

Issued on November 4, 1998.

**Douglas P. Conlan,**

*District Engineer, Federal Highway  
Administration, Albany, New York.*

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## DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

### Surface Transportation Board

[STB Docket No. AB-55 (Sub-No. 567X)]

#### **CSX Transportation, Inc.; Abandonment Exemption; in Allegheny County, PA**

On October 26 1998, CSX Transportation, Inc. (CSXT), filed with the Surface Transportation Board (Board) a petition under 49 U.S.C. 10502 for exemption from the provisions of 49 U.S.C. 10903 to abandon a line of railroad known as the Lower Allegheny Branch extending from milepost 0.00 to milepost 0.85 in Pittsburgh, together with a 0.15-mile line segment of connecting track that joins the Lower Allegheny Branch to a nearby line of the Consolidated Rail Corporation (Conrail),<sup>1</sup> a total distance of 1.00 mile in Allegheny County, PA. The line traverses U.S. Postal Service Zip Code 15233 and includes no stations.

The line does not contain any federally granted rights-of-way. Any documentation in the railroad's possession will be made available promptly to those requesting it.

The interest of railroad employees will be protected by the conditions specified in *Oregon Short Line R. Co.—Abandonment—Goshen*, 360 I.C.C. 91 (1979).

By issuance of this notice, the Board is instituting an exemption proceeding pursuant to 49 U.S.C. 10502(b). A final decision will be issued by February 12, 1999.

Any offer of financial assistance (OFA) under 49 CFR 1152.27(b)(2) will be due no later than 10 days after service of a decision granting the petition for exemption. Each OFA must be accompanied by a \$1,000 filing fee. See 49 CFR 1002.2(f)(25).

All interested persons should be aware that, following abandonment of rail service and salvage of the line, the line may be suitable for other public use, including interim trail use. Any request for a public use condition under 49 CFR 1152.28 or for trail use/rail banking under 49 CFR 1152.29 will be

due no later than December 3, 1998.

Each trail use request must be accompanied by a \$150 filing fee. See 49 CFR 1002.2(f)(27).

All filings in response to this notice must refer to STB Docket No. AB-55 (Sub-No. 567X) and must be sent to: (1) Surface Transportation Board, Office of the Secretary, Case Control Unit, 1925 K Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20423-0001; and (2) Charles M. Rosenberger, 500 Water Street—J150, Jacksonville, FL 32202. Replies to the CSXT petition are due on or before December 3, 1998.

Persons seeking further information concerning abandonment procedures may contact the Board's Office of Public Services at (202) 565-1592 or refer to the full abandonment or discontinuance regulations at 49 CFR part 1152.

Questions concerning environmental issues may be directed to the Board's Section of Environmental Analysis (SEA) at (202) 565-1545. [TDD for the hearing impaired is available at (202) 565-1695.]

An environmental assessment (EA) (or environmental impact statement (EIS), if necessary) prepared by SEA will be served upon all parties of record and upon any agencies or other persons who commented during its preparation. Other interested persons may contact SEA to obtain a copy of the EA (or EIS). EAs in these abandonment proceedings normally will be made available within 60 days of the filing of the petition. The deadline for submission of comments on the EA will generally be within 30 days of its service.

Board decisions and notices are available on our website at "WWW.STB.DOT.GOV."

Decided: November 6, 1998.

By the Board, David M. Konschnik,  
Director, Office of Proceedings.

**Vernon A. Williams,**

*Secretary.*

[FR Doc. 98-30434 Filed 11-12-98; 8:45 am]

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## UNITED STATES INFORMATION AGENCY

### **Administrative Services to the NIS College and University Partnerships Program (NISCUPP)**

**ACTION:** Request for proposals.

**SUMMARY:** The Office of Academic Programs' Specialized Programs Branch of the United States Information Agency's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs announces an open competition to assist in the administration of the Fiscal Year 1999 NIS College and University Partnerships

Program (NISCUPP) competition. Public and private non-profit organizations meeting the provisions described in IRS regulation 26 CFR 1.501(c) may apply to assist in the administration of the technical and academic review of approximately 65 to 85 proposals for the Fiscal Year 1999 NIS College and University Partnerships Program competition (E/ASU-99-05).

The NISCUPP supports linkages between U.S. institutions of higher education and institutions of higher education from the New Independent States in specified fields and disciplines.

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 Freedom for Russia and Emerging Eurasian Democracies and Open Markets Support Act of 1992 (Freedom Support Act).

Projects must conform with Agency requirements and guidelines outlined in the Solicitation Package. USIA projects 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/ASU-99-06.

**Deadline for Proposals:** All copies must be received at the U.S. Information Agency by 5 p.m. Washington, D.C. time on Monday, December 21, 1998. Faxed application documents will not be accepted.

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 compliance with the deadline.

**Approximate Program Dates:** Grant should begin on or about February 15, 1999 and end approximately five months later.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** The Specialized Programs Branch (E/ASU), Room 349, U.S. Information Agency,

<sup>1</sup> The Lower Allegheny Branch is accessed over trackage rights from Conrail's Etna Yard in Pittsburgh and Conrail's Preble Avenue Industrial Track via the 0.15-mile connecting track owned by CSXT.

301 4th Street, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20547, phone: (202) 619-4126, fax: (202) 401-1433. Send a message via Internet to: [jcebra@usia.gov](mailto:jcebra@usia.gov) to request a Solicitation Package containing more detailed award 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 Jonathan Cebra 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 7 copies of the application should be sent to: U.S. Information Agency, Ref.: E/ASU-99-06, Office of Grants Management, E/XE, Room 326, 301 4th Street, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20547.

**Diversity, Freedom and Democracy Guidelines:** Pursuant to the Bureau's authorizing legislation, projects 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 programs 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. 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 account for advancement of this goal, in their program contents, to the full extent deemed feasible.

**Year 2000 Compliance Requirement (Y2K Requirement):** The Year 2000 (Y2K) issue is a broad operational and accounting problem that could potentially prohibit organizations from processing information in accordance with Federal management and program specific requirements including data exchange with USIA. The inability to process information in accordance with Federal requirements could result in grantees' being required to return funds that have not been accounted for properly.

USIA therefore requires all organizations use Y2K compliant systems including hardware, software, and firmware. Systems must accurately process data and dates (calculating, comparing and sequencing) both before and after the beginning of the year 2000 and correctly adjust for leap years.

Additional information addressing the Y2K issue may be found at the General Services Administration's Office of Information Technology website at <http://www.itpolicy.gsa.gov>.

#### **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

##### **Overview**

##### *Objectives*

The recipient of this award will administer the technical and independent academic reviews for the Fiscal Year 1999 NIS College and University Partnerships Program. The NISCUPP is designed to support linkages between U.S. and NIS institutions of higher education in the fields of business/economics, law, journalism/communications, education, and public administration/public policy/political science.

The NISCUPP supports curriculum development, faculty and staff development, educational reform, community outreach and collaborative research through three-year grants of up to \$300,000 each.

##### **Guidelines**

##### *Project Description*

The recipient of this award shall review proposals for compliance with the technical requirements published in the Request for Proposals (RFP) for the FY 1999 NISCUPP competition. (The FY 1999 NISCUPP RFP will be provided in

the application packet mailed to applicants, and also is available upon request by the applicant, and on the Internet via USIA's website at <http://www.usia.gov/education/rfps>).

The recipient will also coordinate the academic review of technically eligible, comprehensive proposals and provide the Agency with a detailed academic appraisal report on each eligible proposal, extensively summarizing the panel discussion in terms of the academic review criteria published in the FY 1999 NISCUPP RFP. The recipient shall arrange for the review of applications regionally or thematically by panels of experts representing eligible fields and themes. These experts should be highly familiar with the New Independent States.

In preparing a submission, the applicant shall designate a coordinator, subject to Agency approval, to implement and chair all the technical and academic reviews, and to provide detailed summaries of the academic review discussions. The applicant should plan to prepare correspondence to be sent to NISCUPP applicants by the Agency in response to inquiries regarding the technical and academic review of their proposals, and to notify applicants of the status of their proposals. All official documents should highlight the U.S. Government's role as program sponsor and funding source.

##### *Eligibility*

Only non-profit organizations based in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area, with experience in international education and educational exchanges, are eligible to compete for this cooperative agreement award from the Agency.

##### *Proposed Budget*

Please provide a detailed line-item budget as part of your grant proposal, which translates the activities described in the proposal narrative into specific cost requirements. Please use explanatory notes where necessary to describe the costs included in specific line items and how the amounts were derived. 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.

## 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. 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. Technical Format Requirements for this competition are included in the check list in the PSI accompanying this RFP.

Panelists will review proposals received in response to this solicitation according to the following criteria:

1. *Quality of Program Plan/Ability to Achieve Program Objectives:* Proposal agendas and plans should adhere to the program overview and guidelines described above and in the Application Package. Objectives should be reasonable, feasible, and flexible. A proposal should clearly demonstrate how an organization will meet the program's objectives and plan.

2. *Institution's Record/Ability/Capacity:* Proposed personnel and institutional resources should be adequate and appropriate to achieve the project's goals. Proposals should demonstrate responsible fiscal management and full compliance with all reporting requirements for any past Agency grants the applicants have administered, as determined by USIA's Office of Contracts.

3. *Cost-Effectiveness/Cost-Sharing:* The overhead and administrative components of proposals, including salaries and honoraria, should be kept as low as possible. All other items should be necessary and appropriate. Proposals should attempt to maximize cost-sharing through private sector support as well as institutional direct funding contributions.

4. *Project Evaluation:* Proposals should include an effective evaluation plan which defines and articulates a list of anticipated outcomes clearly related to the project goals and activities, and provide procedures for ongoing project monitoring and mid-term corrective action.

5. *Support of Diversity:* Proposals should demonstrate the applicant's commitment to promoting the

awareness and understanding of diversity.

## Application Submission

The complete proposal for this competition (E/ASU 99-06) must meet the due date of December 21, 1998. There will be no exception to this deadline.

## 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 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: December 2, 1998.

**John P. Loiello,**

*Associate Director for Educational and Cultural Affairs.*

[FR Doc. 98-30441 Filed 11-12-98; 8:45 am]

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## UNITED STATES INFORMATION AGENCY

### NIS College and University Partnerships Program

**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 the New Independent States 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 99 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 NIS College and University Partnerships Program.

The NIS College and University Partnership Program awards up to \$300,000 for up to 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.

Please note that USIA's NIS College and University Partnerships Program (NISCUPP) is intended exclusively for college and university partnerships throughout the NIS in the following fields: Law, business/economics, education, public administration/public policy/government/urban and regional economic development, and journalism/communications. Other similar United States Government linkage programs include USIA's College and University Affiliations Program, which supports linkages with institutions in selected countries worldwide, and the Sustaining Partnerships into the Next Century (SPAN) program, funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and administered by the International Research & Exchange Board (IREX) which supports partnerships, including university partnerships, in the Russian Federation which contribute to USAID's strategic objectives. USIA and USAID cooperate in order to effectively distribute assistance funding and avoid duplication of efforts. Applicants interested in USIA's College and University Affiliations Program should contact USIA's Specialized Programs Branch at (202) 619-5289. Applicants interested in USAID's SPAN program should contact IREX at (202) 628-8188.

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