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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

[Public Notice 4318]

Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs; South Pacific Scholarship Program

ACTION: Request for proposals.

SUMMARY: The Office of Academic Programs of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs announces an open competition for the *South Pacific Scholarship Program*. Public and private non-profit organizations meeting the provisions described in Internal Revenue Code section 26 U.S.C. 501(c)(3) may submit proposals to organize and carry out an academic exchange program for students from the sovereign nations of the South Pacific. The grantee will be responsible for all aspects of the program, including publicity and recruitment of applicants; merit-based competitive selection; placement of students at an accredited U.S. academic institution; student travel to the U.S.; orientation; up to four years of U.S. degree study at the bachelor's or master's level; enrichment programming; advising, monitoring and support; pre-return activities; evaluation; and follow-up. The duration of the grant will be up to five years, beginning in summer 2003. The FY 2003 funding level is approximately \$500,000.

Program Information

Overview: The South Pacific Scholarship Program was established by the United States Congress to provide opportunities for U.S. study to students from South Pacific nations in fields important for the region's future development. Public Law 103-236 enacted on April 30, 1994 authorized academic scholarships to qualified students from the sovereign nations of the South Pacific region to pursue undergraduate and postgraduate study at institutions of higher education in the United States.

This program supports increased mutual understanding between the people of the U.S. and those of the South Pacific Islands. Students from the following nations are eligible to apply for these scholarships: Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Niue, Papua New Guinea,

Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.

Requirements and Implementation

The requirements for administration of this program are outlined in further detail in this document and in the Program Objectives, Goals and Implementation (POGI) document. The proposal should respond to each item in the POGI.

Fields of study under the program are based on recommendations from Department of State regional bureau representatives and U.S. embassies abroad and have included public administration, journalism, education, environmental studies, agriculture, political science, business and other fields. The grantee should arrange for the students' enrollment at accredited U.S. institutions of higher education where a full liberal arts curriculum (including social sciences, humanities and sciences) is available. Students selected for these scholarships enroll in four year undergraduate degree programs, or in master's degree programs. The latter have generally involved one year of preparatory U.S. study followed by up to two years of formal master's degree study. This grant award will cover the entire program in the U.S. for the students selected. Students are expected to return home following the completion of their U.S. programs.

Program Components

1. Planning, implementation and monitoring of entire exchange program, based on guidance from the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. The proposal must demonstrate an understanding of the South Pacific region and culture and close attention to the needs of students coming to the U.S. from the region.

2. Publicity, recruitment and application process for the program. The proposal should indicate specifically what methods will be used to carry out this process for the South Pacific Islands. Recruitment should particularly emphasize outreach beyond capital cities. Bureau sponsorship should be clearly indicated in all materials.

3. Merit-based selection of principals and alternates. The proposal should explain how the recruitment, application and selection processes will ensure that all qualified individuals are encouraged to apply and that candidates are selected solely on the basis of merit. A pool of qualified alternates should be established that may be drawn on in subsequent years, should an additional place in the program become available.

4. Placement and enrollment of students at an accredited U.S. college/university appropriate to their academic and future professional goals. Students may be placed together at the same institution or at different institutions that offer programs that correspond to their academic and professional goals. The proposal should explain how identification with the South Pacific Scholarship program will be established and maintained among students.

5. Pre-arrival information for students, assistance with the visa application process, travel to the U.S., arrival.

6. Orientation and settling in at U.S. institution. The proposal should indicate how the applicant will prepare the students for their exchange experience.

7. Provision of stipends and coverage of other appropriate living/study/enrichment expenses for participants throughout their program. Provision of tax withholding and health insurance.

8. On-going monitoring, academic advising, and general support for students throughout the program. The proposal should indicate what support services will be provided.

9. Management of cross-cultural issues, special situations and emergencies.

10. Opportunities for transfers and exchanges to other U.S. universities during the program to diversify the students' experience and fulfill academic goals.

11. Obtaining of tuition waivers, reduced fees, and other forms of cost-sharing.

12. Cultural/community enrichment for students about U.S. society and culture.

13. Internships and professional development.

14. Pre-return and reentry activities.

15. Evaluation and follow-on including alumni activities.

16. Fiscal Management of any sub-contractors.

17. Compliance with J-1 visa requirements regarding health insurance for participants.

Guidelines

The amount of the grant award in FY 2003 is expected to be approximately \$500,000. The award will be made in Summer 2003. The grantee should begin planning immediately for recruitment at that time. Participants are expected to begin their U.S. study programs between January 2004 and Fall 2004. Proposal budgets should include all costs for students to complete the entire program of degree study in the U.S. The proposal should indicate the number of students who will be supported for degree