

UNITED STATES INFORMATION AGENCY

Edmund S. Muskie and Freedom Support Act Graduate Fellowship Programs Host Institution Competition

ACTION: Notice announcements.

SUMMARY: Subject to the availability of funds, the Office of Academic Programs, European Branch, of the United States Information Agency's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs announces opportunities for regionally and professionally accredited U.S. institutions offering degree programs at the master's level in business administration, education administration, economics, journalism/mass communications, law, library and information science, public administration, public health, and public policy to host graduate students from Armenia, Azerbaijan*, Belarus, Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Krygystan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan for one- to two-year degree programs under the auspices of the 1998 Edmund S. Muskie and Freedom Support Act Graduate Fellowship Programs.

Application Information

The Edmund S. Muskie and Freedom Support Act (FSA) Graduate Fellowship Programs are comprised of one- to two-year Master's-level academic programs and a three-month internship program. Pending available funding, the 1998 Muskie and FSA Graduate Fellowship Programs will be administered with USIA through cooperative agreements with the American Council of Teachers of Russian/American Council for Collaboration in Education and Language Study (ACTR/ACCELS) and the Open Society Institute (OSI). Under these agreements ACTR and Soros/OSI will be responsible for recruitment, selection, academic placement, and monitoring of Fellows. Interested institutions should contact these organizations for additional program and application information:

For programs in Business Administration, Economics, Library and Information Science, Public Administration, and Public Policy: Susan Frarie, ACTR/ACCELS, 1776 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W., Suite 700, Washington, DC 20036, *Tel:* (202) 833-7522, *Fax:* (202) 833-7523, *E-Mail:* frarie@actr.org.

For programs in Law, Education Administration, Journalism/Mass Communications, and Public Health: Sofia Skindrud, Scholarships Department, The Open Society Institute,

400 West 59th Street, New York, NY 10019, *Tel:* (212) 548-0600, *Fax:* (212) 548-4679, *Email:* sskindrud@sorosny.org.

Current host institutions should contact the above organizations for renewal applications.

All organizations must be received at the appropriate organization by 5 p.m. Washington, D.C. time on Friday, February 20, 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.

Additional Information

Increases in program expenses with reduced overall government funding for exchange programs make cost sharing arrangements with those institutions a critical part of the Muskie and FSA Graduate Fellowship Programs. Preference will be given to institutions that can provide cost-sharing toward tuition, fees, and/or room and board expenses. Cost-sharing may also be in the form of other direct program and participant costs.

The Edmund S. Muskie and Freedom Support Act Graduate Fellowship Programs are not intended as precursors to doctoral studies in the United States. At the end of their designated academic and internship programs, Fellows are required to return to their home countries to fulfill the two-year home residency requirement as specified in the Exchange Visitor (J-Visa) regulations and the Muskie and the FSA Graduate Fellowship Programs Terms and Conditions.

ACTR/ACCELS and OSI will not approve the transfer of visa sponsorship to universities or the extensions of visas for the purpose of Ph.D. Programs, extended practical training, or other additional academic study. Universities that do not comply with the policies of the Muskie and FSA Graduate Fellowship Programs and the J-Visa regulations will be removed from the pool of host institutions.

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 principal both in programs 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.

*** Please Note:** Programs with Azerbaijan are subject to restrictions of section 907 of the Freedom Support Act: Employees of the Government of Azerbaijan or any of its instrumentalities are excluded from participation, and no U.S. participant overseas may work for the Government of Azerbaijan or any of its instrumentalities. In addition, the Government of Azerbaijan or any of its instrumentalities will have no control in the actual selection of participants.

Dated: November 14, 1997.

Robert L. Earle,

Deputy Associate Director for Educational and Cultural Affairs.

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UNITED STATES INFORMATION AGENCY

Freedom Support Act Undergraduate Program

ACTION: Request for proposals.

SUMMARY: Subject to the availability of funds, the Academic Exchanges Division, European Programs Branch of the United States 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 a program to recruit in an open, multinational competition and provide 225 to 250 students from the New Independent States of the former Soviet Union with full scholarships for one year of non-degree, undergraduate study at regionally and professionally accredited two- and four-year institutions throughout the United States in the fields of agriculture, business, computer science, criminal justice studies, economics, education, environmental management, EFL/TEFL,

journalism and mass communication, library and information science, political science, public health, and sociology.

USIA anticipates awarding one grant for this program. Should an applicant organization wish to work with other organizations in the implementation of this program, USIA prefers that a subcontract arrangement be developed. USIA will entertain separately submitted proposals for joint program management, and the proposals must demonstrate a value-added relationship, and must clearly delineate responsibilities so as not to duplicate efforts.

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 other countries of the world." The funding authority for the program cited above is provided through the Freedom Support Act.

Programs and projects must conform with Agency requirements and guidelines outlined in the Solicitation Package. USIA programs are subject to the availability of funds.

Announcement Title and Number: All communications with USIA concerning this RFP should refer to the announcement's title and reference number *E/AEE-99-01*.

Deadline for Proposals: All copies must be received at the U.S. Information Agency by 5 p.m. Washington, D.C. time on *Friday, March 6, 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. Grants should begin October 1998.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT: The Academic Exchange Division, European Programs Branch, E/AEE, Room 246, U.S. Information Agency, 301 4th Street, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20547, telephone (202) 205-0525 and fax (202) 260-7985, treed@usia.gov to request a Solicitation Package containing more detailed information. Please request required application forms, and

standard 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 *Jill Jarvi* 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 competition in any way with applicants until the Bureau proposal review process has been completed.

Submissions: Applicants must follow all instructions given in the Solicitation Package. The original and *nine* copies of the application should be sent to: U.S. Information Agency, Ref.: *E/AEE-99-01*, 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 56 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:

Overview

The purpose of the program is to support the economic and democratic development of the New Independent States of the former Soviet Union through exposing undergraduate students from the NIS to key transition fields and enhancing their academic education with practical training and involvement in a U.S. community.

Guidelines

Programs must comply with J-1 visa regulations. Please refer to program specific guidelines (POGI) in the Solicitation Package for further details. Administration of the program must be in compliance with reporting and withholding regulations for federal, state and local taxes as applicable. Recipient organizations should demonstrate tax regulation adherence in the proposal narrative and budget.

Drafts of all printed materials developed for this program should be submitted to the Agency for review and approval. All official documents should highlight the U.S. government's role as program sponsor and funding source. The USIA requests that it receive the copyright use and be allowed to distribute the material as it sees fit.

Proposed Budget

Organizations must submit a comprehensive line item budget based on the specific guidance in the Solicitation Package. Awards may not exceed \$3.75 million, and preference will be given to organizations whose requested administrative and indirect costs are below 20% of the total grant award. Grants awarded to eligible organizations with less than four years of experience in conducting international exchange programs will be limited to \$60,000.

Applicants must submit a comprehensive budget for the entire program. There must be a summary budget as well as a breakdown reflecting

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.

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.

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.

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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