

Department of State – Public Diplomacy Programming

Program Office: Public Affairs Section, U.S. Embassy Beijing, U.S. Department of State
Funding Opportunity Title: American Cultural Centers and Cultural Programming in the People’s Republic of China
Announcement Type: Grant or Cooperative Agreement – Initial
Funding Opportunity Number: EAPBJ-11-AW-001-EAP-070611
Deadline for Applications: August 12, 2011, 11:59 p.m. EST
CFDA 19.700

ELIGIBILITY

Eligibility is limited to U.S. post-secondary accredited institutions of higher learning (Public, Private, and State) and not-for-profit organizations subject to 501 (c) (3) of the tax code. Direct funding for non-U.S. entities is not available under this announcement.

The U.S. Embassy in Beijing and the Department of State encourages organizations that have not previously received international program funding from the U.S. Government to apply under this announcement. New applicants must have a demonstrated expertise in one or more of the following subject areas: people-to-people exchanges, cultural and academic programming, international cooperation, institution-to-institution partnerships in a foreign setting, and the ability to develop and implement programs in a foreign locale (the People’s Republic of China).

Cost Sharing or Matching

This program requires cost sharing or matching on the part of the grantee organization and/or their Chinese partner institution/organization.

Other Special Eligibility Criteria

Expertise and established relationships with Chinese indigenous institutions/organizations and local officials in the location in China where the proposed project/program(s) will be conducted are required. For the purpose of this RFA, proposals for the establishment of projects/programs on Hong Kong, Macau, or Taiwan will not be considered.

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 Keith A. Lommel, Public Affairs Section of the U.S. Embassy in Beijing at:
Email: LommelKA@state.gov (*Preferred method of communication*)
Phone: 86-10-6597-3242, extension 5213 (China is 12 hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time)

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Public Affairs Section (PAS) of the U.S. Embassy in Beijing, China is pleased to announce an open competition for assistance awards through this Request for Applications (RFA). PAS invites U.S. post-secondary accredited institutions of higher learning (Public, Private, and State) and not-for-profit organizations subject to 501 (c) (3) of the tax code to submit proposals for the establishment of an American Cultural Center through an existing partnership with a Chinese institution and/or comprehensive U.S. cultural-related programming at space provided by a Chinese partner institution as needed. PAS will have approximately US\$1 million available to award multiple grants for up to US\$100,000 per grant.

Administration and National Policy Perspective

The U.S.-China relationship is one of the United States' most important bilateral relationships. A great deal of work remains to be done in fostering mutual understanding between the peoples of the two nations. The PRC's creation in the United States of multiple university-based "Confucius Institutes" has increased the level and quality of the study of Chinese language and culture in the U.S. Though China as a national policy requires the study of the English language broadly among its students, there is no equivalent understanding and appreciation for the strength and diversity of American culture and society. While hundreds of affiliation agreements between U.S. and Chinese universities have promoted academic cooperation, technical expertise, and U.S. study of China, they have done little to help address the overall level of public misunderstanding.

II. BACKGROUND

The U.S. Government believes that building mutual understanding is a cornerstone of U.S. foreign policy abroad. U.S. embassies and consulates abroad seek to tell America's story through explaining U.S. policies, values, culture, and history. To that end, the U.S. Mission to China (Embassy Beijing and Consulates General Chengdu, Guangzhou, Shanghai, Shenyang, and Wuhan) seeks to build a network of programs, whether located in dedicated American Centers or existing virtually or on an ongoing ad hoc basis, through existing partnerships between eligible U.S. institutions and their Chinese counterparts. This network of American Centers and program partnerships will seek to help promote greater understanding of the United States among the Chinese public and youth by providing access to a broad variety of Americans who can introduce the American experience and provide popular and academic background for public perceptions. Such programming will enhance and broaden the cultural and academic outreach of the U.S. Mission in China. All of the American Centers and program partnerships will work closely with the U.S. Embassy in Beijing and the relevant consulates, as appropriate, to ensure that programming is representative of the depth and breadth of U.S. culture, values, policies, and history.

Objectives

It is intended that the American Centers created through this initiative will be open to organization/institution faculty, staff, and students of all levels, as well as the general public for specific events. The Center's goal is to provide a space to create a community and interactions that allow Chinese audiences to better understand the United States, its culture, society, government, language, law, economic system, and values. The center will seek to address the broad spectrum of responsible U.S. opinions in a climate of academic freedom and open-ended inquiry. Areas of cultural programming at American Centers may include (but are not limited to):

- Invited public, private, and academic speakers to engage audiences on U.S. culture, society, government, language, law, economic system, and values, etc.;
- Cultural programming representing a broad range of U.S. visual and performing arts;
- Information resources on U.S. culture, society, government, language, law, economic system, and values, etc. in print and/or electronic form;

Funding Priorities

PAS seeks to fund creative and sustainable projects in China that build upon existing partnerships between U.S. institutions/organizations and Chinese counterparts to create a network of American Cultural Centers throughout China. Proposals for projects through strong, well-established, and collaborative partnerships, as well as projects that represent the geographic diversity of China will be viewed favorably. American Centers can include permanent, dedicated space and personnel at a location in China where programs will be administered, and/or could also be comprehensive plans for high-quality programming at space provided by a Chinese partner as needed, with administrative staff and program implementers from both the U.S. and Chinese partners assigned as needed.

Below is a sample list, though not exhaustive, of the types of projects PAS will consider funding:

For proposals for a permanent American Center space at a Chinese partner organization/institution:

- Reading Room: a comfortable “library-like” area with couches, chairs, and work tables. This will also house a reference collection of appropriate books, magazines, DVDs, and computers for public use (including high-speed internet access, access to online databases, etc.)
- Program Space: A multipurpose space easily configured for various seating/table set-ups (classroom, conference, and theater styles, etc.) to be used for speakers, performances, seminars, etc. The program space should include audio/visual/IT capabilities to show films/television programs, computer generated presentations, host video conferences, lectures, etc.
- Staff Space: An adequate office space for America Center staff to engage in program development and institution/organization affiliation management. This

space will contain standard office equipment and supplies (desks, chairs, office IT equipment (phone, fax, scanners, computers/servers, copiers, etc.).

- Programs: A detailed plan of expected programs that will utilize the space. Programs should include (but are not limited to) the areas of cultural programming noted in the objectives section above.

For proposals for a non-permanent/dedicated American Center space at a Chinese partner institution/organization:

- A comprehensive proposal for 1-2 years of high-quality programming that includes (but is not limited to) the areas of cultural programming noted in the objectives section above. Programs should seek to include high-level, reputable experts from the applicant's organization and/or its partners in the United States, China, and elsewhere, as appropriate.

III. ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Eligibility is limited to U.S. post-secondary accredited institutions of higher learning (Public, Private, and State) and not-for-profit organizations subject to 501 (c) (3) of the tax code. Direct funding for non-U.S. institutions is not available under this announcement. U.S. Embassy Beijing and the Department of State encourage organizations that have not previously received international program funding from the U.S. Government to apply under this announcement (see "Eligibility" on page 1).

Applicants are required to include funding from other donors, including partner institutions/organizations outlined in the proposal. Cost-sharing from the grantee or partner institution/organization is a requirement for consideration and demonstrates a strong commitment to the planned activities by all involved parties.

All potential applicants should be knowledgeable of existing programs in China, including those funded by the U.S. Government, in order to avoid duplication of effort.

For the purpose of this RFA, proposals for the establishment of projects/programs on Hong Kong or Taiwan will not be considered.

For information on the U.S. Embassy Beijing and the Department of State's cultural exchanges and programming, please go to: <http://beijing.usembassy-china.org.cn> and <http://exchanges.state.gov>.

IV. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

Award Period: 12 months

Award Amount: US\$1 million is available for this grant program. Multiple awards will be granted, with a maximum amount per award of US\$100,000.

Application Submission Process: Applicants must submit concept papers electronically using Grants.gov. 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 Keith A. Lommel, Public Affairs Section, U.S. Embassy Beijing, at:

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

Phone: 86-10-6597-3242, extension 5213 (please note that Beijing is 12 hours ahead of Eastern Standard Time)

Application Deadline: All applications must be submitted on or before **August 12, 2011, 11:59 p.m. Eastern Standard 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 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 RFA 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 RFA. The penalty for making false statements in proposals to the U.S. Government is prescribed on 18 U.S.C.1001.

The concept papers may not exceed 8 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. Institutions/organizations are permitted to submit multiple concept papers, but should be aware that PAS seeks to provide opportunities to as many organizations as possible, and is less likely to fund an organization to work in more than one location. The proposal must consist of the following:

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

This form can be found on-line as part of the application package contained with the grants.gov announcement at:

<http://www.grants.gov/search/search.do;jsessionid=jt11TbcZGNDNGNRnZwnYB8zflGXvq3xgRLXMnB0BK0nN19B3jip3!1211605884?oppId=103513&mode=VIEW>. If you are applying for a grant, you must download the application package through the specific announcement on grants.gov and complete the forms within the application package as provided by the awarding agency, and submit it in its entirety.

Section 2 - Abstract:

The abstract is limited to 300 words in length. It must provide a summary of the identified rationale, proposed activities, and expected results.

Section 3 - Project Statement:

The project statement must describe the rationale for the proposed partnership/project with regards to: location, the extent and nature of the existing collaboration between the U.S. institution/organization and its Chinese partner, and need for enhanced U.S. cultural and public diplomacy programming in the proposed location. The statement should also include information on the audiences to be reached through the establishment of an American Center and its programming or a program partnership. This section must also describe cost sharing on the part of the applicant and/or its Chinese partner institution/organization.

Section 4 – Project Goals/Implementation Plan:

The applicant must specify the goals and objectives of the project, relative to the project statement. The proposed activities 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. Finally, this section must include a time-task plan that clearly identifies the objectives and major activities.

Section 5 - Organizational Capability:

Applications must include a clear description of the applicant's management structure, previous experience with cultural programming and public-diplomacy-related projects, and organizational experience and background in China (and the specific region) as these relate to the proposed activities. This section should also include information on the Chinese partner institution/organization, its management structure, and previous experience with cultural programming and U.S.-related projects/programs. This section must also identify the proposed management structure and staffing plan for the proposed project.

Section 6 - Appendices:

The concept paper submission must include three appendices. Only the appendices listed below may be included as part of the application:

- (a) **Budget** – 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. The budget must also include the monetary value of all cost share items as part of this project supplied by the applicant and/or its Chinese partner institution/organization.

- (b) **Resume** – a resume, not to exceed 1 page in length, must be included for the proposed key staff person(s), 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) **Letter(s) of Intent** – Letter(s) of intent from the Chinese partner institution/organization must be included with the concept paper. The letters must identify the type of relationship to be entered into as part of the proposed American Center project, 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 benefit through the project budget. The individual letters cannot exceed 1 page in length.

V. AWARD SELECTION CRITERIA

Consistent with the federal grant regulations, PAS reserves the right to give priority for its funds to those organizations working on key U.S. Government objectives in public diplomacy programming.

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 U.S. Government awards grants to the applicants whose offers represent the best value to the U.S. Government on the basis of technical merit and cost.

Each application will be evaluated by a peer review committee of the U.S. Embassy in Beijing and/or the Department of State, and other experts, as deemed appropriate. The evaluation criteria have been tailored to the requirements of this RFA.

- **Project Statement (25 points):** This section should identify the importance and relevance of the applicant's proposal to the broader U.S. policy objectives on cultural programming and public diplomacy as well as relevance to the program objectives of the U.S. Mission to China/the Department of State as described under the first two Sections of this solicitation. Emphasis will be placed on the extent to which the proposed activity 1) complements existing efforts in China or fills a gap and does not duplicate other programs, including those funded by the U.S. Government, and 2) is planned and implemented so as to achieve maximum sustainability after term of the period of performance of the award. A compelling statement of need for the project, with regards to the U.S.-related programming,

and limitations on resources in the proposed location, will be given great consideration by the review panel.

- **Project Goals/Implementation Plan (40 points):** Applicants should describe what they propose to do and how they will do it. The proposed activities must directly relate to meeting the goals and objectives, and applicants should include information on how they will measure activities' effectiveness. The review panel will be viewing the implementation plan in terms of how well it addresses the project statement, relevance of the goals and objectives, feasibility of the proposed activities and their timeline for completion, and the extent to which the impact of the project will continue beyond the conclusion of the funding period.
- **Organizational Capability (20 points):** Proposals should demonstrate the ability to develop and implement programs in the areas of cultural programming described above. Applicants must demonstrate how their resources, capabilities, and experience will enable them to achieve the stated goals and objectives. In addition, applicants should describe the nature of their existing partnership with the Chinese partner and how that affiliation will help to meet project goals. The application must distinguish all key partners and organizations that will be involved.
- **Appendices (15 points):**
 - **Budget:** Costs shall be evaluated for realism, control practices, and efficiency. PAS 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.
 - **Resume:** The review panel will consider the appropriateness of the selected project director; in view of the role and responsibility that person will play in guiding the project through implementation to completion. Position descriptions submitted in lieu of the resume will be reviewed for the appropriateness of the qualifications and skills identified.
 - **Letter(s) of Intent:** The review panel will consider the types and depth of relationships that the applicant has with the partner institution/organization. The panel will also review the letters to determine the willingness of local partners to participate in the effort, and that all parties have an understanding of their unique roles and responsibilities in terms of the proposed project.

VI. AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

Award Notices: The grant award or cooperative agreement shall be written, signed, awarded, and administered by the Grants Officer. The Grants Officer is the U.S. 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 mail, electronic mail, or facsimile transmission. Institutions/organizations whose applications will not be funded will also be notified in writing.

Anticipated Time to Award: Applicants should expect to be notified of the selected proposals within 60 days after the submission deadline. PAS staff will provide information at the point of notification about any further requirements and/or refinements for the pre-award phase of the process. This may include revisions to the activities proposed and/or budget clarifications and adjustments.

Applicants should be aware that there will be a delay between the time that full applications are submitted and awards are made. Successful applicants can expect to receive their grant funds prior to September 30, 2011 once PAS makes final approvals. This delay is primarily due to the extensive clearance process that must be undertaken prior to grant awards being made.

Issuance of this RFA 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. Progress reports at a minimum should be submitted via electronic mail to an address to be provided in the award.

VII. DISCLAIMER

If a proposal is selected for funding, PAS, U.S. Embassy Beijing, and the Department of State have 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 PAS, U.S. Embassy Beijing, and the Department of State.