

to meet the goals of the National Performance Review with respect to improving customer service on a long-term basis.

Respondents: Savings and Loan Associations and Savings Banks.

Estimated Number of Reporters: 35.

Estimated Burden Hours Per Reporter: .25 average hours.

Frequency of Response: 1.

Estimated Total Reporting Burden: 8.75 hours.

Clearance Officer: Colleen M. Devine, (202) 906-6025, Office of Thrift Supervision, 1700 Street, N. W., Washington, D.C. 20552.

OMB Reviewer: Alexander Hunt, (202) 395-7860, Office of Management and Budget, Room 10202, New Executive Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20503.

Catherine C. M. Teti,

Director, Records Management and Information Policy.

[FR Doc. 98-24891 Filed 9-16-98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 6720-01-P

UNITED STATES INFORMATION AGENCY

NIS REAC (Newly Independent States Regional Educational Advising Coordinator)

ACTION: Request for proposals.

SUMMARY: The Advising and Student Services Branch 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)(3)-1 may submit proposals for candidates for the position of regional educational advising coordinator (REAC) in the NIS region. Ideally based in Moscow, the REAC would work to support and assist in the professional development of advising centers in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan. The REAC is the primary source of information related to educational advising for advisers in the field. In addition to responding to individual queries and supervising the distribution of a regional newsletter, the REAC would travel to advising centers to assist the organizations and staff responsible for those centers to operate them efficiently. The REAC would be responsible for maintain the network of advisers, for the coordination of training programs for NIS advisers, which may

include an annual conference, and for the facilitation of communication between and among advising centers, posts, and E/ASA in Washington.

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."

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/ASA-99-06.

Deadline for Proposals: All copies must be received at the U.S. Information Agency by 5 p.m. Washington, DC time on Monday, October 26, 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.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: The Advising and Student Services Branch, E/ASA, U.S. Information Agency, 301 4th Street, S.W., Washington, DC 20547, telephone: (202) 619-5434, fax: (202) 401-1433, email: ssheehan@usia.gov, to request a Solicitation Package containing more detailed criteria. 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 Sharen Sheehan 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 eight copies of the application should be sent to: U.S. Information Agency, Ref.: E/ASA-99-06, Office of Grants Management, E/XE, Room 336, 301 4th Street, SW., Washington, DC 20547.

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:

Overview

The overall goal for the NIS Regional Educational Advising Coordinator (REAC) is to develop and strengthen the network of USIA-Supported overseas educational advising centers and to provide leadership and expertise in educational advising issues to advising centers and USIS posts. The REAC will be responsible for providing on-site technical assistance and training to

existing centers in the NIS and for coordinating the establishment of new advising centers, as directed by individual embassies in consultation with E/ASA. The REAC should lend support to any center in the twelve countries comprising the NIS region. The NIS REAC, acting as educational advising coordinator for the area, should work impartially with all organizations involved in educational advising in the NIS to enable them to provide accurate and timely information on U.S. higher educational opportunities. The REAC must work closely with E/ASA and NIS USIS posts to help establish priorities for educational advising in the region. The REAC must be a US citizen. Applicants may request from E/ASA a more comprehensive listing of expected REAC duties, entitled "REAC Guidelines." Contact the "For Further Information" address given above.

Guidelines

Responsibilities include:

1. Site visits to advising centers
2. Providing information and guidance in response to specific questions related to educational advising, as requested by centers
3. Supervising production of a newsletter, electronic bulletin board, email discussion list, or other methods of sharing information among centers
4. Organization and oversight of an internship program for approximately five novice advisers at the Moscow American Center; other internship training programs (ITPs) as necessary
5. In-country workshops: One all-region workshop and two to three smaller workshops, or as determined in consultation with E/ASA and US Posts
6. Consultations with posts and E/ASA on the direction and priorities of educational advising
7. Evaluation and Follow-up

Proposed Budget

Applicants must submit a comprehensive line item budget based on the budget guidelines in the PSI. USIA's grant assistance, up to \$95,000 in total, is expected to constitute only a portion of the total funding; cost sharing is required and the proposal should list other anticipated sources of support.

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. There must be a summary budget as well as a breakdown reflecting travel cost details.

Allowable costs for the program include the following:

- (1) REAC Salary of not more than \$40,000 plus fringe benefits;
- (2) Administrative assistant salary
- (3) travel throughout region and per diem;
- (4) travel for REAC to attend the NAFSA National Conference in Denver, CO and REAC meetings in Washington, DC in spring 1999.
- (5) office and administrative costs
- (6) program costs for Internship Training Programs Please refer to the Solicitation Package for complete budget guidelines and formatting instructions.

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, as well as the USIA EEN Area Office. 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 exhibit originality, substance, precision, and relevance to Agency mission.
2. *Program planning:* Detailed agenda and relevant work plan should demonstrate substantive undertakings and logistical capacity. Agency and plan should adhere to the program overview and guidelines described above.
3. *Ability to achieve program objectives:* Objectives should be reasonable, feasible, and flexible. Proposals should clearly demonstrate how the institution will meet the program's objectives and plan.
4. *Multiplier effect/impact:* Proposed programs should strengthen long-term mutual understanding and be designed to enable advising centers to reach as large and diverse an audience as possible.
5. *Support of Diversity:* Proposals should demonstrate substantive support of the Bureau's policy on diversity.

6. *Institutional Capacity:* Proposed personnel and institutional resources should be adequate and appropriate to achieve the program or project's goals.

7. *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.

8. *Project Evaluation:* Proposals should include a plan to evaluate the REAC activities' impact. A draft survey questionnaire or other technique plus description of a methodology to use to link outcomes to original project objectives is recommended. The award-receiving organization will be expected to submit trip reports after each site visit and semi-annual reports reviewing the over-all status of educational advising in the NIS.

9. *Cost-effectiveness:* The overhead and administrative components of the proposal, should be kept as low as possible. All other items should be necessary and appropriate.

10. *Cost-sharing:* Proposals should maximize cost-sharing through other private sector support as well as institutional direct funding contributions.

11. *Value to U.S.-Partner Country Relations:* Proposed programs should receive positive assessments by USIA's geographic area desk and overseas officers of program need, potential impact, and significance in the partner country(ies).

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: September 10, 1998.

John P. Loiello,

Associate Director for Educational and Cultural Affairs.

[FR Doc. 98-24824 Filed 9-16-98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 8230-01-M

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Medical Research Service Merit Review Committee, Notice of Meetings

The Department of Veterans Affairs gives notice under the Federal Advisory

Committee Act, 5 U.S.C. Appendix, of the following subcommittee meetings to be held from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. as indicated below:

Subcommittee	Date	Location
Endocrinology	September 24-25, 1998.	Holiday Inn Central.
Aging and Clinical Geriatrics	September 25, 1998	Holiday Inn Central.
Alcoholism and Drug Dependence	September 28, 1998	Holiday Inn Central.
Nephrology	October 1, 1998	Radisson Barcelo Hotel.
Gastroenterology	October 1-2, 1998 ..	Holiday Inn Central.
Cardiovascular Studies	October 12-13, 1998.	St. James Suites.
Respiration	October 13, 1998	St. James Suites.
Infectious Diseases	October 15-16, 1998.	Crowne Plaza Hotel.
Oncology	October 19-20, 1998.	Radisson Barcelo Hotel.
Hematology	October 22, 1998	Crowne Plaza Hotel.
Mental Health and Behavioral Sciences	October 22-23, 1998.	Holiday Inn Central.
Surgery	October 24, 1998	Clarion Plaza Hotel.
General Medical Science	October 26-27, 1998.	Radisson Barcelo Hotel.
Neurobiology	October 27-29, 1998.	Holiday Inn Central.
Immunology	October 29-30, 1998.	Holiday Inn Central.
Medical Research Service Merit Review Committee	December 3, 1998 ..	Holiday Inn Central.

The addresses of the hotels are listed below:

Clarion Plaza Hotel, 9700 International Drive, Orlando, FL 32819

Crowne Plaza Hotel, 1001 14th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20005

Holiday Inn Central, 1501 Rhode Island Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20005

Radisson Barcelo Hotel, 2121 P Street, NW, Washington, DC 20037

St. James Suites, 950 24th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20037

These subcommittee meetings will be for the purpose of evaluating the scientific merit of research conducted in each specialty by Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) investigators working in VA Medical Centers and Clinics.

The subcommittee meetings will be open to the public for approximately one hour at the start of each meeting to discuss the general status of the program. The remaining portion of each subcommittee meeting will be closed to the public for the review, discussion, and evaluation of initial and renewal projects.

The closed portion of each subcommittee meeting involves discussion, examination, reference to, and oral review of site visits, staff and consultant critiques of research

protocols and similar documents. During this portion of the subcommittee meeting, discussion and recommendations will deal with qualifications of personnel conducting the studies, the disclosure of which would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy, as well as research information, the premature disclosure of which would be likely to significantly hinder implementation of proposed agency action regarding such research projects. As provided by subsection 10(d) of Public Law 92-463, as amended by Public Law 94-409, closing portions of these subcommittee meetings are in accordance with 5 U.S.C. 552b(c)(6) and (9)(B). Those who plan to attend or would like to obtain a copy of minutes of the subcommittee meetings and rosters of the members of the subcommittees should contact Dr. LeRoy Frey, Chief, Program Review Division, Medical Research Service, Department of Veterans Affairs, Washington, DC, (202) 275-6634.

Dated: September 11, 1998.

By Direction of the Secretary.

Heyward Bannister,

Committee Management Officer.

[FR Doc. 98-24895 Filed 9-16-98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 8320-01-M

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Advisory Committee on Women Veterans, Notice of Meeting

The Department of Veterans Affairs gives notice under Public Law 92-463 that a meeting of the Advisory Committee on Women Veterans will be held on September 21-26, 1998, at the Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) 12, Building 18, 5th Avenue and Roosevelt Road, Hines, IL 60104. The agenda will include tours of VA facilities throughout the Chicago metropolitan area. The purpose of the Committee is to advise the Secretary of Veterans Affairs regarding the needs of women veterans with respect to health care, rehabilitation, compensation, outreach and other programs, and activities administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs designed to meet such needs. The Committee will make recommendations to the Secretary regarding such activities.

All sessions will be open to the public. The sessions are coordinated by the VA Chicago Health Care System, West Side Division, 820 S. Damen Avenue, Chicago, IL 60612. For additional information regarding the