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Education

Request for Proposals (RFP)

To : Offerors
From : Institute of International Education, Inc. (IIE)
Subject : *Fulbright Student Programs Website Maintenance and Development*
RFP Issue Date : August 2, 2024
RFP Closing Date : August 26, 2024
RFP Closing Time : 5 PM ET
Performance Period : October 1, 2024-September 30, 2025 (1 year initial contract with option to renew for up to a total of five years)

Enclosed is a Request for Proposals (RFP). IIE invites qualified firms and organizations (“Offerors”) to submit a best-value proposal for the requested services. The Contract resulting from this award will be a USG-Funded Contract serving the below mentioned program.

Offerors are encouraged to read this RFP in its entirety (including any and all attachments), paying specific attention to the instructions and requirements included herein. Issuance of this solicitation does not, in any way, obligate the Institute of International Education (IIE) to award a contract, nor will IIE pay for any costs incurred in the preparation and submission of a proposal. The agreement resulting from this RFP will be provided to the most responsive Offeror(s) whose Offer will be the most advantageous to IIE in terms of cost, functionality, and other factors as specified in this RFP.

The required services are described in the “Statement of Work” in Attachment A. IIE encourages your organization to indicate its interest in this RFP by submitting a proposal according to the instructions in “Proposal Preparation Instruction”. Proposals will be evaluated based on the “Evaluation Criteria.

All proposals are due by the dates and times stated above. Any proposal received after the required time and date specified for receipt shall be considered late and non-responsive. Late proposals will not be evaluated.

Questions: Any questions are to be submitted via email to the email address listed below no later than the date listed in the table below at 17:00 hours U.S. Eastern Time. No questions will be entertained if they are received by means other than the specified email address. No oral answers will be provided. Answers to questions IIE deems relevant to this RFP will be published on or about the date listed in the table below on IIE’s website under Subawards and Procurement at: <https://www.iie.org/Work-With-Us/Subawards-Procurements/Solicitations-for-Goods-and-Services>.

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Proposal Submission: Proposals, including any attachments (limited to 6MB), should be sent electronically in PDF format to: skerr@iie.org . Be sure to include in the subject line: “Request for Proposal (RFP)— Fulbright Student Programs Websites” IIE will not accept proposals received by fax.

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RFP SCHEDULE

Event	Date
RFP Distribution to Offerors	Friday, August 2, 2024
Offerors Questions Submission Deadline	Friday, August 9, 2024
Responses to Offeror’s questions	Wednesday, August 14, 2024
Proposal Submission Due Date	Monday, August 26, 2024
Semi-Finalists Invited to Deliver Presentation	The week of September 9 - 12, 2024
Anticipated decision and selection of Offeror	On or about September 16, 2024
Anticipated commencement date of work	October 1, 2024

Section 1: Background and Purpose

The Institute of International Education (“IIE” or the “Institute”) is a New York not-for-profit corporation that is among the world’s largest and most experienced international education and training organizations. Founded in 1919, IIE promotes educational exchange around the world through a wealth of programs and services including Fellowship and Scholarship Management, Higher Education Institutional Development, Emergency Student and Scholar Assistance, and Leadership Development.

For more than 100 years, IIE has promoted educational exchange around the world. The Institute currently implements more than 200 programs benefiting 40,000 participants from 183 countries. Foremost among these programs is the world-renowned Fulbright Program, which IIE has had the honor to administer on behalf of the U.S. Department of State since the program’s inception in 1946. In addition to the U.S. Department of State, program sponsors include: the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID); World Bank; major philanthropic foundations; private and public corporations; foreign governments; and individuals.

With IIE’s global headquarters in New York City, IIE has offices around the world, including offices in the United States (Washington D.C., Chicago, Houston and San Francisco) and in other countries (China, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Mexico, Thailand, and Ukraine).

The Fulbright Program

The Fulbright Program, the flagship international educational exchange program sponsored by the U.S. government, is designed to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries. The U.S. Congress established the Fulbright Program in 1946, following legislation introduced by the late Senator J. William Fulbright to fund the “promotion of international good will through the exchange of students in the fields of education, culture and science.” The program actively seeks out individuals of achievement and potential who represent the full diversity of their respective societies and selects nominees through open, merit-based competitions. IIE administers the Fulbright Program under the guidance of and in consultation with the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA).

Purpose of Request for Proposal

The Fulbright Program is seeking a full service website maintenance and development company with expertise in development, design, and maintenance of the websites of the Fulbright student programs.

The purpose of this Request for Proposal (“RFP”) is to invite bidders to submit a proposal for a website maintenance and development company to provide ongoing support, maintain, enhance, and improve the current Fulbright student program websites; and enhance and improve existing functionality that adheres to the stipulations and needs as described in this request for proposal. Pending the availability of funds and the approval of the Fulbright sponsor

(The U.S. Department of State), IIE may consider a website redesign and other major website projects in future years.

The information presented in this RFP is furnished solely for the purpose of assisting the bidder in making its own evaluation of the Scope of Work and does not purport to be all-inclusive or to contain all the information you may require. This RFP is not an offer by IIE to contract, but rather an attempt to establish a common framework for IIE to evaluate potential suppliers. The bidder should make its own investigations, projections and conclusions to verify independently the information contained in this RFP, and to obtain any additional information that it may require, prior to submitting a proposal.

Section 2: RFP Conditions

IIE reserves the right to:

- Reject any or all offers and discontinue this RFP process without obligation or liability to any potential Offeror or other party.
- Accept other than the lowest price offered.
- Award a contract on the basis of initial offers received, without discussions or requests for best and final offers.
- Award more than one contract.

Nothing in this RFP is, or should be, relied on by Offeror as a promise or representation by IIE. IIE does not make any representation or warranty as to the completeness of this RFP or have any liability for any representations (express or implied) contained in, or omissions from, this RFP. This RFP and any replies to any written notifications are transmitted to the Offeror solely for the purposes of the Offeror preparing and submitting a Proposal. Each Offeror shall keep the RFP and its contents confidential and shall return the RFP (without keeping copies) to IIE if the Offeror elects not to submit a proposal, or upon being requested to do so by IIE.

Any information or materials submitted in response to this RFP and/or as a proposal (whether successful or unsuccessful) shall become the property of IIE and will not be returned.

In submitting a proposal, you must agree that your offer shall remain firm for a period of no less than 120 days from the RFP closing date.

Failure to follow the specifications and requirements provided in this RFP may result in disqualification.

The successful Offeror will be obligated to enter into an agreement containing the same or substantially similar terms and conditions found at <https://www.iie.org/Work-With-Us/Subawards-Procurements/Solicitations-for-Goods-and-Services>. The IIE terms and conditions may be changed, added to, deleted or modified by IIE prior to awarding the agreement. Other terms and conditions may be negotiated between IIE and the successful Offeror, at IIE's discretion. State Universities and Agencies should not expect or ask IIE to modify its Terms and Conditions to incorporate any State Regulations or Statutes.

Section 3: Proposal Preparation instructions

Proposals are expected to be comprehensive and include the information set forth below. Offerors are also invited to send any additional information or supplemental material they believe will aid IIE in properly evaluating their service offerings. Please be sure to respond to each of the elements requested and frame your answers in direct response to the information being sought.

Include only your own work and no text copied from sources outside of your organization, unless those sources are adequately cited and credited. In order to be qualified for this RFP, all Offerors are requested to provide the following information, and format their proposal as follows:

1. Letter of transmittal, one page

2. Basic information, one page

- Legal name, registered address, and “Remit to” mailing address, if different from registered address
- Name of authorized representative for this RFP, with telephone number(s), and e-mail address
- General information about your organization and the services it offers

3. Qualifications and Capabilities, two page maximum

- Brief description of the organization/entity and experience in the field that illustrates overall services and capabilities to meet the terms of the RFP
- Years of relevant experience
- Any plans to outsource/subcontract the services or any part thereof
- Please note any previous experience working with IIE

4. Past Performance and Experience

Document and summarize your proven track record of successfully implementing similar activities.

- Using the table format provided below, please list only the relevant projects you implemented within the past 3 years, a brief description of how each is relevant to the scope of the RFP, and the contact details for each previous client or donor.
- You may also include recommendation/appreciation letters and certificates.
- You must include a list of at least 3 but no more than 5 websites that you currently manage. Include the URL for each website
- Make sure to include any lessons learned

#	(a) Name of Organization	(b) Activity Title	(c) Locations of activity	(d) Synopsis of the activity and relevance to this RFP	(e) Performance period (date and duration)	(f) Cost for the activity	(g) Name & Contact Info (E-mail <u>and</u> phone)
1							

2							
3							

5. Implementation of the Statement of Work, 10 page maximum (10 pages)

- Detailed description of the services being offered and any information relevant to meeting the technical specifications stated in **Attachment A**. Make sure to describe any innovative approaches or technology you plan to use.
- Describe your ideas for potential upgrades, renovations or other projects not specifically mentioned in the scope of work. IIE strongly encourages offerors to be creative and to bring new ideas.
- Implementation plan, and reasoning behind the plan chosen
- Quality control plan including:
 - A description of internal review procedures that facilitate high-quality standards
 - How quality control will be managed when completing multiple projects for multiple clients
- Exceptions to the RFP, additional or different ideas, in the statement of work and other requirements should be expressly noted
- Describe your process and timeline when collaborating with another solution provider should there be a transition period between IIE’s current solution and your proposed solution.

6. Cost Proposal

- Submit a detailed cost proposal, in U.S. dollars, in the recommended format shown in Attachment B
- Include any additional cost items that the Offeror wishes to propose
- Include any proposed discounts, including any discounts for working with not-for-profit organizations
- Total cost proposed

Section 4: Terms of Payment

Payment terms for the award shall be approximately net thirty (30) days after satisfactory completion of each deliverable or milestone agreed upon and established in the resulting agreement. Payment shall be made by the Institute of International Education (“IIE”) via check or electronic funds transfer/bank wire. The final payment terms in the contract will control, not this RFP. No advance payments will be provided.

Section 5: Evaluation of Proposals

Item	Requirement	Points Available
1) Technical Approach to Required Elements of Scope of Work	IIE is seeking proposals that demonstrate strong capabilities managing website maintenance and development	50 points
2) Technical Approach to Proposed Creative Elements	IIE is seeking innovative new ideas regarding how to approach the Fulbright Scholar website.	15 points
3) References/Letters of Recommendation/Past Projects		10 points
Cost Proposal	IIE’s review of the cost proposal shall determine if the overall costs proposed are realistic for the work to be performed, reflect a correct understanding of the project requirements, and are consistent with the Offeror’s technical proposal.	25 points
Total		100 points

Section 6: Annual Renewal

Annual Renewal: Selection(s) may be renewed annually, at IIE’s sole discretion, for up to five years before re-competition. IIE reserves the right to exercise any one of the following options:

- Accept the updated proposal if changes are reasonable and within the scope of the original selection;
- Negotiate any updates/changes; or,
- Decide not to renew

Attachment A: Statement of Work

The Fulbright Student program currently maintains two primary websites, and three “secondary” sites which are updated less frequently, as well as an email account.

- The Fulbright U.S. Student Program - <https://us.fulbrightonline.org>
- The Fulbright Foreign Student Program – <https://foreign.fulbrightonline.org>
- The Student Award Catalog - <https://ccms.fulbrightonline.org/>
- Fulbright Pre-Departure Resources - <https://us.fulbrightonline.org/pdr>
- Fulbrightmail – free email accounts are managed and maintained for current and past grantees, in collaboration with Google G Suite.

The primary purpose of the Fulbright U.S. Student Program website is to recruit potential applicants to the program, whereas the Fulbright Foreign Student Program website’s primary purpose is to provide the numerous external stakeholders and audiences with a user-friendly resource and repository of documents, program information, and other relevant material.

The purpose of the Fulbright U.S. Student Award Catalog is to present detailed information on a range of program and grant opportunities to interested individuals and institutions. As it serves as the primary recruitment tool for the program, it should be both attractive and easy to use for prospective applicants. The catalog should also allow for multiple levels of administrative access for various stakeholders in over 130 countries to intuitively create, edit, track changes, and approve content in the system.

The purpose of the Fulbright Pre-Departure Resources (PDR) is to present information detailed program information and resources to participants before they begin their program. It should be visually attractive and intuitive to use. The PDR content also needs to be transmitted to the Fulbright Scholar website (<https://fulbrightscholars.org/pdr/fulbright-pre-departure-resources>) via an API. It should also allow multiple levels of administrative access for various stakeholders in over 130 countries to create, edit, and approve content in the system.

Currently Joomla and WordPress are the platforms utilized for the multiple sites and they are hosted on Microsoft Azure. Different platforms and hosts can be used in proposals.

IIE is seeking a full service website maintenance and development company to ensure that its websites continue to meet the changing needs of its sponsor (U.S. State Department) and its users (prospective and current participants, Commissions/U.S. Embassies, Fulbright Program Advisors (FPAs) on U.S. campuses. The major purposes of the websites are to:

- Provide clear and easily understandable information to current and prospective participants.
- Provide password-protected sections and documents for different user groups based on permissions
- Allow for the ability for Fulbright Commissions/Posts around the world, ECA, Program Managers, and IIE Staff to add/edit specific country content

Pending availability of funds in future years and the approval of the sponsor, IIE may also consider more significant updates and upgrades to the website including, but not limited to, a complete website re-design, a change in platforms, and other possible major projects.

A. Responsibilities of the contractor will include:

- Manage and maintain all domains, including technical support with our webhost and website security company.
- Complete regular repairs as needed to scripting languages, basic HTML, cascading style sheets, broken images, broken links and all other malfunctioning code or components.
- Daily website backups and restore points that will be archived and accessible
- Complete regular software and plugin updates for all frameworks.
- Quarterly check-up: at the end of each quarter the contractor will check for any broken links, broken images, template distortion, test all contact forms and other interactive elements and provide a report upon request at the end of each quarter. This report should also include site traffic statistics and search engine analysis reports. Reports will be emailed when complete.
- Contractor will respond to all maintenance requests from Fulbrightonline.org within 3 hours on weekdays and 18 hours on weekends, via email, with a confirmation that the request was received and an estimated completion date for each action item in the request
- Maintain the databases which requires basic administration throughout the year including security maintenance and upgrades, troubleshooting, and data repair.
- Maintain Custom-built Site Search Engine by ensuring any content updates and new pages are searchable and respect the multi-level permission access that are in place. A quarterly check-up is required to ensure security and privacy of protected content from public search.
- Ability to maintain and develop API functionality with external sites.
- Ability to maintain OKTA Single Sign-On using industry standards for federated authentication such as SAML2 or OpenID Connect. Ensure that site is 508 Compliant, follows the guidelines of WCAG 2.1 or above, and utilizes mobile-responsive design.
- Ensure that the site is compliant with sponsors communications guidance - https://eca.state.gov/files/bureau/communications_guidance_for_eca_recipient_organizations.pdf
- Continue with Google Analytics tracking code for proper website analytics. The code can be adjusted using the configuration in the Google Analytics module.

B. Development/Design

- Refresh design and navigation of fulbrightonline.org to improve user experience
Using website analytics and data on user behavior:
 - Update homepage
 - Update CSS templates
 - Update website navigations and menus

- Improve user experience of U.S. Student Awards Catalog
- Improve website search capabilities so users can easily find relevant pages and documents.
- Improve user experience for individuals using mobile devices.
- The ability to seamlessly embed learning component, such as offering asynchronous course content and assessments.
- Further improve accessibility for users with disabilities.
- Improve user experience and customization for editors of U.S. Student Awards Catalog
- Improve functionality of text editor on all parts of the site – specifically to make formatting more automated and/or intuitive.
- Add additional password-protected sections to website.
- The website should take advantage of modern SEO standards/techniques including performance considerations, web crawlers, https, mobile design, scripting etc. to increase frequency of search appearances for the program.

C. Service level/Response times

- Include a proposed list of service levels and response times; if you would like to propose more than one set of service levels and response times please be sure that the cost differential between the options is clearly shown.

D. Web Support

- Provide support services, upgrades, bug fixes, security and software updates and site optimization as needed.
- Other upgrades contingent on cost and available budget:
 - Provide improved solution for photo uploads, and media management.
 - Provide test environment for minor changes, updates and bug fixes.
 - Improve ability to manage data and information related to Fulbright Scholar and Liaison directories.

E. Proposed enhancements, contingent on cost and available budget:

- Improve website search capabilities with AI-enhanced search. Requirements include:
 - AI-Enhanced Search: Incorporate AI to enhance search functionality, providing more accurate and relevant results.
 - Natural Language Processing (NLP): The search should understand natural language queries, including questions and complex phrases.
 - Auto-Suggestions: Implement auto-suggestions and autocomplete features to improve user experience.
 - Personalization: The search should be able to personalize results based on user behavior and preferences.
 - Faceted Search: Allow users to refine search results using filters and facets.
 - Synonym Recognition: Recognize and handle synonyms to ensure comprehensive search results.

- Analytics and Reporting: Provide detailed analytics on search queries, user behavior, and search performance.
 - Scalability: Ensure the search function can handle large volumes of queries without performance degradation.
 - Security: Ensure search data is handled securely and complies with relevant data protection regulations.
- The ability to incorporate an AI-powered chat function should the program decide to implement this functionality in the future. Requirements include:
 - The chat should be powered by advanced AI, capable of natural language processing (NLP) to understand and respond to user queries accurately.
 - Customization: The chat should be customizable to reflect the brand and style of IIE.
 - Learning and Adaptation: The AI should have the ability to learn from interactions and improve its responses over time.
 - Multi-Channel Support: The chat should be accessible via web, mobile, and other relevant platforms.
 - Multilingual Support: The chat should support multiple languages to cater to a diverse user base.
 - User Data Security: Ensure all user data collected through the chat is stored securely and complies with relevant data protection regulations.
 - Analytics and Reporting: Analyze user interactions, common queries, and performance metrics.
 - Fallback Mechanism: Include a fallback mechanism to direct users to human support if the AI cannot resolve their query.
 - Utilize Google Analytics to track users journeys who are applying to the U.S. Student Program to better support them through the application process.

Attachment B: Cost Proposal Template

Submit a detailed, budget for the services described in the technical proposal. IIE's review of the cost proposal shall determine if the overall costs proposed are: realistic for the work to be performed, reflect a correct understanding of the project requirements, and are consistent with the Offeror's Technical Proposal.

The following is a format may be used as a guide to assist you in the preparation of the cost proposal. You may submit the cost proposal using this form or in the format of your choice (plain sheets, your own form, or a variation of this form). The Offeror may list any cost line items, but it is recommended that the Offeror follow the major categories listed below, breaking down all "lump sum" items as much as reasonably possible.

Proposed rates for site build if required.

Item No.	Description	Proposed Rate (specify whether blended, hourly, or daily)	Estimated # of hours	Comments
1	Website Discovery/Planning			
2	Website Visual Design			
3	Website Implementation			
4	Ongoing Project Management			
5	Content Migration From Existing Site to New Site			Please specify whether you are proposing a per page rate for manual migration or an automated tool for mass migration
6	Other proposed rates (please specify)			
	Estimated Total Price			

Proposed Rates

Rate Type	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Monthly Hosting (fixed)					
Monthly Maintenance (fixed)					
Website Design (specify whether blended, hourly or daily)					
Website Development (specify whether blended, hourly or daily)					
Other Proposed Rates					

Attachment C – ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

Third-Party IT Risk Management Process (TPRM)

An **IT Security Questionnaire** is required prior to signing a contract if the vendor will process IIE proprietary data or Personal Data according to GDPR's definition on behalf of IIE or connect to IIE's network.

- Vendors who can furnish evidence of an **ISO 27001 Certification** are asked to attach such documentation and to provide their up-to-date **System and Organization Controls (SOC) 2 Type 2 Attestation**.
- Vendors who cannot furnish IIE with ISO 27001 Certification evidence will be asked to provide a **SOC 2 Type 2 attestation** and complete a **security assessment that is mapped to the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) Cyber Security Framework (CSF)**. NIST is a guidance, based on existing standards, guidelines, and practices for organizations to better manage and reduce cybersecurity risk. The NIST CSF consists of five concurrent and continuous Functions—Identify, Protect, Detect, Respond, Recover. When considered together, these Functions provide a high-level, strategic view of the lifecycle of an organization's cybersecurity risk management.
- If your organization does not wish to complete this request using the automated OneTrust platform, please visit the "Welcome" screen of the IT Security Questionnaire (using the emailed link from OneTrust) and click "*Complete Offline Using Excel*" to download the **Excel** version of the NIST CSF assessment. Please make sure to upload the completed file to OneTrust using the same path and **Submit**.

Prohibition on certain telecommunications and video surveillance services or equipment

IIE cannot enter into a contract to procure or obtain equipment, services, or systems that uses covered telecommunications equipment or services as a substantial or essential component of any system, or as critical technology as part of any system. As described in Public Law 115-232, section 889, covered telecommunications equipment is telecommunications equipment produced by Huawei Technologies Company or ZTE Corporation (or any subsidiary or affiliate of such entities).

Covered equipment and services must not be part of your offer to IIE.