Questions asked during the proposal-writing webinars

Q: How many applications can each university submit – for example, can I submit funding applications for two projects with higher education institutions from New York and from Washington?
A: Institutions can submit multiple projects, but only one submitted project per institution can receive UPP funding. If an institution wants to work with two partners, it has the option of creating a three-way partnership.

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Q: When will the results of the competition be revealed?
A: Competition winners will be notified on June 1, 2015.

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Q: When is the funding expected to start?
A: UPP will release the first payment after signing an official grant agreement with each institution receiving funds on behalf of the partnership. These grant agreements will stipulate exact dates for the project funding period. The start date of the funding will vary based on how quickly each institution reviews and signs the grant agreement, but we anticipate that most institutions will be able to do so by mid-June.

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Q: What will be the percentage of winners of out of the total number of applicants?
A: As this is the first Linkage funding competition held by UPP, it is unknown how many applications we will receive. The number of winners will depend on the caliber of the applications received during this funding round. UPP has a limited amount of funding available and will distribute the awards between the spring and autumn funding rounds at its own discretion.

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Q: Can a Russian university partner with an American community college?
A: Yes. Any accredited American higher education institution, including a community college, is eligible as a partner.

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Q: Is it necessary to have a special company registration (D-U-N-S)?
A: You will need to request a Dun & Bradstreet (D-U-N-S) number if the total amount your institution will receive from UPP is over $25,000. The UPP grants manager will help award recipients in this situation register after they have been notified about their acceptance.

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Q: Can I receive a copy of the presentation by email?
A: The presentation is posted on the UPP website.

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Q: How will Russian universities receive their funding if they win an award?
A: The funds will be disbursed to Russian universities by wire transfer (in dollars) and to American universities by check.

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Q: Is the joint component filled out in both languages?
A: The joint component does not have to be in two languages. Only one version of the joint component is necessary, and applicants can use English, Russian or a combination of both as they see fit.

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Q: Where to include names of students and postdocs that contribute to the project?
A: The only individual names that are required to be listed in the application are the for the Institution Official, Project Director and Financial Manager positions. Information on these positions is included in the individual component for each university. Other participants can be listed in the narrative portion of the joint component if they are already identified, but it is not required.

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Q: What does "EF" mean on the budget form?
A: "EF" stands for "Eurasia Foundation", which is the organization that implements UPP. This column on the budget form is for funds that will come from Eurasia Foundation through UPP (up to $41,000).

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Q: Should the application forms be submitted as hard copies or in scanned electronic versions?
A: UPP does not require hard copies. Electronic versions of the application forms must be emailed as attachments to upp@eurasia.org by the May 18 deadline. PDF or Microsoft Word documents are both acceptable.

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Q: Can the Project Director participate in trips to the partner university?
A: Yes!

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Q: How detailed should the project plan be?
A: Project plans should be as detailed as possible within the word limits (on the individual component) and page limits (on the joint component) provided. UPP understands that there may be some aspects of the project that will not be finalized by May 18 (e.g. specific dates, numbers of participants), but there should be a clear outline of the main activities, deliverables, budget, impact, and evaluation of results during the project.

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Q: Where should the cost-sharing funds come from and is it mandatory?
A: The project budget is required to include at least $5,000 in cost-share. This funding can come from one or both institutions and/or from third parties.

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Q: Who can be a financial manager? Should this person be an administrative staff member with rights to sign financial documents? What should be responsibilities of financial manager?
A: Financial Manager is a key personnel that is responsible for the financial side of the project. Financial manager has to have some finance-related background or experience to prove that s/he is capable of managing project funds and ensuring compliance with donor's requirements. Project Director and Financial Manager cannot be one person, procedures these positions have to be taken by different people.

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Q: Should the application package be sent as a single file or 4 files separately in one e-mail?
A: UPP has no preference, so applicants may do whatever is easiest for them. If the files are too large to send in one email, applicants may send the application package as a zip file or as attachments to several emails. Applicants may also send the package using an online file sharing service such as Dropbox or Google Drive if emails fail to go through.

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Q: Could a continuing education program, that is a part of an academic university institution, be eligible to be partner?
A: Yes, because it is part of an academic university institution.

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Q: May we still apply if we have had partnerships with Russian institutions previously?
A: In most cases, yes. Your application would only be ineligible if it is with an institution you have an active partnership with or an institution you are restarting a former project with. For example, if you have an active partnership with Moscow State University, you may apply for funding with a new partner such as Kazan State University, but not with Moscow State University. You also may not apply to get new funding for a joint project with Moscow State University that has existed in the past.

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Q: Do all of selection criteria have to be addressed within the 5 pages of the narrative in the Joint Component?

A: Not necessarily. UPP evaluates the application as a whole, including the joint, individual and budget components. For example, the score of the "experience of partner institutions in the proposed area" criterion can draw from multiple sections of the application such as key personnel resumes, the "A.5. Aims and Activities of the Institution" section of the individual component and the "II. Purpose of Project" section of the joint component.

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Q: In effect, is the Linkage Funding application is merely an expansion of the Contact Funding application? Are the Linkage Individual Component application(s) identical to the Contact Individual Components?
A: The Contact funding and Linkage funding applications are similar, but not identical. In general, the components of the Linkage application use the same general format as the Contact application, but include more questions and/or request more detailed information. The Linkage individual component has a higher word limit and has one more question than the Contact individual component, but is otherwise the same. However, if you have already applied during the Contact stage, you still need to fill out all sections of the Linkage application forms to facilitate the review process.

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Q: We will have several faculty from our university who will participate in the project. Do I need to include their names and also their vitas in the proposal?
A: Applicants are only required to submit curricula vitae or resumes for the key personnel (institution official, project director, and financial manager). Names and descriptions of other project participants can be listed in the application if the partner institutions think it would be useful for the application reviewers, but it is not mandatory.

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Q: For conferences and meeting can food costs be included in the budget?
A: Yes, if the costs are reasonable. The UPP review panel may ask clarifying questions about specific expenses included in the budget (such as food) during the review process.

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Q: Could we submit page 6 of the Joint Component twice--one with the Russian official signature and another with the US official signature?
A: Yes. It is more convenient to have the signatures on the same page, but institutions will not be penalized if they are on different pages.

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Q: What should be the beginning date of the project? Does the grant have to start in June? Could it start on Sept. 1?
A: The grant's project funding period will begin once the official grant agreements between Eurasia Foundation and the partner institutions are signed. Each grant agreement will list an official start and end date that will vary based on how quickly the agreement is signed (by mid-June for most institutions). However, the project activities may start at any time within twelve months of when the agreement was signed.

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Q: What expenses are allowable or unallowable in the project budget?
A: Allowable expenses are direct costs of project implementation, such as communication between institutions, conferences and events, honoraria for project experts, interpretation/translation services, travel costs, and prorated portions of salaries for key personnel. Unallowable expenses include construction expenses, purchase of real estate, repayment of debts, ongoing expenses not relevant to program implementation, and in most cases indirect costs.

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Q: What is the release time of funding for the American partner?
A: Funds are released to American partners by check. The first payment will be mailed as soon as the grant agreement is signed. Please allow several days for processing and delivery.

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Q: What are the main criteria for the selection of finalists during the 2nd stage (Linkage funding)?
A: A full list of selection criteria is available in the Request for Proposals. Based on our experience with the previous round of Contact application submissions, we remind applicants that their proposal must include parity in participation among partner institutions, benefit in both countries, and a convincing plan for sustainability of the project beyond the funding period.

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Q: Can we make a program for graduate students?
A: Yes, projects can involve graduate students, as long as the framework of the project is not individual student exchanges or internship programs. Graduate-level dual degree programs, research projects, study tours, and joint courses, for example, would all be eligible.