

8. *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.

9. *Cost-effectiveness*: The overhead and administrative components of the proposal, including salaries and honoraria, should be kept as low as possible. All other items should be necessary and appropriate.

10. *Cost-sharing*: Proposals should maximize cost-sharing through other private sector support as well as institutional direct funding contributions.

11. *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 countries.

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."

Notice

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be subject to periodic reporting and evaluation requirements.

Notification

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

Dated: July 7, 1999.

Judith Siegel,

Deputy Associate Director for Educational and Cultural Affairs.

[FR Doc. 99-17976 Filed 7-14-99; 8:45 am]

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UNITED STATES INFORMATION AGENCY

Regional Educational Advising Coordinator (REAC) for Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean (MCAC) Region; Request for Proposals

SUMMARY: The Office of Academic Programs/Advising, Teaching, and Specialized Programs Division of the bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the United States Information Agency announces an open competition for a Regional Educational Advising Coordinator (REAC) for Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean (MCAC) Region. Public and private non-profit organizations meeting the provisions described in IRS regulation 26 CFR 1.501(c) may submit proposals for a REAC candidate to expand and enhance the sharing of information and materials with the region's advising centers, follow trends in U.S. education and regional exchange, disseminate information on the latest developments in technology and provide direct guidance such as site visits, internships, training and workshops in Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean. The region boasts 53 advising centers in the USIA network. These centers provide comprehensive and unbiased information to interested students, scholars, and other individuals about study opportunities in the US.

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.

Program Information

Overview: The Regional Educational Advising Coordinator (REAC) will be responsible for providing on-site technical assistance and training to existing centers in the Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean Region (MCAC) and for coordinating the

establishment of any new advising centers, as directed by individual embassies in consultation with E/ASA. The REAC should support any USIA-affiliated center located in the following countries: Mexico, Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Guyana, Surinam, Anguilla, Antigua, Aruba, Bahamas, Barbados, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grand Cayman Island, Grenada, Haiti, Jamaica, Martinique, Montserrat, Nevis, St. Kitts, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Tobago, Tortola, and Trinidad. The MCAC REAC, acting as educational advising coordinator for the area, should work impartially with all organizations, binational centers, USIS Posts, universities, libraries, etc. involved in educational advising in the MCAC region to enable them to provide accurate and timely information on U.S. higher educational opportunities. The REAC must work closely with E/ASA and USIS posts throughout the region to help establish priorities for educational advising.

Guidelines: The period of this grant is October 1, 1999 to September 30, 2000.

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

Programs must comply with J-1 visa regulations. Please refer to Solicitation Package for further information.

Budget Guidelines

Applicants must submit a comprehensive budget for the entire program. Awards may not exceed \$50,000. 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:

- (1) Salary and benefits.
- (2) Budget for REAC travel and per diem.
- (3) Costs for training materials.
- (4) Costs for Regional Adviser Conference.
- (5) Office supplies and expenses.
- (6) Indirect costs.

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

Announcement Title and Number: All correspondence with USIA concerning this RFP should reference the above title and number E/ASA-00-02.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: The Advising and Student Services Branch,

E/ASA, Room 349, U.S. Information Agency, 301 4th Street, SW., Washington, DC 20547, phone: (202) 619-4731, email: ssheehan@usia.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 USIA E/ASA Program Officer Sharen Sheehan 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 202/401-7616. 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 U.S. Information Agency by 5 p.m. Washington, DC time on *Monday, August 2, 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.

Applicants must follow all instructions in the Solicitation Package. The original and 6 copies of the application should be sent to: U.S. Information Agency, Ref.: E/ASA-00-02, Office of Grants Management, E/XE, Room 336, 301 4th Street, 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. These documents 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. 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, 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 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>.

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 WHA Area Office and the USIA posts 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.

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 and program content.
6. *Institutional Capacity:* Proposed personnel and institutional resources should be adequate and appropriate to achieve the program of project's goals.
7. *Institution's Record/Ability:* Proposals should demonstrate an institutional record of successful exchange programs, including responsible fiscal management and full compliance with all reporting requirements for past Agency grants as determined by USIA's Office of Contracts. The Agency will consider the past performance of prior recipients and the demonstrated potential of new applicants.

8. *Follow-on Activities*: Proposals should provide a plan for continued follow-on activity (without USIA support) 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.

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Dated: July 8, 1999.

Judith Siegel,

Deputy Associate Director for Educational and Cultural Affairs.

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