

The Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE)

Application for the US-Brazil Higher Education Consortia Program -- A New Special Focus Competition

SUPPORTING STATEMENT

1. Consistent with the provisions of Title VII, Part B of the Higher Education Act as amended, 20 USC 1138-1138d, the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) works to improve postsecondary education through grants to postsecondary educational institutions and agencies. Such grants are awarded on the basis of competitively reviewed applications submitted to FIPSE under its Comprehensive and Special Focus Competition Program grant competitions. The Department of Education is requesting permission for approval of the forms and information used to solicit applications for new grants under the Special Focus Program: The US Brazil Higher Education Consortia Program. The program has been funded annually since fiscal year 2001. The current application (OMB 1840-0761) expires October 31, 2003. Regulations governing this program are contained in 34 CFR Part 75 (Education Department General Administrative Regulations).

The US-Brazil Higher Education Consortia Program (US-Brazil Program) is a special focus grant program within the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE). The US-Brazil Program provides grants to U.S. institutions participating in bilateral institutional cooperation and student exchange programs in the United States and Brazil. Institutions are funded by their respective government agencies: in the United States, the Fund for the Improvement for Postsecondary Education (FIPSE); in Brazil, the Fundação Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior (CAPES), at the Brazilian Ministry of Education. The bilateral program was first signed into agreement at a May 2000 meeting in São Paulo, Brazil. Both governments renewed their commitment to the program at a meeting in Brasilia, Brazil in March 2002. This application package is for a renewal of a grant competition and includes application materials and information. These renewed guidelines will be available to the public on or around November 1, 2003, and grant awards will be made on or around July 2004.

2. The enclosed application forms and instructions (Title Page, Budget Page, Assurances, Narrative, and Application Instructions) are necessary to standardize applications and to ensure the information required to process and review them effectively is included. Without the information contained in this application package, FIPSE staff would not have the information needed to make these grant-funding decisions. We anticipate receiving approximately 25 applications from institutions and will award approximately 12 grants for consortia.

Please note that the overall purpose and objectives of the program have not changed from the first clearance. There have been three substantive changes to the guidelines. All three of these changes fall within the spirit of the program. Two of the three changes listed below have come about through annual bi-national meetings between the governments and annual meetings with project directors from the United States and Brazil. The last change has come through the recognition of the importance of highlighting FIPSE's GPRA indicators more clearly in the grant application guidelines. The changes are detailed as follows:

- a. The addition of a subcategory of grants called "Short-Term Complementary Activities" to complement the existing "Four Year Consortia Projects." FIPSE and CAPES propose the addition of this short term grant category to the U.S. Brazil Program that supports limited grants up to \$75,000 for up to two years. As explained on page 13 of the proposed application guidelines, the purpose of this grant category is to support sustainable, collaborative research activities in established partnerships or consortia of US and Brazilian colleges and universities through the creation of sustainable opportunities for faculty and students to engage in collaborative research. The idea for this addition has come from intergovernmental discussions between the United States and Brazil as well as with project directors in the U.S. Brazil Program. In addition, FIPSE currently funds a similar subgrant category with its European Commission-United States Cooperative Program (1840-0636) called Complementary Activities.
- b. The addition of language placing additional focus on priorities to FIPSE and CAPES. FIPSE and CAPES added additional language that places a priority on projects that improve U.S and Brazilian higher education: 1) the expansion of access into higher education and the increase of transfer between vocational training and higher education; 2) the improvement of teacher education in mathematics and science in the United States and Brazil. The purpose of this was to help encourage applications that help meet national priorities in both countries. The US-Brazil Program will remain open to all disciplinary and professional fields. This change is listed on page 7 of the proposed application guidelines.
- c. The addition of language that provides better clarification on FIPSE's GPRA indicators and how these indicators should be reflected in the grant process. To follow the example of FIPSE's Comprehensive Program's submission for renewal of their application package (02285 1840-New.v1), FIPSE has also taken steps to ensure that the U.S.-Brazil Program has clarified the importance of GPRA in its application guidelines (page 17).
- d. The addition of a budget category for language stipends (\$1000 per student) to help support Portuguese language learning for students going to Brazil. FIPSE has found that one of the major barriers for student success in these programs is the lack of language preparation. Until now, the use of money for language

stipends was folded into the overall training stipend. The addition of a budget category for language stipends ensures that funds will be used for this purpose if they are requested. This budget category already exists in the EC-US Program (1840-0636).

3. Department of Education is expanding its pilot project of electronic submission of applications to include discretionary grant competitions. The US-Brazil Higher Education Consortia Program has been one of the programs that has participated in this pilot project for the past year. The program will continue to use the electronic format for future competitions. Applicants are able to submit their applications in either electronic or paper format. The program uses the Electronic Grant Application System (e-Application, formerly e-GAPS) portion of the Grant Administration and Payment System (GAPS). Participation by applicants remains voluntary. In FY '03, the program received 1 application by electronic submission. In addition, FIPSE has established a user-friendly annual and final reporting function for all annual and final reports for FY 2003. The U.S. Brazil Program received 100% (20 of 20) annual report via online submissions. These reports, in turn are reviewed and assessed by FIPSE program staff on-line. The performance data and the assessments are used for enhanced GPRA information and reporting.
4. FIPSE staff have made every effort to ensure that there is no duplication of data acquisition. The collection is unique to the US-Brazil Higher Education Consortia Program, and there is no similar information currently available that could be used for the purpose of making award decisions in this program. However, FIPSE and CAPES have taken steps to further reduce burden on projects by coordinating data collection for annual reports for institutions in both countries electronically through the web (as mentioned in section 3 above). To further streamline data acquisition, FIPSE submitted in April 2002 a change form to consolidate the annual performance reporting forms for all three international programs (the EC-US Joint Consortia Program (1840-0756) and the proposed clearance for U.S.-Brazil Higher Education Consortia Program (1840-0761) and the North American Program (1840-0760) into one form, the North American Program annual reporting form (1840-0760). The annual reporting form (1840-0760) will be renewed as a "FIPSE International Consortia Form" for next year's (2004) annual reporting cycle.
5. The collection does not have a significant impact on small business or other small entities.
6. This program, which supports institutional cooperation and student exchange between the United States and Brazil, has the strong support of Congress and the Administration. The application process occurs once every year to enable applicants to compete for Federal funds that are annually appropriated by Congress. This annual application is the lowest frequency possible to award these annual appropriations.
7. No special circumstances apply.

8. In developing the initiative and the information collection, FIPSE staff consulted extensively with representatives from the international education community and various professional disciplines, as well as representatives from other Federal agencies involved in bilateral activities, including USIA, the State Department, and other offices within the Department of Education. This planning and consultation has included a series of annual bi-national meetings between the governments of United States and Brazil involving the academic community. This particular program was announced at the Fourth Bi-National Dialogue held by the Secretary of Education in South Carolina in October 1999, and an agreement was signed at the Fifth Bi-National Dialogue in São Paulo, Brazil in May 2000. The bi-national support for the program was reasserted in Brasilia, Brazil, when representatives from both the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of State extended the agreement for cooperation with the Brazilian Ministry of Education and the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs at the Seventh Bi-National Dialogue. Further, FIPSE and CAPES meet on an annual basis with all grantees from the United States and Brazil to give technical assistance and to share best practices. FIPSE and CAPES ensure at this point that grantees have an opportunity to give feedback on the program at a concluding town meeting session.
9. ED does not provide any payment or gift to respondents.
10. No assurance of confidentiality is provided to respondents, except as provided by the Privacy Act and the Department of Education's policies governing the review of discretionary grant applications.

11. There are no questions of a sensitive nature.

12. Estimates of Respondent Hour Burden

Number of Respondents: 30

Frequency of Response: once annually or less for 30

Annual hour burden: 30 hours per application for total of 900 annual hour burden. Annual hour burden is based on oral accounts of applicants and grantees under three programs

Preparation of applications (\$28.00 per hour x 900 burden hours) \$16,800

13. Estimated Total Annual Cost Burden to Respondents:

Postage and printing (10.00 per application x 20 applications) \$ 200

14. Estimated Annualized Cost to Federal Government

Review by FIPSE program staff	
(150 hrs. x \$30.50) <u>1/</u>	\$4,575
Administrative and support staff	
(50 hrs. x \$14) + 175 x 31.50*.....	\$6,212.5

Review by outside readers **.....	\$6,000
Printing (\$0.80 x 10,000 applications)	\$8,000
Postage (\$2.10 x 10,000 applications mailed).....	\$21,000
TOTAL.....	\$45,787.50

* Hourly rate includes 18% benefits

** Based on actual costs in prior years. Assumes approximately 15-20 reviewers working 1-2 days each.

15. Number of applicants has been smaller (20 than originally anticipated 80). This impacts respondent burden and department work load estimates.

16. ED does not plan to publish this data and does not employ statistical methods.

17. FIPSE is not seeking approval for this.

18. There are no exceptions.

B. FIPSE does not plan to employ statistical methods.