of \$400 per interpreter plus any U.S. travel expenses during the program. Salary expenses are covered centrally and should not be part of an applicant's proposed budget.

(4) Book and cultural allowance. Participants are entitled to and escorts are reimbursed a one-time cultural allowance of \$250 per person, plus a participant book allowance of \$50. U.S. staff do not get these benefits.

(5) Consultants. May be used to provide specialized expertise or to make presentations. Daily honoraria generally do not exceed \$250 per day.

Subcontracting organizations may also be used, in which case the written agreement between the prospective grantee and subcontractor should be included in the proposal.

(6) Room rental, which generally should not exceed \$250 per day.

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

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

(9) All USIA-funded delegates will be covered under the terms of a USIA-sponsored health insurance policy. The premium is paid by USIA directly to the insurance company.

(10) Other costs necessary for the effective administration of the program, including salaries for grant organization employees, benefits, and other direct and indirect costs per detailed instructions in the application package.

Review Process

USIA will acknowledge receipt of all proposals and will review them for technical eligibility. Proposal 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, as well as the USIA Office of Western European and Canadian Affairs and the USIA post overseas, where appropriate. Proposals may 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.

Review Criteria

Technically eligible applications will be competitively reviewed according to the criteria stated below. These criteria are not rank ordered and all carry equal weight in the proposal evaluation:

1. Quality of the program idea:

Proposals should respond to the program requirements of the RFP.

2. Program planning and ability to achieve objectives: Program objectives should be stated clearly and precisely and should reflect the applicant's expertise in the subject area and the region. Goals should be reasonable and attainable. A detailed agenda and relevant work plan should demonstrate how objectives will be achieved. A timetable indicating when major program tasks will be undertaken should be provided. The substance of seminars, presentations, consulting, internships and itineraries should be spelled out in detail. Responsibilities of in-country partners should be clearly described.

3. Support of diversity: Proposals should demonstrate substantive 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).

4. Multiplier effect/impact: Proposed programs should strengthen long-term mutual understanding, including maximum sharing of information and establishment of long-term institutional and individual linkages.

5. Institutional capacity: Proposed personnel and institutional resources should be adequate and appropriate to achieve the program or project's goals. The narrative should demonstrate proven ability to handle logistics. Proposal should reflect the institution's expertise in the subject area and knowledge of the country. 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.

6. Follow-on Activities: Proposals should provide a plan for continued follow-on activity (without USIA support) which ensures that USIA supported programs are not isolated events.

7. 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.

8. Cost-effectiveness/cost sharing: The overhead and administrative components of the proposal, including salaries and honoraria, should be kept as low as possible. All other items should be necessary and appropriate. Proposals should maximize cost-sharing through other private sector support as well as institutional direct funding contributions.

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: July 28, 1997.

James D. Whitten,

Acting Deputy Associate Director for Educational and Cultural Affairs.

[FR Doc. 97-20183 Filed 7-30-97; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 8230-01-M