

**DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY****Office of Thrift Supervision**

[AC-4: OTS No. 6519]

**Douglas Federal Bank, a Federal Savings Bank, Douglasville, GA; Approval of Conversion Application**

Notice is hereby given that on May 6, 1999, the Director, Office of Examination and Supervision, Office of Thrift Supervision, or his designee, acting pursuant to delegated authority, approved the application of Douglas Federal Bank, a Federal Savings Bank, Douglasville, Georgia, to convert to the stock form of organization. Copies of the application are available for inspection at the Dissemination Branch, Office of Thrift Supervision, 1700 G Street, NW, Washington, DC 20552, and the Southeast Regional Office, Office of Thrift Supervision, 1475 Peachtree Street, NE, Atlanta, GA 30309.

Dated: May 11, 1999.

By the Office of Thrift Supervision,

**Nadine Y. Washington,***Corporate Secretary.*

[FR Doc. 99-12371 Filed 5-14-99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 6720-01-P

**UNITED STATES INFORMATION AGENCY****Azores and Cape Verde School Partnership Program****ACTION:** Request for proposals.

**SUMMARY:** The Youth Programs Division, Office of Citizen Exchanges, of the United States Information Agency's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs announces an open competition for the Azores and Cape Verde School Partnership Program. Public and private non-profit organizations meeting the provisions described in IRS regulation 26 CFR 1.501(c) may submit proposals for a project in which three American high schools will be paired with two schools in the Azores and one in Cape Verde for the purpose of exchanges of students and teachers and to develop joint projects on themes relating to areas of common interest between the United States and the Azores/Cape Verde.

**Program Information***Overview*

One grant of up to \$100,000 will be awarded to sponsor a one-year secondary school partnership program involving activities during academic year 1999-2000. If successful, one or two follow-on grants may be possible,

subject to the availability of funding. The basic model for the program is the information of a one-to-one partnership in which the participating student bodies and faculties in the partner schools engage in joint thematic projects throughout the academic year. During the year, there will be a non-simultaneous exchange, each school sending and hosting ten students and one or two teachers for a minimum three-week period. Once the linkages are established, the partner schools could decide on any variations, involving longer stays for individuals or small groups.

*Guidelines*

Although the project seeks to target communities in the U.S. that have concentrations of immigrants from the Azores and Cape Verde, the goal is to include a broad spectrum of the population of those communities. The areas of greatest interest are eastern Rhode Island and east central and southeastern Massachusetts. The American Consulate in Ponta Delgada will choose the communities and schools in the Azores, and the American Embassy in Praia will do the same for Cape Verde. The American administering organization, chosen through this competition, will select the American partner schools. Once the linkage is established, each school pair will choose a project on a theme of interest to the participating countries and U.S. regions. Possible themes include civic education and comparative political systems, the environment (with special focus on the oceans), agriculture and aquaculture, health education, preparation for careers or vocations, and international security issues. In each school, students and teachers would work on aspects of these projects throughout the academic year, corresponding with their counterparts in the partner schools, exchanging materials, and working toward a culmination when the exchange participants get together. This ensures that the program has a didactic purpose and that it involves the general populace in the schools. Each side will also introduce its school communities to the language, culture, and geography of the partner country. A merit-based selection process would be worked out by the partner schools to ensure that the participants in the exchange phase are well qualified, prepared and motivated and will represent their communities well. Exchanges should take place while schools are in session so that the participants can attend classes and experience scholastic activities. All participants would live with host

families and would have excursions to important historic and cultural sites in the host communities. Ideally, the schools on both sides would have Internet access so that they can maintain regular communication via E mail and use the Internet to develop their joint projects. If they lack this, funding for the program might include some support to bring the schools online. Please refer to Solicitation Package for further information.

*Eligibility*

USIA will award a grant to one organization, which will coordinate the whole program. Eligible applicants include: non-profit, community-based organizations with exchange experience, a school system or network of schools, and universities with established ties to secondary schools. Criteria for selection include: (1) experience conducting high school exchanges; (2) some familiarity with the Azores and Cape Verde; (3) ability and commitment to supplement the grant funds with private sector contributions; and (4) low administrative overhead costs. Applicant organizations with less than four years of experience in conducting international exchange programs will be ineligible for this competition. For complete judging criteria, see below. J-1 visa regulations and USIA policy require that the students participating in the exchange component be between the ages of 14 and 18.5 years of age and that those who represent US schools be American citizens.

*Budget Guidelines*

The grant is intended to subsidize international and in-country airfare, program enhancements, and participant stipends. Host communities are expected to cover many local expenses and participants should be lodged with volunteer host families (compensation for host families is not allowable). Participants are expected to contribute to their travel and living expenses. Administrative (indirect) expenses over 20% will be judged less competitive. 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. Please refer to the Solicitation Package for complete budget guidelines and formatting instructions. The grant award will not likely be available before September 1. For the successful applicant organization, grant-funded activity may not begin until after that date and should conclude by December 31, 2000.

*Announcement Title and Number:* All correspondence with USIA concerning this RFP should reference the above title and number *E/PY-99-58*.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT:** The Youth Programs Division, E/PY, Room 568, U.S. Information Agency, 301 4th Street, SW, Washington, DC 20547, 202-619-6299; fax 619-5311; Internet address [RPersiko@usia.gov](mailto: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 specify USIA Program Officer, Robert Persiko 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://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 Monday, June 28, 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 eight (8) copies of the application should be sent to: U.S. Information Agency, Ref.: *E/PY-99-58*, 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, socio-economic status, and physical challenges, as well as location of activities. 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.

### **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 area offices and the relevant 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. *Quality of the program idea:* Proposals should exhibit originality, and substance, relevance to the Agency's goals as outlined above, accuracy and clarity.
2. *Program planning:* Detailed agenda and work plan should demonstrate organizational competency 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 indicate how the projects will serve to demonstrate the diversity of American society. Applicants should focus both on program administration (selection of participants, program venue and program evaluation) and program content (orientation and wrap-up sessions, program activities, resource 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:* Proposals should demonstrate an institutional record of relevant successful exchange activities, 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 review the past performance of prior recipients or consider the demonstrated potential of new applicants.
8. *Follow-on Activities:* Proposals should provide a plan for maintaining

the linkages without US Government support and facilitating ongoing communication between the partners.

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 one interim and a final program and financial report.

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 participant contributions and 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 areas offices and officers in USIS missions/American embassies in the two countries in terms of the adequacy of program plan.

#### **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.

#### **Notice**

Term 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 11, 1999.

**Judith S. Siegel,**

*Acting Deputy Associate Director for Educational and Cultural Affairs.*

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