

Solicitation Package for the entire program. There must be a summary budget as well as a break-down reflecting both the administrative budget and the program budget. For better understanding or further clarification, applicants must provide separate sub-budgets for each program component, phase, location, or activity in order to facilitate USIA decisions on funding.

Budget guidelines apply to proposals submitted in both Category A and B described above.

Allowable costs for the program include the following:

- (1) round-trip international travel via an American flag carrier;
- (2) domestic travel;
- (3) maintenance and per diem;
- (4) academic program costs (e.g. book allowance);
- (5) orientation costs;
- (6) cultural enrichment costs (e.g. admissions, tickets, etc.);
- (7) U.S.-based administration costs (e.g. advertisement, recruitment and selection costs).

Please refer to the Solicitation Package (the Proposal Submission Instructions or PSI) for complete budget guidelines for formatting instructions.

Administrative costs are not to exceed 20 percent of the requested budget. Cost-sharing is strongly encouraged.

#### 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 USIA Office of Academic Programs, as well as by the USIA Office of North African, Near Eastern, and South Asian Affairs and the USIA post(s) 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 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 Agency mission.

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 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 mutual understandings, 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-on activities).

6. *Institutional Capacity:* Proposed personnel and institutional resources should be adequate and appropriate to achieve the program or project's goals.

7. *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.

8. *Follow-on Activities:* Proposals should provide a plan for continued follow-on activity (without USIA support) which ensures that USIA-supported programs are not isolated events.

9. *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. 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.

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:* Proposed projects should receive positive assessments by USIA's geographic area desk and overseas officers of program need, potential impact, and significance in the partner country(ies).

#### 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: January 24, 1997.

Dell Pendergrast,

Deputy Associate Director for Educational and Cultural Affairs.

[FR Doc. 97-2302 Filed 1-29-97; 8:45 am]

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### Telecommunications Training Program for Slovenia

**ACTION:** Notice—request for proposals.

**SUMMARY:** The Office of Citizen Exchanges 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)(3)-1 may apply to develop training programs in telecommunications for Slovenia.

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 cited above is provided through the Support for Eastern European Democracies 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 announcement should refer to the above title and reference number *E/P-97-23*.

**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 14, 1997. Faxed documents will not be accepted, nor will documents postmarked March 14, 1997 but received at a later date. It is the responsibility of each applicant to ensure that proposals are received by the above deadline.

Program activities should begin after June 1, 1997.

**For Further Information, Contact:** The Office of Citizen Exchanges, E/PE, Room 216, U.S. Information Agency, 301 4th Street, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20547, telephone: 202-619-5319, fax: 202-619-4350, e-mail address:

{cminer@usia.gov} to request a Solicitation Package containing more detailed award criteria, 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/> or from the Internet Gopher at <gopher://gopher.usia.gov>. Under the heading "International Exchanges/Training," select "Request for Proposals (RFPs)." Please read "About the Following RFPs" before downloading.

Please specify USIA Program Officer Christina Miner 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 eight copies of the application should be sent to: U.S. Information Agency, Ref.: E/P-97-23, 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 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.

**Supplementary Information:** Overview: Slovenia is beginning the process of restructuring its telecommunications sector. Restructuring involves liberalizing the provision of voice and data telephony services and providing opportunities for alternative telecom operators and networks to offer more advanced products and services to a nation than had been previously available. The first step is the adoption of legislation authorizing new entrants into the nation's telecom arena. USIA is interested in proposals that will provide an overview of the U.S.

telecommunications sector with special attention focussing on the regulatory structure as provided by an independent regulatory authority such as the U.S. Federal Communications Commission; the effects of liberalization and privatization on the telecom sector and how this restructuring can be

accomplished; and the introduction of new telecommunications products and services to consumers and how this can be accomplished in other markets. Participants should include officials from the incumbent telecommunications service provider; government officials from the ministry and parliamentary body that will oversee the restructuring of the telecom sector; and other participants who may represent vendors or potential new networks. The primary component of this project will be a U.S. study tour to give participants an idea of how the telecommunications sector functions in the U.S. Exchange and training programs supported by institutional grants should operate at two levels: they should enhance institutional relationships; and they should offer practical and comparative information to individuals to assist them with their professional responsibilities. Strong proposals usually have the following characteristics: an existing partner relationship between an American organization and a host-country institution; a proven track record of conducting program activity; cost sharing from American or in-country sources, including donations of air fares, hotel and housing costs; experienced staff with language facility; and a clear, convincing plan showing how permanent results will be accomplished as a result of the activity funded by the grant. USIA wants to see tangible forms of time and money contributed to the project by the prospective grantee institution, as well as funding from third party sources.

Note: Research projects or projects limited to technical issues are not eligible for support nor are film festivals or exhibits. Exchange programs for students or faculty or proposals that request support for the development of university curricula or for degree-based programs are also ineligible under this RFP. Proposals to link university departments or to exchange faculty and/or students are funded by USIA's Office of Academic Programs (E/A) under the University Affiliation Program and should not be submitted in response to this RFP.

#### Guidelines

1. All grant proposals must clearly describe the type of persons who will participate in the program as well as the process by which participants will be selected. Note that participants should be professionals working in the field of telecommunications and not members of university faculties. In the selection of all foreign participants, USIA and USIS posts retain the right to nominate participants and to approve or reject participants recommended by the

program institution. Programs must also comply with J-1 visa regulations.

2. Programs that include internships in the U.S. should provide letters tentatively committing host institutions to support the internships. Letters of commitment from the hosts of study tour site visits should also be included, if applicable.

3. Applicants are encouraged to consult with USIS offices regarding program content and partner institutions before submitting proposals. Award-receiving applicants will be expected to maintain contact with the USIS post throughout the grant period.

#### Proposal Budget

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

Applicants must submit a detailed line item budget based on specific instructions in the Program and Budget Submission Instructions. Proposals for less than \$60,000 will receive preference.

The following project costs are eligible for consideration for funding:

1. International and domestic air fares; visas; transit costs; ground transportation costs.

2. Per Diem. For the U.S. program, organizations have the option of using a flat \$140/day for program participants or the published U.S. Federal per diem rates for individual American cities. For activities outside the U.S., the published Federal per diem rates must be used. NOTE: U.S. escorting staff must use the published Federal per diem rates, not flat rate.

3. Interpreters. If needed, interpreters for the U.S. program are provided by the U.S. State Department Language Services Division. Typically, a pair of simultaneous interpreters is provided for every four visitors. USIA grants do not pay for foreign interpreters to accompany delegations from their home country. Grant proposal budgets should contain a flat \$140/day per diem for each Department of State interpreter, as well as home-program-home air transportation of \$400 per interpreter plus any U.S. travel expenses during the program. Salary expenses are covered centrally and should not be part of an applicant's proposed budget.

4. Book and cultural allowance. Participants are entitled to and escorts are reimbursed a one-time cultural allowance of \$150 per person, plus a participant book allowance of \$50. U.S. staff do not get these benefits.

5. Consultants. May be used to provide specialized expertise or to make presentations. Daily honoraria generally do not exceed \$250 per day.

Subcontracting organizations may also be used, in which case the written agreement between the prospective grantee and subcontractor should be included in the proposal.

6. Room rental, which generally should not exceed \$250 per day.

7. Materials development. Proposals may contain costs to purchase, develop, and translate materials for participants.

8. One working meal per project. Per capita costs may not exceed \$5-8 for a lunch and \$14-20 for a dinner, excluding room rental. The number of invited guests may not exceed participants by more than a factor of two-to-one.

9. A return travel allowance of \$70 for each participant which is to be used for incidental expenditures incurred during international travel.

10. All USIA-funded delegates will be covered under the terms of a USIA-sponsored health insurance policy. The premium is paid by USIA directly to the insurance company.

11. Other costs necessary for the effective administration of the program, including salaries for grant organization employees, benefits, and other direct and indirect costs per detailed instructions in the application package.

#### 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 East European and NIS Affairs and 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 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 respond to the program requirements of the RFP.

2. *Program planning and ability to achieve objectives:* Program objectives should be stated clearly and precisely and should reflect the applicant's

expertise in the subject area and the region. Goals should be reasonable and attainable. A detailed agenda and relevant work plan should demonstrate how objectives will be achieved. A timetable indicating when major program tasks will be undertaken should be provided. The substance of seminars, presentations, consulting, internships, and itineraries should be spelled out in detail. Responsibilities of incountry partners should be clearly described.

3. *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).

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. *Institutional Capacity:* Proposed personnel and institutional resources should be adequate and appropriate to achieve the program or project's goals. The narrative should demonstrate proven ability to handle logistics. Proposals should reflect the institution's expertise in the subject area and knowledge of Slovenia.

6. *Follow-on Activities:* Proposals should provide a plan for continued follow-on activity (without USIA support) which ensures that USIA supported programs are not isolated events.

7. *Project Evaluation:* Proposals should include a plan and methodology to evaluate the project's success, both as the activities unfold and at the end of the program. USIA recommends that the proposal include a draft survey questionnaire and/or plan for use of another measurement technique (such as a focus group) 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.

8. *Cost-effectiveness/cost sharing:* The overhead and administrative components of the proposal, including salaries, honoraria, and subcontracts for services, 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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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

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Congress, allocated and committed through internal USIA procedures.

Dated: January 24, 1997.

Dell Pendergrast,

*Deputy Associate Director for Educational and Cultural Affairs.*

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