

UNITED STATES INFORMATION AGENCY

Training Programs in Central and Eastern Europe; Notice: Request for Proposals

SUMMARY: The Office of Citizen Exchange of the United States Information Agency's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs announces an open competition for an assistance award. U.S. public and private non-profit organizations meeting the provision described in IRS regulation 26 CFR 1.501(C) may submit proposals to develop training programs. Grants are subject to the availability of funds.

Program Information

Overview

USIA is interested in proposals that encourage the growth of democratic institutions in Albania, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, and Slovenia. Exchanges and training programs supported by Office of Citizen Exchanges institutional grants should operate at two levels: they should enhance institutional relationships, and they should offer practical information to individuals to assist them with their professional responsibility. Strong proposals usually have the following characteristics: an existing partner relationship between an American organization and an in-country institution in one of the countries targeted in this announcement; a proven track record of conducting program activity; cost-sharing from American or in-country sources, including donations of air fares, hotel and/or housing costs; experienced staff with language facility; and a clear, convincing plan showing how permanent results and continuing activity will be implemented as a result of the activity funded by the grant. USIA wants to see tangible forms of time and money contributed to the project by the prospective American and Central/Eastern European grantee institutions, as well as funding from third party sources.

Unless otherwise specified below, project activities may include: internships; study tours; short-term training; consultations; and extended, intensive workshops taking place as a two-way exchange in the United States and in Albania, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, and Slovenia. Proposals should reflect the

applicants' understanding of the political, economic, and social environment in which the program activity will take place. Program designs based on a one-way exchange will be considered under circumstances where the proposal outlines an exceptional program.

USIA is interested in proposals whose designs take into account the need for ongoing sharing of information, training and concrete plans for self-sustainability. Examples include: support for training centers in the target countries; plans to create professional networks or professional associations to share information; establishing ongoing Internet communication; and/or "train the trainers" models.

USIA recommends that programs with a U.S. component include letters of commitment from host institutions, even if tentative. Letters of commitment from any in-country partners should also be provided. Applicants are strongly encouraged to consult with USIS offices regarding program content and partner institutions before submitting proposals. Award-receiving applicants will be expected to maintain contact with the USIS post(s) throughout the grant period.

USIA will consider proposals that respond to the following country-specific topics for the countries listed below. Themes have been developed in consultation with the Central and Eastern European USIS offices and USIA's Office of Eastern European and NIS Affairs.

For the following project, priority will be given to single country proposals; however, proposals for projects in both Bosnia and Serbia will also be considered. A total of \$500,000 has been set aside for both countries. \$200,000 is for Bosnia. \$300,000 is for Serbia, out of which \$100,000 is designated for activities in Kosovo.

1. For Bosnia and Serbia

INTERNET training for journalists.

The goal of this project is to create Internet access in newsrooms of major media outlets (both print and broadcast) and to provide training from a U.S. expert or experts on how to include Internet-based information in local reporting. The program should include training on how to set up Web sites for newspapers and broadcast outlets. The U.S. team could also work with interested broadcasters to develop public-service programs on the Internet. The project budget may include costs to cover equipment purchases and Internet access, if necessary.

For the following project, priority will be given to proposals in the range of \$160,000 to \$210,000.

1. For Bosnia, Bulgaria, Macedonia, and Serbia Media Internships. Applicants must submit proposals that include all of the countries listed above.

The development of a free and open media has been described as fundamental in the development of democratic societies in Central and Eastern Europe. USIA is looking for proposals that will provide media training for journalists and media managers. The program should include a week-long orientation, an internship program of approximately six weeks in small to medium-sized media organizations, and a three-day debriefing. Participants should be from print, radio and television. USIS posts reserve the right to nominate participants for the media internships. Please note the following requirements for individual posts:

BOSNIA: 6 participants

BULGARIA: 1 participant

MACEDONIA: 10 10 12 participants

SERBIA: 2 participants

For the following six projects, priority will be given to proposals in the range of \$80,000 to \$120,000.

1. For Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia

Reform of Court Administration. Applicants must submit proposals that include all of the countries listed above.

Judicial reform has become increasingly important throughout Central Europe as governments, legal professionals, and concerned citizens recognize the need for a modern, efficient court system to keep pace with the social, economic, and political changes in their countries. Legal experts note that courts throughout the region are overburdened, inefficient, and unresponsive to citizens. This exchange should focus on promoting an independent judiciary in Central Europe by exposing judicial and legal practitioners from the five Central European countries listed above to U.S. court structures, to functions, practices and characteristics of the American judiciary, and to U.S. court management and administration practices. Two participants from each country—one lawyer and one judge, both fluent English speakers—should spend approximately two weeks in the U.S. The first week should consist of training and the second week should be in a U.S. city other than Washington, where participants would visit courts at all levels, bar associations and prisons. In

phase two of the program American experts would visit the five countries to address in more detail topics identified by the participants. Rather than expecting all members of the U.S. group to visit all five countries, we recommend that the American participants split up according to their expertise and the requests of the Central European hosts.

2. For Poland

Strategic planning for universities.

The concept of strategic planning for universities is just now developing in Poland. USIA welcomes proposals on how to use more effectively the universities' resources (financial, human, and physical) to implement their mission and reach their long-term goals. Project activities could include a country-wide workshop for Polish university rectors, vice rectors and deans on how to implement strategic planning. A second phase could consist of a U.S. program for a selected number of participants. The program should be geared to non-English speakers. Priority will be given to proposals from U.S. institutions with existing links with Poland.

3. For Slovenia and Bosnia

Intellectual Property Rights. Single and multi-country projects are eligible.

Although some Central and Eastern European countries have made strides in upholding intellectual property rights, there remain significant problems regarding software piracy, illegal cable retransmission of satellite broadcasts, illegal photocopying of protected works, illegal reproduction of protected works for direct commercial gain, and intellectual property and the Internet. Proposals should focus on intellectual property rights (IPR), with a special concentration on copyright protection for films/videos, music recordings, computer software, and similar products subject to piracy. USIA is interested in proposals that help local organizations develop advocacy skills for intellectual property rights issues through training and consultations by American experts. Proposals might also provide expertise and training in how to set up indigenous NGOs in the field of Intellectual Property Rights that would have as their goal that of promoting the awareness and respect of Intellectual Property Rights. Participants should include: (1) government officials responsible both for drafting and enforcing laws and regulations; (2) lawyers, judges and distributors or licensing organizations involved with presenting and deciding infringement cases; and (3) press and media, to

engage them in raising public consciousness about IPR protection.

4. For Bosnia, Poland and Lithuania

Media Training for Government Spokespersons. Single and multi-country projects are eligible.

As governments in Central and Eastern Europe begin to communicate more openly with their citizens, the role of the government spokesperson takes on greater importance. USIA is interested in proposals that focus on public affairs and public information as they are handled by government institutions. Program activities should cover such topics as spokesperson skills and the government's responsibility to provide accurate, timely information to the public, especially to journalists. For the Polish participants, the emphasis should be on spokespersons for local government institutions.

5. For Slovakia

Fundraising for universities.

Universities in Slovakia are entirely funded by the national budget. Because any fees the universities may receive are taken by the central government, there is little to no incentive for universities to make money selling services. At the same time the government is under great pressure to provide a college education to more young people without increased budget resources for education. USIA is interested, therefore, in proposals that will assist Slovakian universities in developing a healthier funding base. Proposals should examine various strategies for universities to gain financial autonomy. Public-private financing of higher education and its legislative underpinning might also be discussed. Proposals should engage Slovak institutions with an interest in higher education. Participants might include university administrators; members of the national association of rectors, the Slovak Academic Information Agency, or other education-focused organizations; the Ministry of Education; and/or relevant members of parliament.

6. For Albania, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, and Slovenia

Fundraising for NGOs. Single and multi-country projects are eligible.

Non-governmental organizations in Central and Eastern Europe have lessened their dependency on foreign donors and are beginning to raise money from in-country sources. USIA is interested in proposals that encourage local businesses to support community

development. Proposals should demonstrate the benefits of corporate giving not only to worthy causes but to the businesses themselves. Proposals should offer fundraising training such as grant writing to non-governmental organizations. The reform of tax codes to encourage charitable donations by businesses and individuals could also be addressed.

For the following project, priority will be given to proposals in the range of \$60,000 to \$100,000.

1. For Albania, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia

Women's Leadership Training Programs. Proposals for single and multi-country projects are eligible.

Proposals should offer leadership training skills to representatives of women's organizations who are active in their own communities. The focus of the training programs should be on how to identify priorities, organize and form coalitions and conduct advocacy training regarding specific issues important to local communities and regions. Media and public relations training could also be included. Proposals are not limited to a one-country focus but may address how to build networks among women's organizations in several countries. Prospective grantee institutions should identify the Central and Eastern European local organizations and individuals with whom they are proposing to collaborate and describe in detail previous cooperative programming and contacts. Program activity may take place in Central and Eastern Europe or in the United States. Applicants should consider developing action plans during the project so that activities may be continued after the expiration of the grant. USIA welcomes projects for non-English speakers and for participants outside of the capital cities.

Selection of Participants

Successful applications should include a description of how participants will be recruited and selected. In the selection of foreign participants, USIA and USIS posts abroad retain the right to nominate participants and to approve or reject participants recommended by the grantee institution. Priority will be given to foreign participants who have not traveled to the United States.

Visa Regulations

Foreign participants on programs sponsored by the Office of Citizen Exchanges are granted J-1 Exchange Visitor visas by the U.S. Embassy in the spending country. All programs must comply with J-1 visa regulations. Please refer to the 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 are invited to provide both an all-inclusive budget as well as separate sub-budgets for each program components, phase, location, or activity in order to facilitate USIA decisions on funding. While a comprehensive line item budget based on the model in the Solicitation Package must be submitted, separate component budgets are optional.

Allowable costs for the program include the following:

1. International and domestic air fares; foreign visa fees for outbound Americans; transit costs; ground transportation costs.
2. Per diem. For the U.S. program, organizations have the option of using a flat \$160/day for program participants or the published U.S. Federal per diem rates for individual U.S. cities. For activities outside of the U.S., the published Federal per diem rates must be used.

Note: U.S. escorting staff must use the published Federal per diem rates, not the flat rate. Per diem rates may be accessed at <http://www.policyworks.gov/>.

3. Interpreters. If needed, interpreters for the U.S. program are provided by the U.S. State Department Language Services Division. Typically, a pair of simultaneous interpreters is provided for every four visitors who need interpretation. USIA grants do not pay for foreign interpreters to accompany delegations from their home country. Grant proposal budgets should contain a flat \$160/day per diem for each Department of State interpreter, as well as home-program-home air transportation of \$400 per interpreter plus any U.S. travel expenses during the program. Salary expenses are covered centrally and should not be a part of the applicant's proposed budget.

4. Book and cultural allowance. Participants are entitled to and escorts are reimbursed a one-time cultural allowance of \$150 per person, plus a participant book allowance of \$50. U.S. staff do not receive these benefits.

5. Consultants. Consultants may be used to provide specialized expertise or to make presentations. Daily honoraria generally do not exceed \$250 per day. Subcontracting organizations may also be used, in which case the written agreement between the prospective grantee and subcontractor should be included in the proposal.

6. Room rental. Room rental should not exceed \$250 per day.

7. Materials development. Proposals may contain costs to purchase, develop and translate materials for participants.

8. One working meal per project. Per capita costs may not exceed \$5-\$8 for a lunch and \$14-\$20 for a dinner, excluding room rental. The number of invited guests may not exceed participants by more than a factor of two-to-one.

9. A return travel allowance of \$70 may be provided to each participant to be used for incidental expenditures during international travel.

10. All USIA-funded delegates will be covered under the terms of the USIA-sponsored health insurance policy. The premium is paid by USIA directly to the insurance company.

11. Administrative Costs. Other costs necessary for the effective administration of the program including salaries for grant organization employees, benefits and other direct and indirect costs as described in the detailed instructions in the application package. While this announcement does not proscribe a rigid ratio of administrative to program costs, in general, priority will be given to proposals whose administrative costs are less than twenty-five (25) percent of the total requested from USIA. Proposals should show cost-sharing, including both contributions from the applicant and from other sources.

Please refer to the Application Package for complete budget guidelines.

Announcement Title and Number: All correspondence with USIA concerning this RFP should reference the above title and number E/P-99-20.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT: The Office of Citizen Exchanges, E/PE, Room 220, U.S. Information Agency, 301 4th Street, SW, Washington, DC 20547, attn: Christina Miner, tel.: (202) 401-7342, fax: (202) 619-4350, or Internet address: cminer@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 Christina Miner 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 Tuesday, February 23, 1999. 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 twelve copies of the application should be sent to: U.S. Information Agency, Ref.: E/P-99-20, Office of Grants Management, E/XE, Room 326, 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 provide 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.

Year 2000 Compliance Requirement (Y2K Requirement)

The Year 1000 (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>.

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 the USIA Office of NIS and Eastern European Affairs and the USIA posts overseas, where appropriate. Eligible proposals will be forwarded to panels of 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.

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. Program Planning and Ability to Achieve Objectives

Program objectives should be stated clearly and precisely and should reflect the applicant's expertise in the subject area and the region. Objectives should respond to the priority topics in this announcement and should relate to the current conditions in the included countries. Objectives should be reasonable and attainable. A detailed work plan should explain step by step how objectives will be achieved, including a timetable for completion of major tasks and activities and an outline of the selection process. The substance of the seminars, presentations, workshops, consulting, internships and itineraries should be spelled out in detail. Responsibilities of in-country partners should be clearly described. A plan for the recruitment and selection of participants should also be included.

2. 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.

3. Support of Diversity

Proposals should demonstrate substantive support of the Bureau's policy on diversity. Achievable and relevant features should be cited in both program administration (selections of participants, program venue and program evaluation) and program content (orientation and wrap-up sessions, program meetings, resource materials and follow-up activities).

4. Institutional Capacity

Proposed personnel and institutional resources should be adequate and appropriate to achieve the program or project's goals. The narrative should demonstrate proven ability to handle logistics. Proposals should reflect the institution's expertise in the subject area and knowledge of the conditions in the targeted country of counties.

5. Follow-on Activities

Proposals should provide a plan for continued follow-on activity (without USIA support) ensuring that USIA supported programs are not isolated events.

6. Project Evaluation

Proposals should include a plan to evaluate the program's success, both as activities unfold and at the end of the program. USIA recommends that the proposal include a draft survey

questionnaire or other technique plus description and/or plan for use of another measurement technique (such as a focus group) to link outcomes to original project objectives.

7. Cost-Effectiveness and Cost Sharing

Overhead and administrative costs in the proposal, including salaries, subcontracts for services and honoraria, should be kept low. 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 the Fulbright-Hays Act and Support for Eastern European Democracy Act (SEED).

Notice

The terms and conditions published in this RFP are binding and may not be modified by an 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: November 28, 1998.

William B. Bader,

Associate Director for Educational and Cultural Affairs.

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UNITED STATES INFORMATION AGENCY

NIS Secondary School Partnership Program; Notice: Request for Proposals

SUMMARY: The Office of Citizen Exchange, Youth Programs Division, of the United States Information Agency's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs announces an open competition for the NIS Secondary School Partnership Program. Public and private non-profit organizations meeting the provisions described in IRS regulation 26 CFR 1.501© may submit proposals to either enhance or expand existing partnerships or develop new school partnership programs with Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Russia, or Ukraine. All submissions must have a thematic focus and feature on-going joint project activity between the schools, a student exchange component, and an educator (teacher/administrator) exchange component. The maximum grant award will be \$200,000.

Program Information

The U.S. recipient of the grant is responsible for recruiting, selecting, and organizing a minimum of two U.S. secondary schools to form the U.S. network; strengthening an existing working relationship with an organization or agency of government in the NIS responsible for a network of at least two schools there; and linking the two networks through a thematic project and substantive exchange activities.

Overview: The short-term goal of the school partnership program is to provide partial funding for linkages between U.S. and NIS schools featuring collaborative substantive projects and student and educator exchanges. Grant-funded exchanges must have a thematic focus and have tangible outcomes, such as the development of educational materials.

The long-term goals are to: (1) advance mutual understanding between the U.S. and the NIS; (2) develop lasting institutional ties between U.S. and NIS schools and communities; and (3) promote partnerships developed through governmental, educational, and not-for-profit sector cooperation that hold promise for a sustainable program

beyond the grant term and serve the needs and interests of the schools.

The linked network of secondary schools in the United States and network of schools in the NIS must establish or expand ties between the schools in the network through joint project activity and two sets of exchange programs: 1) the exchange of secondary school students, from 14 to 18 years of age, between the U.S. and participating NIS countries, and 2) the exchange of secondary school educators (teachers and/or administrators) between the U.S. and NIS countries.

Guidelines: A competitive proposal will present a project that builds upon previous contacts and interaction between the proposed schools to help ensure a solid foundation for the partnership. Partnerships should have an existence beyond the scope of this initiative; that is, there should be an inherent reason for their linkage apart from the availability of grant funds.

In general, USIA seeks school partnerships that target under-served countries or regions. For programs with Russia, priority will be given to partnerships with schools located outside of the Moscow and St. Petersburg regions. Proposals that feature networks in the cities and regions noted below will be given priority consideration. These cities are former nuclear and/or chemical weapon manufacturing locations in Russia: Gornyy, Kambarka, Kizner, Leonidovka, Lesnoy, Maradykovsky, Novouralsk, Ozersk, Pochep, Sarov, Seversk, Shchuchye, Snezhninsk, Trekhgnornyy, Zarechnyy, Zelenogorsk, Zheleznogorsk. Russian Regional Investment Initiative sites: Novgorod, Samara, and the Russian Far East (Khabarovsk and Sakhalin).

Organizers and school networks in the U.S. and NIS should collaborate in planning and preparation. Applicants must have an NIS organizational partner that has its base of operation in the partner country and not in another country. Proposals should support a working relationship that will produce something tangible and lasting in addressing the interests of both sides, beyond the confines of the funded project. The proposal should specify up front what the measurable goals and objectives of the program will be. Each school partnership must also provide a statement of goals and objectives for their exchange.

USIA funding may not be used to supplant existing private sector funding. Applicants must indicate how activities have been funded in the past and how the activities will be expanded with assistance from USIA. Competitive

proposals must demonstrate a solid and comprehensive follow-on plan to continue after the grant has expired.

Proposals must clearly describe and define substantive thematically-based projects for each school partnership that are the focus of the exchange for both students and educators and on-going joint project activity between the two schools. Applicants should present a program that succeeds in linking the greater school community. All participating schools must be identified. Proposals should describe the selected theme, its importance to the schools and communities, the specific academic activities, and the expected outcome or product of the project. Possible themes include but are not limited to the following: civic education, health education, environmental issues, youth leadership training, volunteerism/ community service, conflict resolution, computer technology, multicultural education, agriculture, and business management.

Proposals must clearly present independent educator programs for teachers/administrators. These programs could include curriculum development seminars, "shadowing" of host peers in the classroom, university-level courses, or other substantive activities, with an emphasis on such themes as parent-teacher cooperation, model schools, teacher training, and collaboration with local businesses. A program that relies on the educator to act as just an escort will not be competitive. Although educators can certainly travel with student groups, a group of educators could travel separately if an organization developed such a program.

The U.S. recipient of the grant will (1) design the overall plan that integrates the joint project activity and the exchange components of the partnership; (2) ensure quality control for all program elements; (3) keep USIA/USIS informed of its progress; (4) manage all travel arrangements, logistics, passports, visas, etc.; (5) provide competent and informed escorts for student groups; and (6) disburse and account for grant funds. Recipients of the assistance award are responsible for ensuring the selection of exchange participants who are most suited for the program and for providing them with a meaningful pre-departure orientation. Selection of individual participants from the U.S. and the NIS in the exchange components of the program must be merit-based; the proposal should describe the mechanisms used for participant selection. Participants (both Educators and Students) from the U.S. and the NIS countries should represent a diversity of backgrounds