PROJECT DIRECTOR'S HANDBOOK

Getting Your Educational Partnerships Program Started: Information and Suggestions

We look forward to working with you during your project. The information below is being provided to assist you in getting your program started and background information that may be helpful in handling the business aspects of the project. We include information on health insurance, visas, the Fly America Act, money transfers, participant orientation, classroom dynamics and academic resources, maximizing impact, computer equipment purchases, Department of State contacts, and grant changes and amendments. grant reporting requirements, and foreign visitor departures from the United States. You and your project administrative staff should be familiar with this material. The final sections include information on alumni website membership and recommendations from previous project directors that you might find helpful.

Health Insurance

Projects must ensure that all foreign exchange participants are covered by a comprehensive health insurance plan. Health insurance coverage for foreign exchange participants is an eligible program expense and can be charged to your grant. J visa regulations require that at minimum, insurance must cover: (1) medical benefits of at least $50,000 per person per accident or illness; (2) repatriation of remains in the amount of $7,500; (3) expenses associated with the medical evacuation of the exchange visitor to his or her home country in the amount of $10,000; and (4) a deductible that does not exceed $500 per accident or illness. Please refer to Exchange Visitor Program regulations, 22 CFR 62.14, for complete details; web address: http://exchanges.state.gov/education/jexchanges/administration.htm#insurance.

DS-2019 forms, J visas, and Exchange Visitor Visa Tracking Systems

DS-2019 form completion

Foreign participants must travel to the United States under a J visa during exchange visits funded by this program. Other types of visas cannot be utilized**.** Grantee colleges/universities are required to prepare DS-2019 (formerly known as IAP-66) forms for all foreign participants who will be visiting the United States as part of this program. The DS-2019 form is a recommendation that certifies to a U.S. consular office that a

J-1 visa applicant will be participating in a U.S. educational program with the support described on the completed form. It is not a visa application, but a certification of eligibility for a visa and functions as a recommendation to the consular officer who reviews the participant's visa application. The completed DS-2019 form should be sent directly to the participant, not to the U.S. Embassy or Consulate in the country where the participant is applying for the visa, unless your program officer has advised you otherwise. Faxes are not acceptable. If you need assistance obtaining or completing the DS-2019 form, go to the person responsible for J-1 visas in your college or university. Generally, a centralized office (often the International Studies/Students Office) at a college/university has the authority to issue and sign these forms. The DS-2019 is a controlled form (each one is individually numbered and organizations with the authority to issue them must account for each individual form) so you will need to coordinate with your J-1 visa office. U.S. embassies do not issue DS-2019 forms.

It is absolutely crucial that all information on the DS-2019 forms match the details in the exchange visitor's passport. This is especially important in countries where there are differing transliterations of the spelling of names from the native language into English. If the DS-2019 form and the applicant's passport contain different details, the visa application will be rejected. It is often a good idea to get a faxed or photocopied version of the applicant's passport before filling out the DS-2019 in order to guarantee that the information will be correct.

In the past, there has been some confusion on the part of the U.S. project directors about whether to prepare the visa paperwork indicating that the University or the U.S. Government is the sponsor for the applicant. With partnership program participants, the University acts as the sponsor and fills out the sponsorship section of the DS-2019 form with their designated Exchange Visitor Program (J visa) number. This number begins with the letter "P" which indicates private, rather than government, sponsorship. When filling out the form, it is important to indicate in the pull-down computer menu that the program sponsor has received funding from the U.S. government. The consular officer may consider this information in deciding whether to grant a visa. In section 5 of the DS-2019 form, text should be included stating that support for this visitor comes from the Department of State.

Please also note that there is a two-year home residency requirement placed on recipients of J visas. The home residency requirement states that after visiting the U.S. on a J visa, participants are required to spend two years in their home countries before being eligible to apply to return to the U.S. on either an immigrant visa or a work visa. Waivers of this two-year requirement are rarely granted (even in cases of marriage to a U.S. citizen). The INS restriction does "not" prevent J recipients from returning to the U.S. on other types of visas (J visas, student visas, tourist visas) although individual consular offices may have their own policies or practices.

Visa Interviews

All J visa applicants are now required to undergo personal interviews as part of the visa application process. Once the participant has received the completed DS-2019 form from you, it may be a good idea for him/her to contact the Public Affairs Section at the appropriate Embassy or Consulate prior to submitting the visa application to confirm that he/she has all the necessary documentation and discuss the process of scheduling the visa interview. You may also want to contact the embassy to let them know that you are in the process of requesting visas for partnership participants. Please check with your program officer to get the current contact details for the relevant person at the embassy and encourage foreign participants to make appointments for their visa interviews with the appropriate consular authority as soon as possible. *Please note that due to increased security screenings and a new requirement that all visa applicants undergo a personal interview, visa applications may now take up to three months to process*. It is crucial that all paperwork is prepared and sent well in advance of the proposed visit. There is little that can be done to expedite the process so it is important to allow time for potential delays. You should book travel on tickets that can be re-booked or refunded in the event that travel cannot take place as scheduled. Since many countries are tightening their transit visa policies for foreigners traveling to and from the United States, grant administrators should stay informed of transit visa requirements.

Information on visa processing wait times is available on the Department of State's Bureau of Consular Affairs' newly redesigned travel web site: http://travel.state.gov. You can visit http://travel.state.gov/visa/tempvisitors_wait.php to obtain wait time estimates for visa interviews and visa processing. The site also provides links to each consulate's web site, where information on local procedures and instructions is available. The information can be useful in determining the amount of lead time needed to obtain proper visas to travel to the United States for exchange visits.

SEVIS

Recent legislation requires that student and exchange visitor visas be tracked electronically in a database. The Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS), which was introduced in 2002, is an electronic database and information tracking system that must now be used to generate the DS-2019 forms and track and verify the subsequent visa application process. The SEVIS system allows U.S. consular officers abroad as well as immigration officers at the point of entry to verify the authenticity of the DS-2019 form and the visa application. The International Studies/Students office at your institution should be familiar with this system and should be able to enter the necessary details on behalf of your exchange visitors. Additional details on SEVIS and the SEVIS fee can be found on the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Student and Exchange Visitor Program web site, www.ice.gov/graphics/enforce/imm/sevis/index.htm.

Visa-related fees

Prior to going to the U.S. embassy or consulates for their visa interviews, applicants for J-1 visas, with a few exceptions, were required to pay as of September 1, 2004 a $100 SEVIS registration fee by mail or electronically to cover the administrative costs of that system. This fee is in addition to the existing visa application fees. For information on Sevis, see: http://www.ice.gov/graphics/sevis/index.htm

It also is likely the foreign participants will have to pay for their visas. The costs of visas vary, depending on the nationality of the applicant, the duration of the stay and the number of entries. A complete index of visa charges by nationality can be found at: http://10.8.40.7/ReciprocityWeb/index.htm New regulations requiring personal interviews for all U.S. visa applicants mean that exchange participants from outside of capital cities may incur costs related to travel for the visa interview. Costs related to SEVIS registration and the visa application process can be charged to the grant. Please contact your program officer with any questions.

Foreign Visitor Departures from the United States

Foreign participants are subject to monitoring by the Student and Exchange Visitor Exchange System (SEVIS) during their exchange visits. When exchange visitors arrive at your institution, please ask them to provide you with a copy of any paperwork they receive from the Department of Homeland Security or other U.S. government agencies for your review. You may be able to prevent misunderstandings about foreign participant registration requirements and exit interviews required by the immigration officers when the participants depart from the United States.

Please note: A U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Fact Sheet issued by the National Security Entry-Exit System (NSEERS) states: "Some individuals will require additional scrutiny and will have to provide additional information under the National Security Entry-Exit Registration System, or NSEERS . . .. Anyone could be subject to additional scrutiny and should follow the directions of the Customs and Border Protection Officer if additional information regarding itinerary, length of stay, or other security questions is required. A packet of information will be available at the port of entry explaining the registration procedure."

Since, as stated above, any participant can be subject to NSEERS, ask your participants if they were interviewed, fingerprinted, and given a packet at the airport when they arrived. More information can be found at: www.dhs.gov/us-visit

Fly America Act

Both U.S. and foreign participants traveling on grant funds must comply with the Fly America Act. Please see the Fly America Act guidelines regarding flight availability. For flights that are code-shared, it is important that the ticket reflect the flight's designation as being on a U.S. carrier (not whatever is written on the side of the airplane or the nationality of the crew.) If you are facing unusual circumstances that might require an exception to the Fly America Act, please contact your program officer to discuss the details.

Money Transfers

Some means of transferring money to the partner location to pay for goods and services there is generally needed. There are a variety of means to effect these transfers, each with its own pluses and minuses.

There are instances in which U.S. grantees formally sub-contract with their foreign partners. The U.S. organization's grant from the Department of State would need to be amended to reflect this subcontract (unless it is reflected in the original grant) and the Grants Officer will need a copy of such subcontracts. Many grantees disburse funds in the host country (such as local purchases or salaries) directly rather than through a formal subcontracting arrangement.

Some grantees have wire-transferred money to their partners as part of a subcontract agreement. Questions to ask when contemplating such a transfer include: does the partner department or faculty have a bank account? Are the banks in the partner country reliable? Will the host government tax the transfer? If the partner is using an account belonging to the university or some independent organization, will the account owner claim overhead? Are there restrictions about withdrawing money that is wired (e.g. must accounts be held in the – sometimes rapidly depreciating - local currency)? Wire transfers can be processed through banks as well as through companies such as Western Union.

In some cases it may be possible to use credit cards (e.g. to purchase computers or plane tickets). For large equipment purchases, it may be possible to identify a local supplier with ties to western companies and to work out an arrangement whereby payment is made to a bank account in a third country and computers with service contracts are delivered locally. Under such an arrangement, it may be possible to have a signed contract in advance of payment to make the accountants happy.

Some individual exchange participants have used ATM cards to meet their living expenses. With both ATMs and credit cards you should be aware of the potential for identity theft and fraud.

In some cases goods may be purchased in the United States and sent to the foreign partner. Most commonly airplane tickets fall into this category (although there are reports that tickets may be substantially cheaper in foreign countries). Some grantees request that foreign exchange participants purchase their own tickets and receive reimbursement. This can be a financial challenge for some partners; it is also necessary to make sure that the partners clearly understand Fly America provisions.

Some projects rely on individuals to hand carry funds to the partner country. This does place a large responsibility on the individuals so tasked.

Orientation for Exchange Participants

Providing pre-departure or post-arrival orientation for all exchange participants can make a substantial difference in preparing the travelers to make the most of their experience abroad. The International Studies/Students Office at your institution should be able to provide materials and ideas for orientation sessions for participants arriving from abroad. Orientations can address issues such as:

- Overview of the country/culture/institution that the exchange participants will be visiting;
- Goals of the exchange and the role that the participants are expected to fulfill, including an overview of trip reports, progress reports, syllabi, or any other types of documentation that the participants will be expected to produce;
- Information about how to negotiate public transportation/restaurants/stores in the host city;
- Overview of culture shock and cultural adjustment theory;
- Information on who to turn to if assistance is needed while abroad;
- Discussion of potential differences in academic environment, student/teacher interactions and interactions with foreign colleagues in the partner university.
- Overview of any relevant visa tracking/registration or entry/exit regulations based on new policies from the Department of Homeland Security.

Orientations can be planned for groups or individuals and can consist of any combination of the above and other topics. Written orientation materials, which the participants can refer to at a later date, can also be a useful resource.

Classroom Dynamics and Academic Resources

Many partnership projects propose to introduce more active teaching methods at the foreign partner institution. In attempting to introduce new teaching methods, it is important to consider the relationship of teaching methods, the availability of resources, and the structure of existing curricula.

Traditionally, academic systems in many countries have focused on classes in which lectures are read to students in a large classroom, there is little student-teacher interaction and students are tested on their ability to reproduce the content of the lectures, verbatim. Students generally spend many, sometimes up to 30 or 35 hours weekly in class and have little homework to do outside of class. Additionally, students often hold part-time jobs to support themselves and their families, further reducing the time they have available to focus on their studies.

The lack of resources such as textbooks, journals, or Internet access, which would allow the students to prepare readings or research outside of class, has contributed to this approach to education in which the class lecture is the primary source on information. It is not possible to assign readings to the students if there are no books or journals available from which to take articles.

Many of the projects supported by the Educational Partnerships Program have budgeted funds to provide new educational resources to the foreign partner universities. These materials can have a dramatic impact on the institutions that receive them. In spite of this, however, it is useful to keep in mind that the students and faculty with whom you will be working are likely to be relatively time and resource poor, which will affect how much you can realistically accomplish in the limited time that you are working with them.

Maximizing Impact

Participants in Educational Partnerships Program project can be excellent resource persons. Please encourage foreign participants in particular to share their experiences with colleagues in their home institutions and communities after returning from the United States. In addition, please look for opportunities to enable your institution and community to benefit from the presence of your foreign visitors. Please look for opportunities to introduce them to persons or groups during their exchange visits, and suggest that they look for opportunities to talk about their U.S. experiences after they return to their countries.

In your proposals, many of you listed "internationalization" of your institutions as one of the goals of the partnership proposal. One way to promote greater awareness of this international partnership is by developing a project web page which includes information on the goals of the partnership, tracks progress toward the accomplishment of the goals, includes pictures of trips to the foreign partner campus or visits from exchange participants, highlights new courses, revised syllabi, a calendar of partnership related events, etc. Examples of such websites can be found at:

http://bluehawk.monmouth.edu/~swork/Latvia_MU_Web/home/index.shtml (Monmouth University/Higher School of Social Work Social Pegagogics "Attistiba")
http://www.coe.uga.edu/stc (University of Georgia/West Visayas State University/Western Mindanao State University)

If you do develop a project website, please remember to share the address with your program officer. From time to time, you may wish to consult the Educational Partnerships Programs' website for information on the activities of other institutional linkages: http://exchanges.state.gov/education/partnership

When you visit your partner institution abroad, we ask that you arrange to meet with the cultural or public affairs officer at the U.S. Embassy to discuss your project. This can provide an opportunity to learn how your project fits into the larger context of U.S. government-supported educational exchange efforts and whether there are other resources or information that could be useful to the project. Continued support for

Educational Partnerships depends on the Embassy's knowledge of the impact and accomplishments of projects like yours. In addition, please let us know about any publicity the project receives or project-related events that the Department of State might help to publicize.

Computer Equipment Purchases

If computer equipment purchases have been approved for your project, you may purchase computers in either the U.S. or the country of the partner institution or a third country. Challenges associated with purchasing computers in the United States include: the additional cost of shipping; the murky issue of what (if any) duties will be imposed and how to request waiver of such duties on humanitarian donations; the difficulty of obtaining appropriate service contracts. Because of these challenges many grantees find that it makes more sense to purchase computers locally. The principal challenge involved with purchasing computers locally at the partner site is transfer of funds. In some cases, some types of equipment (or books, for example) may not be available for local purchase and will have to be shipped in.

Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs Contacts

Every Bureau grant has both a Grants Officer and a Program Officer. Programmatic issues, such as changes in planned activities or participants, should be addressed to the Program Officer. Required reports should be submitted - in duplicate - to the Grants Officer (see "Reporting Requirements" section below for more detail). Issues of a contractual nature, including amendment requests or budget reallocations, should be addressed to the Grants Officer (although it will expedite the process if the Program Officer is copied on amendment requests). Financial issues, such as grant disbursement or reimbursement, should be addressed to the Grants Officer. (Also see the "Grant Amendments" section below for additional guidance.)

Grant Changes and Amendments

You should keep a copy of the FY04 Educational Partnerships Program Request for Grant Proposal (RFGP) and Program Objectives, Goals and Implementation document (POGI) in your files. These documents include administrative requirements that apply throughout the grant period. Please contact your program officer to discuss any changes to the budget, grant period, or programmatic content of your project. In some cases, a formal grant amendment is required before such changes can be made.

Reporting Requirements

You will have received a document outlining the partnership program's reporting requirements as a separate attachment in this mailing. Please refer to this handout for more specific content related details. Your first required report, the planning report, is due approximately 30 days after the date the grant was awarded. The purpose of the planning report is to give you an opportunity to outline any changes in timing or personnel, which have taken place in the months since the original proposal was submitted. In some cases, project directors submit this report after making a preliminary visit to the partner university and realizing that due to local circumstances, various aspects of the proposal may need to be re-thought. If this happens to you, please contact your program officer to discuss the process of making changes in direction or emphasis of the project.

Annual reports are due at the end of each year of grant activity. The grant year is based on the date on which the grant was finalized, not the date on which program activities started. In addition to listing grant activities that took place over the year, this report should also include analyses of what went or did not go as expected and any implications for the upcoming year's activities. We also recommend that you include copies of any trip reports that you receive from exchange participants. Please refer to the reporting requirements for a complete listing of issues to address in the annual reports. Annual reports should also include an evaluation section, in which the findings from the evaluation plan included in the original proposal are discussed. The final report is due 90 calendar days after the expiration or termination of the award.

Two paper copies of all official reports should be submitted directly to the grants officer indicated in your contract. Please include your grant agreement number on the reports and in all correspondence with the grants office. The address of the grants office is:

U.S. Department of State
Attn: (Name of Grants Officer)
Grants Division, ECA/EX/G
SA-44, Room 524
301 4th St, SW
Washington DC 20547

Although the grants office will eventually forward a copy of your report to us in the program office, it would be very useful if you could send us a copy (preferably as an e-mail attachment) for our more immediate reference. We also ask that you periodically send us short anecdotes or "success stories" describing grant activities and accomplishments. These are useful for us to use in illustrating the usefulness of this program and why it should continue to receive funding! Accompanying photos are also welcome.

The grants office may withhold grant payments from projects with delinquent or missing reports, so it is very important to submit required reports on time!

Alumni Website Membership

The State Alumni website (https://alumni.state.gov) is a password-protected online community for current and past participants in U.S. government-funded exchange programs. Launched as a pilot project in 2001, the site now has approximately 9,000 registered users and serves alumni in the East Asia/Pacific, Eurasia, Europe, South Asia, and North and South America regions of the world. Current participants of Educational Partnerships with universities in these regions are welcome to join the site. The State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs anticipates inviting participants and alumni from the Near East and Africa to join in 2005. To access the site, please visit the homepage and follow the link that says "Join Now!" Once you join, you will have access to a variety of features that are updated daily, including a career development section, grant opportunities, alumni news, discussion boards, a photo gallery, and the "Find Fellow Alumni" section that allows you to search for other registered alumni. The site also hosts live online question and answer sessions where a guest expert appears on the site to answer alumni questions. For more information, please contact <webmaster@alumni.state.gov>.

Recommendations from Former Project Directors

Over the years, project directors like you have provided us with insight into some of the "lessons learned" during the course of their projects and recommendations for future grantees. Following are some of their suggestions and issues to consider as you begin your grant project.

Project Focus

- Although students appreciate classroom instruction, more emphasis on U.S. faculty working directly with foreign faculty to design courses and materials would have added more value to the grant's accomplishments.

- Greater outreach efforts of U.S. participants are recommended to help in consolidating support within community as well as for exchangees to acquire better understanding of marketplace or context.

- Concentrate on faculty rather than graduate student exchanges – the faculty are well educated, anxious to learn, and will return home. Do not bring graduate students from the partner country to the U.S. with the idea that they will return home to teach – with a foreign-earned MBA or Ph.D., they will have little incentive to return to academia in their home country.

- Focus on teaching methodology that includes hands on experiences and collaborative work in the classroom.

- Avoid attempting to transfer American teaching methodologies, concepts, and practices to a foreign country without adapting them to the other country's reality.

- Avoid underestimating the professional level of foreign specialists and student populations (e.g. oversimplifying course materials).

- For new material to be useful, it must integrate the foreign partner's experience.

- Participants may find that it is more realistic to incorporate new materials and methodologies into old courses rather than attempt to change curricula officially.

Preparation and Planning Logistics

- Clarify what amenities, (e.g. bedding, kitchenware, etc.) will be available for exchangees; what is the proximity to shopping, access to transportation; any irregularity in the availability of heat and/or water.

- Investigate how to transfer funds, if there is any IRS tax liability for exchangees, or issues relating to the disbursement of per diem.

- Make sure that the co-director is from an appropriate department in the partner institution.

- Offer orientation or other processes intended to educate both parties on fundamental State Department objectives for grants.

- It is important to have a well-developed infrastructure for grant accounting and administration.

- With more emphasis on the preparation of exchange participants, more concrete results could be achieved – particularly with the first short- term group to go.

- Give guidance to any mentor/"mentee" pairs about how to get the most out of partnerships.

- Broad participation should be encouraged in activities by faculty, business, and the community.

- Each stay should be well planned and follow-up evaluations should be undertaken yearly in order to assess the impact in the long run.

- Make sure that exchange participants are chosen with relevant fields of study in mind in terms of furthering overall program goals.

- An administrative coordinator at each site to coordinate needs of exchangees (housing, meetings, etc) takes pressure off of faculty to do these tasks.
- Keep a copy of the grant contract and maintain close communication with the university grants office to ensure that all regulations are being followed in the implementation of the project.

Language Issues

- Make sure your translators are familiar with Business English – or any field specific language that your project will be using.

- Have someone on the administrative team who speaks the language of the partner university.

- Ability to work in the language is critical. Whenever possible, only faculty who have a sound command of the language should participate. Those who lack appropriate language competence should agree to participate in intensive language training during the first part of their visit.

- When it is necessary to include participants who lack adequate language skills, the deficits can be partly overcome by organizing short-term intensive academic seminars that use interpreters.

Timing and Scheduling of Activities

- It is not usually useful to concentrate all exchange activities during summer months even though regular academic responsibilities may be lower then.

- There should be some stays for extended periods of time (more than one month) at the host institution.

- If tours/visits of other cities are planned, do so at the end, rather than the beginning, of an exchange visit when the participants' language and cultural understanding is higher.

- Scheduling of bi-weekly faculty/departmental luncheons helped in fostering co-mingling of faculty on both sides and breaking down barriers.

- Short-term visits (less than one month) tend to consume an inordinate amount of time of travel, while not providing the richness of a more extended stay.

- First steps should include analysis of and travel to the site to gain better understanding of the workings and politics of the partner institutions. Support should be gained from presidents, provosts, rectors, deans and faculty at both partner institutions.

Interpersonal

- Be flexible, persistent, sensitive, listen well, be open, resist impulse to personalize issues, stay focused on mutual goals.

- Ask yourself, what can we learn from the foreign partners?

- Increased face-to-face contact between State Department overseas offices and grant participants is valuable.

- Typical problems include: language ability, lack of focused/specific research topics, limited understanding of project vision and expectations.

- Make no assumptions about the others' understanding of responsibilities, goals, schedules, procedures, etc. Monitor to check that understandings are shared and progress is being made.

- Flexibility and adaptability to unforeseeable change in conditions and personnel is necessary.

Conclusion

We hope that this information will prove to be useful to as you finalize your plans and implement your new grant awards. We encourage you to get in touch with us by phone or e-mail at any point if you have questions, would like some feedback on an idea, or simply would like to give us an update on the program. We look forward to working with you and watching the evolution of your project!