U.S. Embassy in Tbilisi, Georgia

Program Office:	Public Affairs Section, U.S. Embassy in Tbilisi, Georgia
Funding Opportunity Title:	University Research Program
Announcement Type:	Grant
Funding Opportunity Number:	
Deadline for Applications:	July 19, 2010
AECCA	250,000.00

ELIGIBILITY

Eligibility is limited to U.S. non-profit/non-governmental organizations subject to 501 (c) (3) of the tax code, and U.S. universities, and Georgian non-profit/non-governmental organizations, universities and institutes.

The Department encourages organizations that have not previously received international program funding from the U.S. Government to apply under this announcement. Applicants must have a demonstrated expertise in teaching research and academic writing skills; in mentoring researchers (in preparing an article/thesis/dissertation); in teaching academic English (optional); and in developing research library capacity (optional). Knowledge of the Georgian higher education system and established relationships with Georgian universities and educational organizations will be favorably considered.

Cost Sharing or Matching
This program does not require cost sharing, however in-kind contributions will be favorably considered.

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) On program requirements of this solicitation, contact Ms. **Cynthia WHITTLESEY**, Public Affairs Officer, or Ms. **Nino GAGUA**, Cultural Affairs Assistant/Grants Coordinator, Public Affairs Section, U.S. Embassy in Tbilisi, Georgia, at:
Email: whittleseyc@state.gov ; gaguan@state.gov *(Preferred method of communication)*
Phone: +995 32 277 628

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Public Affairs Section (PAS) of the U.S. Embassy in Tbilisi, Georgia is pleased to announce an open competition for assistance awards through this Request for Proposals (RFP) for a University Research Program. The Public Affairs Section (PAS) of the U.S. Embassy in Tbilisi, Georgia invites U.S. and Georgian non-profit/non-governmental organizations, universities, and educational institutes to submit proposals for a one- to two-year project to improve the standards of Georgian academic research in Georgian universities and educational institutes, and to encourage greater interaction between Georgian academic researchers, civil society, and government policy-makers. The project is meant to strengthen the quantitative and qualitative research skills and the academic writing of young Georgian scholars; raise Georgian scholarship to an international standard; and encourage the publication of Georgian scholarly research in Western academic and/or in Georgian peer reviewed journals in areas directly related to: domestic policy issues (i.e. health care, education, environment, civil service/personnel issues, local government, etc.) and comparative analyses (U.S.-Georgian). The proposal may also include teaching academic English and updating Georgian research library capacities and resources.

The direct beneficiaries of this program will be young Georgian academics, primarily assistant professors and PhD candidates, and the indirect beneficiaries will be their Georgian host universities. PAS will award approximately $250,000 for this one-to-two-year project, and may seek additional funding for future years.

II. BACKGROUND

Almost twenty years after independence, Georgia has implemented important and successful educational reforms. The Georgian Academy no longer suffers from the kind of rampant corruption that was prevalent in the early days of independence, and strict accreditation and other standards have led to the closing of numerous questionable institutions. Nevertheless, the Georgian higher education system is still heavily influenced by Soviet models which have deteriorated over time, particularly in the area of research. Georgian scholars publish at a very low rate in comparison to other post-Soviet countries, and they have not yet made the leap, for the most part, to publish in Western or international journals, much less to adopt a system of blind peer-review for Georgian journals. This is becoming more and more of an obstacle for PhD candidates who are now required to publish in international academic journals in order to obtain their degree. Evidence-based qualitative and quantitative research, and academic writing in conformance with Western standards, debate, and peer review skills are still largely missing.

The University Research Program will enable Georgian academics to adopt internationally accepted research skills, to pass these skills on to their students, and thereby increase the research capacity of Georgian universities across the board. A focus on academic writing will help Georgian academics prepare research for publication in Western and international journals, and will help lead to introducing peer-review processes in Georgia. A thematic focus on issues of public policy, including domestic public policy issues and comparative policy analysis, will enhance ties between the

Georgian Academy and civil society, and between the Georgian Academy and government, by enabling Georgian academics to develop sophisticated policy analysis and realistic policy options.

Pending the availability of funds, the project will award approximately $250,000 for a one- to two-year project to defray the costs of conducting training (coursework and/or workshops) with qualified Georgian or international trainers; ongoing assessment of the competencies and skills developed by project participants; ongoing advising and mentoring on research topics and papers; communication costs; travel costs; honoraria; translation and printing costs of research papers (as needed); English instruction (optional); and purchasing resource materials, to include electronic databases, for research libraries in Georgia (optional); etc..

For more background information on Georgian universities and their research capacity please see:

- Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia www.mes.gov.ge

- Law of Georgia on Higher Education http://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/upload/Georgia/Georgia_Law_of_Georgia_on_HE.pdf

- An Assessment of Research Capacities in the Social Sciences and Humanities in Georgia http://www.grstiftung.ch/documents/AssessOfResearchCapacitiesGeorgia_000.pdf

Objectives

This project is designed to improve the standards of Georgian academic research at Georgian universities, and to encourage greater interaction between Georgian academic researchers, civil society, and government policy-makers. The project is meant to strengthen the quantitative and qualitative research skills and the academic writing of young Georgian scholars; raise Georgian scholarship to an international standard; and encourage the publication of Georgian scholarly research in Western academic journals or in Georgian peer reviewed journals; and encourage cooperation between Georgian academics and government policy-makers and civil society in areas directly related to the development of policy analysis, such as domestic policy issues (i.e. health care, education, environment, civil service/personnel issues, local government, etc.) and comparative analyses (U.S.-Georgian). The proposal may also include teaching academic English and updating Georgian research library capacities and resources.

The project has the following specific objectives (applicants must respond to A and B at a minimum):

> A: To improve the quantitative and qualitative research and the academic writing skills of young Georgian academics, i.e. assistant professors, lecturers, and PhD candidates.

- To train Georgian academics who work at universities in research methodologies, using local or invited experts, and including coursework and/or workshops in quantitative and qualitative research methodologies, evidence-based research, statistical and comparative analyses, etc.

- To train Georgian academics who work at universities in academic writing, to include proposal design, bibliography preparation, research grant application writing, and scholarly article/thesis/dissertation writing.

B: To oversee and/or mentor young Georgian scholars who work at universities throughout the process of preparing an article/thesis/dissertation for publication or for defense. If for publication, the objective should be to publish the article in a Western, international or Georgian peer-reviewed journal. Articles for publication in Western or international journals should be in English.

C: To teach academic English to university professors and PhD candidates. (Optional)

D. To help develop research library capacity and resources for university professors and PhD candidates. (Optional)

NOTE: Prospective grantees must provide information on how participants will be selected, with a preference for competitive selection from a broad range of Georgian universities; any potential incentives for participation in and completion of the program (i.e. course credits for PhD candidates as negotiated with the academic's host university and/or stipends for professors) or disincentives for unsuccessful performance during the program (expulsion from the program). As the project is intended to improve research capabilities in Georgian universities - including by having participants share their gained knowledge with students - researchers at national science institutes and think tanks who do not teach at universities will not be eligible to be beneficiaries of this program.

If the grantee chooses to support academic English, the grantee should identify the criteria by which the English-language instructor(s) will be selected. If the grantee chooses to support the development of library research capabilities, the grantee should identify a host library with broad public access, either physical or virtual.

Expected Results

The program is intended to improve the quality of university research, particularly in public policy areas, thereby better integrating the university into civil society and government policy formulation. Specifically, the program will enable young Georgian academics to raise their research and academic writing skills up to an international standard and encourage them to publish in Western, international or Georgian peer-reviewed journals.

- To develop a cadre of Georgian professors who publish scholarly articles in internationally recognized academic journals.

- To develop Georgian teaching capacity in research methodologies and academic writing. Participants in this program would be expected or encouraged to pass these skills on to their students.

- To develop greater research capacity within Georgian universities.

- To encourage Georgian scholars to participate in international academic conferences and to help Georgian universities develop international partnerships between universities and among scholars.

Funding Priorities
The Public Affairs Section (PAS) of the U.S. Embassy in Tbilisi, Georgia seeks to fund an effective, creative and sustainable project to improve the research capacity of Georgian universities. An organization with prior experience conducting similar trainings in research methodologies for universities and educational institutions, particularly with in-kind financial contributions, will be favorably considered.

III. ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Eligibility is limited to U.S. non-profit/non-governmental organizations subject to 501 (c) (3) of the tax code, U.S. universities, and Georgian non-profit/non-governmental organizations, universities and institutes.

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.

IV. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

Award Period: One to two years upon Applicant's program design.

Award Amount: $250,000 is available for this grant program.

Application Submission Process: Applicants must submit proposals electronically to Nino GAGUA, Grants Officer Representative (GOR), U.S. Embassy in Tbilisi, E-mail: gaguan@state.gov; Phone: (995-32) 277-628.

Application Deadline: All applications must be submitted in electronic form in addition to or instead of the hard copies on or before July 19, 2010 11:59 p.m. eastern time to the attention of **Nino GAGUA**, Grants Officer Representative, e-mail: gaguan@state.gov.

Applications submitted after 11:59 p.m. will not be eligible for consideration. If not, receipt of application in not confirmed within two days, please contact Nino Gagua at the above e-mail address.

Telegraphic or fax applications are not authorized for this RFA and will not be accepted. The total size of each attachment should not exceed 3 MBs. Every page of the proposal

must be numbered. The application must have a table of contents. Large graphic files are discouraged. The format of any attachments must be in Microsoft Word, Excel or PDF. Attached files should be printable on US letter size paper (8½ X11".)

If submitting hard copies in addition to the required electronic submission, hard copies and all attached documents should be submitted in sealed envelopes or packages with the RFA number, the name and address of the applicant to:

Nino Gagua
Grants Officer Representative
Public Affairs Section
11 George Balanchine Street
Tbilisi 0131, Georgia

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.

Section 1 - Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424):
This form can be found on-line at: http://apply07.grants.gov/apply/FormLinks?family=15

Section 2 – Executive summary (maximum 2 pages):
The executive summary is limited to 300 words in length. It must provide a summary of the identified need, proposed activities, and expected results.

Section 3 – Project Goals/Implementation Plan (maximum 15 pages):
The applicant must specify the proposed activities that will be undertaken to achieve the goals and objectives of this RFA. The proposed activities should be described in sufficient detail to show how objectives and goals will be met. The narrative should be brief, concise and provide a clear description of what the Applicant proposes to do, where, why, when, how and by whom.

This section should also include a structured monitoring and evaluation plan or matrix that will demonstrate how success will be measured against objectively verifiable performance indicators. The matrix should also include: sources/means for verification, risks and assumptions for goals and objectives, and expected results and activities.

Section 4 - Organizational Capability (maximum 2 pages):
Applications must include a clear description of the applicant's organizational and management structure, and previous experience with similar projects. In addition to information about the organization as a whole, this section must also identify the proposed management structure and staffing plan for the proposed project. Describe any partnerships, consortia or coalitions arranged between the applicant and the beneficiary organization(s).

Section 5 - Appendices:
The proposal submission must include the two appendices listed below:

(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 (salary, wages, honoraria); fringe benefits if any; international and domestic travel; materials; equipment, if any; supplies; office /classroom rental; Georgian participants costs, if any (stipends, domestic travel, etc.); other direct and indirect costs, etc.. Include a budget with an accompanying budget narrative which provides in detail the total costs for implementation of the program your organization is proposing. Detailed budget notes and supporting justification of all proposed budget line items should be included. In addition, a summary of the budget must be submitted using Standard Form SF-424A. This form can be found on-line at:
http://www.grants.gov/techlib/SF424A-V1.0.pdf
http://www.grants.gov/assets/DraftInstructionsSF424%20A_DOL.pdf
The budget may include an estimate for continuation activities, which will be considered for successful applicants to this RFP in future fiscal years based on performance and the availability of funds.

Applicants that have a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement with the U.S. Government should submit the latest copy.

(b) **Resume (Required)** – a resume, not to exceed 3 pages 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 one-page position description, identifying the qualifications and skills required for that position, in lieu of a resume.

(c) **Letters of Intent (Optional)** – Public Affairs Section (PAS) of the U.S. Embassy in Tbilisi, Georgia recommends that U.S. applicants identify in advance the Georgian partner and beneficiary organization(s) and recommends submitting letters of intent together with the proposal. Georgian applicants should identify local beneficiary (s) and key invited instructors/experts who will help to implement the project. The letters must identify the type of relationship to be entered into (formal or informal), the roles and responsibilities of the Applicant and beneficiary(s) in relation to the proposed project activities, and the expected result of the cooperation. 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 5 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 will be evaluated by a review committee of the Department of State and Public Affairs Section, U.S. Embassy in Tbilisi, Georgia and other experts, as deemed appropriate. The evaluation criteria have been tailored to the requirements of this RFP.

- **Program Strategy and Approach, and Implementation Plan (50 points):** Applicants should demonstrate a. Understanding of the issue; clear definitions of the program and a vision of what will be accomplished at the end the agreement; b. Clarity of proposed objectives; c. Technical soundness of approach, including clarity in scope and focus of activities to be carried out; feasibility of achieving results and objectives; d. Detailed analysis of potential obstacles, risks and problems that could be encountered during the project implementation; e. Local partnership commitments and optimum utilization of Georgian organizations and Georgian expertise in program implementation; f. Clarity of expected achievements/outcomes of the project, and a brief description of the proposed monitoring and evaluation plan.
  The review panel will be viewing the implementation plan in terms of how well it addresses the overall 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 (30 points):** Proposals should demonstrate the applicant's ability to develop and implement a university research program. Applicants must demonstrate how their managerial, programmatic and technical capacity and past experience will enable them to achieve the stated goals and objectives; and provide a strategy to ensure the smooth and effective implementation of program activities. In addition, applicants should describe how they will collaborate with Georgian partner organization(s) to meet the project goals.

- **Appendices (20 points):**

  - **Budget:** Costs shall be evaluated for realism, control practices, and efficiency. The review committee 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-21 and if the costs are consistent with the program narrative.
    http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/rewrite/circulars/a021/a021.html
  - **Resume:** The review committee 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 a resume will be reviewed for the appropriateness of the qualifications and skills identified.

- **CVs for trainers (Preferred)**
- **Letters of Intent from cooperating Georgian universities (Optional):** Please provide any available letter(s) from any U.S. or Georgian partner organizations, including universities, regarding their intention to partner in this project.

VI. AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

Award Notices: The grant award 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 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 of the final decision within 90 days after the submission deadline. Following this the Public Affairs Section (PAS) of the U.S. Embassy in Tbilisi, Georgia staff will provide information at the point of notification about the requirements for the final application, which may include revisions to the activities. The final applications will not be subject to further competition, but must incorporate any suggested changes made by the Public Affairs Section (PAS) of the U.S. Embassy in Tbilisi, Georgia.

Applicants should be aware that there may be a delay between the time that applications are submitted and awards are made. Successful applicants can expect to receive their first tranche of grant funds no later than October 1, 2010. This delay is primarily due to the extensive clearance process that must be undertaken prior to grant awards being made.

Issuance of this RFP does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the Government, nor does it commit the Government to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of proposals. Further, the 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, the Department of State has no obligation to provide any additional future funding in connection with the award. Renewal of an award to extend the period of performance is at the total discretion of the Department of State.

NOTE:
Applicants may send program related questions by to Nino Gagua at gaguan@state.gov by June 28, 2010. The answers will be posted on grants.gov as an amendment within two weeks.