

44; 301-4th Street, SW, Room 700,
Washington, DC 20547-0001.

Dated: December 15, 1999.

William B. Bader,

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

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

[Public Notice 3182]

Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs NIS Secondary School Partnership Program

NOTICE: Request for proposals.

SUMMARY: The Office of Citizen Exchanges, Youth Programs Division, in the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the United States Department of State announces an open competition for the NIS Secondary School Partnership Program. Public and private non-profit organizations meeting the provisions described in IRS regulation 26 CFR 1.501(c) may submit proposals to either enhance or expand existing partnerships or develop new school partnership programs with Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Russia, or Ukraine. All proposals must have a thematic focus and feature on-going joint project activity between the schools, a student exchange component, and an educator (teacher/administrator) exchange component. The maximum grant award will be \$125,000 for single-country applications and \$200,000 for multiple country applications.

Program Information

The Secondary School Partnership Program is funded under the Freedom Support Act to assist young people in building an open society and developing democratic processes and institutions in the New Independent States (NIS). This program provides grants to link schools in the seven countries noted above with schools in the United States.

The U.S. recipient of the grant is responsible for recruiting, selecting, and organizing a U.S. network of a minimum of two secondary schools; strengthening an existing working relationship with an organization or agency of government in the NIS responsible for a network of at least two schools there; and linking the two networks in one-to-one school partnerships through a thematic project and substantive exchange activities.

Overview

The short-term goal of the school partnership program is to provide

partial funding for linkages between U.S. and NIS schools featuring collaborative substantive projects and reciprocal student and educator exchanges with strong academic content. The long-term goals are to: (1) develop lasting, sustainable institutional ties between U.S. and NIS schools and communities; (2) support democracy in the NIS; (3) advance mutual understanding between the youth and teachers of the U.S. and the NIS; and (4) promote partnerships developed through governmental, educational, and not-for-profit sector cooperation that serve the needs and interests of the schools.

The program has several defining features to help the participating schools develop their partnership:

—Each partnership has a project theme and the students and teachers in the two schools work on a joint project throughout the school year related to this theme;

—The two schools develop a relationship over the course of an academic year, through the planning process and the work on their joint project, which is highlighted by exchanges from three weeks to ten months in duration. Exchanges take place while the host school is in session.

—The student and teacher exchanges must be reciprocal.

—The program includes educators (teachers and/or administrators) in order to involve them in all aspects of the partnership and to provide them access to resources for curriculum development and educational training.

—During the exchange, participants attend class, are involved in school-based activities, work on their joint project, perform community service, visit educational and cultural sites, and reside with host families.

An applicant may, but is not required to, propose one of several optional features in its proposal. Please see these three optional features described later in this solicitation.

Dates

Grants may begin on or about July 15, 2000, and cover the 2000-2001 academic year. The exact starting date of the grant will be dependent on availability of funds.

Guidelines

A competitive proposal will present a project that builds upon previous contacts and interaction between the proposed schools to help ensure a solid foundation for the partnership. Partnerships should have an existence beyond the scope of this initiative; that

is, there should be an inherent reason for the linkage apart from the availability of grant funds. Organizers and school networks in the U.S. and NIS should collaborate in planning and preparation. Applicants must have an NIS organizational partner that has its base of operation in the partner country and not in another country. Proposals should support a working relationship that will produce something tangible and lasting in addressing the interests of both sides, beyond the confines of the funded project, such as the development of educational materials. The proposal should specify measurable goals and objectives of the program.

In general, the Bureau seeks school partnerships that target under-served countries or regions. For programs with Russia and Ukraine, priority will be given to partnerships with schools located outside of the Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Kiev regions. Bureau funding may not be used to supplant existing private sector funding. Competitive proposals must demonstrate a solid and comprehensive follow-on plan to continue after the grant has expired.

Proposals must clearly describe and define substantive thematically-based projects for each school partnership that are the focus of the exchange for both students and educators and on-going joint project activity between the two schools. Specific activities, products, curriculum materials, and pre-planning are areas that can be addressed.

For example, what will the participants be doing and how is it relevant to the thematic focus of the program? Applicants should present a program that succeeds in linking the greater school community. All participating schools must be identified. Proposals should describe the selected theme, its importance to the schools and communities, the specific academic activities, and the expected outcome or product of the project. Possible themes include but are not limited to the following: democracy education, volunteerism or community service, conflict resolution, business management, health education, environmental issues, youth leadership training, computer technology, multicultural education, and agriculture.

Proposals must clearly present independent educator programs for teachers/administrators. These programs could include curriculum development seminars, shadowing of host peers in the classroom, university-level courses, or other substantive activities, with an emphasis on such themes as parent-teacher cooperation, model schools,

teacher training, and collaboration with local businesses. A program that relies on the educator to act as just an escort will not be competitive.

Optional Features

An applicant may choose to present its proposed program in accordance to the guidelines above or may choose to implement one of the following features. Clearly indicate if you are including one of these features and, if so, which one, on your application cover sheet. All guidelines outlined in this solicitation still apply unless noted below.

Feature One: Educators travel separately. In lieu of having students and educators travel to their partner school together, the applicant may arrange for an escort to accompany the student group while up to two educators travel to the partner school at another time. This arrangement would apply to both U.S. to NIS travel and NIS to U.S. travel. Travel during the school year is preferred, but educators' travel may take place during the summer if a significant component of their exchange contributes to the development of the partnership between the schools. This design will allow for sustained personal contact throughout the school year and will allow educators to focus on their own professional development during their exchange.

Feature Two: Grant period spans two school years. In lieu of having one reciprocal exchange during the 2000–2001 academic year, the applicant may arrange for each school to send and receive two smaller delegations, once in 2000–2001 and again in 2001–2002 for a total of four exchange trips. The grant period would start on or about July 15, 2000, and end on or about July 15, 2002. This design allows for longer, sustained interaction between the schools. Grant requests, however, may not exceed the limits noted in this solicitation.

Feature Three: Only one school partnership is formed. In lieu of a network of schools in the U.S. and in the NIS, an applicant that is a secondary school or school district may propose to link only one school in the U.S. with one school in the NIS. The NIS organizational coordinator may be an individual at the partner school as long as he or she can fulfill the responsibilities outlined in this solicitation. The grant request that accompanies applications with this feature may not exceed \$50,000.

Applicants that choose one of these features should provide a brief explanation of why they have chosen to do so and how they believe it will enhance their program.

Responsibilities

The U.S. organization receiving the grant will (1) design the overall plan that integrates the joint project activity and the exchange components of the partnership; (2) ensure quality control for all program elements; (3) keep The Bureau informed of its progress; (4) manage all travel arrangements, logistics, passports, visas, etc.; (5) provide competent and informed escorts for student groups; and (6) disburse and account for grant funds. Recipients of a grant are responsible for ensuring the selection of exchange participants who are most suited for the program and for providing them with a meaningful pre-departure orientation. Selection of individual participants from the U.S. and the NIS in the exchange components of the program must be open, competitive, and merit-based; the proposal should describe the mechanisms used for participant selection. All participants from the U.S. and the NIS should represent the full diversity of their communities (racial, ethnic, economic status, religious, etc.) to give greater understanding to the culture and society as a whole.

Preference will be given to proposals that include schools that have not received funding under the NIS Secondary School Initiative for a total of three years.

Significant cost-sharing is mandatory in all proposals, and those that show more generous and creative cost-sharing will be more favorably viewed. Proposals that contain non-Bureau funded items such as additional students and/or educators on the exchange, U.S. participants paying for some of their own costs, computer software purchases, cultural excursions, capital city civics programs, and other significant items will be more competitive proposals than those that do not. However, NIS participants may not be charged to participate in the program, aside from paying for home country costs (such as transportation to the point of departure), the costs of hosting the U.S. students and educators, and miscellaneous expenses such as pocket money.

Please be sure to refer to the Project Objectives, Goals, and Implementation (POGI) section of the Solicitation Package for greater detail regarding the design of the component parts as well as other program information. Also consult the Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) for information on budget presentation and required forms.

Budget Guidelines

Applicants must submit a comprehensive budget for the entire project. For single-country applications, awards may not exceed \$125,000 or the country allocation noted below, whichever is less. Awards for one school partnership (optional feature three) may not exceed \$50,000. The maximum award for multiple country applications is \$200,000. The Bureau has set country allocations for this competition and all proposals must adhere to these maximum amounts per country. Only partnerships between secondary schools in the United States and these countries are eligible for this competition.

Country allocations (subject to change): Armenia \$97,000; Azerbaijan \$97,000; Belarus \$97,000; Georgia \$97,000; Moldova \$68,000; Russia \$500,000; Ukraine \$330,000.

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

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. All program costs should clearly indicate whether they cover U.S. or NIS participants. Be sure to note the statement on cost-sharing in the Guidelines section. Please refer to the Solicitation Package for complete budget guidelines and formatting instructions.

Announcement Title and Number

All correspondence with the Bureau concerning this RFP should reference the above title and number ECA/PE/C–00–26.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT: The Youth Programs Division, Office of Citizen Exchanges, ECA/PE/C/PY, Room 568, U.S. Department of State, 301 4th Street, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20547, telephone (202) 619-6299; fax (202) 619-5311; E-mail clantz@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 Bureau Program Officer Carolyn Lantz 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, 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 website at <http://e.usia.gov/education/rfps>. 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, D.C. time on Friday, February 11, 2000. 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 proposal, one fully-tabbed copy, and seven copies including tabs A-E and appendices should be sent to: U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, Ref.: *ECA/PE/C-00-26*, Program Management, ECA/EX/PM, Room 336, 301 4th Street, S.W., Washington, D.C. 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. The Bureau will transmit these files electronically to the Public Affairs section at the US Embassy for its review, with the goal of reducing the time it takes to get embassy 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 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 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>.

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 Public Diplomacy section 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 Bureau 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 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, resource materials and follow-up activities).
6. Institutional Capacity and Record: 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 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. Follow-on Activities: Proposals should provide a plan for continued follow-on activity (without Bureau support) ensuring that Bureau supported programs are not isolated events.
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 are 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/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.

10. Value to U.S.-Partner Country Relations: Proposed projects should receive positive assessments by the U.S. Department of State's geographic area desk and overseas officers of program need, potential impact, and significance in the partner country(ies).

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 the FREEDOM Support Act of 1992.

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: December 14, 1999.

Evelyn S. Lieberman,

Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy, U.S. Department of State.

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

[Public Notice 3181]

FY 2000 Ron Brown Fellowship Program; Request for Proposals

SUMMARY: Subject to the availability of funds for FY 2000, the Office of Academic Programs of the United States Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) announces an open competition for the Ron Brown Fellowship Program. The Bureau solicits detailed proposals from U.S. public or private non-profit organizations with at least four years of experience in conducting international academic exchange programs and meet the provisions described in IRS regulation 26 CAR 1.501c to develop and administer the FY 2000 Ron Brown Fellowship Program. Preference will be given to organizations that have placement experience at the graduate level and a demonstrated ability to conduct academic exchange programs. The level of funding for FY 2000 will be approximately \$2,500,000. Organizations are invited to submit a proposal to conduct the final selection (from a pool of well-qualified candidates), placement, orientation, monitoring, evaluation and follow-on/alumni activities for approximately 42 Fellows from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), Romania, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia, Kosovo and Montenegro) (FRY), and Slovenia. Participants will be enrolled in two-year degree programs, or in one-year non-degree professional development programs (except for the one-year degree programs in law) at accredited U.S. academic institutions for study at the Masters' degree level in the fields of business administration, economics, educational administration, environmental management, journalism/mass communication, law, public administration, and public policy. Preference will be given to proposals with budgets that do not exceed \$2,500,000.

Please note: This program will not support Ph.D. studies. Programs and projects must conform with Bureau requirements and guidelines outlined in the Solicitation Package. Bureau projects and programs are subject to the availability of funds.

Authority

The funding authority for the Ron Brown Fellowship Program is provided through the Support for East European Democracy (SEED) Act of 1989, targeted to advance the democratic and economic transition of Central and Eastern Europe. In order to comply with mandates for this program, the grantee organization is required to keep track of the spending for each of the participating countries under the FY 2000 Ron Brown Fellowship Program. Funds allocated for one country should not be used to support Fellows from other countries. Specific country allocations will be provided at the time of the award.

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."

Program Information

Overview

The FY 2000 Ron Brown Fellowship Program will provide funding for approximately 42 fellowships to citizens from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, FYROM, Romania, FRY, and Slovenia. Fellowships will be distributed according to specified country-quotas. The goal of the Ron Brown program is to provide an opportunity for university graduates and young professionals who are selected through open merit-based competition in the aforementioned European countries to participate in quality graduate study programs at accredited universities throughout the United States. The fields of study are: business administration, economics, educational administration, environmental management, journalism/mass communication, law, public administration, and public policy. Fellowships will be awarded for one-year, non-degree professional development programs, except for one-year degree programs in law, or for two-year degree granting programs. Program