

both the administrative budget and the program budget. For further clarification, applicants may provide separate sub-budgets for each program component, phase, location, or activity in order to facilitate USIA decisions on funding.

Allowable costs for the program include the following:

- (1) U.S.-based administrative costs.
- (2) NIS-based administrative costs.
- (3) Program costs.
- (4) Start up recruitment costs for FY 2000.

Please refer to the Solicitation Package for complete budget guidelines and formatting instructions.

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, as well as the USIA Office of and Eastern Europe and NIS Affairs the USIA post overseas, where appropriate. 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 Education 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 Development and Management

Proposals should exhibit originality, substance, precision, innovation, and relevance to Agency mission. Objectives should be reasonable, feasible, and flexible. Proposals should clearly demonstrate how the organization will meet the program's objectives. A 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.

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 students in their U.S. communities.

3. Support of Diversity

Proposals should demonstrate the recipient's commitment to promoting the awareness and understanding of diversity, and should include a strategy for achieving diverse applicant pools for both students and host institutions.

4. Institution's Record/Ability

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. Proposed personnel and institutional resources should be adequate and appropriate to achieve the program or project's goals.

5. Follow-on and Alumni Activities

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

6. Project Evaluation

Proposals should include a plan to evaluate the program's success, both during and after the program. USIA recommends that the proposal include a draft survey questionnaire or other technique, plus a description of methodologies that can be used to link outcomes to original project objectives. Award-receiving organizations/institutions will be expected to submit intermediate reports after each project component is concluded or quarterly, whichever is less frequent.

7. Cost-Effectiveness and 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. Proposals should maximize cost sharing through other private sector support as well as institutional direct funding contributions.

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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.

Option for Renewals

Subject to the availability of funding for FY 2000 and FY 2001, and the satisfactory performance of grant programs, USIA may invite grantee organizations to submit proposals for renewals of awards.

Dated: November 14, 1997.

Robert L. Earle,

Deputy Associate Director for Educational and Cultural Affairs.

[FR Doc. 97-30523 Filed 11-19-97; 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 98 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.

Please note that USIA's NIS College and University Partnership 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, journalism/communications. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX) have issued a request for proposals to strengthen existing partnerships between U.S. and Russian organizations—the Sustaining Partnerships into the Next Century (SPAN) program.

In order to effectively distribute assistance funding and avoid duplication of efforts, colleges and universities interested in applying for partnerships in the fields listed above should apply for funding under USIA's NISCUPP program. Colleges and universities interested in other fields, and all other relevant partnerships, should apply to the SPAN program administered by USAID and IREX. USIA and USAID missions will jointly review proposals from colleges and universities.

The program awards up to \$300,000 for 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.

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 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-98-07.

Deadline for Proposals

All copies must be received at the U.S. Information Agency by 5 p.m. Washington, D.C. time on Monday, February 23, 1998. 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 June 30, 1998.

Duration: June 30, 1998–May 31, 2001.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Office of Academic Programs; Advising Teaching, and Specialized Programs Division; Specialized Programs Unit, (E/ASU) room 349, U.S. Information Agency, 301 4th Street, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20547, telephone: (202) 619-4126, fax: (202) 401-1433, internet: jcebra@usia.gov 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.

To Download a Solicitation Package via Internet: The entire Solicitation Package may be downloaded from USIA's website at <http://www.usia.gov/education/rfps>. Please read all information before downloading.

To Receive a Solicitation Package via Fax on Demand: The entire Solicitation Package may be received via the Bureau's "Grants Information Fax on Demand System", which is accessed by calling 202/401-7616. Please request a "Catalog" of available documents and order numbers when first entering the system.

Please specify USIA Program Officer Jonathan Cebra on all inquiries and correspondences. 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 completion 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-98-07, Office of Grants Management, E/XE, Room 326, 301 4th Street, S.W., Washington, D.C. 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. Public Law 104-319 provides that "in carrying out programs of educational and cultural exchange in countries whose people do not fully enjoy freedom and democracy", USIA "shall take appropriate steps to provide opportunities for participation in such programs to human rights and democracy leaders of such countries." Proposals should account for advancement of this goal in their program contents, to the full extent deemed feasible.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Guidelines

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

- (1) Law;
- (2) Business/economic/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 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, one U.S. participant should be in residence at the foreign partner institution for one semester to serve in a coordinating role.

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, D.C. Preference will be given to proposals which demonstrate evidence of previous relations with the foreign partner institution(s).

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 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. The lead U.S. institution in the consortium is responsible for submitting the application and each application from a

consortium 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 Participating Eligibility

Overseas, participation is open to recognized, degree-granting institutions of post-secondary education, which may include internationally recognized and established independent research institutes. 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 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—foreign partners must be independent institutions; state universities are not eligible.

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

Georgia.

Kazakhstan.

Kyrgyzstan.

Moldova.

Russia—preference will be given to proposals which: (1) designate partner institutions outside of Moscow and St. Petersburg; (2) designate partner institutions in regions which have been identified by the U.S.-Russian Joint Commission on Economic and Technical Cooperation for Regional Investment Initiatives. Khabarovsk kraj and Sakhalin oblast have been designated for a Regional Investment Initiative. Samara oblast has also been designated for a Regional Investment Initiative.

Tajikistan.

Turkmenistan.

Ukraine.

Uzbekistan.

Partnerships including a secondary foreign partner from a non-NIS country in Europe are eligible; however, with the exception noted below, USIA will not cover overseas non-NIS partner institution costs.

In order to promote regional cooperation, limited funds may be budgeted for the exchange, as part of this partnership agreement, 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 14, 1997.

John P. Loiello,

Associate Director for Educational and Cultural Affairs.

[FR Doc. 97-30525 Filed 11-19-97; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 8230-01-M