

Dated: June 12, 1998.

**Rose Royal,**

*Federal Register Liaison.*

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## UNITED STATES INFORMATION AGENCY

### College and University Partnerships Program for Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Moldova

**ACTION:** Request for proposals.

**SUMMARY:** The Office of Academic Programs of the United States Information Agency's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs announces an open competition for an assistance award program. Accredited, post-secondary educational institutions meeting the provisions described in IRS regulation 26 CFR 1.501(c) may apply to develop a partnership with (a) foreign institution(s) of higher education from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, or Moldova in specified fields.

Proposed projects must be eligible in terms of countries/localities and disciplines as described in the section entitled "Eligibility" below.

Participating institutions exchange faculty and administrators for a combination of teaching, lecturing, faculty and curriculum development, collaborative research, and outreach, for periods ranging from one week (for planning visits) to an academic year. The FY 98 program will also support the establishment and maintenance of Internet and/or e-mail communication facilities as well as interactive distance learning programs at foreign partner institutions. Applicants may propose other project activities not listed above that are consistent with the goals and activities of the College and University Partnerships Program (CUPP).

The program awards up to \$200,000 for a three-year period to defray the cost of travel and per diem with an allowance for educational materials and some aspects of project administration. Grants awarded to organizations with less than four years of experience in conducting international exchange programs will be limited to \$60,000.

Overall grant-making authority for this program is contained in the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961, Pub. L. 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 Freedom for Russia and Emerging Eurasian Democracies and Open Markets Support Act of 1992 (Freedom Support 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 College and University Partnerships Program for Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Moldova and reference number E/ASU-98-11.

**DEADLINE FOR PROPOSALS:** All copies must be received at the U.S. Information Agency by 5 p.m. Washington, DC time on Monday, August 10, 1998. 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.

*Approximate program dates:* Grants should begin on or about September 30, 1998.

*Duration:* September 30, 1998—August 31, 2001.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT:** Office of Academic Programs; Advising, Teaching, and Specialized Programs Division; Specialized Programs Unit, (E/ASU) room 349, U.S. Information Agency, 301 4th Street, SW., Washington, DC 20547, telephone: (202) 619-4126, fax: (202) 401-1433, internet: jcebra@usia.gov to request a Solicitation Package containing more detailed award criteria; all application forms; and 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 TAX 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 Jonathan Cebra 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 10 copies of the application should be sent to: U.S. Information Agency, Ref.: E/ASU-98-11, 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:****Guidelines**

The College and University Partnership Program for Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Moldova is limited to specific academic disciplines.

For Georgia and Azerbaijan, eligible disciplines include:

- (1) Law;
- (2) Business/economics/trade;
- (3) Government/public policy/public administration; and
- (4) Journalism/communications.

The eligible discipline for Armenia is journalism; please note that the Journalism Faculty of Yerevan State University is the only eligible NIS partner institution.

The eligible discipline for Moldova is political science; please note that Moldovan State University is the only eligible partner institution.

Proposals must focus on curriculum, faculty, and staff development in one or more of these eligible disciplines. Administrative reform at the foreign partner may also be a project component.

Projects should involve the development of new academic programs or the building and/or restructuring of an existing program or programs, and should promote higher education's role in the transition to market economies and open democratic systems. Feasibility studies to plan partnerships will not be considered.

Whenever feasible, participants should make their training and personnel resources, as well as results of their collaborative research, available to government, NGOs, and business.

Participating institutions should exchange faculty and/or staff members for teaching/lecturing and consulting. At least once, one U.S. participant should be in residence at the foreign partner institution for one semester to serve in a coordinating role.

U.S. institutions are responsible for the submission of proposals and should collaborate with their foreign partners in planning and preparing proposals. U.S. and foreign partner institutions are encouraged to consult about the proposed project with USIA E/ASU staff in Washington, DC. Preference will be given to proposals which demonstrate evidence of previous relations with the foreign partner institution(s).

**U.S. Partner and Participant Eligibility**

In the U.S., participation in the program is open to accredited two- and four-year colleges and universities, including graduate schools. Applications from consortia of U.S. colleges and universities are eligible. Secondary U.S. partners may include relevant non-governmental organizations, non-profit service or professional organizations. The lead U.S. institution in the consortium is responsible for submitting the application and each application from a consortium must document the lead school's started authority to represent the consortium. Participants representing the U.S. institution who are traveling under USIA grant funds must be faculty, staff, or advanced graduate students from the participating institution(s) and must be U.S. citizens.

**Foreign Partner and Participant Eligibility**

Overseas, participation is open to recognized, degree-granting institutions of post-secondary education, which may include internationally recognized and established independent research institutes. Secondary foreign partners may include relevant governmental and non-governmental organizations, non-profit service or professional organizations. Participants representing the foreign institutions must be faculty, staff or advanced students of the partner institution, and the citizens, nationals, or permanent residents of the country of the foreign partner, and be qualified to hold a valid passport and U.S. J-1 visa.

Foreign partners from the following countries are eligible:

Armenia—only the journalism faculty of Yerevan State University is eligible.

Azerbaijan—any recognized, degree-granting post-secondary educational institution is eligible.

Georgia—any recognized, degree-granting post-secondary educational institution is eligible.

Moldova—only Moldovan State University is eligible.

Partnerships including a secondary foreign partner from a non-NIS country are eligible; however, with the exception noted below, USIA will not cover overseas non-NIS partner institution costs.

In order to promote regional cooperation, limited funds may be

budgeted for the exchange, as part of this partnership agreement, of faculty between NIS institutions and institutions of higher learning in Central and Eastern Europe (Albania, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovakia, Slovenia).

**Ineligibility**

A proposal will be deemed technically ineligible if:

(1) It does not fully adhere to the guidelines established herein and in the Solicitation Package;

(2) It is not received by the deadline;

(3) It is not submitted by the U.S. partner;

(4) One of the partner institutions is ineligible;

(5) The academic discipline(s) is/are not listed as eligible in the RFP, herein;

(6) The amount requested of USIA exceeds \$200,000 for the three-year project.

Please refer to program-specific guidelines (POGI) in the Solicitation Package for further details.

**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: June 12, 1998.

**John P. Loiello,**

*Associate Director for Educational and Cultural Affairs.*

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