

Department of State - Global Affairs

Program Office: Public Affairs Section, U.S. Embassy, Kabul, Afghanistan
Funding Opportunity Title: **Educational Advising, Career Advising and Testing Center in Kabul, Afghanistan**
Announcement Type: Cooperative Agreement
Funding Opportunity Number: SCAKAB-12-AW-018-SCA-08102012
Deadline for Applications: September 10, 2012
CFDA 19.501- Public Diplomacy Programs for Afghanistan and Pakistan

ELIGIBILITY

Eligibility is open to registered Afghan NGOs or private Institutes of Higher Education located in Kabul, Afghanistan with prior experience in project management and/or Education Advising Services.

Cost Sharing or Matching

This program requires cost sharing of at least 10% by the second year of the agreement.

Other Special Eligibility Criteria

Not Applicable.

CONTACT INFORMATION

- A) For questions relating to Grants.gov, please call the Grants.gov Contact Center at 1-800-518-4726.
- B) For assistance with the requirements of this solicitation, contact **Pedro Palugyai**, Grants Manager, Public Affairs Section, U.S. Embassy, Kabul, Afghanistan, at: Email: KabulPDProposals@state.gov (*Preferred method of communication*)

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Public Affairs Section (PAS) of the U.S. Embassy in Kabul, Afghanistan is pleased to announce an open competition for assistance awards through this Request for Proposals (RFP) for a cooperative agreement to manage an Education Advising Center in Kabul, Afghanistan from September 30, 2012 to September 29, 2015. This grant is intended for an Afghan Non Governmental Organization (NGO) or private Higher Education Institution to establish an educational advising center to provide advising and training to students who wish to pursue further study opportunities in the United States, and to provide career mentoring and job-searching skills for those students prior to and upon their return to Afghanistan. The center will be managed jointly by the grantee and the Embassy's Education USA Adviser. In addition to educational advising and test preparation courses, the recipient of this grant will provide testing services and provide a venue to Embassy Education USA advising activities. These activities will supplement the activities undertaken by the Kabul Education USA Advising Center located at the U.S. Embassy in Kabul. (see attached Introduction to Education USA for further background.)

It will support an Education center to do the following:

1. Increase awareness of scholarship opportunities in the United States, including the Fulbright program.
2. Increase the pool of candidates for all education exchange opportunities by raising awareness of programs and develop specific plans to target under-served populations, such as female candidates. Staff of the Center should represent the gender makeup of the population to ensure appropriate outreach.
3. Improve standardized test-taking proficiency of students and candidates, by providing English classes and test taking preparation to increase candidates' scores on required tests.
4. Provide standardized testing services in an on-site or nearby facility that meets the requirements of and is authorized by the test vendors, such as Education Testing Services (ETS).
5. Establish a comprehensive library in the advising center with computers connected to internet and updated test preparation, essay writing and other educational advising reference materials.
6. Assist candidates and students in planning their academic and career pursuits.
7. Liaise with Public Affairs education exchange staff and Education USA Adviser to hold training and advising sessions.
8. Host Public Affairs Section events such as Alumni gatherings, Fulbright and other exchange programs interviews and pre-departure events.
9. Disseminate promotional materials on all U.S. exchange programs.
10. Provide a room with computer, printer and internet for the Public Affairs Section's Education USA Advisor to conduct group and individual advising sessions.

The Education Advising Center should improve clients' preparedness for study in the U.S., including by developing skills in resume writing, essay writing, and interviewing. It should provide English language instruction and TOEFL, GRE, GMAT, ACT or SAT preparation classes. It will also provide testing services.

It will support a Career Center to do the following:

1. Services: Offer courses in basic career development, career exploration, and successful networking; provide assessments via computerized self-help surveys (My Plan, Strong Interest Survey, Myers-Briggs); assistance with choosing an area of study, researching graduate programs, and deciding on a career path via an advisor or mentor.
2. Make available resources to include online recruiting and job postings, mentorship programs with employers, network of mentors and electronic resources and guides for job searching.
3. Offer a regular schedule of events, to include a part-time jobs fair, employer information sessions, interview preparation sessions; resume, essay and application writing workshops/counseling; workshops on interviewing and test-taking strategies; and assistance in focusing on academic major and developing marketable skills.
4. Offer assistance with developing the experience necessary to find a rewarding job, to include information on internships/job shadowing programs with professionals in different fields; informational interviews; and how to volunteer in a related field.
5. Job placement for alumni of U.S. government alumni, specifically Fulbright grantees, 50-80 students per year who have received a Master of Arts or Ph.D in the United states. This would include contacting current exchange participants in the U.S. to provide one-on-one job placement services in anticipation of their return to Afghanistan. The organization selected will maintain close contact with the U.S. Embssy regarding exchange/alumni participation and outreach.
6. Most importantly, Career Center staff must develop and cultivate relationships with potential employers. In conjunction with the U.S. Embassy, staff will target an agreed number of employers per month to contact and to add to database; staff will also target an agreed number of students per month.

The organization or institution must permit students from outside their institution to utilize their services.

A successful proposal will include:

- A detailed plan on how the organization will turn this into a sustainable, commercial operation after September 29, 2015, including details plans to increase cost sharing over the three year period of the cooperative agreement to achieve financial independence when the agreement concludes.
- A detailed project plan for implementation of financial independence.
- Detailed description on services and activities that will be provided through the Education Advising and Career Center
- A detailed budget on expenditures by year and budget category with supporting documentation
- CVs of all key personnel

Summary of professional experience/background in this area of expertise

II. BACKGROUND

Objectives

Proposals should address three distinct activities:

1. Educational advising services
2. Career advising services
3. Standardized Testing Services such as preparation for and test administration of TOEFL, GRE, GMAT etc
4. Relationship with US Embassy Public Affairs Exchange staff and Higher Education Institutions in Kabul to increase access to educational and career advising services and to develop candidates for exchanges

The award Recipient shall provide the following overall support:

- Operational and program management for the Education Advising and Testing Center in/around District 6 – the academic area -- of Kabul city that is accessible to students and professional population.
- On-going, regular communication with US Embassy Public Affairs Exchange staff and co-management with Education USA Adviser to facilitate events in support of exchange programs and provide a full range of advising services.
- Submission of itemized quarterly reports to the U.S. Embassy on program activities and budgets for each ELC.
- Submission of itemized quarterly financial reports and an end-of-year full report.

The U.S. Embassy Public Affairs Section (PAS) shall provide the following support:

- In cooperation with Recipient, coordinate advising, recruitment, training, and test preparation.
- Implement Education USA advising services within the Education Advising and Testing Center
- Assign a Project Coordinator for the management of the Education Advising and Testing Center to closely work with the Recipient as a co-manager.
- Review quarterly budget expenditures and narrative progress reports.

III. ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Eligibility is open to registered Afghan NGOs or private Institutes of Higher Education in Kabul, Afghanistan with prior experience in project management and/or Education Advising Services.

Applicants are not required to include funding from other donors. However, applications that include additional in-kind and/or cash contributions from non-U.S. Government sources will be more competitive, since cost-sharing demonstrates a strong commitment to the planned activities and will be considered to show greater cost effectiveness. Cost-sharing of 10% must be in place by year two of the cooperative agreement.

IV. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

Award Period: 3 years

Award Amount: The award ceiling is set at \$1,000,000.

Application Submission Process: Applicants must submit proposals electronically using Grants.gov or submit proposals to PAS Kabul directly at: KabulPDProposals@state.gov. If proposals are submitted directly to KabulPDProposals@state.gov, please include the Funding Opportunity Title and Funding Opportunity Number in the email subject line. Thorough instructions on the Grants.gov application process are available at <http://www.grants.gov>. For questions relating to Grants.gov, please call the Grants.gov Contact Center at 1-800-518-4726. For questions about this solicitation, contact Pedro Palugyai, Grants Manager, Public Affairs Section, U.S. Embassy, Kabul, Afghanistan, at:

Email: KabulPDProposals@state.gov (*Preferred method of communication*)

Application Deadline: All applications must be submitted on or before September 10, 2012 11:59 p.m. Kabul time. Applications submitted after 11:59 p.m. will be ineligible for consideration. **Begin the application process early**, as this will allow time to address any technical difficulties that may arise in advance of the deadline. There will be no exceptions to this application deadline.

All applicants utilizing Grants.gov must register with Grants.gov prior to submitting an application. **Registering with Grants.gov is a one-time process; however, it could take as long as two weeks to have the registration validated and confirmed. Please begin the registration process immediately to ensure that the process is completed well in advance of the deadline for applications.** Until that process is complete, you will not be issued a user password for Grants.gov, which is required for application submission. There are four steps that you must complete before you are able to register: (1) Obtain a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number from Dun & Bradstreet (if your organization does not have one already) by calling 1-866-705-5711; (2) Register with Central Contractor Registry (CCR); (3) Register yourself as an Authorized Organization Representative (AOR); and (4) Be authorized as an AOR by your organization. For more information, go to www.grants.gov. Please note that your CCR registration must be annually renewed. Failure to renew your CCR registration may prohibit submission of a grant application through Grants.gov.

Application Content: Applicants must follow the RFP instructions and conditions contained herein and supply all information required. **Failure to furnish all information or comply with stated requirements will result in disqualification from the competition.** Applicants must set forth full, accurate, and complete information as

required by this RFP. The penalty for making false statements in proposals to the USG is prescribed on 18 U.S.C.1001.

Proposals may not exceed 10 double-spaced pages in 12-point, Times New Roman font with 1-inch margins. This requirement excludes the allowable appendices, which are identified in Section 6 below. The proposal must consist of the following:

Section 1 - Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424):

This form can be found on-line at: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants/forms.html>.

Section 2 - Abstract:

The abstract is limited to 300 words in length. It must provide a summary of the project to be undertaken, expected timeline, and cost.

Section 3 – Implementation Plan:

The applicant must specify the goals and objectives of the project. The steps involved -- from design to procurement to training -- should be described in sufficient detail to show how objectives and goals will be met. This section should also describe how success will be measured via performance indicators. This section must include a time-task plan that clearly identifies the objectives and major activities.

Section 4 - Organizational Capability:

Applications must include a clear description of the applicant's management structure, previous experience with higher level education in Afghanistan, project management, and/or Education Advising Centers in Afghanistan, experience working with Afghan government institutions, and the organizational experience and background in Afghanistan related to the proposed activities. Besides information about the organization as a whole, this section must also identify the proposed management structure and staffing plan for the proposed project.

Section 5 - Appendices:

The proposal submission must include two appendices, with a third, optional appendix to be submitted at the discretion of the applicant. Only the appendices listed below may be included as part of the application:

- a) **Budget (Required)** – the budget must identify the total amount of funding requested, with a breakdown of amounts to be spent in the following budget categories: personnel; fringe benefits; travel; equipment; supplies; consultants/contracts; other direct costs; and indirect costs. The budget may not exceed 1 page in length. A separate narrative is required to be submitted to provide explanation on the amounts requested. The Department of State must determine that the costs paid for this award are reasonable, allowable, and allocable to the proposed project activities. This will consist of a review of the Budget to determine if the overall costs are realistic for the work to be performed, if the costs reflect the applicant's understanding of the allowable cost principles established by OMB Circular A-122, and if the costs are consistent with the

program narrative. Applicants are also advised that as per OMB Circular A-133 that a financial audit is required for any award over \$500,000 awarded in one year.

- b) **Resume (Required)** – a resume, not to exceed 1 page in length, must be included for the proposed key staff person, such as the Project Director. If an individual for this type of position has not been identified, the applicant may submit a 1-page position description, identifying the qualifications and skills required for that position, in lieu of a resume.
- c) **Letters of Intent (Required)** –Letters of intent should be included with the proposal. The letters must identify the type of relationship to be entered into (formal or informal), the roles and responsibilities of each partner in relation to the proposed project activities, and the expected result of the partnership. Please note that these are not letters of support, and should only be included for those organizations that will play an active role in the project, including those that receive financial support through the project budget. The individual letters cannot exceed 1 page in length, and applicants are limited to submitting up to five letters per proposal.

V. AWARD SELECTION CRITERIA

Evaluation Criteria: Applicants should note that the following criteria (1) serve as a standard against which all proposals will be evaluated, and (2) serve to identify the significant matters that should be addressed in all proposals. The USG will award grants to the applicants whose offers represent the best value to the USG on the basis of technical merit and cost.

Each application submitted under this announcement will be evaluated and rated on the basis of the following evaluation criteria. The criteria are designed to assess the quality of the proposed project, and to determine the likelihood of its success. The criteria are closely related and are considered as a whole in judging the overall quality of an application. Applications will be reviewed on the basis of their fullness, coherence, clarity, and attention to detail. Points are awarded only to applications that are responsive within the context of this program announcement.

Applicants must submit a full project description in accordance with the following instructions and the specified evaluation criteria. The instructions give a broad overview of what the project description should include while the evaluation criteria provide details of more program-specific information that is needed.

Cover Sheet: Provide a summary of the project description (no more than two pages) with reference to the amount and duration of the funding request.

Narrative: Outline a plan of action that describes the scope and detail of how the proposed work will be accomplished. Account for all functions or activities identified in the application. Cite factors that might accelerate or decelerate the work and state reasons for

taking the proposed approach rather than alternatives. Describe any unusual features of the project, such as design or technological innovations, reductions in cost or time, or extraordinary social and community involvement.

Provide quantitative monthly or quarterly projections of the accomplishments to be achieved for each function or activity in such terms as the number of people to be served and the number of activities accomplished. When accomplishments cannot be quantified by activity or function, list them in chronological order to show the schedule of accomplishments and their target dates.

Goals and Objectives – The project is likely to provide maximum impact in achieving the proposed results and the organization. The project addresses one or more of the U.S. Embassy Kabul Public Affairs Section priorities outlined previously. Applicant demonstrates it is able to measure program success against key indicators and provide milestones to indicate progress toward Public Affairs Section goals. **(30 points)**

Strengths and Innovation – Applicant clearly describes how its proposal will address the requested program within the proposed time frame and articulates an innovative strategy or plan. The project builds civil society leadership and capacity, and demonstrates sustainable capacity building. **(30 points)**

Organizational Capacity – The organization has expertise in one or more of U.S. Embassy Kabul Public Affairs Section priorities and demonstrates the ability to perform the proposed activities. Where partners are described, the applicant details each partner’s respective role and provides curriculum vitas (CVs) for persons responsible for the project and financial administration. Each key person responsible for the proposed project and its financial administration is listed and a CV for these persons is provided. **(30 points)**

Budget and Budget Justification – The budget and narrative justification are reasonable in relation to the proposed activities and anticipated results and the plan for services is realistic. Costs shall be evaluated for realism, control practices, and efficiency. The Department of State must determine that the costs paid for this award are reasonable, allowable, and allocable to the proposed project activities. This will consist of a review of the Budget to determine if the overall costs are realistic for the work to be performed, if the costs reflect the applicant’s understanding of the allowable cost principles established by OMB Circular A-122, and if the costs are consistent with the program narrative. Applicants are advised that as per OMB Circular A-133 a financial audit is required for anything over \$500K awarded in one year. **(10 points)**

VI. AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

Award Notices: The grant shall be written, signed, awarded, and administered by the Grants Officer. The Grants Officer is the Government official delegated the authority by the U.S. Department of State Procurement Executive to write, award, and administer grants and cooperative agreements. The assistance award agreement is the authorizing document and it will be provided to the Recipient through either mail or facsimile

transmission. Organizations whose applications will not be funded will also be notified in writing.

Anticipated Time to Award: Applicants should expect to be notified if their proposal has been selected for award within 30 days after the submission deadline. PAS Kabul will provide information at the point of notification about any modification to the proposal or plan of work that will be required to finalize the cooperative agreement.

Issuance of this RFP does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the U.S. government, nor does it commit the U.S. government to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of proposals. Further, the U.S. government reserves the right to reject any or all proposals received.

- **Reporting Requirements:** Grantees are required to submit quarterly program progress and financial reports throughout the project period. Progress and financial reports are due 30 days after the reporting period. Final programmatic and financial reports are due 90 days after the close of the project period.

VII. DISCLAIMER

If a proposal is selected for funding, the Department of State has no obligation to provide any additional future funding in connection with the award. Renewal of an award to increase funding or extend the period of performance is at the total discretion of the Department of State.

Annex A: Additional Background

Introduction to EducationUSA

EducationUSA is a global network of more than 400 advising centers supported by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs at the U.S. Department of State. The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) promotes mutual understanding between the United States and other countries through personal and professional ties between private citizens in the United States and abroad, as well as by presenting U.S. history, society, art and culture in all of its diversity to overseas audiences. U.S. and foreign students alike can prepare for leadership roles in today's world through an international education.

Kabul EducationUSA Advising Center (KEAC)

Introduction:

Kabul EducationUSA Advising Center (KEAC) is financed by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the United States Department of State and is based in the Public Affairs Section of the U.S. Embassy in Kabul. The center is affiliated with a global network of more than 400 advising centers in 170 countries around the world. For more information about U.S. educational information centers please see our website at www.educationusa.state.gov.

Our Mission:

Kabul's EducationUSA Advising Center actively promotes U.S. higher education by offering accurate, comprehensive, current and un-biased and updated information about accredited educational institutions and educational opportunities in the United States of America.

Our Objectives:

- ✓ Providing information on accredited U.S. universities that offer scholarships/financial aid for international students;
- ✓ Providing information on U.S. Government-sponsored scholarships for Afghan students;
- ✓ Assisting Afghan high school and university students to apply to U.S. universities and to acquire scholarships/financial aid;
- ✓ Advising interested students and scholars on different study and research programs available in the United States;
- ✓ Providing guidance to students in preparing admission applications for universities and colleges in the United States;
- ✓ Maintaining contacts with the higher education institutions in Afghanistan for the dissemination of information on educational opportunities in the United States.
- ✓ Maintaining close contacts with colleges and universities in the United States to receive updates on scholarships/financial aid offered for international students.

Our Services -- Free of Charge

Education Advising Sessions:

KEAC conducts group and individual advising sessions and holds consultations on a variety of topics including the U.S. educational system, scholarships/financial aid, opportunities for international students, how to write a statement of purpose, admission application process, standardized tests, and the student visa process.

Reference and Test Prep Books:

KEAC has a collection of books that include resource materials such as: U.S. universities/colleges directories and catalogs, colleges and universities reference books, essay writing materials, and practice test materials including CDs for the TOEFL, GRE, GMAT, ACT and SAT exams.

Document Attestation:

KEAC offers educational document attestation services to Afghans who have completed their education in the United States in order to facilitate their application to the Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Higher education for recognition of their educational credentials issued by accredited U.S. universities/colleges.

Outreach:

KEAC's staff holds information sessions at universities and other educational institutions (including high schools) on study abroad opportunities, U.S. Government-sponsored programs and other educational programs in the United States. Additionally, the center disseminates information through a specially developed listserv to all institutions and interested individuals.

Pre-departure orientations:

KEAC conducts pre-departure orientation seminars for students leaving to study in the United States.. Topics covered include information on visa regulations, arrival in the United States, personal and academic life, opportunities for international students, Muslim life in America, and other items related to overcoming culture shock and assimilating into a U.S. campus environment.

EducationUSA Website:

The EducationUSA website includes information on; undergrad study, graduate study, specialized profession study, opportunities for scholars, short-term study, accreditation, admission requirements, financial assistance, student visas, standardized tests, the Find-a-School search engine and links to helpful publications. For more information please visit our website at: <http://www.educationusa.state.gov/>

Join us on Facebook at www.fb.com/KabulEducationUSA

Appointment Hours and Contacts:

All are welcomed to visit KEAC by appointment.

Sunday-Thursday

9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

KEAC is closed Fridays and Saturdays and on Afghan and American holidays.

For more information, please contact us by email or phone.

Landline: 0093700108350
Email: KabulEducationUSA@state.gov
Website: www.educationusa.state.gov