



**Request for  
Proposal**

**Linkage Funding Competition**

**US-Russia University Partnership  
Program**

**Winter 2016**

The US-Russia University Partnership Program (UPP) is an initiative for mutual academic collaboration that connects higher education institutions in Russia and US with one another and supports the launch of new bilateral partnerships. It provides professors, researchers, administrators and other higher education professionals in Russia and the US with an opportunity to broaden the scope of their activities and learn from the vast wealth of knowledge and experience the counterpart institution brings to the partnership. UPP is implemented by Eurasia Foundation, in partnership with the National Training Foundation.

Eurasia Foundation (EF) was founded in 1992 to empower the citizens of the nations that comprised the Soviet Union to advance their countries socially and economically. Since then, Eurasia Foundation has transformed from a US-based foundation with field offices in the region to the Eurasia Foundation Network comprised of six autonomous institutions: New Eurasia Foundation in Russia, Eurasia Foundation of Central Asia, and Eurasia Partnership Foundation in the South Caucasus, East Europe Foundation of Ukraine, East Europe Foundation of Moldova, and Eurasia Foundation in the United States. By working together, the network's foundations increase exchanges among local and international institutions throughout the region and multiply the social return on the financial investments made by their donors.

**COMPETITION GOAL**

To further its goal of promoting collaboration between higher education institutions in the US and Russia, UPP is conducting a two-stage partnership funding competition for projects proposed jointly by Russian and US higher education institutions.

This Request for Proposals (RFP) governs the second stage of the competition. Through this RFP, EF calls for Linkage project funding proposals that will help the incubation of sustainable partnership relations between higher education institutions in Russia and US by helping these institutions launch joint projects with the goal of forming long-lasting and sustainable relationships beyond the funding period. Linkage project funding applicants are not required to have participated in the preceding Contact funding competition.

Applications for Linkage funding will be accepted through January 22, 2016, 12:00 p.m. East Coast time. They will be evaluated by a review panel of UPP staff and independent experts based on selection criteria stated below. Finalists will be notified on February 8, 2016.

## **ELIGIBILITY**

The following are eligibility criteria for Contact funding:

- Any degree-granting higher education institution in Russia or the US that is accredited by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation (for Russian institutions) or an accreditation agency recognized by the US Department of Education (for US institutions) is eligible. This may include higher education institutions other than universities such as community colleges, liberal arts colleges and conservatories.
- Project proposals must include at least one Russian institution and one US institution. The number of partner institutions submitting the joint proposal can be higher than two if necessary.
- UPP project funding can only support new partnerships. UPP will not support continued or bridge funding to existing partnerships.
- Institutions that have not engaged in US-Russia collaborations in the past are more likely to be selected. However, institutions with existing bilateral US-Russia partnerships may still apply as long as the funding sought is for a new partnership in a different academic area.
- Individual schools and/or departments within the same institution may submit applications for funding, but UPP will typically fund only one project per institution during each funding round.
- While there are no geographic limits on eligibility within the two countries, regional institutions (e.g. outside of Moscow or St. Petersburg) or projects with a significant regional component are more likely to be selected.
- Funding is awarded on the institutional rather than individual level. Proposals must include written approval from an appropriate institutional official with legal authorization to enter into contractual obligations on behalf of the institution.
- Institutions that submitted Contact or Linkage funding proposals to the previous round in 2015 but did not receive funding are eligible to reapply. Institutions that received Linkage funding in the previous round are NOT eligible to reapply for new Linkage funding. However, institutions that received Contact funding but did not receive Linkage funding are eligible to reapply to the Linkage competition.

## **PROJECT COMPONENTS**

The partnership projects designed during the Linkage stage proposals may cover any academic or professional subject matter, but projects should avoid topics that focus on political activity, public policy reform or other non-academic goals. Linkage proposals that are eligible for UPP funding include (but are not necessarily limited to) the following types of partnerships:

- International Dual/Double Degree Programs
  - These study programs are collaboratively offered by two or more higher education institutions located in different countries. They typically feature a jointly developed and integrated curriculum and agreed-on credit recognition, and involve students studying at two or more partnering higher education institutions. Upon completion of the program, students receive degree certificates issued separately by each of the institutions involved in

the program.

Example: <http://www.bard.edu/academics/dualdegree/>

- International Joint Degree Programs
  - o Similar to dual/double degree programs, joint degree programs typically offer students the opportunity to study at two or more of the partnering higher education institutions. Upon completion, they are awarded a single degree certificate issued and signed jointly by all institutions involved in the program.  
Example: <http://www.triumemba.org/program/>
- Collaborative Teaching / Joint Courses
  - o These are partnership components fostered through virtual classrooms, videoconferences, email exchanges, and web-based platforms. Such partnerships might include working with a partner institution to develop new course modules.  
Example: <http://trinity.duke.edu/teaching-innovation/collaborative-teaching-through-research-across-institutions>
- Faculty Exchanges
  - o Through these agreements, institutions arrange for the exchange of faculty members for the purpose of teaching or research at the counterpart institution. Guest faculty members might instruct entire courses or components of courses.  
Example: <http://web.mit.edu/sktech/faculty-research/>
- Faculty-Led Study Tours
  - o Commonly, these are academic courses combining traditional classroom learning and experiential learning in an international setting. Tours provide students and faculty first-hand opportunities to conduct research and increase cultural knowledge in the context of the partner country.  
Example: [http://ur.umich.edu/1011/Aug15\\_11/2534-u-m-partership-to](http://ur.umich.edu/1011/Aug15_11/2534-u-m-partership-to)
- Joint Research Projects
  - o Such projects involve collaboration on research projects of mutual interest to partnering institutions. Example: <http://eureca.ucla.edu/eureca/home>
- Resource-Sharing Arrangements
  - o These arrangements between institutions involve sharing of laboratory equipment, library resources, art collections, curricula, and the like.  
Example:  
<http://guides.library.appstate.edu/c.php?g=65561&p=422514>

The following partnerships types are not eligible for UPP funding:

- Student Exchanges
- International Service Learning
- Internship Programs

## **CRITERIA FOR PROJECT EVALUATION AND SELECTION**

The following criteria will be used in assessing Contact funding proposals:

1. The degree of adherence to competition requirements as described in the RFP (e.g. eligibility, project components, use of funds, application deadlines)
2. Clarity of the plans and timeline of the suggested activities during the Linkage stage
3. Design of the project, with justification of its feasibility and the potential for cooperation
4. The potential for significant and concrete benefits in both countries resulting from successful implementation of the partnership
5. Innovativeness of the suggested partnership project in breaking new ground for bilateral engagement
6. Experience of partner institutions in the proposed area
7. The degree of parity in participation among partner institutions
8. Effectiveness of joint management plan among partner institutions
9. The degree of potential for long-term sustainability of the partnership beyond the funding period
10. Feasibility of cost-sharing plan
11. The degree of explicitness and feasibility in addressing gender equity
12. The degree of regional diversity among the partner institutions and/or project beneficiaries

Priority will be given to institutions that have not engaged in US-Russia collaborations in the past and that illustrate concrete, significant, and immediate benefits in both countries resulting from the completion of the project.

A review panel comprised of independent experts will review Linkage project proposals and provide funding recommendations to Eurasia Foundation, which will announce final decisions.

## **USE OF FUNDS**

Applicants may request a combined total funding of up to \$41,000 per partnership during the Linkage stage to facilitate the collaborative implementation of a Linkage project. The partner applicants may request unequal funding levels, depending on where they expect to expend certain funds and for what purpose. The allocation scheme for project funding should be fully explained and justified within the Contact application.

Projects that receive Linkage funding may vary in duration, but the funding period may not exceed twelve months.

Once award decisions are made, each institution receiving funding will conclude a separate agreement with Eurasia Foundation. If a single institution requests to receive the full funding amount on behalf of the partnership, expenditure decisions should be made in consultation with the non-recipient partner.

Institutions receiving funding for the implementation of the same project are treated as fully equal partners: they have equal rights and responsibilities within the project framework in

relation to each other and Eurasia Foundation.

Each Linkage funding proposal must also include a cost-share component. Applicants are asked to contribute a combined total of at least \$5,000 (monetary and/or in-kind). Thus, including a cost-share contribution of \$5,000, the budget for a Linkage proposal may total up to \$46,000. Applicants are encouraged to contribute more than \$5,000 in cost-share to finance additional expenses. The submitted Linkage funding application should include the cost-share expense breakdown on the budget form and brief description in the application's narrative portion. A sample budget template is provided in the application package.

The cost-share requirement will be part of the agreement between EF and the applicants. Applicants obligate themselves to meet the cost share target and report to EF as indicated in the agreement. It is important that funding recipients accurately project and track cost share.

Funding may be used for:

- Direct costs of project development-related events, e.g. organizing meetings, rental of conference facilities, translation services
- Communication between partner institutions, e.g. phone, fax, e-mail
- Modest honoraria costs for project experts (local and international)
- Transportation of project participants to meeting(s) and related expenses, e.g. accommodation, per diem
- Pro-rated portion of salaries for key participants, e.g. director, accountant
- Other expenses directly related to project development

Funding may be used only for activities directly connected with the implementation of the project. In accordance to the EF policy, funding may not be used for covering such expenses as a university's ongoing expenses, construction expenses, the purchase of real estate, or the repayment of debts. Please note that if salary costs are included in the proposal budget, a clear justification must be provided for establishing both the salary level and percentage of working time dedicated to the project.

### **In-kind cost-share contributions**

In-kind cost share contribution is the computed value of goods or services used for the project, wherein the value of the contribution can be readily determined but no actual funds are transacted in securing the good or service. In-kind contributions can refer to the use of resources already available or donated to the institution, while cash contributions are new expenditures made by the institution in support of the project.

Some common examples of in-kind contributions include:

- Volunteer time
  - Example: volunteer translation of an article about the project's research
- Donated use of facilities (including land or buildings)
  - Example: free use of conference space to hold a panel discussion
- Donated use of equipment and materials
  - Example: access to computer hardware owned by the institution
- Donated travel expenses

- Example: free use of institution's vehicles or housing for visiting faculty

In-kind contributions are sometimes difficult to value (such as space, use of equipment, and intellectual property). To count in-kind contributions towards the UPP cost-sharing requirement, the following must be true:

- The contribution is quantifiable
- The contribution assigns a direct benefit to the specific project
- The value of the contribution does not exceed its fair market or rental value
- The contribution is prorated according to the share of its total use dedicated to the project
- For volunteer time: the contribution is valued at a rate that would be reasonable compensation for the amount of time devoted and type of service rendered
- A verifiable explanation for how the monetary value of the contribution was calculated is included in the application budget section

## **APPLICATION FORMS**

The application for Linkage funding consists of three components: a Joint Component, an Individual Component, and a Budget form. Proposals must include one Joint Component and one budget form *per joint proposal* and one Individual Component *per participating institution*. All required forms can be downloaded from the Partnership Funding page of the UPP website: <http://usrussiaupp.org/en/partnership-funding>. In order to access these materials, the applicant will need to receive a login and password by registering on the UPP site. Any interested party is eligible to register on the website.

## **ASSISTANCE IN PROPOSAL PREPARATION**

Proposals submitted in conjunction with this competition must be the original and sole work of the applicant institutions.

To assist applicants with proposal preparation, UPP staff will hold two on-line webinars on the following dates:

- Proposal-writing workshop (on-line, in Russian) – TBD
- Proposal-writing workshop (on-line, in English) – TBD

For further information on this Linkage project competition please contact UPP staff at [upp@eurasia.org](mailto:upp@eurasia.org).

## **APPLICATION SUBMISSION PROCEDURE**

Applicant organizations will submit proposals electronically in English or Russian to [upp@eurasia.org](mailto:upp@eurasia.org).

The completed application package should contain all documents listed in the Application Checklist (see page 2 of the Joint Component). All materials and documents submitted in conjunction this competition will be retained by Eurasia Foundation during the review process and will not be returned to the applicant.

Eurasia Foundation guarantees the confidentiality of applications. Eurasia Foundation

does not use information presented by applicants for purposes other than review and does not provide this information to any outside persons or institutions, except in such cases where it is required by US or Russian law, or by donor agreements with Eurasia Foundation.

Applications may be submitted no later than 20:00 (MSK) on January 22, 2016/ 12:00 p.m. (ET).

The Linkage project funding competition schedule is the following:

Linkage funding competition announcement	Monday, July 20, 2015
Proposal writing webinar (in English)	TBD
Proposal writing webinar (in Russian)	TBD
Deadline for submission of Linkage funding applications	Friday, 20:00 (MSK)/12:00 p.m. (ET) on January 22, 2016
Linkage funding finalists notified	Monday, February 8, 2016

## **DECISION MAKING PROCESS**

During the review process, additional information may be requested from applicants, to be presented within 5 working days of the request, unless some other period for response is indicated. The Linkage funding proposal will only be reviewed upon the timely submission of all requested information, or otherwise at the discretion of Eurasia Foundation.

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