

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 USIA procedures.

Dated: October 22, 1997.

Robert Earle,

Deputy Associate Director for Educational and Cultural Affairs.

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UNITED STATES INFORMATION AGENCY

Summer Institute for Foreign Policy Officials: The United States Today

ACTION: Notice—Request for Proposals (RFP).

SUMMARY: The U.S. Information Agency's Branch for the Study of the United States announces an open competition for an assistance award program entitled: "Summer Institute for Foreign Policy Officials: The United States Today." Public and private non-profit organizations meeting the provisions described in IRS regulation 26 CFR 1.501(c) may apply to develop and implement a three-week post-graduate level program designed for a multinational group of 18 experienced mid-level foreign affairs professionals. *The program is intended to provide participants with a deeper understanding of American life and institutions through an examination of contemporary political, economic, social and cultural issues, with special reference to domestic trends and issues in American life and their relationship to U.S. policies and actions in the international arena. Tentative program dates are any three week period between May 15 and July 31, 1998.*

USIA is seeking detailed proposals from colleges, universities, consortia of colleges and universities, and other not-for-profit academic organizations that have an established reputation in a scholarly discipline related to the subject of the institute and that can demonstrate expertise in conducting post-graduate programs for foreign educators. *Applicant institutions must have a minimum of four years experience in conducting international exchange programs.* The project director or one of the key program staff responsible for the academic program must have an advanced degree in a

relevant discipline. Staff escorts traveling under the USIA cooperative agreement must be U.S. citizens with demonstrated qualifications for this service.

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."

Programs and projects must conform with Agency requirements and guidelines outlined in the Solicitation Package. USIA projects and programs are subject to the availability of funds.

Announcement Name and Number: All communications with USIA concerning this announcement should refer to the above title and reference number E/AAS-98-04.

Deadline for Proposals: All copies must be received at the U.S. Information Agency by 5:00 p.m. Washington D.C. time on Friday, January 16, 1998. Faxed documents will not be accepted, nor will documents postmarked by the due date but received at a later date. It is the responsibility of each applicant to ensure that proposal submissions arrive by the deadline.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: U.S. Information Agency, Office of Academic Programs, Branch of the Study of the United States, E/AAS—Room 252, 301 4th Street, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20547, Attention: William Bate, Telephone number: (202) 619-4557, Fax number: (202) 619-6790, Internet address: wbate@usia.gov.

Please use the above information to request a Solicitation Package containing more detailed award criteria, required application forms, and standard guidelines for preparing proposals (including specific information on budget preparation).

Please specify USIA Program Officer William Bate on all inquiries and correspondence. Interested applicants should read the complete **Federal Register** announcement before addressing inquiries to the office listed above or submitting proposals. Once the

RFP deadline has passed, USIA staff may not discuss this competition in any way with applicants until after the Bureau 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://www.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 received via the Bureau's "Grants Information Fax on Demand System", which is accessed by calling 202/401-7616. Please request a "Catalog" of available documents and order numbers when first entering the system.

Submissions

Applicants must follow all instructions given in the Solicitation Package. The original and 13 copies of the complete application should be sent to: U.S. Information Agency, Ref.: E/AAS-98-04, Office of Grants Management, E/XE, Room 326, 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. This material must be provided in ASCII text (DOS) format with a maximum line length of 65 characters.

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 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 account for advancement of this goal in their program contents, to the full extent deemed feasible.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Overview and Objectives

"The Summer Institute for Foreign Policy Officials: The United States Today," is intended to provide mid-career foreign affairs professionals with the opportunity to increase their understanding of the politics, society, economy, and culture of the United States at the end of the 20th century. Our working assumption is that the foreign policy decisions of the United States and its actions in the international arena are to a significant degree a reflection of fundamental, albeit shifting, cultural values, embedded in U.S. institutions, public and private, and that a fuller understanding of those institutions will lead in turn to a better understanding of U.S. policies and actions abroad. Accordingly, the Institute should provide participants with both a broad-gauged historical overview of major U.S. institutional and cultural trends—political, economic, social, cultural, religious—and the opportunity for a more intensive treatment and discussion of particular issues and themes that might be subsumed under each of the major "institutional clusters" above, e.g., the role of the Presidency and the Congress in the making of foreign policy; immigration and labor in the United States; church, state and American politics; ethnicity, race and the American identity; and the social impact of technology and the media, to mention only a few of the possible areas for study and discussion. Throughout the seminar, the program should seek to explore how certain aspects of the national debate on political, social and cultural issues bear on the formation and development of American policies in the international arena. At the program's end, participants should have a fuller and more nuanced understanding of the diversity and complexity of contemporary American life, as well as a greater appreciation of the manifold ways in which contemporary American institutional arrangements and cultural values influence U.S. actions abroad.

Accordingly, the Institute should be designed as a coherent, thoughtfully integrated and academically stimulating program that presents a multi-dimensional view of the United States through a series of lectures, readings,

panel presentations, and round table discussions. While the program is intended to be an intensive academic seminar designed for a nonacademic audience, the program organizers are encouraged to include a mix of presenters, including university scholars as well as other professionals from government, the private sector, and the media.

The program should be three weeks in length, including at least two weeks of residency at a U.S. college or university, and, depending on the program's design, an integrated study tour segment not to exceed one week in length. Part of that study tour should include a trip to Washington, D.C., where the program content should extend and complement the residency portion of the program. With the exception of the Washington segment, alternately, organizers might choose to spend the entire three-week period in campus residence, with occasional week-end or single-day trips to relevant institutions, sites and cities near the host institution.

Program Dates

Tentative program dates are any three-week period between May 15 and July 31, 1998. The institute must be a total of 21 program days in length. USIA will make every effort to award the approved cooperative agreement by March 1, 1998.

Participants

The program should be designed for 18 highly-motivated and experienced mid-level professionals whose day-to-day work focuses on some aspect of their country's bi-lateral relationship with the United States. Many will come from their country's Ministry of Foreign Affairs; others will be professionals employed by universities of other non-governmental organizations concerned with international and foreign affairs issues. While participants will not be required to possess either a formal or in-depth knowledge of American life and institutions, most are likely to have a working understanding of the United States by virtue of their professional work. Some may have had substantial prior study or work experience in U.S. Participants will be drawn from all regions of the world and will be fluent in English.

Participants will be nominated by U.S. Information Service posts abroad, and selected by the staff of USIA's Branch of the Study of the United States in Washington, D.C. USIA will cover all international travel costs directly.

Guidelines

The conception, design, structure and, ultimately, the content of the institute program is entirely the responsibility of the organizers. However, given the many possible approaches to the development of such a program, organizers are expected to submit proposals that articulate in concrete detail how they intend to organize and implement the institute.

Please refer to the Solicitation Package for further details on program design and implementation, as well as additional information on all other requirements.

Proposed Budget

Unless special circumstances warrant, based on a group of 18 participants, the total USIA-funded budget (program and administrative) should not exceed \$145,000, and USIA-funded administrative costs as defined in the budget details section of the solicitation package should not exceed \$38,500. Justifications for any costs above these amounts must be clearly indicated in the proposal submission. Any grants awarded to eligible organizations with less than four years of experience in conducting international exchange programs will be limited to \$60,000. Applicant proposals should try to maximize cost-sharing in all facets of the program and to stimulate U.S. private sector, including foundation and corporate, support. Applicants must submit a comprehensive line item budget for the entire program, based on the specific guidance provided in the Solicitation Package. The Agency reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposal budgets in accordance with the needs of the program, and availability of U.S. government funding.

Please refer to the "POGI" in the Solicitation Package for complete budget guidelines and formatting instructions for the institute program.

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. Eligible proposals will be forwarded to panels of USIA officers for advisory review. All eligible proposals will be reviewed by the program office, as well as the USIA Geographic Area Offices. Proposals may be reviewed by the Office of the General Counsel or by other Agency elements. Funding decisions are at the discretion of the USIA 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. *Overall Quality:* Proposals should exhibit substance and originality, consonant with the highest standards of American teaching and scholarship. Program should reflect an overall design whose various elements are coherently and thoughtfully integrated. Lectures and panels, taken as a whole, should offer a balanced presentation of issues, reflecting both the continuity of the American experience as well as the diversity and dynamism inherent in it.

2. *Program Planning:* Proposals should demonstrate careful planning. The organization and structure of the institute should be clearly delineated and be fully responsive to all program objectives. The travel component should be an integral and substantive part of the program, reinforcing and complementing its academic segment.

3. *Institutional Capacity:* Proposed personnel, including faculty and administrative staff as well as outside presenters, should be fully qualified to achieve the project's goals. Library and media resources should be accessible to participants; housing, transportation and other logistical arrangements should be fully adequate to the needs of participants and should be conducive to a collegial atmosphere.

4. *Diversity:* Proposals should demonstrate the recipient's commitment to promoting the awareness and understanding of diversity throughout the program. This can be accomplished through documentation, such as a written statement, summarizing past and/or on-going activities and efforts that further the principle of diversity within the organization and its activities. Program activities that address this issue should be highlighted.

5. *Experience:* The proposal should demonstrate an institutional record of successful exchange program activity, indicating the experience that the organization and its professional staff have had in working with foreign educators.

6. *Evaluation and Follow-up:* The proposal should include a plan for evaluating activities during the Institute and at its conclusion. Proposals should comment on provisions made for follow-up with returned grantees as a

means of establishing longer-term individual and institutional linkages.

7. *Administration and Management:* The proposals should indicate evidence of continuous on-site administrative and managerial capacity as well as the means by which program activities will be implemented.

8. *Cost Effectiveness:* The proposals should maximize cost-sharing through direct institutional contributions, in-kind support, and other private sector support. Overhead and administrative components of the proposal, including salaries and honoraria, should be kept as low as possible.

Notice

The terms and conditions published in this RFP are binding and may not be modified by any USIA representative. Explanatory information provided by the Agency 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 Agency 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, and allocated and committed through internal USIA procedures.

Dated: October 24, 1997.

Robert L. Earle,

Deputy Associate Director for Educational and Cultural Affairs.

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DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

[OMB Control No. 2900-0582]

Proposed Information Collection Activity: Proposed Collection; Comment Request; Reinstatement

AGENCY: Office Financial Management, Office of Management, Department of Veterans Affairs.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: The Office of Financial Management (OFM), Office of Management, Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), is announcing an opportunity for public comment on the proposed collection of certain information by the agency. Under the Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA) of

1995, Federal agencies are required to publish notice in the **Federal Register** concerning each proposed collection of information, including each proposed reinstatement, without change, of a previously approved collection for which approval has expired, and allow 60 days for public comment in response to the notice. This notice solicits comments on requirements relating to Federal agencies collecting Internal Revenue Service (IRS) 1099 tax reporting and Federal 1057 socio-economic information on Federal I.M.P.A.C. (International Merchant Purchase Authorization Card) credit card transactions.

DATES: Written comments and recommendations on the proposed collection of information should be received on or before December 29, 1997.

ADDRESSES: Submit written comments on the collection of information to Martha Orr, Office of Financial Management (047F), Office of Management, Department of Veterans Affairs, 810 Vermont Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20420. Please refer to "OMB Control No. 2900-0582" in any correspondence.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Martha Orr at (202) 273-9447.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Under the PRA of 1995 (Public Law 104-13; 44 U.S.C. 3501-3520), Federal agencies must obtain approval from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for each collection of information they conduct or sponsor. This request for comment is being made pursuant to Section 3506(c)(2)(A) of the PRA.

With respect to the following collection of information, comments are invited on: (1) Whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of functions, including whether the information will have practical utility; (2) the accuracy of the burden estimate of the proposed collection of information; (3) ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and (4) ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on respondents, including through the use of automated collection techniques or the use of other forms of information technology.

Title Form Numbers: Request for IRS 1099-MISC Tax Collection and Federal 1057 Socio-Economic Status, VA Form Letter 4-555.

OMB Control Number: 2900-0582.

Type of Review: Extension of a currently approved collection.

Abstract: Federal agencies are required to collect Internal Revenue