

inquiries or submitting proposals. Once the RFGP 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://exchanges.state.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, DC time on Monday, April 7, 2003. 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 8 copies of the application should be sent to: U.S. Department of State, SA-44, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, Ref.: ECA/PE/C/PY-03-28, Program Management, ECA/EX/PM, Room 336, 301 4th Street, SW., Washington, DC 20547.

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," the Bureau "shall take appropriate steps to provide opportunities for participation in such programs to human rights and democracy leaders of such countries." Public Law 106-113 requires that the governments of the countries described above do not have inappropriate

influence in the selection process. Proposals should reflect advancement of these goals in their program contents, to the full extent deemed feasible.

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 State Department Geographic Area Office and Public Diplomacy section at the U.S. embassy 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 Department 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. Proposals should display an understanding of the goals of the program, as reflected in the priorities of this RFGP. Exchange activities should ensure sufficient use of program resources. Proposals should demonstrate a commitment to excellence and creativity in the implementation and management of the program.

2. *Program planning:* A detailed agenda and relevant work plan should explain how objectives will be achieved and should include a timetable for completion of major tasks. The substance of workshops, seminars and exchange activities should be described in detail. Responsibilities of in-country partners should be clearly described.

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. *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 schools and participants, program venue and program evaluation) and program content. Applicants should refer to the Bureau's Diversity, Freedom and Democracy Guidelines in the Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI).

5. *Institutional Capacity/Record/Ability:* Applicants should demonstrate knowledge of each country's educational environment and display significant experience in developing school-based Internet programs. Proposals should exhibit an institutional record of successful exchange programs, including responsible fiscal management and full compliance with all reporting requirements as determined by the Bureau's Grants Division. Proposed personnel and institutional resources should be adequate and appropriate to achieve the program goals and objectives.

6. *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. Applicants should provide baseline data and questionnaires for use in surveying schools/participants to facilitate the demonstration of results. Applicants may describe any experience conducting results-oriented evaluations.

7. *Follow-on Activities:* Proposals should provide a strategy for the continuation of the schools' Internet access and online linkages without the Bureau's financial support. Applicants should detail how exchange participants will share newly-acquired knowledge and skills with others.

8. *Cost-effectiveness/cost sharing:* The overhead and administrative components of the proposal, including salaries and honoraria, should be kept as low as possible. While lower "per school" figures will be more competitive, the Bureau expects all figures to be realistic. 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.

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