

3. Conducts studies and analyses on the national disabled population, applicants for benefits, disability beneficiaries, work incentives and disability assessment tools.

4. Conducts analyses of the interrelationships between SSA's disability programs, the national economy and other income maintenance programs, as well as various socioeconomic factors.

Dated: November 4, 2002.

Jo Anne B. Barnhart,

Commissioner.

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

[Public Notice 4206]

Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs Request for Grant Proposals (RFGPs): The FREEDOM Support Act/Future Leaders Exchange (FSA/FLEX) Program: Host Family and School Placement

NOTICE: Request for grant proposals.

SUMMARY: The Youth Programs Division of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs announces an open competition for the placement component of the FREEDOM Support Act/Future Leaders Exchange (FSA/FLEX) program. Public and private non-profit organizations meeting the provisions described in Internal Revenue Code section 26 U.S.C. 501(c)(3) may submit proposals to recruit and select host families and schools for high school students between the ages of 15 and 17 from countries of the former Soviet Union, thereafter referred to as Eurasia. In addition to identifying schools and screening, selecting, and orienting families, organizations will be responsible for: Orienting students at the local level; providing support services for students; arranging enhancement activities and leadership opportunities that reinforce program goals; monitoring students during their stay in the U.S.; providing re-entry training; and assessing student performance and progress. The award of grants and the number of students who will participate is subject to the availability of funding in fiscal year 2003.

Program Information

Overview

Background: Academic year 2003/2004 will be the eleventh year of the FSA/FLEX program, which now

includes over 11,000 alumni. This inbound, academic year component was originally authorized under the FREEDOM Support Act of 1992 and is funded by annual allocations from the Foreign Operations and State Department appropriations. The goals of the program are to promote mutual understanding and foster a relationship between the people of Eurasia and the U.S.; to assist the successor generation of Eurasian countries in developing the qualities it will need to lead in their aspirations for transformation in the 21st century; and to promote democratic values and civic responsibility by giving Eurasian youth the opportunity to live in American society and participate in focused activities for an academic year.

Objectives:

- To place approximately 1,400 pre-selected high school students from Eurasian countries in qualified, well-motivated host families.
- To place students in schools that have been accredited by the respective state departments of education.
- To expose program participants to American culture and democracy through homestay experiences and enhancement activities that will enable them to attain a broad view of the society and culture of the U.S.
- To encourage FSA/FLEX program participants to share their culture, lifestyle and traditions with U.S. citizens.
- To provide Eurasian students with leadership opportunities that will foster skills they can take back with them and use in their home countries.

Through participation in the FLEX program, students should:

1. Acquire an understanding of important elements of a civil society. This includes concepts such as volunteerism, the idea that American citizens can and do act at the grassroots level to deal with societal problems, and an awareness of and respect for the rule of law.
2. Acquire an understanding of a free market economy and private enterprise. This includes awareness of privatization and an appreciation of the role of the entrepreneur in economic growth.
3. Develop an appreciation for American culture and an understanding of the diversity of American society.
4. Interact with Americans and generate enduring ties.
5. Teach Americans about the cultures of their home countries.
6. Gain leadership capacity that will enable them to initiate and support activities in their home countries that focus on development and community service in their role as FLEX alumni.

Other Components: One organization has been awarded a grant to perform the following functions: Recruitment and selection of students; targeting recruitment for students with disabilities; assistance in documentation and preparation of DS-2019 visa forms; preparation of cross-cultural materials; predeparture orientation; international travel from home to host community and return; facilitation of ongoing communication between the natural parents and placement organization, as needed; maintenance of a student database and provision of data to the U.S. Department of State; and ongoing follow-up with alumni after their return to the Eurasia. Most of the students with disabilities, as well as a select number of additional students who are identified as needing English language enhancement before entering their host communities, will attend a Language and Cultural Enhancement (LCE) program in July 2003, which will be conducted under a separate grant awarded exclusively for that purpose.

Guidelines: Organizations chosen under this competition are responsible for the following:

- (1) Recruitment, screening, selection, and Eurasia/FLEX-specific orientation of host families;
- (2) Enrollment in an accredited school;
- (3) Local orientation for participants;
- (4) Placement of a small number of students with disabilities;
- (5) Ensuring that all students identified for the preacademic-year LCE program have their permanent year-long placement by the time they arrive at the LCE program in July;
- (6) Specialized training of local staff and volunteers to work with FLEX students from Eurasia;
- (7) Preparation and dissemination of materials to students pertaining to the respective placement organization;
- (8) Dispersal of program-specific information, such as alumni activity reports and School Administrator handbooks, to respective persons involved with the program (e.g., host families, school administrators, local coordinators);
- (9) Program-related enhancement and leadership activities;
- (10) Troubleshooting;
- (11) Communication with the organizations conducting other program components, when appropriate;
- (12) Evaluation of the students' performance;
- (13) Quarterly evaluation of the organization's success in achieving program goals;

(14) Eurasia-specific re-entry training to prepare students for readjustment to their home environments.

Applicants must request a grant for the placement of at least 40 students. There is no ceiling on the number of students who may be placed by one organization. It is anticipated that approximately 10–15 grants will be awarded for this component of the FLEX program. Placements may be in any region in the U.S. Strong preference will be given to organizations that choose to place participants in clusters of at least three students. Applicants must demonstrate that training of local staff ensures their competence in providing Eurasia-specific orientation programs, appropriate enhancement activities, and quality supervision and counseling of students from Eurasian countries. Please refer to the Solicitation Package, available on request from the address listed below, for details on essential program elements, permissible costs, and criteria used to select students.

We anticipate grants beginning no later than April, 2003, subject to the availability of funds.

Most participants arrive in their host communities during the month of August and remain for 10 or 11 months until their departure during the period mid-May to late June 2004.

Administration of the program must be in compliance with reporting and withholding regulations for federal, state, and local taxes as applicable. Recipient organizations should demonstrate tax regulation adherence in the proposal narrative and budget.

Applicants should submit the health and accident insurance plans they intend to use for students on this program. If use of a private plan is proposed, the State Department will compare that plan with the Bureau plan and make a determination of which will be applicable.

Budget Guidelines: Grants awarded to eligible organizations with less than four years of experience in conducting international exchange programs will be limited to \$60,000.

Applicants must submit a comprehensive budget for the entire program. *Per capita* costs should not exceed \$5,450.

There must be a summary budget as well as breakdowns reflecting both administrative and program budgets. Applicants may provide separate sub-budgets for each program component, phase, location, or activity to provide clarification. Allowable costs for the program include the following:

(1) A monthly stipend and a one-time incidentals allowance for participants,

as established by the Department of State;

(2) Costs associated with student enhancement activities and orientations;

(3) Health and accident insurance. Please refer to the Solicitation Package for complete budget guidelines and formatting instructions.

Announcement Title and Number: All correspondence with the Bureau concerning this RFGP should reference the above title and number ECA/PE/C/PY-03-24.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: The Office of Youth Programs, ECA/PE/C/PY, Room 568, U.S. Department of State, 301 4th Street, SW., Washington, DC 20547, tel. (202) 619-6299, and fax (202) 619-5311, e-mail lbeach@pd.state.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 Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs Program Officer Anna Mussman on all other inquiries and correspondence.

Please read the complete **Federal Register** announcement before sending inquiries or submitting proposals. Once the RFGP deadline has passed, Bureau 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 the Bureau's Web site at <http://exchanges.state.gov/education/RFGPs>. Please read all information before downloading.

Deadline for Proposals: All proposal copies must be received at the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs by 5 p.m. Washington, DC time on December 19, 2002. Faxed documents will not be accepted at any time. Documents postmarked the due date but received on a later date will not be accepted. It is the responsibility of each applicant to ensure that the proposals are received by the above deadline. Applicants must follow all instructions in the Solicitation Package. The original and 8 copies of the application should be sent to: U.S. Department of State, SA-44, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, Ref.: ECA/PE/C/PY-03-24, Program Management, ECA/EX/PM, Room 534, 301 4th Street, SW., Washington, DC 20547.

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. Pub. L. 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." Pub. L. 106-113 requires that the governments of the countries described above do not have inappropriate influence in the selection process. Proposals should reflect advancement of these goals in their program contents, to the full extent deemed feasible.

Adherence to All Regulations Governing the J Visa

Participants will travel on J-1 visas issued by the State Department using a government program number.

The Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs is placing renewed emphasis on the secure and proper administration of Exchange Visitor (J visa) Programs and adherence by grantees and sponsors to all regulations governing the J visa. Therefore, proposals should demonstrate the applicant's capacity to meet all requirements governing the administration of Exchange Visitor Programs as set forth in 22 CFR 6Z, including the oversight of Responsible Officers, screening and selection of program participants, provision of pre-arrival information and orientation to participants, monitoring of participants, proper maintenance and security of forms, record-keeping, reporting and other requirements. A copy of the complete regulations governing the administration of Exchange Visitor (J) programs is available at:

<http://exchanges.state.gov/education/jexchanges>.

Or from:

United States Department of State, Department Office of Exchange Coordination and Designation, ECA/EC/ECD-SA-44, Room 734, 301 4th Street, SW., Washington, DC 20547.

Telephone: (202) 401-9810. FAX: (202) 401-9809.

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 reviewed by the program office, as well as the State Department's Office for U.S. Assistance to Europe and Eurasia (EUR/ACE) and Public Diplomacy section at the U.S. embassy overseas, where appropriate. Eligible proposals will be forwarded to panels of Bureau officers for advisory review. Proposals may also be reviewed by the Office of the Legal Adviser or by other Department elements. Final funding decisions are at the discretion of the Department of State's Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs. Final technical authority for assistance awards (grants or cooperative agreements) resides with the Bureau's 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 the Bureau's 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 organization will meet the program's objectives and plan. Strategies should utilize and reinforce exchange activities creatively to ensure an efficient use of program resources.

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. Proposals should include creative ways to involve students in their U.S. communities.

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, host families, schools, program venue and program

evaluation) and program content (orientations, program meetings, resource materials and follow-up activities).

6. *Organization's record/institutional capacity:* Proposed personnel and institutional resources should be adequate and appropriate to achieve the program or project's goals. Proposals should demonstrate an institutional record of successful exchange programs, including responsible fiscal management and full compliance with all reporting and J-1 Visa requirements for past Bureau grants as determined by Bureau Grant Staff. The Bureau will consider the past performance of prior recipients and the demonstrated potential of new applicants.

7. *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. Submission of a sample FLEX-specific draft survey questionnaire, or other technique, plus description of a methodology to use to link outcomes to original project objectives are highly recommended. The final project evaluation should provide qualitative and quantitative data about the project's influence on the participants as well as their surrounding communities. Successful applicants will be expected to submit quarterly reports, which should be included as an inherent component of the work plan.

8. *Cost-effectiveness/cost sharing:* The overhead and administrative components of the proposal, including salaries and honoraria, should be kept as low as possible. All other items should be necessary and appropriate. Proposals should maximize cost-sharing through other private sector support as well as institutional direct funding contributions.

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 pertaining to the Department of State and FREEDOM Support Act appropriations.

Notice

The terms and conditions published in this RFGP are binding and may not be modified by any Bureau representative. Explanatory information provided by the Bureau that contradicts published language will not be binding. Issuance of the RFGP 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: November 7, 2002.

Patricia S. Harrison,

Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs, Department of State.

[FR Doc. 02-29198 Filed 11-14-02; 8:45 am]

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OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES TRADE REPRESENTATIVE

Request for Comments and Notice of Public Hearing Concerning Proposed Free Trade Agreement Negotiations With Southern Africa

AGENCY: Office of the United States Trade Representative.

ACTION: Notice of intent to initiate negotiations, request for public comments, and notice of public hearing on negotiation of a free trade agreement between the United States and five southern African countries.

SUMMARY: The United States intends to initiate negotiations on a free trade agreement (FTA) with Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa and Swaziland, which collectively comprise the Southern African Customs Union. The interagency Trade Policy Staff Committee (TPSC) will convene a public hearing and seeks public comments to assist the United States Trade Representative (USTR) in amplifying and clarifying negotiating objectives for the proposed FTA and to provide advice on how specific goods and services and other matters should be treated under the proposed agreement.