

Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20220. Tel.: (202) 622-0220.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** At the October 9, 1998 session, the regular quarterly meeting of the Advisory Committee, the Committee is expected to consider the agenda items listed below. The agenda may be modified prior to the meeting:

1. Status of implementation of Committee recommendations on the Automated Export System (AES).
2. The Automated Commercial Environment (ACE) and the International Trade Data System (ITDS): Where do they stand?
3. Adequacy of staffing for the Office of Regulations and Ruling.
4. The Merchandise Processing Fee and aggregation of entries.
5. Review of Committee annual report recommendations.

The meeting is open to the public; however, participation in the Committee's deliberations is limited to Committee members and Customs and Treasury Department staff. A person other than an Advisory Committee member who wishes to attend the meeting, should give advance notice by contacting Theresa Manning at (202) 622-0220 no later than October 2, 1998.

Dated: September 19, 1998.

**John P. Simpson,**

*Deputy Assistant Secretary (Regulatory, Tariff, and Trade Enforcement).*

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## UNITED STATES INFORMATION AGENCY

### Program Title The FREEDOM Support Act/Future Leaders Exchange (FSA/FLEX) Program; Inbound, NIS Secondary School Initiative

**NOTICE:** Request for proposals.

**SUMMARY:** The Youth Programs Division/Office of Citizen Exchanges of the United States Information Agency's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs announces an open competition for the FREEDOM Support Act Future Leaders Exchange Program. Public and private non-profit organizations meeting the provisions described in IRS regulation 26 CFR 1.501 may submit proposals to recruit and select host families of high school students between the ages of 15 and 17 from the New Independent States (NIS) of the former Soviet Union. In addition to screening, selecting, and orienting host families and enrolling students in American high schools, organizations will be responsible for: Orienting

students at the local level; providing support services for students; arranging enhancement activities; monitoring students during their stay in the U.S.; providing reentry training; and assessing student performance and progress. The award of grants and the number of students who will participate is subject to the availability of funding in fiscal year 1999.

### Program Information

#### Background

Academic year 1999/00 will be the seventh year of the FSA/FLEX program, which now includes over 6000 alumni. This component of the NIS Secondary School Initiative was originally authorized under the FREEDOM Support Act of 1992 and is funded by annual allocations from the Foreign Operations and USIA appropriations. The goals of the program are to promote mutual understanding and foster a relationship between the people of the NIS and the U.S.; assist the successor generation of the NIS to develop the qualities it will need to lead in the transformation of those countries in the 21st Century; and to promote democratic values and civic responsibility by giving NIS youth the opportunity to live in American society for an academic year.

#### Objectives

To place approximately 930 pre-selected high school students from the NIS in qualified, well-motivated host families and welcoming schools. To expose program participants to American culture and democracy through homestay experiences and enhancement activities that will enable them to attain a broad view of the society and culture of the U.S. To encourage FSA/FLEX program participants to share their culture, lifestyle, and traditions with U.S. citizens.

#### Other Components

Two organizations have been awarded grants to perform the following functions: Recruitment and selection of students; targeted recruitment for students with disabilities; assistance in documentation and preparation of IAP-66 forms; preparation of cross-cultural materials; pre-departure orientation; international travel from home to host community and return; facilitate ongoing communication between the natural parents and placement organizations, as needed; maintenance of a student database and provision of data to USIA; and ongoing follow-up with alumni following their return to the NIS. Additionally, a separate grant

may be awarded for a one-week mid-year civic education program in Washington, DC, for a select number of students who successfully compete for the Washington program. Students who require additional English language training before entering their host communities will attend an English upgrade and cultural orientation program, which is conducted under a grant exclusively for that purpose. The announcements of the competitions for these grants are being published separately.

#### Guidelines

Organizations chosen under this competition are responsible for the following: Recruitment, screening, selection, and orientation of host families; school enrollment; local orientation; placement of a small number of students with disabilities; specialized training of local staff and volunteers to work with NIS students; preparation and dissemination of materials to students pertaining to the placement organization; program enhancement activities; supervision and monitoring of students; trouble shooting and periodic reporting on their progress; when appropriate, communication with the organizations conducting other program components; evaluation of the students' performance; evaluation of the organization's success in achieving program goals; and re-entry training to prepare students for readjustment to their native culture.

Applicants may request a grant for the placement of at least 20 students. There is no ceiling on the number of students who may be placed by one organization. It is anticipated that 10 to 15 grants will be awarded for this component of the FLEX program. Placements will be spread all across the U.S. Students may be clustered in one or more regions or dispersed. If dispersed, applicants should demonstrate that local staffing and training of local staff is adequate to ensure their competence in supervising and counseling students from the NIS. Please refers to the Solicitation Package, available on request from the address listed below, for details on essential program elements, permissible costs, and criteria used to select students.

Grants should begin at the point that the complete applications on selected finalists are delivered to the placement organizations, approximately on April 1, 1999. Participants arrive in their host communities in the month of August and remain for 10 or 11 months until their departure during the period mid-June to early July 2000. Some students will depart at the end of May to

complete university exams in their home countries.

Administration of the program must be in compliance with reporting and withholding regulations for federal, state, and local taxes as applicable. Recipient organizations should demonstrate tax regulation adherence in the proposal narrative and budget.

Applicants should submit the health and accident insurance plans they intend to use for students on this program. USIA will compare the plan with the Agency plan and make a determination of which will be applicable.

Participants will travel on J-1 visas issued by USIA using a government program number. Organizations must comply with J-1 visa regulations in carrying out their responsibilities under the FLEX program. Please refer to Solicitation Package for further information

#### **Budget Guidelines**

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 breakdowns reflecting both administrative and program costs. Applicants may provide separate sub-budgets for each program component, phase, location, or activity to provide clarification.

Allowable costs for the program include the following:

- (1) Monthly and incidentals allowances for participants, as established by USIA.
- (2) Costs associated with student enhancements and orientations.
- (3) Administrative costs associated with host family recruiting, staff training, monitoring, and other functions.
- (4) Health and accident insurance.

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

#### **Announcement Title and Number**

All correspondence with USIA concerning this RFP should reference the above title and number E/P-99-05.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** The Office of Youth Program, E/PY, Rm 568, U.S. Information Agency, 301 4th Street, SW, Washington, DC 20547, tel. (202) 619-6299, fax (202) 619-5311, e-mail [daronson@usia.gov](mailto:daronson@usia.gov) to request a Solicitation Package. The Solicitation Package contains detailed award criteria, required application forms,

specific budget instructions, and standard guidelines for proposal preparation. Please specify USIA Program Officer Diana Aronson on all other inquiries and correspondence.

Please 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 with applicants until the 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 requested 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 the first order when entering the system.

#### **Deadline for Proposals**

All proposal copies must be received at the U.S. Information Agency by 5 p.m. Washington, DC time on Friday, October 30, 1998. Faxed documents will not be accepted at any time. Documents postmarked the due date but received on a later date will not be accepted. Each applicant must ensure that the proposals are received by the above deadline.

Applicants must follow all instructions in the Solicitation Package. The original and 6 copies of the application should be sent to: U.S. Information Agency, Ref.: E/P-99-05, Office of Grants Management, E/XE, Room 336, 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. These documents must be provided in ASCII text (DOS) format with a maximum line length of 65 characters. USIA will transmit these files electronically to USIA 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 reflect advancement of this goal in their program contents, to the full extent deemed feasible.

#### **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. All eligible proposals will be reviewed by the program office, as well as by USIA's East European and NIS Area Office and the USIA post(s) overseas, where appropriate. Eligible proposals will be forwarded to panels the USIA officers for advisory review. Proposals may also be reviewed by the Office of the General Counsel or by other Agency elements. Final funding decisions are at the discretion of USIA's Associate Director for Educational and Cultural Affairs. Final technical authority for assistance awards (grants or cooperative agreements) resides with the USIA Grants Officer.

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 the Agency's mission.
2. *Program planning:* Detailed agenda and relevant work plan should demonstrate substantive undertakings and logistical capacity. Agenda and plan should adhere to the program overview and guidelines described above.
3. *Ability to achieve program objectives:* Objectives should be

reasonable and feasible and should coincide with those for the FLEX program stated above. 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, including maximum sharing of information and establishment of long-term institutional and individual linkages.

**5. Support of Diversity:** Proposals should demonstrate substantive support of the Bureau's policy on diversity both in host community and family placements and in program content (e.g., orientation, enhancement activities).

**6. Institutional Capacity:** Proposed personnel and institutional resources should be adequate and appropriate to achieve the program goals and efficiency in carrying out all functions.

**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 grant recipients and the demonstrated potential of new applicants.

**8. Project Evaluation:** Proposals should include a plan to evaluate achievements and success in dealing with problems. A draft survey questionnaire or other technique plus description of a methodology to use to link outcomes to the stated objectives is recommended. Successful applicants will be expected to submit quarterly reports.

**9. Cost-effectiveness:** The overhead and administrative costs, including salaries and honoraria, should be kept as low as possible. All other items should be reasonable and appropriate to conducting the program efficiently.

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

#### Authority

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 above is provided through legislation pertaining to the USIA and Foreign Operations appropriations.

#### 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 15, 1998.

**John P. Loiello,**

*Associate Director for Educational and Cultural Affairs.*

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#### DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

[OMB Control No. 2900-0095]

#### Proposed Information Collection Activity: Proposed Collection; Comment Request

**AGENCY:** Veterans Benefits Administration, Department of Veterans Affairs.

**ACTION:** Notice.

**SUMMARY:** The Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), is announcing an opportunity for public comment on the proposed collection of certain information by the agency. Under the Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA) of 1995, Federal agencies are required to publish notice in the **Federal Register** concerning each proposed collection of information, including each proposed

extension of a currently approved collection, and allow 60 days for public comment in response to the notice. This notice solicits comments on the information needed to determine net income derived from farming.

**DATES:** Written comments and recommendations on the proposed collection of information should be received on or before November 23, 1998.

**ADDRESSES:** Submit written comments on the collection of information to Nancy J. Kessinger, Veterans Benefits Administration (20S52), Department of Veterans Affairs, 810 Vermont Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20420. Please refer to "OMB Control No. 2900-0095" in any correspondence.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Nancy J. Kessinger at (202) 273-7079 or FAX (202) 275-5947.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** Under the PRA of 1995 (Public Law 104-13; 44 U.S.C., 3501 " 3520), Federal agencies must obtain approval from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for each collection of information they conduct or sponsor. This request for comment is being made pursuant to Section 3506(c)(2)(A) of the PRA.

With respect to the following collection of information, VBA invites comments on: (1) Whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of VBA's functions, including whether the information will have practical utility; (2) the accuracy of VBA's estimate of the burden of the proposed collection of information; (3) ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and (4) ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on respondents, including through the use of automated collection techniques or the use of other forms of information technology.

**Title:** Pension Claim Questionnaire for Farm Income, VA Form 21-4165.

**OMB Control Number:** 2900-0095.

**Type of Review:** Extension of a currently approved collection.

**Abstract:** A claimant's eligibility for VA pension benefits is determined, in part, by countable income. VA Form 21-4165 is used to develop the necessary income and asset information peculiar to farm operations. The information is used by VA to determine whether the claimant is eligible for VA benefits. If eligibility exists, the information is used to determine the proper rate of benefits.

**Affected Public:** Individuals or households—Farms.

**Estimated Annual Burden:** 12,500 hours.