

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]

BILLING CODE 8230-01-M

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

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 NIS College and University Partnerships Program and reference number E/ASU-99-05.

Deadline For Proposals: All copies must be received at the U.S. Information Agency by 5 p.m. Washington, D.C. time on Friday, February 19, 1999. 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 August 15, 1999.

Duration: August 15, 1999–August 14, 2002.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT: Office of Academic Programs; Advising, Teaching, and Specialized Programs Division; Specialized Programs Branch, (E/ASU) room 349, U.S. Information Agency, 301 4th Street, SW., Washington, DC. 20547, fax: (202) 401-1433 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. Please specify USIA Program Officer Sam Eisen (telephone: 202-619-4097, e-mail: seisen@usia.gov) on all inquiries and correspondences regarding partnerships with institutions in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, or Uzbekistan. Please specify USIA Program Officer Jonathan Cebra (telephone: 202-619-4126, e-mail: jcebra@usia.gov) on all inquiries and correspondences regarding partnerships with institutions in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, or Ukraine.

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.

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-99-05, 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.

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:

Guidelines

The NIS College and University Partnership Program is limited to the following specific academic disciplines:

- (1) Law;
- (2) Business/economics/accounting/trade;
- (3) Education/continuing education/civic education/educational reform;
- (4) Government/public policy/public administration/urban and regional economic development; and
- (5) Journalism/communications.

Proposals must focus on curriculum, faculty, and staff development at the NIS partner institution(s) in one or more of these eligible disciplines. Administrative reform at the foreign partner should also be a project component. Proposals in the field of economic development should focus on utilizing university resources to conduct educational outreach which will promote trade and investment in the region.

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 during the grant period, one U.S. participant should be in residence at the foreign partner institution for one semester to serve in a coordinating role. (Exception: Proposals for partnerships with institutions in Tajikistan should not include travel by U.S. participants to Tajikistan.)

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). Preference will be given to proposals which do not duplicate partnership activities currently supported by USIA.

Guidelines

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 or professional 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. If a lead U.S. institution in a consortium is responsible for submitting an application on behalf of a consortium, the application must document the lead school's stated 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 institutions of post-secondary and continuing education. 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 primary or secondary partner institution, and be 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;

Azerbaijan;

Belarus—foreign partners must be independent institutions; state universities are not eligible;

Georgia;

Kazakhstan—preference will be given to proposals for partnerships with institutions located in the Atyrau region;

Kyrgyzstan—potential applicants should contact USIA before preparing proposals;

Moldova;

Russia—preference will be given to proposals which: (1) Designate partner institutions outside of Moscow and St. Petersburg; (2) are in the field of business administration and designate partner institutions which have been designated by the Russian government for inclusion in the Presidential Management Training Initiative—a partial list of such institutions can be found in the POGI; (3) designate partner institutions in regions which have been identified by the U.S.-Russian Joint Commission on Economic and Technical Cooperation for Regional Initiatives—such regions currently include: Khabarovsk kraj, Sakhalin oblast, Samara oblast, and Novgorod oblast. Proposals for partnerships with institutions in Novgorod in regional economic development focusing on tourism are encouraged.

Tajikistan—in consideration of the State Department Warning advising U.S. citizens to defer travel to Tajikistan, proposals for partnerships with institutions in Tajikistan should not include travel by U.S. participants to Tajikistan;

Turkmenistan;

Ukraine—preference will be given to proposals for partnerships with institutions located in the Kharkiv region;

Uzbekistan;

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.

USIA encourages proposals which build upon established collaboration between U.S. institutions and partners in Central and Eastern Europe in order to support faculty and curriculum

development in the NIS and to promote regional cooperation. Funds may be budgeted for the exchange, within the context of this partnership agreement and under the guidance of the U.S. partner institution, 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 \$300,000 for the three-year project.

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

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Notification

Final awards cannot be made until funds have been appropriated by Congress, allocated and committed through internal USIA procedures.

Dated: November 2, 1998.

John P. Loiello,

Associate Director for Educational and Cultural Affairs.

[FR Doc. 98-30443 Filed 11-12-98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 8230-01-M