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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

(racial, geographic, economic status, religious, etc.) to give greater understanding to the culture and society as a whole.

Because the ultimate goal of this program is self-sufficiency, school partnerships that have received USIA funding under the NIS Secondary School Initiative for a total of three years are only eligible to receive up to \$20,000 for NIS participant travel costs, per diem, and allowances.

Significant cost-sharing is mandatory in all proposals and those that show more generous and creative cost-sharing will be more favorably viewed. Proposals that contain non-USIA funded items such as additional students and/or educators on the exchange, U.S. participants paying for some of their own costs, computer software purchases, cultural excursions, state/national capital civics programs, and other significant items will be more competitive proposals than those that do not. However, NIS participants may not be charged to participate in the program, aside from paying for in-country costs (such as transportation to the point of departure), the costs of hosting the U.S. students and educators, and miscellaneous expenses such as pocket money.

Programs must comply with J-1 visa regulations. The Agency will process the IAP-66 forms for travel to the United States. Applicant organizations are required to use the USIA Accident and Sickness Program for Exchanges (ASPE) for participants in USIA-funded exchanges. Applicants who choose not to use the USIA plan must demonstrate that an alternative plan (1) provides comparable or better coverage, and (2) costs less. Please refer to the Program Objectives, Goals, and Implementation (POGI) section of the Solicitation Package for greater detail regarding the design of the component parts as well as other program information.

#### **Budget Guidelines**

Applicants must submit a comprehensive budget for the entire program. Awards may not exceed \$200,000. The Agency has set country allocations for this competition and all proposals must adhere to these maximum amounts per country.

Only partnerships between secondary schools in the United States and these countries are eligible for this competition.

These amounts are approximate: Armenia \$100,000; Azerbaijan \$150,000; Belarus \$200,000; Georgia \$100,000; Moldova \$100,000; Russia \$350,000; Ukraine \$250,000.

Grants awarded to eligible organizations with less than four years of experience in conducting international exchange programs will be limited to \$60,000.

There must be a summary budget as well as breakdowns reflecting both administrative and program budgets. Applicants may provide separate sub-budgets for each program component, phase, location, or activity to provide clarification. All program costs should clearly indicate whether they cover U.S. or NIS participants. The cost per NIS student, NIS educator, U.S. student, and U.S. educator should be listed separately. Be sure to note the statement on cost-sharing in the Guidelines section. Please refer to the Solicitation Package for complete budget guidelines and formatting instructions.

**Announcement title and number:** All correspondence with USIA concerning this RFP should reference the above title and number E/PY-99-26.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** The Youth Programs Division, E/PY, Room 568, U.S. Information Agency, 301 4th Street, SW., Washington, DC 20547, telephone: (202) 619-6299; fax: (202) 619-5311; E-mail: [clantz@usia.gov](mailto:clantz@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 Carolyn Lantz 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 5:00 p.m. Washington, DC time on Friday, February 12, 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 10 copies of the application should be sent to: U.S. Information Agency, Ref.: E/PY-99-26, Office of Grants Management, Room 568, 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 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. 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 reflect 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>.

#### 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 East European and NIS Affairs and the USIA posts overseas. 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. Programmatic planning, objectives, and quality:** The program should demonstrate originality, substance, precision and relevance to the Agency's mission. Applicant organizations should demonstrate sound judgment in all aspects of the program design and a thorough understanding of the NIS. A detailed agenda and relevant work plan should adhere to the program overview and guidelines described. Proposals should clearly demonstrate how the institution will meet the program's objectives and plan.

**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. Proposals should also include creative ways to

involve project participants in their host schools and communities.

**3. Institutional Capacity and Record:** Proposed personnel and institutional resources should be adequate and appropriate to achieve the program or project's goals. Proposals should demonstrate an institutional record of successful exchange programs, including responsible fiscal management and full compliance with all reporting requirements for past Agency grants as determined by USIA's Office of Contracts. The Agency will consider the past performance of prior recipients and the demonstrated potential of new applicants. An organization's track record will be evaluated based on the achievement of stated goals and impact on schools in the U.S. and NIS.

**4. 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 (selection of participants and host families, program venue, and program evaluation) and program content (orientation and wrap-up sessions, program meetings, resource materials and follow-up activities).

**5. Cost-effectiveness/cost-sharing:** The overhead and administrative components of the proposal, including salaries and honoraria, should be kept as low as possible. All other items should be necessary and appropriate. Overall per-participant costs will be a factor in the review of the proposal. Proposals should maximize cost-sharing through U.S. participant contributions and other private sector support as well as institutional direct funding contributions. Applicants should indicate sources of funds for cost-sharing.

**6. 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.

**7. Project Evaluation:** Proposals must include a plan to evaluate the project, both as the activities unfold and at the end of the program. USIA recommends that the proposal include a draft survey questionnaire or other technique plus a description of a methodology to use in linking outcomes to original project objectives for each school partnership. Successful applicants will be expected to submit reports on each partnership.

#### Authority

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 above is provided through the FREEDOM Support Act of 1992.

#### 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: December 5, 1998.

**William B. Bader,**

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#### UNITED STATES INFORMATION AGENCY

#### Summer Institute in Social Science Research and Public Policy for Ukrainian Social Scientists; Notice: Request for Proposals (RFP)

**SUMMARY:** The Branch for the Study of the United States of the U.S. Information Agency's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs announces an open competition for an assistance award. Public and private non-profit organizations meeting the provisions described in IRS regulation 26 CFR 1.501(C) may apply to develop and implement a post-graduate level academic institute and related programs