

Proposed Frequency of Responses:
 No. of Respondents—800
 Recordkeeping Hours—16
 Total Annual Burden—80

Dated: May 12, 1999.

Rose Royal,

Federal Register Liaison.

[FR Doc. 99-12452 Filed 5-17-99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 8230-01-M

UNITED STATES INFORMATION AGENCY

College and University Affiliations Program

ACTION: Notice—Request for Proposals.

SUMMARY: The Office of Academic Programs of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs in the United States Information Agency announces an open competition for an assistance award program. For applicants' information, on October 1, 1999 the Bureau will become part of the U.S. Department of State without affecting the content of this announcement or the nature of the program described. Accredited, post-secondary educational institutions meeting the provisions described in IRS regulation 26 CFR 1.501(c) may apply to pursue institutional or departmental objectives in international partnerships whose goals will strengthen, through teaching, scholarship, and professional outreach from the partner institutions, mutual understanding and cooperation on specified themes of mutual interest to the United States and eligible foreign institutions. Eligible fields are education or educational administration; the social, political, economic, or environmental sciences; law; business; public administration; or communications. Within these fields, themes of special interest are described in additional detail in the section on "Country Eligibility."

In general, underlying the specific objectives of projects funded by this program should be the goal of fostering freedom and democracy through a deepened mutual understanding of fundamental issues and practical applications in the encouragement of civil society, economic growth and prosperity, environmental cooperation, or the free flow of information. Creative, innovative strategies to address these underlying concerns in the pursuit of clearly defined institutional goals are encouraged. The extension of understanding about these issues through outreach from academic institutions to larger communities of citizens and practitioners is also encouraged.

The Bureau supports institutional linkages in higher education through the College and University Affiliations Program, for which this Request for Proposals invites applications for funding in FY2000. In addition, for the New Independent States of the former Soviet Union, the N.I.S. College and University Partnerships Program Request for Proposals will be issued separately in the summer of 1999 to invite applications for funding in FY2000. For further information about this program see the section of this Request describing eligibility of the N.I.S. under "Country Eligibility."

In the College and University Affiliations Program, partner institutions may pursue specific institutional goals with support from the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs through exchanges of teachers, administrators or, in limited circumstances, students for any appropriate combination of teaching, consultation, research, and outreach, for periods ranging from one week (for planning visits) to an academic year. The Bureau's support may be used to defray the costs of the exchange visits as well as the costs (up to a maximum of 20 percent of the total grant) of their administration at any partner institution, including administrative salaries but excluding indirect costs. Although grants will be issued to eligible U.S. colleges and universities, adequate provision for the administrative costs of the project at all partner institutions is encouraged. Administrative salaries may include salary support for project directors and administrative assistants within the 20 percent maximum that may be allocated to administrative costs, but the Bureau will not fund salaries, stipends, or honoraria for program participants. (See sections of this document on "U.S. Partner and Participant Eligibility" and "Foreign Partner and Participant Eligibility" for details.) The costs of exchange visits of foreign students and U.S. graduate student teaching or research assistants who are working under the supervision of a faculty participant or project director toward the achievement of project objectives are eligible for support. Other students may participate in the project, but not with the Bureau's support for the costs of their visits. With the Bureau's support, institutions may reinforce the activities of exchange participants through the establishment and maintenance of Internet and/or electronic mail communication facilities as well as through interactive technology or non-technology-based distance-learning

programs. Applicants may propose other project activities not specifically anticipated in this solicitation if the activities reinforce exchange activities and their impact.

Proposals must be submitted by the U.S. institutional partner and must include a letter of commitment from the foreign partner(s). While the benefits of the project to each of the participating institutions may differ significantly in nature and scope, proposals should outline well-reasoned strategies leading to specific, demonstrable changes (for example, new courses, new research or teaching capacities or methodologies, new programs or revised curricula) that are anticipated for each participating department or for the institution as a whole as a result of the project. Proposals to pursue a limited number of related thematic objectives at each institution are encouraged over proposals whose thematic goals within each institution are unrelated. The strategy for achieving project goals may include exchange visits in either or both directions, but no single formula is anticipated for the duration, sequence, or number of these visits. However, visits of one semester or more for participants from at least one of the institutional partners are encouraged. Although strong budgetary and programmatic emphasis may be given to visits in one direction over another, the benefits of these visits to the sending as well as the receiving sides should be clearly explained in terms of their contributions to the departmental or institutional objectives which the project is designed to achieve.

In addition to demonstrating the capacity of each participating institution to contribute to its partner(s), proposals should also explain how this cooperation will enable each of the institutions to address its own needs.

Accordingly, applicants are encouraged to describe the needs as well as the capabilities of each participating department. Effective proposals will explain the anticipated cooperation in ways that demonstrate that the institutions proposed for participation in the partnership clearly understand one another and are committed to support one another in project implementation. If the proposed partnership would occur within the context of a previous or on-going project, the proposal should explain how the request for Bureau funding would build upon the pre-existing relationship or complement concurrent projects and cooperation. Projects that direct assistance from one institution to another in one direction only are not eligible for consideration.

The commitment of all partner institutions to the proposed project should be reflected in the cost-sharing which they offer in the context of their respective institutional capacities.

To provide adequate time to meet institutional goals, the program awards grants for periods of approximately three years (36 months to 40 months). The maximum award in the FY2000 competition will be \$150,000. Requests for amounts smaller than the maximum are eligible. Grants awarded to organizations with less than four years of experience in conducting international exchange programs will be limited to \$60,000. Grants are subject to the availability of funds for Fiscal Year 2000.

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 Fulbright-Hays Act.

Within this authority, the College and University Affiliations Program operates in cooperation with the Fulbright Senior Scholar Program; current and former participants in the Fulbright Senior Scholar Program are encouraged, together with other college and university teachers with knowledge of educational institutions in other countries, to consider how to build on this knowledge with support from the Bureau through the College and University Affiliations Program.

Projects must conform with the Bureau's requirements and guidelines outlined in the solicitation package for this RFP, which can be obtained by following the instructions given in the section below entitled "For Further Information." The "Project Objectives, Goals, and Implementation" (hereafter, POGI) and the "Project Specific Instructions (hereafter, PSI), which contain additional guidelines, are included in the Solicitation Package. Proposals that do not follow RFP requirements and the guidelines appearing in the POGI and PSI may be

excluded from consideration due to technical ineligibility.

Announcement Title and Number: All communications with the Bureau concerning this announcement should refer to the College and University Affiliations Program and reference number E/ASU-00-01.

Deadline for Proposals: All copies must be received at the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs by 5 p.m. Washington, DC time on Monday, November 15, 1999. Faxed documents will not be accepted, nor will documents postmarked on Monday, November 15, 1999 but received on a later date. It is the responsibility of each applicant to ensure compliance with the deadline.

Approximate program dates: Grant activities should begin on or about May 1, 2000.

Program Duration: May 1, 2000-April 30, 2003 (or until September 30, 2003).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Office of Academic Programs; Advising, Teaching, and Specialized Programs Division; College and University Affiliations Program (CUAP), (E/ASU), Room 349, U.S. Information Agency, 301 4th Street, SW., Washington, DC 20547, phone: (202) 619-5289, fax: (202) 401-1433. Send a message via Internet to: affiliat@usia.gov to request a Solicitation Package. The Solicitation Package includes 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://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 received via the Bureau's "Grants Information Fax on Demand System," which is accessed by calling 202/401-7616. The "Table of Contents" of available documents and order numbers should be the first order when entering the system.

Please specify "College and University Affiliations Program Officer" on all inquiries and correspondence. Prospective applicants should read the complete **Federal Register** announcement before addressing inquiries to the College and University Affiliations Program staff or submitting their 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 10 copies of the complete application, including the documents specified under Tabs A through I in the "Project Objectives, Goals, and Implementation" (POGI) section of the Solicitation Package, should be sent to: U.S. Information Agency (until October 1, 1999) or U.S. Department of State (effective October 1, 1999) Ref: E/ASU-00-01, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, Office of Grants Management, E/XE, Room 326, 301 4th St., 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. This material must be provided in ASCII text (DOS) format with a maximum line length of 65 characters. The Bureau will transmit these files electronically to U.S. Embassies overseas for their review, with the goal of reducing the time needed to make the comments of overseas posts available in the Bureau's grant review process.

Diversity, Freedom and Democracy Guidelines

Pursuant to the Bureau's authorizing legislation, projects 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," the Bureau "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.

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 compliant 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>.

Eligibility

U.S. Partner and Participant Eligibility: In the United States, participation in the program is open to accredited two- and four-year colleges and universities, including graduate schools. Applications from community colleges, minority-serving institutions, undergraduate liberal arts colleges, research universities, and combinations of these types of institutions are eligible. Applications from consortia of U.S. colleges and universities are eligible. Secondary U.S. partners may include non-governmental organizations as well as non-profit service and professional organizations. The lead U.S. organization in the consortium is responsible for submitting the application. Each application from a consortium must document the lead organization's authority to represent the consortium. With the exception of outside evaluators on contract with the U.S. institution, participants representing the U.S. institution who are traveling under the Bureau's grant funds must be teachers, graduate student teaching or research assistants, or administrators from the participating institution(s). Participants representing the U.S. institution must be U.S. citizens. Graduate student teaching or research assistants are eligible for Bureau-funded participation in this program only if they are working under the direction of a faculty participant or

project director on the achievement of project objectives.

Foreign Partner and Participant Eligibility: In other countries, participation is open to recognized, degree-granting institutions of post-secondary education, which may include established, internationally recognized independent research institutes. Secondary foreign partners may include relevant governmental and non-governmental organizations, as well as non-profit service and professional organizations. Participants representing the foreign institutions must be teachers, administrators, or student teaching or research assistants who are working under the supervision of a faculty participant or project director on the achievement of project objectives. Participants must be citizens, nationals, or permanent residents of the country of the foreign partner and must be qualified to hold a valid passport and a U.S. J-1 visa.

Country Eligibility: To increase the chances that competitive proposals can be funded, the number of eligible countries and locations is limited. However, country eligibility is expected to rotate within most of the following seven world regions according to a three-year cycle as outlined below. Countries may be added to the countries listed for FY2001 and FY2002; countries listed as anticipated for eligibility are expected to be eligible in the year(s) for which they are listed. Separate Requests for Proposals will be issued in the spring of 2000 for FY2001 and in the spring of 2001 for FY2002.

(1) *Sub-Saharan Africa:* Proposals are encouraged that will facilitate the development of programs in African educational institutions in collaboration with the private sector to encourage economic development, with the public sector to increase the effectiveness of democratic institutions, or with non-government institutions to improve the quality of community life.

Eligible For FY2000: Botswana, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, and Zambia; in addition, trilateral configurations involving a college or university in the United States and a counterpart institution in South Africa with an institution in any other country of sub-Saharan Africa are also eligible. These proposals should clearly demonstrate understanding of both African institutions and provide benefits to all three institutional partners.

Anticipated Eligibility for FY2001: Cote D'Ivoire, Senegal, and South Africa. Subjects to be determined.

Anticipated Eligibility for FY2002: Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria,

Tanzania, Uganda, and Zimbabwe. Subjects to be determined.

(2) *Western Hemisphere:* Proposals are especially encouraged which strengthen judicial reform, economic reform, or educational reform, or which address current issues in communications or the social or environmental sciences.

Eligible For FY2000: Bolivia, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Haiti, Panama, Peru, Venezuela.

Anticipated Eligibility for FY2001: Argentina, Barbados, Brazil, Chile, Jamaica, Paraguay, Trinidad and Tobago, Uruguay. Subjects to be determined.

Anticipated Eligibility for FY2002: Costa Rica, El Salvador, Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and trilateral projects including both Canada and Mexico. Subjects to be determined.

(3) *East Asia and the Pacific:* Proposals for projects that will promote democracy, strengthen civil society, or help to create more transparent, market-oriented economies are encouraged.

Eligible for FY2000: Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Laos, and Vietnam.

Anticipated Eligibility for FY2001: Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, and Thailand. Subjects to be determined.

Anticipated Eligibility for FY2002: China, Korea, Mongolia, and Taiwan. Subjects to be determined.

(4) *Europe:* Proposals are encouraged that will equip universities in central and Eastern Europe to assist with the transitions in the region to more market-oriented economies, to more democratic political life, and to more responsible and accountable administration in the public sector.

Eligible for FY2000: Hungary, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia.

Anticipated Eligibility for FY2001: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Slovenia, and Turkey. Subjects to be determined.

Anticipated Eligibility for FY2002: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Subjects to be determined.

(5) *New Independent States (former Soviet Union):* No eligibility anticipated for the College and University Affiliations Program in FY2000, FY2001, or FY2002. Institutions interested in partnerships with institutions of higher education in countries of the New Independent States of the former Soviet Union should consult a separate request for proposals that will be announced by the Office of Academic Programs in the summer of 1999 for the N.I.S. College and University Partnerships Program, which

focuses specifically on the N.I.S. For information about this program, contact the Office of Academic Programs; Advising, Teaching, and Specialized Programs Division (NISCUPP), (E/ASU), Room 349, U.S. Information Agency, 301 4th Street, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20547, phone: (202) 619-5289, fax: (202) 401-1433.

(6) North Africa and the Middle East: Projects are encouraged which strengthen civil society, or which develop a more effective and more transparent public sector.

Eligible for FY2000: Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, and Oman.

Anticipated Eligibility for FY2001: Israel, Jordan, and Morocco. Subjects to be determined.

Anticipated Eligibility for FY2002: Bahrain, Lebanon, and Tunisia. Subjects to be determined.

(7) South Asia: Proposals for projects that will help to develop good governance and strengthen educational and economic institutions in the region are encouraged.

Eligible for FY2000: India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh.

Anticipated Eligibility for FY2001: India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. Subjects to be determined.

Anticipated Eligibility for FY2002: Countries and subjects to be determined.

Ineligibility: A proposal may 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 foreign country or geographic location is ineligible;

(6) It involves a request to fund exchanges between the United States and more than one country, with the exception of the trilateral partnerships between the United States, South Africa, and two sub-Saharan African institutions as specified previously (see the previous section on eligible countries/locations for details);

(7) The amount requested from the Bureau exceeds \$150,000;

(8) The amount requested from the Bureau includes funding for salaries or honoraria for program participants in compensation for teaching or other program activities;

(9) The amount requested from the Bureau includes funding for stipends of student participants;

(10) The amount requested from the Bureau includes funding for the travel or per diem costs of student participants

with the exception of those foreign students and U.S. graduate student teaching assistants who are working under the direct supervision of a faculty member on the achievement of project objectives;

(11) The proposal is for assistance to be directed from one institution to another in one direction only.

Review Process

The Bureau 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 forwarded to independent reviewers and to Bureau and U.S. Embassy officers for advisory review.

The independent reviewers, who will be professional, scholarly, or educational experts with appropriate regional and thematic knowledge, will provide recommendations and assessments for consideration by The Bureau. The Bureau will consider for funding only those proposals which are recommended for further consideration by the independent reviewers.

Proposals will also be reviewed by Bureau officers as well as by other State Department officers in Washington, D.C. and overseas. Proposals may also be reviewed by the Office of the Legal Advisor or by other officers of the U.S. Department of State. Funding decisions will be made at the discretion of the Assistant Secretary of State for Educational and Cultural Affairs. Final technical authority for assistance awards (grants or cooperative agreements) will reside with a contracts officer with competency for Bureau programs.

Review Criteria

Independent reviewers and State Department officers in Washington, D.C., and overseas will use the criteria below to reach funding recommendations and decisions. Technically eligible applications will be competitively reviewed according to the criteria stated below. These criteria are not rank-ordered or weighted.

(1) **Quality and Clarity of Program Objectives:** Proposed programs should outline clearly formulated objectives for each participating institution that will also contribute to freedom and democracy through a deepened mutual understanding of fundamental issues and practical applications in the themes eligible for consideration in this competition.

(2) **Creativity and Feasibility of Program Plan:** Implementation plans for

proposed programs should demonstrate the feasibility of achieving program objectives during a three-year period by utilizing and reinforcing exchange mechanisms realistically and with creativity.

(3) **Impact of Program Objectives:** Proposal objectives should have sustainable consequences for the participating institutions and the societies and communities which these institutions serve.

(4) **Cost-effectiveness:** Administrative costs should be reasonable and appropriate with cost-sharing provided by all participating institutions within the context of their respective capacities and as a reflection of their commitment to cooperation with one another in pursuing project objectives.

(5) **Project Evaluation:** Proposals should include a plan and methodology for evaluating the project's degree of success in meeting program objectives. The plan should include an updated assessment of the current status of each department at the time of program inception; on-going formative evaluation to allow for prompt corrective action; and summative evaluation of the degree of achievement of project objectives together with recommendations for further activities and projects to build upon project achievements.

(6) **Institutional Commitment to Cooperation:** Proposals should demonstrate significant understanding at each institution of its own needs and capacities and of the needs and capacities of its proposed partner(s), together with a strong commitment, during and after the period of grant activity, to cooperate with one another in the mutual pursuit of institutional objectives.

(7) **Support of Diversity:** Proposals should demonstrate substantive support of the Bureau's policy on diversity by outlining relevant aspects of the institutional profile of each participating institution together with the relevancy of issues of diversity to program objectives and implementation.

The terms and conditions published in this RFP are binding and may not be modified by any USIA or State Department representative. Explanatory information provided by the USIA or the Department of State 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 Bureau 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 Bureau procedures.

Dated: May 10, 1999.

Judith S. Siegel,

Deputy Associate Director for Educational and Cultural Affairs.

[FR Doc. 99-12453 Filed 5-17-99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 8230-01-M