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[FR Doc. 99-14772 Filed 6-9-99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910-62-U

UNITED STATES INFORMATION AGENCY

FY99 Burma Refugee Scholarship Program; Request for Proposals

SUMMARY: The Office of Academic Programs of the United States Information Agency's (USIA) Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs announces an open competition for the Burma Refugee Scholarship Program (BRSP) which will begin recruitment and selection in FY99 (Academic year 1999-2000) and enrollment in FY00. Public and private non-profit organizations meeting the provisions described in IRS regulation 26 CFR 1.501(c) may submit proposals to develop an educational program for approximately five Burmese students and professionals, living in India as refugees, to receive undergraduate and/or graduate training in a variety of fields in the humanities and sciences in U.S. colleges and universities for a three year grant period running until 2002. The requirements are outlined in this letter and in the attached Program Goals, Objectives, and Implementation (POGI) document.

Program Information

Overview: The goal of the program is to support the economic and democratic development of Burma by helping to educate potential leaders living outside of Burma who could assist in its future transition to a democratic government. It is USIA's intent to provide grantees with programs of the highest quality that meet their academic and personal needs and to further the Agency's mission to promote mutual understanding. We also request that administration efficiencies and cost-sharing be actively sought.

Guidelines: The applicant organization shall design a proposal with a cost of up to \$300,000 to conduct the recruitment, selection, and placement of no more than five Burmese undergraduate students living in India in an appropriate U.S. academic setting. Monitoring the students' academic progress will be a requirement of the organizations. Grant administration should begin October 1, 1999. Students with undergraduate degrees who are bridging to a master's program would

also be eligible. We estimate that these funds will support five students for up to a year of intensive English-language training and two years towards an associate, bachelor's or master's degree program.

Administration in the Region: The organization must work closely with USIA, the U.S. Information Service (USIS), Immigration and Naturalization Service, and the U.S. Embassy in India to coordinate appropriate documentation for grantees' entry into the United States. The USIS representative administering the BRSP is in India, but it may be difficult for USIS officers to provide extensive facilitative assistance for this program. Applicant proposals should therefore include a plan to provide for publicity, recruitment, and selection in India, should USIS support be unavailable. The organization will be responsible for administering the program through its own resources and subcontractors, as required. The organization must also provide relocation or transition assistance to the students in the U.S. at the time their studies are terminated.

Requirements and Implementation: The proposal should respond to and describe the following major requirements:

- Planning and monitoring the entire exchange program;
- Selection and notification of participants, including publicizing the program to appropriate audiences in India using such methods as media, alumni networks, and local educational institutions and NGOs; and plans for distributing, answering inquiries about, and receiving applications—which may require the assistance of volunteers or paid staff in the region and/or special mailing arrangements;
- Travel;
- Placement at U.S. universities;
- Orientations;
- Provision of housing/stipends;
- On-going advising and student services;
- Cross cultural counseling;
- Cultural and community enrichment activities about the U.S.;
- Internships and professional development;
- Evaluation and alumni activities; and
- Fiscal management.

To the extent possible, the applicant should designate a contact person in India who would provide assistance with dissemination and submission of applications. Please review the application form to ensure that it includes all the information needed for review panel deliberations.

Length of Program: The proposed length of the Burmese scholarships is

three years—up to one year of intensive English-language training followed by up to two years of academic study. The duration of the USIA grant cannot exceed three years. Students must understand this policy in advance. Where there are compelling circumstances, students may receive a limited extension to complete their degrees at the discretion of the project director and the USIA program officer. Summer periods should be used for a mix of academic, professional and enrichment activities.

Pre-Academic and English-Language Training: Applicants must describe plans for pre-academic preparation and English-language training. USIA recommends that immediately after the initial orientation, participants be tested to determine which level of English-language courses are appropriate. Several levels of intensive English-language courses, from beginning to advanced, should be made available. It is assumed that most participants in this scholarship program will need up to one year of English-language instruction. Students who need additional instruction beyond the first year will be required to take the additional instruction at their placement universities.

Recruitment: The recruitment material and award publicity should provide all relevant information to potential applicants. The key conditions, benefits, and terms of the program—what is, and what is not covered under the grant—should be fully described to candidates and nominees before they accept an award and travel to the U.S. The description of study opportunities should be basic and include essential information for applicants who are unfamiliar with the U.S. educational system, and the policy on dependents should be described. All individuals should be fully informed of these policies before they accept an award.

Stipends: Please address the question of participant stipend levels in the narrative, including what expenses the stipend is intended to cover and the estimated monthly cost of housing provided to students. The USIA program officer must be informed in advance of any proposed adjustment in stipend levels and must approve such changes prior to implementation.

Fields of Study: Eligibility fields for the FY-99 program should respond to critical development needs in Burma, promote mutual understanding and potential linkages with the U.S., and attract academically qualified students who are likely to become future leaders in Burma. The program announcement

might include a statement such as: "Eligible fields of study are drawn from the standard university curriculum, with priority given to agriculture, business administration, community/public health, economics, education, environmental studies, journalism, legal studies, natural resources management political science, and public administration. If a subject area is proposed that is not among these priority fields, candidates should give special attention to explaining how this course of study would support the goals of the program." The final list of eligible fields and the text of the announcement must be reviewed and approved by the Office of Academic Programs, in consultation with USIA's East Asia and Pacific Area Office, prior to program implementation.

Selection Criteria: The Burma Refugee Scholarship Program is directed toward Burmese students and professionals who are outside Burma. The proposal should outline the selection criteria and selection process for the program. A corresponding statement of the selection criteria should be included in the program announcement for potential applicants. The leadership elements and the expectation that students will be active alumni following the conclusion of the program should be mentioned. Applicants should plan to work closely with USIA in developing the selection criteria.

Timeline: The proposed should include a projected timeline, from first announcement to student arrival and placement in the U.S., which takes into consideration the logistical and communications obstacles in the region. These include immigration requirements, travel arrangements, time required to obtain student records, and the like. The timeline should include dates of key elements, such as "candidates notified," "pre-arrival materials mailed," etc.

U.S. Educational System, American Culture and Institutions: It is essential that prior to arrival, as well as during orientation, applicants and participants be informed of the general nature, philosophy and goals of U.S. higher education, particularly with regard to the broad scope of a liberal arts bachelor's degree program. Applicants and participants should clearly understand that they will be required to take courses in a variety of academic fields and should be briefed about the specifics of this grant. Students should receive guidance from the academic advisor to assist them in choosing appropriate courses outside their major field.

To support the mutual understanding goal of the exchange, USIA is particularly interested in opportunities for academic and enrichment experiences related to U.S. institutions, society, and culture. It is recommended that the applicant stipulate that students take one or more courses in a U.S. Studies field, such as American history, literature, or government. USIA welcomes other creative ideas for exposing students to American institutions, such as "issues" discussion groups for students, visits to political campaign offices and polling places, attendance at school board or city council meetings, exposure to American religious institutions, and civic-related volunteer work. Student attendance at museums, concerts, plays, and other cultural events featuring American content should be encouraged and facilitated wherever possible. The awardee will be requested to keep USIA informed of the status of this part of the program throughout the year.

Program Activities: Applicants should describe plans for orientation, including pre-departure orientation; goals and approaches for the academic portion of the program, including any special activities such as internships or academic enrichment; cultural and community projects; evaluation and follow-up; and alumni-tracking. For example, volunteer work, student presentations to the local community, and matching of students with a local host family might be among the enrichment activities proposed. Internships should be designed to provide a close match with a student's field of academic or professional interest. USIA requests that applicants provide support systems (such as tutoring, counseling, host family, mentor or buddy system, consultation with student advisor and project director) to the students during the program.

Pre-Arrival Information: Please provide a sample copy of the pre-arrival information in advance to the USIA program officer. Information should be complete, accurate for the program site and detailed. Key points about academic requirements, academic departments and available courses, housing, what to bring with them, personal budgeting considerations, policies on dependents, and other critical issues should be included in the material. The material should be designed to serve as a useful post-arrival reference as well, supplemented with additional information. Students should also receive a summary of key points in addition to the complete package. This

should include exchange policy matters as well as "what to bring."

GPRA-Outcomes and Results: Applicants must include a statement of goals and expected outcomes for the program, including how results, as necessitated by Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) requirements would be measured. Outcomes might include, but are not limited to, the following areas: developing a cadre of Burmese leaders with first-hand experience in the U.S., advancement of development goals for Burma, conflict resolution and building viable non-governmental institutions in Burma, and expansion of professional relationships between individuals and institutions in the U.S. and Burma. Project goals and planning should be linked to desired outcomes. For example, if it is a goal to produce or influence leaders in Burma, potential leadership qualities should be among the selection criteria for applicants.

Measurements might include: alumni achievements and activities; the quality and quantity of institutional linkages established as a result of the program; and degree of positive change in participant and/or public attitudes as a result of the program.

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. Awards may not exceed \$300,000. 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:

A. Program Costs

- (1) One-way economy fare international travel from their overseas location;
- (2) Domestic travel;
- (3) Tuition, room and board, incidental expenses, maintenance for university vacation periods;
- (4) Education materials;
- (5) Cost of standardized test fees;
- (6) Per diem for orientation, professional, academic and cultural enrichment.

B. Administrative Costs (Not To Exceed 20% of the Budget)

- (1) Staff salaries and benefits;
- (2) Staff travel;

(3) Communications (including telephone, fax, postage, etc.);

- (4) Office supplies;
(5) Other direct costs.

For the budget presentation, applicants should submit a three-column budget which includes the following information:

Column 1—FY-99 USIA funds requested

Column 2—Amount of cost-sharing in FY-99

Column 3—Total FY-99 Budget (Total of Columns 1 and 2)

Please refer to the Solicitation Package for complete budget guidelines and formatting instructions. Applicants will find those federally required forms which must be included in the proposal submission in the Proposal Submission Instructions section of the solicitation package.

Announcement Title and Number

All correspondence with USIA concerning this RFP should reference the title and number E/AEF-99-04. Please submit a one-page Executive Summary and a narrative as part of the proposal. The Executive Summary should contain an overview of the goals and activities of the program in order to set the context for modifications and budget requests. The narrative should deal with program facts only, and not contain the history of the organization or program philosophy, except as directly relevant to the proposed activity. It should outline the purpose of the program and the major activities funded under the award which meet the goals of the program. Concurrently, this will provide background information for a review of the proposed budget and program modifications.

Applicants should explain in the narrative any personnel changes which are anticipated in the coming year. Please also indicate briefly the responsibilities of all staff listed as working on this project, including those whose employment is cost-shared. Please submit resumes for employees under Tab E.

Further Information: For further information, or to request a Solicitation Package, contact the Office of Academic Programs, E/AEF, Room Number 208, U.S. Information Agency, 301 4th Street, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20547, telephone (202) 619-5406, fax number (202) 401-1728. The Solicitation Package contains detailed award criteria, required application forms, specific budget instructions, and standard guidelines for proposal preparation. Please specify USIA Program Officer, Tim Gerhandson, on all other inquiries and correspondence.

Please read the complete Federal Register announcement before sending inquiries or submitting proposals. Once the RFP deadline has passed, Agency staff may not discuss this competition with applicants until the proposal review process has been completed.

To Download a Solicitation Package Via Internet

The entire Solicitation Package may be downloaded from USIA's website at <http://e.usia.gov/education/rfps>. Please read all information before downloading.

To Receive a Solicitation Package via Fax on Demand

The entire Solicitation Package may be requested from the Bureau's "Grants Information Fax on Demand System," which is accessed by calling 202401-7616. The "Table of Contents" listing available documents and order numbers should be the first order when entering the system.

Deadline for Proposals

All proposal copies must be received at the US. Information Agency by 5 p.m. Washington, DC time on *June 30, 1999*. Faxed documents will not be accepted at any time. Documents postmarked the due date but received on a later date will not be accepted. Each applicant must ensure that the proposals are received by the above deadline. The FY99 BRSP applications (the original proposal), 10 hard copies, and one extra application cover sheet should be submitted to: United States Information Agency, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, Reference: E/AER-99-04, Grants Management Division, E/XE, Room 326, 301 4th St. SW, Washington, DC 20547.

Review Process

USIA will acknowledge receipt of all proposals and will review them for technical eligibility. Proposals will be deemed ineligible if they do not fully adhere to the guidelines stated herein and in the Solicitation Package. All eligible proposals will be reviewed by the program office, as well as the USIA EA area office(s) and the USIA post(s) overseas, where appropriate. Eligible proposals will be forwarded to panels of USIA officers for advisory review. Proposals may also be reviewed by the Office of the General Counsel or by other Agency elements. Final funding decisions are at the discretion of USIA's Associate Director for Educational and Cultural Affairs. Final technical authority for assistance awards (grants or cooperative agreements) resides with the USIA Grants Officer. Awards will be

subject to the availability of FY99 funding. The Agency reserves the right to reduce, revise or increase proposal budgets in accordance with the needs of the program.

The narrative is not a program report or an annual report, nor does it replace any reporting requirements outlined in the grant. However, the grant proposal is the only document that the review panel will consider during its deliberations, so it should provide all relevant information for a full review. It should not be assumed that panelists will have prior familiarity with applicants or this particular scholarship program.

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 Agency'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 institution will meet the program's objectives and plan.
- 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. 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, resources and follow-up 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 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) ensuring 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.

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).

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 reflect advancement of this goal 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>.

Authority

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 above is provided through legislation.

Notification

Final awards cannot be made until funds have been appropriated by Congress, allocated and committed through internal USIA procedures. For further information, please contact my designee for this program, Tim Gerhardson, at (202) 619-5406, or tgerhard@usia.gov on e-mail.

Dated: June 18, 1999.

Judith Siegel,

Deputy Associate Director for Educational and Cultural Affairs.

[FR Doc. 99-14836 Filed 6-9-99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 8230-01-M

UNITED STATES INFORMATION AGENCY

Future Leaders Exchange Program Administrative Components

NOTICE: Request for proposals.

SUMMARY: The Division for the NIS Secondary School Initiative, Office of Citizen Exchanges, of the United States Information Agency's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs announces an open competition for the Future Leaders Exchange (FLEX) program. Public and private non-profit organizations meeting the provisions described in IRS regulation 26 CFR 1.501(c) may submit proposals to conduct a package of Administrative Components for the recruitment, selection and other related activities listed below for approximately 930 high school students from the 12 New Independent States (NIS) of the former Soviet Union who will come to the U.S. for the 2000/2001 academic year under the FLEX program. This RFP is only for the package of administrative components described in this solicitation. Grants for other program components, including placement and supervision of the students while they are in the United States, will be competed separately. Final award of the grant or grant(s) is subject to the availability of funding.

Program Information

Overview

The Future Leaders Exchange (FLEX) program has been sponsored by USIA since 1992, when it was authorized and funded under the Freedom Support Act. The 2000/2001 FLEX program will be its eighth cycle. The program provides an opportunity for high school students aged 15-17 from the 12 countries of the New Independent States (NIS) of the former Soviet Union to live with an American host family for eleven months and attend a full academic year of high school. The scholarship covers all aspects of the students' program, including recruitment and selection, orientation, travel, family and school placement, supervision while in the U.S., maintenance allowances, health and accident insurance, cultural and educational enhancements, and alumni activities upon return to their home countries. Placement, supervision,