U.S. AMBASSADORS FUND *for* CULTURAL PRESERVATION

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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About the Program

Q: What is the Ambassadors Fund?

A: The U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation is a grant program internal to the State Department that is administered by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, Cultural Heritage Center. The program awards grants through U.S. embassies in developing countries for the preservation of cultural heritage.

Q: How long has the Ambassadors Fund been around?

A: The Ambassadors Fund has been around since October 2000. It funded its first round of projects in Fiscal Year 2001. Since that time, the fund has provided support for more than 700 projects to preserve cultural heritage in more than 120 countries.

Q: Who created it?

A: Congress created the Ambassadors Fund in October 2000. In creating the program, Congress noted—

> *Cultural preservation offers an opportunity to show a different American face to other countries, one that is non-commercial, non-political, and non-military. By taking a leading role in efforts to preserve cultural heritage, we show our respect for other cultures by protecting their traditions.* (P.L. 106-553)

Q: What kinds of projects does the Ambassadors Fund support?

A: The AFCP supports projects to preserve cultural heritage in three priority funding areas established by Congress: Cultural Sites, Cultural Objects & Collections, and Forms of Traditional Cultural Expression.

The AFCP's three focus areas align with the classifications used by professionals worldwide to describe cultural heritage:

AFCP Focus Areas	**Tangible Heritage**		**Intangible**
	Moveable	***Immoveable***	**Heritage**
Cultural Sites		**X**	
Cultural Objects & Collections	**X**		
Forms of Traditional Cultural Expression			**X**

Within each AFCP focus area the Center has established a number of categories for reporting purposes. Those categories are:

Cultural Sites
- Archaeological Sites
- Historic Buildings and Sites

Cultural Objects & Collections
- Archaeological Collections
- Ethnographic Objects
- General Museum Conservation
- Manuscripts
- Paintings & Sculpture

Forms of Traditional Cultural Expression
- Crafts
- Dance
- Drama
- Languages
- Music
- Ceremony (formerly Rituals)
- Traditional Knowledge

Consult the AFCP Glossary of Terms for definitions of the AFCP focus areas and categories.

Q: What are some examples of the kinds of projects the AFCP supports?

Some examples of the kinds of projects the AFCP supports are:

- preservation of historic buildings and sites having architectural, artistic, historical or other cultural (non-religious) importance
- needs assessment and conservation of museum collections
- archaeological site preservation
- documentation of vanishing traditional craft techniques
- improved environmental conditions for preventive conservation of archives and manuscripts
- documentation of indigenous languages threatened with extinction

Who Can Apply

Q: Who can apply for AFCP support?

A: U.S. ambassadors in eligible countries may apply for support on behalf of qualified entities. "Qualified entities" as defined by the AFCP program are reputable and accountable non-governmental organizations, museums, ministries of culture, or similar institutions and organizations that are able to demonstrate that they have the requisite experience and capacity to manage projects to preserve cultural heritage in collaboration with the national cultural authority in the host country.

Q: What countries are eligible to participate in this program?

A: The AFCP program uses the United Nations Human Development Index (HDI) as a guide in determining eligibility. The HDI is an international index composed from per-capita GDP and other statistical data collected by the U.N. Development Programme. Generally speaking, countries with an HDI rank below 51 are eligible to participate. The AFCP program reviews its list of eligible countries annually.

Q: Can individuals or commercial entities apply for AFCP support?

A: No. Only non-governmental organizations, museums, ministries of culture, or similar institutions are eligible to apply for AFCP support.

Q: Can U.S.-based NGOs, museums, and similar institutions participate in the AFCP program? Can they apply for AFCP support?

A: Unlike many of the exchange programs in the U.S. Department of State, the Bureau neither actively recruits nor requires U.S. participation in AFCP-supported projects overseas. However, AFCP grant recipients may enter into contracts with U.S. citizens and U.S.-based companies and organizations for goods and services required for the successful completion of their projects—especially when they require expertise or supplies and equipment unavailable in their own country or region—but the recipients are also free to hire local consultants or consultants from other countries.

U.S.-based NGOs, museums, universities, and similar institutions may apply for AFCP support for projects to preserve cultural heritage overseas. However, the AFCP does not support independent U.S. projects abroad, and U.S.-based applicants must demonstrate that they are working in full partnership with the national cultural authority in the host country.

Application Process

Q: How does the proposal application process work?

A: Each year, the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs puts out a call for proposals to U.S. embassies in eligible countries. U.S. embassies identify potential partners (called "qualified entities") and projects and sponsor (submit) those project proposals in the global competition in Washington.

Q: How many proposals can an embassy submit to the Cultural Heritage Center for the global competition?

There is no limit to the number of proposals a U.S. embassy can submit to the AFCP global competition. However, U.S. embassies are to use discretion when reviewing proposals and submit only those that are complete, meet AFCP program priorities, and support MSP or other diplomatic goals. Furthermore, U.S. embassies are to take into account their capacity to manage multiple AFCP projects and the applicant's capacity to complete the project successfully.

Review and Selection Process

Q: How does the proposal review and selection process work?

A: The Center screens all proposals for eligibility based on the neutral criteria contained in the request for proposals. Those criteria include the funding categories, such as cultural sites, established by Congress, and priority activities, such as the preservation of archaeological sites, that are in keeping with international standards for the preservation of cultural heritage. The Center also screens proposals against a list of AFCP program-specific ineligible activities, such as new construction.

Using a point-based system, the Center rates all proposals based on the quality, soundness, comprehensiveness of the project description, plan, and budget; the urgency of the proposed project; the rationale for U.S. support for the project supplied by the applying U.S. embassy; and the quality and quantity of supporting materials, such as resumes of the key project participants, images of the resource; and notices of official permission from the responsible cultural steward, such as a ministry of culture.

Once the Center has completed its screening and rating, it forwards all eligible proposals to the Public Diplomacy sections in the respective regional bureaus in the State Department for ranking. Once the proposals are ranked, the Center convenes a panel that reviews the ranked proposals and determines how many proposals may receive funding depending on the amount available in the fiscal year.

Q: How many grants can a single country receive in a single year?

A: There are no limits to the number of AFCP grants that a single country can receive in a single year.

Money and Funding

Q: How is the Ambassadors Fund funded? Where does the money come from?

A: The Ambassadors Fund is funded using existing Diplomatic & Consular Program (DCP) funds. It does not receive a line item appropriation. Each year, Congress recommends that the State Department set aside a specific amount of DCP funds for the Ambassadors Fund.

Q: Are there limits to the amount of funding that applicants can request?

The AFCP does not have a limit on the maximum amount of funding an embassy can request, though most embassies request amounts in the $10,000 to $100,000 range. The minimum amount an embassy can request is $10,000.

Q: How does the money make its way to the grant recipient?

A: Once the Cultural Heritage Center has completed the AFCP rating, review, and project selection process, the Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs recommends that the Deputy Assistant Secretary for State Programs, Operations, and Budget (RM/BP) release the funds for the approved projects to the respective regional bureaus in the Under Secretariat for Political Affairs (Africa, East Asia and the Pacific, Europe and Eurasia, Near East, South and Central Asia, and Western Hemisphere). The regional bureaus, in turn, allot the project funds to the U.S. embassies which execute the grants.

Q: Is cost sharing required?

A: Cost sharing is not required, but in-kind contributions and other forms of cost participation from other sources are welcome and encouraged.

Cultural Objects and Sites Which Have a Religious Connection

Q: Does the AFCP support the preservation of cultural objects and sites having a religious connection?

A: Yes, under certain conditions. In January 2003, the U.S. Department of State received guidance from the Office of Legal Counsel at the Department of Justice (OLC/DOJ) on the use of federal funds to preserve items of cultural importance which have a religious connection. That guidance notes that the establishment clause of the U.S. Constitution permits the government to include religious objects and sites within an aid program under certain conditions. For example, an item with a religious connection (including a place of worship) may be the subject of a cultural preservation grant if the item derives its primary significance and is nominated solely on the basis of architectural, artistic, historical or other cultural (not religious) criteria.

U.S. embassies interested in sponsoring proposals for projects to preserve cultural objects or sites which have a religious connection are encouraged to contact the Cultural Heritage Center at (202) 632-6301 (ECA/P/C) with any questions.

Private and Commercial Personal and Real Property

Q: Does the AFCP support projects that focus on commercially or privately owned cultural objects or sites?

A: No. The AFCP does not support the preservation of commercially or privately owned cultural heritage.

Q: What about objects or sites owned by a private trust?

A: Cultural sites and objects owned by a private trust are considered private property and are thus not eligible for support through the AFCP program.

Q: What if the objects or sites are owned by a family or a private or commercial entity but are made available to the public?

A: Even though many cultures have long traditions of family ownership of cultural heritage, that heritage is still privately owned and thus not eligible to receive support from the AFCP program. This prohibition applies even to privately owned heritage that is accessible or made available to the public.

Q. What if privately owned objects or sites will be transferred to public ownership upon the award of an AFCP grant?

A. AFCP does not support the preservation of cultural heritage that is privately owned, even if a commitment is pending to donate objects or sites. Transfers of property must take place prior to the submission of AFCP grant applications for funding to preserve that property.

Q: What about ethnographic objects like masks, carvings, and textiles, some of which are in museums but important examples of which are in private hands?

A: Even when the owners of objects are willing to participate and share their resources, the AFCP does not support work on those objects. In such cases, applicants must focus their

proposals only on those objects whose ownership status is neither private nor commercial. This restriction applies to inventory of objects as well as to their treatment.

Natural Heritage and Human and Animal Remains

Q: Does the AFCP support the preservation of natural heritage?

A: No. The AFCP does not support the preservation of natural heritage. For the purposes of the AFCP program, n*atural* heritage includes environmental or geological formations, endangered or protected plants or animals, paleontological collections of fossilized hominid (including human), plant, and animal remains (including dinosaur bones), and similar natural objects and phenomena.

Cultural heritage, on the other hand, refers to the products of past or present human activities, such as buildings, spaces, manmade objects, artifacts, and forms of expression. AFCP supports only the preservation of cultural heritage.

Newspapers and Other News Media

Q: Does the AFCP support projects to preserve news media or news reels?

A: No. The AFCP does not support projects to preserve newspapers, magazines, news radio and television recordings, or other news media. The AFCP recognizes that news media are very important sources of historical information and highly susceptible to deterioration if not properly handled and stored, but the information they transmit often extends beyond the limits of what AFCP can support (namely, the preservation of cultural sites, cultural objects and collections, and forms of traditional cultural expression such as traditional music and dance), and their value stems from the information they transmit, not from their materials (paper, film) or their methods of construction (made by hand, etc.).

Digitization

Q: Does the AFCP support projects to scan or otherwise digitize cultural heritage?

A: No. The AFCP supports such activities only in cases where such activities are part of a larger, clearly defined physical conservation effort.

Although digitization offers an extremely effective means of expanding access to cultural information, it is not a sustainable preservation activity in its own right. Video tapes, diskettes, CDs, DVDs, and other digital storage media are susceptible to damage from extremes and fluctuations in temperature, exposure to the elements, chemical leaks, magnetic disturbance, and improper handling and use. They deteriorate at unpredictable rates but seldom show any outward signs of deterioration. Physical damage to these media is irreversible.

These media, furthermore, depend on a reliable electrical supply and fully operable machinery and equipment for maximum use and effectiveness.

The AFCP gives priority to proposals that directly address the physical preservation and protection needs of cultural objects and sites or that contribute to the preservation of tangible or intangible heritage in sustainable ways. The AFCP program will consider proposals that involve digitization only if that activity is part of a larger, comprehensive effort to ensure the physical preservation and protection of cultural heritage.

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