

**DEPARTMENT OF STATE****[Public Notice 3160]****Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs; NIS Community College Partnerships Program: Request for Proposals****ACTION:** Notice.

**SUMMARY:** The Office of Global Educational Programs of the United States Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs announces an open competition for an assistance award program. Accredited community colleges offering the two-year Associate's degree and meeting the provisions described in IRS regulation 26 CFR 1.501 may apply to pursue institutional or departmental objectives in international partnerships with counterpart institutions from Russia or Ukraine for the purpose of supporting, through teaching, scholarship, and professional outreach from the partner institutions, the transition of the New Independent States to democratic systems based on market economies, as well as the purpose of strengthening mutual understanding and cooperation between the United States and the New Independent States. Eligible fields are education, continuing education or educational administration; the social, political or economic sciences; business/accounting/trade; or journalism/communications. Within these fields, themes of special interest may be described in additional detail in the section on "Country Eligibility." Community colleges interested in working with partner institutions in the NIS outside of Russia and Ukraine are eligible to apply through the NIS College and University Partnerships Program, described separately in this announcement.

The NIS Community College Partnerships Program is designed to encourage community colleges to share with their educational partners in the NIS their practical experience in designing and implementing programs which provide targeted training in professional fields; provide outreach and services to surrounding communities; and provide education to underserved populations.

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, 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 encouraged, particularly by linking educational programs in the NIS to the communities which they serve.

In addition to the NIS Community College Partnerships Program, the Bureau also supports institutional linkages in higher education with partners from the New Independent States of the former Soviet Union through the NIS College and University Partnerships Program, which was described in a previous announcement dated September 16, 1999 with a deadline of January 19, 2000. The Bureau supports institutional linkages in higher education with partners worldwide through the College and University Affiliations Program; the College and University Affiliations Program was described in a previous announcement dated May 18, 1999 with a deadline of November 15, 1999. Applicants interested in either of these two programs should contact the Bureau's Humphrey Fellowships and Institutional Linkages Branch at (202) 619-5289. In addition, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) supports the Sustaining Partnerships into the Next Century (SPAN) program, which supports organizational and institutional partnerships, including university partnerships, in the Russian Federation. Applicants interested in USAID's SPAN program should contact the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX) at (202) 628-8188 (E-mail: [irex@irex.org](mailto:irex@irex.org)).

In the NIS Community College Partnerships Program, partner institutions may pursue specific institutional goals with support from the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs through exchanges of teachers and administrators 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 of their administration at any partner institution up to a maximum of 20 percent of the total grant, including administrative salaries but excluding indirect costs. Although grants under this program will be issued to eligible U.S. community colleges, adequate provision for the administrative costs of the project at all

partner institutions is encouraged. Administrative salary support may be included for project directors and administrative assistants within the 20 percent maximum that may be allocated to administrative costs. (See the section of the POGI on "Allowable costs".) 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. 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 each 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 as well as the broader social and educational needs which the partner institutions attempt to serve. 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 ongoing project, the proposal should explain how the request for Bureau funding would build upon the pre-existing relationship or complement concurrent projects and cooperation.

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. The maximum award in the FY2000 competition will be \$200,000. 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 Freedom for Russia and Emerging Eurasian Democracies and Open Markets Support Act of 1992 (Freedom Support Act).

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 "Proposal Submission 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 RFP should refer to the NIS Community College Partnerships Program and reference number ECA/A/S/U-00-08.

#### **Deadline for Proposals**

All copies must be received at the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs by 5 p.m. Washington, DC time on Wednesday, March 15, 2000. Faxed documents will not be accepted at any time, nor will documents postmarked on Wednesday, March 15, 2000 but received on a later date. It is the responsibility of each applicant to ensure compliance with the deadline.

*Approximate program dates:* Grants should begin on or about August 15, 2000.

*Duration:* Approximately August 15, 2000–August 14, 2003.

#### **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:**

United States Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, Office of Global Educational Programs, Humphrey Fellowships and Institutional Linkages Branch, State Annex 44 (ECA/A/S/U) room 349, 301 4th Street, SW, Washington, DC 20547, fax: (202) 401-1433 to request a Solicitation Package containing more detailed award criteria; all application forms; and guidelines for preparing proposals, including specific criteria for preparation of the proposal budget. Please specify Bureau Program Officer Jonathan Cebra (telephone: 202-619-4126, e-mail: jcebra@usia.gov) on all inquiries and correspondence.

#### **To Download a Solicitation Package Via Internet**

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

Interested applicants should read the complete **Federal Register** announcement before sending inquiries or submitting proposals. Once the RFP deadline has passed, Bureau 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 application should be sent to: U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Cultural and Educational Affairs, Ref.: ECA/A/S/

U-00-08, Program Management Staff, ECA/EX/PM, 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. 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 public affairs sections at U.S. embassies overseas for their review, with the goal of reducing the time it takes to get posts' comments for the Bureau'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", 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 the Bureau. 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.

The Bureau 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>.

#### **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

#### **Guidelines**

The NIS Community College Partnerships Program is limited to the following academic fields:

- (1) Business/accounting/trade;
- (2) Education/continuing education/educational administration;
- (3) Journalism/communications; and
- (4) Social, political, or economic sciences.

Proposals must focus on curriculum, faculty, and staff development at the NIS partner institution(s) in one or more of these eligible disciplines.

Administrative reform at the foreign partner should also be a project component. Projects should involve the development of new academic programs or the building and/or restructuring of an existing program or programs, and should promote higher education's role in the transition to market economies and open democratic systems. Feasibility studies to plan partnerships will not be considered.

Whenever feasible, participants should make their training and personnel resources, as well as results of their collaborative research, available to government, NGOs, and business.

Participating institutions should exchange faculty and/or staff members for teaching/lecturing and consulting. At least once during the grant period, one U.S. participant should be in residence at the foreign partner institution for one semester to serve in a coordinating role.

U.S. institutions are responsible for the submission of proposals and should collaborate with their foreign partners in planning and preparing proposals. U.S. and foreign partner institutions are encouraged to consult about the proposed project with program office staff in Washington, DC.

#### **U.S. Partner and Participant Eligibility**

In the United States, participation in the program is open to accredited community colleges offering the two-year Associate's degree. Applications from consortia of community colleges are eligible. Secondary U.S. partners

may include relevant non-governmental organizations, non-profit service or professional organizations, or other institutions of higher education. If a lead U.S. institution in a consortium is responsible for submitting an application on behalf of a consortium, the application must document the lead school's stated authority to represent the consortium. With the exception of outside evaluators on contract with the U.S. institution, participants representing the U.S. institution(s) who are traveling under Bureau grant funds must be faculty or staff from the participating institution(s) and must be U.S. citizens.

#### **Foreign Partner and Participant Eligibility**

In other countries, participation is open to recognized institutions of post-secondary education, including pedagogical institutes and universities, technical institutes and universities, and vocational training schools. Secondary foreign partners may include relevant governmental and non-governmental organizations, non-profit service or professional organizations. Participants representing the foreign institutions must be faculty or staff of the primary or secondary partner institution, and be citizens, nationals, or permanent residents of the country of the foreign partner, and be qualified to hold a valid passport and U.S. J-1 visa.

Foreign partners from the following countries are eligible:

Russia—Proposals for partnerships with institutions located in Moscow or St. Petersburg should clearly indicate how those partnerships will have impact on other regions. Proposals which designate a partner institution in the Sakhalin Region are encouraged.

Ukraine—proposals for partnerships with institutions located in the Kharkiv region are encouraged;

Partnerships including a secondary foreign partner from a non-NIS country are eligible to participate in a project funded by this program; however, with the exception of Central European partners as noted below, the Bureau will not cover overseas non-NIS partner institution costs.

#### **Central European Partners**

The Bureau encourages proposals which build upon established collaboration between U.S. institutions and partners in Central and Eastern Europe in order to support faculty and curriculum development in the NIS and to promote regional cooperation. Within the context of this partnership agreement and under the guidance of the U.S. partner institution, funds may

be budgeted for the exchange of faculty between NIS institutions and institutions of higher learning in Central and Eastern Europe (applicants planning to submit proposals for trilateral partnerships with a partner from Central or Eastern Europe are encouraged to contact the program office).

#### **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 Bureau officers as well as by other State Department officers in Washington, DC and overseas. All eligible proposals will be forwarded to the appropriate U.S. Embassy officers for advisory review. Proposals may also be reviewed by the Office of the Legal Advisor or by other offices of the U.S. Department of State. Funding decisions will be made at the discretion of the Assistant Secretary 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**

State Department officers in Washington, DC 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 the transition of the New Independent States to market economies and democracies and to a deepened mutual understanding of fundamental issues and practical applications in the themes eligible for consideration in this competition.

##### *2. Program Planning*

Proposals should include appropriate and feasible project plans and a detailed schedule which should include a well-reasoned combination of useful and appropriate teaching, faculty development, curriculum development, and outreach. The various activities should be clearly related to project objectives, but need not be equally emphasized within the proposal.

Proposals should clearly demonstrate how the partnership will meet the program's objectives and plan.

### 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. 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.

### 5. Institutional Capacity and Commitment

Proposals should demonstrate commitment of institutional resources adequate and appropriate to achieve program goals. 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. Relevant factors include: the financial and political stability of partner institutions and the availability of a critical mass of faculty willing and able to participate. Preference will be given to proposals which include multiple quarter- or semester-length stays. Proposals should provide evidence of relevant and successful prior interactions between institutions and an indication of collaborative program planning. The Bureau will consider the past performance of prior grant recipients and all reviewers will consider the demonstrated potential of new applicants. Reviewers will also consider the quality of exchange participants' academic credentials, skills, and experience relative to the goals and activities of the project plan (e.g. language skills).

### 6. 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.

### 7. 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.

### Ineligibility

A proposal will 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 academic discipline(s) is/are not listed as eligible in the RFP, herein;
- (6) The amount requested of the Bureau request exceeds \$200,000 for the three-year project.

Please refer to program-specific guidelines (POGI) in the Solicitation Package for further details.

### Notice

The terms and conditions published in this RFP 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 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: November 5, 1999.

**Evelyn S. Lieberman,**

*Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs.*

[FR Doc. 99-30048 Filed 11-16-99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4710-11-P

## DEPARTMENT OF STATE

[Public Notice 3159]

### Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs; Public Policy Partnership for the Institute of Public Administration at Moscow State University Project (PPP): Request for Proposals

**ACTION:** Notice.

**SUMMARY:** The Office of Global Educational Programs of the United States Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs announces an open competition for an assistance award. Public and private non-profit organizations meeting the provisions described in IRS regulation 26 CFR 1.501(c) may submit proposals to assist the Institute of Public Administration of Moscow State University in developing graduate programs in the field of public policy.

### Program Information

#### Overview

This project is designed to assist the Institute of Public Administration (IPA) at Moscow State University in developing its capacity to deliver a graduate program in Public Policy that meets high international standards for instruction and research in this field. The primary goal of this project is to promote development of a curriculum of policy-relevant, theoretically sophisticated, empirical approaches designed to promote an open, accountable, efficient and responsive public sector. The grantee organization will be expected to assist the Institute of Public Administration through a comprehensive program of exchange and support activities which will foster lasting institutional and individual ties. The project will award up to \$500,000 for up to a two year period to defray the costs of two-way faculty exchange and of limited student exchange, with an allowance for educational materials (including support for distance learning projects) and with provision for some aspects of project administration. There is also the possibility of a renewal grant of up to \$500,000 for up to a two year period pending positive program review and the availability of funding.

#### Objectives

The overall objective of this project is to enable the Institute of Public Administration at Moscow State University to equip its graduate program in Public Policy to support emergent democratic institutions in Russia by preparing future leaders to analyze and resolve public policy issues within a democratic framework in the context of