

Reinsurance Company, U.S. Branch, was last listed as an acceptable reinsuring company on Federal bonds at 62 FR 35581, July 1, 1997.

With respect to any bonds currently in force with both these companies, bond-approving officers may let such bonds run to expiration and need not secure new bonds. However, no new bonds should be accepted. In addition, bonds that are continuous in nature should not be renewed.

The Treasury Department Circular 570 may be viewed and downloaded through the Internet (<http://www.fms.treas.gov/c570.html>) or through our computerized public bulletin board system (FMS Inside Line) at (202) 874-6887. A hard copy may be purchased from the Government Printing Office (GPO), Subscription Service, Washington, DC, telephone (202) 512-1800. When ordering the Circular from GPO, use the following stock number: 048-000-00509-8.

Questions concerning this notice may be directed to the U.S. Department of the Treasury, Financial Management Service, Funds Management Division, Surety Bond Branch, 3700 East-West Highway, Room 6A11, Hyattsville, MD 20782.

Dated: November 20, 1997.

Charles F. Schwan III,

*Director, Funds Management Division,
Financial Management Service.*

[FR Doc. 97-31807 Filed 12-3-97; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4810-35-M

DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY

Internal Revenue Service

Proposed Collection; Comment Request for Form 8498

AGENCY: Internal Revenue Service (IRS), Treasury.

ACTION: Notice and request for comments.

SUMMARY: The Department of the Treasury, as part of its continuing effort to reduce paperwork and respondent burden, invites the general public and other Federal agencies to take this opportunity to comment on proposed and/or continuing information collections, as required by the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, Public Law 104-13 (44 U.S.C. 3506(c)(2)(A)). Currently, the IRS is soliciting comments concerning Form 8498, Program Sponsor Agreement for Continuing Education for Enrolled Agents.

DATES: Written comments should be received on or before February 2, 1998 to be assured of consideration.

ADDRESSES: Direct all written comments to Garrick R. Shear, Internal Revenue Service, room 5571, 1111 Constitution Avenue NW., Washington, DC 20224.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Requests for additional information or copies of the form and instructions should be directed to Carol Savage, (202) 622-3945, Internal Revenue Service, room 5569, 1111 Constitution Avenue NW., Washington, DC 20224.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Title: Program Sponsor Agreement for Continuing Education for Enrolled Agents.

OMB Number: 1545-1459.

Form Number: Forms 8498.

Abstract: Form 8498 is used by the Director of Practice to determine the qualifications of those individuals or organizations seeking to present continuing professional educational programs for persons enrolled to practice before the Internal Revenue Service.

Current Actions: There are no changes being made to the form at this time.

Type of Review: Extension of a currently approved collection.

Affected Public: Individuals and business or other for-profit organizations.

Estimated Number of Respondents: 500.

Estimated Time Per Respondent: 36 minutes.

Estimated Total Annual Burden Hours: 300.

The following paragraph applies to all of the collections of information covered by this notice:

An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless the collection of information displays a valid OMB control number. Books or records relating to a collection of information must be retained as long as their contents may become material in the administration of any internal revenue law. Generally, tax returns and tax return information are confidential, as required by 26 U.S.C. 6103.

REQUEST FOR COMMENTS: Comments submitted in response to this notice will be summarized and/or included in the request for OMB approval. All comments will become a matter of public record. Comments are invited on: (a) Whether the collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information shall have practical utility; (b) the accuracy of the agency's estimate

of the burden of the collection of information; (c) ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; (d) ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on respondents, including through the use of automated collection techniques or other forms of information technology; and (e) estimates of capital or start-up costs and costs of operation, maintenance, and purchase of services to provide information.

Approved: November 26, 1997.

Garrick R. Shear,

IRS Reports Clearance Officer.

[FR Doc. 97-31805 Filed 12-3-97; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4830-01-P

UNITED STATES INFORMATION AGENCY

Regional Scholar Exchange Program With the New Independent States and Freedom Support Act Fellowships in Contemporary Issues

ACTION: Notice—request for proposals.

SUMMARY: The Office of Academic Programs, 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 with at least four years of experience in conducting international exchange programs with the New Independent States and meeting the provisions described in IRS regulation 26 CFR 1.501(c) may apply to develop and administer the recruitment, selection, orientation, placement, monitoring, evaluation, and alumni activities for two programs:

The Regional Scholar Exchange Program with the new Independent States: Research fellowships for four months and six months at host institutions in the United States for approximately 130 highly qualified advanced graduate students pursuing dissertation research and university faculty and scholars at the early stages of their careers in one of twenty-five designated fields of the social sciences and humanities who are citizens of Armenia, Azerbaijan*, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan and for research fellowships for four months and six months at host institutions in the New Independent States for approximately twenty advanced graduate student pursuing dissertation research or special projects

and university faculty in one of twenty-five designated fields of the social sciences and humanities who are citizens of the United States.

The Freedom Support Act

Fellowships in Contemporary Issues:

Research fellowships for four months at host institutions in the United States for approximately 75 highly qualified practitioners in diverse professions in the public, private, and not-for-profit sectors who are citizens of Armenia, Azerbaijan*, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan and who are shaping public policy or otherwise contributing to the transformation of their societies in one of five designated areas: Sustainable Growth and Economic Development; Democratization, Human Rights and the Rule of Law; Political, Military, Security, and Public Policy Issues; Strengthening Civil Society; Internet, the Communications Revolution, and Intellectual Property Rights.

Interested organizations should read the complete **Federal Register** Announcement and request a Solicitation Package from USIA prior to preparing a proposal.

- **Please note:** Programs with Azerbaijan are subject to the restrictions of Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act of 1992: 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.

Both programs are merit-based open competitions that must be conducted nationally in the home countries of the applicants. Applicants who have participated in a USIA-sponsored academic program of more than six weeks after March 1, 1997 are not eligible to receive fellowships.

Each program has separate conditions and requirements which are stated in this announcement and detailed in the full Solicitation Package. Organizations should apply for an assistance award for both programs and should submit a single proposal and a single budget to address the administration of both programs. Applicant organizations may apply to administer the programs individually, or via a subcontract arrangement as long as one organization is designated to be the recipient of the grant, or as a consortia in partnership with other organizations where each applicant organization submits a separate proposal and separate budget that cites the division of labor and duties among the members. USIA anticipates awarding one or two assistance awards for the administration

of the programs cited in this announcement. Awards are expected to begin no earlier than May 1, 1998 and must be completed by October 31, 2000.

Applicant organizations must demonstrate the ability to administer all aspects of both programs, including publicity, advertisement, recruitment, selection, placement, orientation, Fellow monitoring and support, logistics, financial management, evaluation, and alumni tracking and programming.

Overall grant making authority for the Regional Scholar Exchange 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 Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961, Public Law 87-256, as amended. Programs shall also maintain their scholarly integrity and shall meet the highest standards of academic excellence.

Overall grant making authority for the Freedom Support Act Fellowships in Contemporary Issues is made possible through legislation sponsored by the U.S. Congress and incorporated in the Foreign Relations Authorization Act of FY 1993. The legislation was established to assist the economic and democratic development of the New Independent States of the former Soviet Union. 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 projects and programs are subject to the availability of funds. USIA reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase the proposal budgets in accordance with the needs of the programs.

ANNOUNCEMENT TITLE AND NUMBER: All communications with USIA concerning this RFP should refer to the announcement's title and reference number E/AEE-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 Thursday, February 12, 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. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that proposals are received by the above deadline.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: The Office of Academic Programs, Division of Academic Exchanges, European Programs Branch, E/AEE, Room 246, U.S. Information Agency, 301 4th Street, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20547; telephone number (202) 205-0525; fax: (202) 260-7985; Internet address treed@usia.gov to request a Solicitation Package containing more detailed award criteria. 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 Solicitations 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 Manager Rhonda E. Boris 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 14 copies of the application should be sent to: U.S. Information Agency, Ref.: E/AEE-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: The Regional Scholar Exchange Program empowers outstanding citizens of the NIS and the U.S. who are committed to careers in academia to obtain access to the resource materials and specialists of the host country in order to conduct research and consult with colleagues on specific topics in one of twenty-five designated fields of the social sciences and humanities, write scholarly articles, dissertations, and books, audit classes, deliver occasional lectures, and participate in academic conferences with the goal of contributing to the advancement of higher education, scholarship, and university teaching in their academic fields in their home countries. NIS participants will be expected to begin their fellowships in the U.S. as a group at a program orientation in Washington, D.C. in late August 1999 and attend a pre-departure orientation in their home countries in February 1999. However, in some cases where it is necessary, a limited number of NIS participants may begin their U.S. programs at other appropriate times during the academic year. U.S. participants will be expected to begin their fellowships in the NIS at

appropriate times in summer and fall 1999 and attend a program orientation in their host countries. At the end of their fellowships, all participants must return immediately to their home countries.

The Freedom Support Act Fellowships in Contemporary Issues empower outstanding citizens of the New Independent States who are practitioners in diverse fields to obtain access to the resource materials and specialists of the U.S. in order to conduct research and policy analysis on specific topics in one of five designated areas, write reports, articles, and studies, deliver lectures, and engage counterparts in the United States with the goal of framing the terms of debate in their fields and playing a more active role in consolidating the transition to democracy, free markets, and civil society in their home countries. Participants will be expected to begin their fellowships in the U.S. as a group at a program orientation in Washington, D.C. in March 1999 and attend a pre-departure orientation in their home countries in February 1999. At the end of their fellowships, all NIS participants must return immediately to their home countries.

Further details about specific program requirements and additional information can be found in the Project Objectives, Goals, and Implementation (POGI) Statement which are part of the full Solicitation Package.

Guidelines

Visa/Health Insurance/Tax Requirements: Programs must comply with J-1 visa regulations. Exchange program regulations require that all J visa holders carry health and accident insurance. 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.

Proposed Budget

Funding for the FY 1998 Regional Scholar Exchange Program is anticipated at \$2,000,000. Funding for the FY 1998 Freedom Support Act Fellowships in Contemporary Issues is anticipated at \$955,000.

Applicant organizations must submit a comprehensive line item budget request for general program costs, participant program costs, and administrative costs based on the specific guidance in the Solicitation

Package. There must be a summary budget as well as a break-down reflecting both the administrative budget and the program budget and a budget narrative demonstrating how costs were derived. Organizations whose proposals include an administrative budget that is less than 20% of the grant amount requested from the USIA will be given preference.

Allowable costs for each category include the following:

- (1) General Program Costs
- (2) Participant Program Costs
- (3) U.S. Administrative Costs
- (4) NIS Administrative Costs
- (5) Start Up for FY 1999 Recruitment

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 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 plan:* Proposals should include academic rigor, thorough conception of program, demonstration of meeting participants' needs, contributions to understanding the partner country, specific details of recruitment, selection, placement, monitoring, alumni activities, alumni tracking, and relevance to USIA's mission.

2. *Program planning and organizational capacity:* A detailed work plan citing all critical program components and timeline should demonstrate the organization's logistical and administrative capacity to implement both programs. Proposals must demonstrate how the organization

and its staff will meet both programs' objectives. Proposed personnel and organizational resources must be adequate and appropriate to implement the program in each country.

3. Organization's track record:

Relevant USIA and outside assessments of the organization's experience with academic exchanges with the NIS, including responsible fiscal management and full compliance with all reporting requirements for past grants as determined by USIA's Office of Contracts.

4. Multiplier effect/impact: Proposed programs must demonstrate an impact on the wider community through the sharing of information and the establishment of long-term institutional and individual linkages.

5. Cost-effectiveness: A key measure of cost-effectiveness is USIA's cost per participant. This is the total funds requested from USIA divided by the number of participant-months (number of participants multiplied by the number of program months). Overhead and administrative costs, including salaries and honoraria, should be kept as low as possible. All other items should be necessary and appropriate.

6. Cost-sharing: Preference will be given to proposals that seek to maximize cost-sharing through other private sector support as well as institutional direct funding contributions.

7. Value of U.S.-partner country relations: The assessment by USIA's geographic area office of the need potential impact, and significance of the project with the partner country.

8. Support of diversity and pluralism: Proposals should demonstrate substantive support of the Bureau's policy on diversity through the recruitment, selection and placement of participants, to the extent feasible for organizations.

9. Follow-on activities: Proposals should provide a plan for alumni activities and other follow on programs (without USIA support) which ensures that USIA supported programs are not isolated events. Proposals should include a plan for alumni tracking that demonstrates the willingness to provide data to and coordinate tracking with USIA and USIS posts.

10. Program evaluation: Proposals should include a plan to evaluate the program's success. A draft survey questionnaire plus a description of a methodology to be used to link outcomes to original project objectives is required.

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.

Options for Renewals

Subject to the availability of funding for FY 1999 and FY 2000, and the satisfactory performance of grant programs, USIA may invite grantee organizations to submit proposals for renewal assistance awards for two fiscal year cycles.

Notification

Final awards cannot be made until funds have been appropriated by Congress, allocated and committed through internal USIA procedures.

Dated: December 1, 1997.

Robert L. Earle,

Deputy Associate Director for Educational and Cultural Affairs.

[FR Doc. 97-31787 Filed 12-3-97; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 8230-01-M

UNITED STATES INFORMATION AGENCY

FY 1998 Ron Brown Fellowship Program

ACTION: Request for proposals.

SUMMARY: Subject to the availability of funds for FY 1998, the Office of Academic Programs, Academic Exchanges Division, European Branch of the United States Information Agency's Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs announces an open competition for an assistance award. American public or private nonprofit organizations with at least four years of experience in conducting international academic exchange programs and meeting the provisions described in IRS regulation 26 CFR 1.501(c) may apply to develop and administer the FY 1998 Ron Brown Fellowship Program. Preference will be given to organizations that have placement experience at the graduate level and a demonstrated ability to conduct academic exchange programs in Central and Eastern Europe. Organizations are invited to submit a proposal with a budget not to exceed \$2,000,000 to develop and administer the final selection (from a pool of

applicants), placement, orientation, monitoring, evaluation and follow-on/alumni activities of at least 42 Fellows from the following countries: Albania, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Serbia and Slovenia. Participants will be enrolled in two-year degree programs, or in one-year non-degree professional development programs (except for the one-year degree programs in law) at accredited U.S. academic institutions for study at the Masters' level in the fields of business administration, economics, education administration/civic education, environmental policy/resource management, journalism/mass communication, law, public administration and public policy.

Please Note: This program will not support Ph.D. studies.

Overall grant making authority for the Ron Brown Fellowship 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 East European Democracies (SEED) Act of 1989, targeted to advance the democratic and economic transition of Central and Eastern Europe. In order to comply with mandates for this program, grantee organization is required to keep track of the spending for each of the ten countries under the FY98 Ron Brown Fellowship Program. Specific country allocations will be provided at the time of the award. Funds allocated for one country should not be used to support Fellows from other countries.

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 NAME AND NUMBER: All communications with USIA concerning this announcement should refer to: The Ron Brown Fellowship Program, reference number E/AEE-98-05.