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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 by the USIA Office of East European and NIS Affairs and the USIA post 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. *Quality of the program idea:* Proposals should exhibit originality, substance, precision, relevance to the Agency's mission, and responsiveness to the objectives and guidelines stated in this solicitation. Proposals should demonstrate substantive expertise in civic education.

2. *Program planning:* Detailed agenda and relevant work plan should demonstrate substantive undertakings and logistical capacity. Agenda and plan should adhere to the program overview described above.

3. *Ability to achieve program objectives:* Objectives should be reasonable, feasible, and flexible. Proposals should clearly demonstrate how the institution will meet the program's objectives and plan.

4. *Multiplier effect/impact:* Proposed programs should strengthen long-term mutual understanding, including maximum sharing of information and establishment of long-term institutional and individual linkages.

5. *Support of Diversity:* Proposals should demonstrate substantive support of the Bureau's policy on diversity.

Achievable and relevant features should be cited in both program administration (selection of participants, program venue and program evaluation) and program content (orientation and wrap-up sessions, program meetings, resource materials and follow-up activities).

6. *Institutional Capacity and Record/Ability:* 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.

7. *Follow-on Activities:* Proposals should provide a plan for continued follow-on activity (without USIA support) to ensure ongoing involvement with Azerbaijani curriculum development projects.

8. *Project Evaluation:* Proposals should include a plan to evaluate the activity's success, both as the activities unfold and at the end of the program. The progress of the grant should be monitored closely. The USIA Program Officer should be kept informed of the implementation of each phase of the program. A draft survey questionnaire or other technique plus description of a methodology to use to link outcomes to original project objectives is recommended. Successful applicants will be expected to submit intermediate reports after each project component is concluded or quarterly, whichever is less frequent.

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

10. *Value to U.S.-Partner Country Relations:* Proposed projects should demonstrate the need, potential impact, and significance of the project in the partner country.

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 Freedom for Russia and Emerging Eurasian Democracies and Open Markets Support Act of 1993 (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.

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: May 5, 1999.

Judith Siegel,

Deputy Associate Director for Educational and Cultural Affairs.

[FR Doc. 99-11974 Filed 5-12-99; 8:45 am]

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UNITED STATES INFORMATION AGENCY

Teaching Excellence Awards Program

NOTICE: Request for proposals.

SUMMARY: The Division for the NIS Secondary School Initiative, Office of Citizen Exchanges, of the United States Information Agency's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs announces an open competition for the Teaching Excellence Awards (TEA) program. Public and private non-profit organizations meeting the provisions

described in IRS regulation 26 CFR 1.501(c) may submit proposals for the fourth year of a program of recognition for excellence in the fields of English and American studies at the primary and secondary levels of education in Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan. The total amount of funding available for this program is \$2,250,000.

Program Information

Overview: The objective of the program is to select exemplary teachers in the five target countries through a merit-based competition and provide modest awards to them and their schools. The top national winners participate in a summer enrichment program in the U.S. The goals are to: give recognition to excellence in the teaching of English and American studies; promote innovation in teaching methodology in the New Independent States (NIS) of the former Soviet Union; and promote mutual understanding about the societies and educational systems of the U.S. and the five target NIS countries.

Background: The program was established in 1996 and has been administered for the past three years by the American Councils for International Education (ACIE). For the 1996–1997 program year, the teacher competition was conducted in Russia and Ukraine, and 900 educators were nominated, for which their schools received plaques. The competition culminated in the selection of 225 Russian and 75 Ukrainian regional winners of awards—\$200 worth of education materials for the teachers and \$2,000 worth of education equipment for the schools. Thirty Russian and 15 Ukrainian educators were selected as national winners and participated in a seven-week enrichment program in the U.S. Twenty American teachers were also selected from national excellence competitions who interacted with the NIS teachers and traveled to their countries for two-week programs. The program was repeated in 1997–1998 and expanded in 1998–1999 to include Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan.

Guidelines: The organization that is awarded the grant to administer this program must have an infrastructure of offices in the five countries with staff in place year-round under the direct supervision of an American national. The organization must have the ability to work closely with ministries of education and local educational and governmental authorities. The competition must be conducted as a high-profile, merit-based process that

encompasses all oblasts (regions) where it is feasible to elicit nominations. The competition should be broadly advertised to ensure that the maximum number possible of teachers and schools are made aware of it. In Russia nominations will be made primarily by committees of oblast ministry of education officials operating under detailed instructions from the grantee organization in conjunction with USIS Moscow. In the other four countries, applications will be submitted directly to the grantee, which will assemble screening committees of specialists. The awards for regional winners should include a range of educational materials and equipment such as copiers, fax machines and computers, which will be for use by the winner's school. The grantee should arrange for a six-to-seven week enrichment program in the U.S. for the national winners designed to enhance teaching methodologies in English as a foreign language and American studies. The grantee must recruit American educators from state and national teaching excellence competitions to participate in aspects of the summer enrichment program and travel to the NIS for two-to-three week programs based in the schools of the NIS national winners. Close collaboration with USIS and American Embassy officers and American English teaching specialists is required. The competition should be conducted in the fall of 1999; awards should be made in the spring of 2000; the enrichment program should take place in the summer of 2000; the American participants should travel to the NIS in the fall of 2000. Grant activities may begin on August 1, 1999. The grantee is responsible for conducting all activities directly or under sub-contracts.

Programs must comply with J-1 visa regulations. Please refer to Solicitation Package for further information.

Budget Guidelines

One grant will be awarded for the whole program. Organizations with less than four years of experience in conducting international exchange and/or training programs with the NIS are not eligible for this competition.

Applicants must submit a comprehensive budget for the entire program. There must be a summary budget as well as breakdowns reflecting both administrative and program budgets. The itemized budget should clearly show costs for each program component, phase, location, or activity.

Proposals should obey these specific maximum limits for each country: Kazakhstan, \$300,000; Kyrgyzstan,

\$150,000; Russia, \$1,000,000; Ukraine, \$500,000; Uzbekistan, \$300,000.

Allowable costs for the program include the following: the competition itself, awards of material or equipment (valued at \$200 per regional winner, \$2,000 per school), the summer enrichment program, the US teachers to the NIS, and reasonable administrative costs. 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-99-48.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Robert Persiko, the NIS Secondary School Initiative (E/PY), Room 568, U.S. Information Agency, 301 4th Street, SW., Washington, DC 20547, telephone 202-619-6299, fax 202-619-5311—rpersiko@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 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://e.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 June 14, 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 ten copies of the application should be sent to: U.S.

Information Agency, Ref.: E/PY-99-48, Office of Grants Management, E/XE, 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. Pub. L. 104-319 provides that "in carrying out programs of educational and cultural exchange in countries whose people do not fully enjoy freedom and democracy," USIA "shall take appropriate steps to provide opportunities for participation in such programs to human rights and democracy leaders of such countries." Proposals should reflect advancement of this goal in their program contents, to the full extent deemed feasible.

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 complaint 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 USIS posts in the five countries. 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. *Quality of the program idea:* Proposals should exhibit originality, substance, precision, and relevance to the Agency's goals as outlined above.
2. *Program planning:* Detailed agenda and relevant work plan should demonstrate substantive undertakings and logistical capacity. Agenda and plan should adhere to the program overview and guidelines described above.
3. *Ability to achieve program objectives:* Objectives should be expressed in terms that are quantifiable, measurable, and achievable. Proposals should clearly demonstrate how the institution will meet the program's stated objectives.
4. *Multiplier effect/impact:* The proposed program should strengthen long-term mutual understanding, including maximum sharing of information and establishment of long-term institutional and individual linkages.

5. *Support of Diversity:* Proposals should demonstrate substantive support of the Bureau's policy on diversity. Achievable and relevant features should be cited in both program administration

(selection of participants, program venue and program evaluation) and program content (orientation and wrap-up sessions, program activities, resources materials and follow-up activities).

6. *Institutional Capacity:* Proposed personnel and institutional resources should be adequate and appropriate to implement the program efficiently and effectively.

7. *Institution's Record/Ability:* Proposal should demonstrate an institutional record of relevant successful exchange activities with the NIS, as well as 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.

8. *Follow-on Activities:* Proposal should provide a plan for maintaining contact with program alumni, as well as facilitating their ongoing interaction with each other.

9. *Project Evaluation:* Proposals should include a plan to evaluate the activity's success in terms of achieving the stated objectives, both as the activities unfold and at the end of the program. A draft survey questionnaire or other technique plus description of a methodology to use to link outcomes to original project objectives is recommended. Successful applicants will be expected to submit quarterly program and financial reports.

10. *Cost-effectiveness:* 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.

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

12. *Value to U.S.-Partner Country Relations:* Proposals will be assessed by USIA's geographic area office and officers and USIS missions in the five countries in terms of the adequacy of program plan and the organization's NIS infrastructure to achieve TEA's objectives.

Authority

Overall grant making authority for this program is contained in the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961, Pub. L. 87-256, as amended, also known as the Fulbright-Hays Act. The purpose of the Act is "to enable the Government of the United States to increase mutual understanding between

the people of the United States and the people of other countries * * *; to strengthen the ties which unite us with other nations by demonstrating the educational and cultural interests, developments, and achievements of the people of the United States and other nations * * * and thus to assist in the development of friendly, sympathetic and peaceful relations between the United States and the other countries of the world." The funding authority for the program above is provided through legislation. Funds for this program are made available under the Foreign

Operations appropriation for fiscal year 1999.

Notice

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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: May 3, 1999.

Judith S. Siegel,

Deputy Associate Director for Educational and Cultural Affairs.

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