



THE LANGUAGE FLAGSHIP

Creating Global Professionals

**Request for Proposals
AFRICAN LANGUAGES FLAGSHIP CENTER**

Application Guidelines

DEADLINE FOR RECEIPT OF PROPOSALS:

FRIDAY, MAY 2, 2008

Dear Grant Applicant,

The Institute of International Education (IIE) is pleased to provide you with application materials for an African Languages Flagship Center under The Language Flagship. The Language Flagship is a major initiative of the National Security Education Program (NSEP). IIE considers it a distinct pleasure to serve as the administrative agent for this important effort.

NSEP was created by Congress in 1991 to address the need to increase the ability of Americans to communicate and compete globally by knowing languages and cultures of other countries. NSEP embodies a recognition that the scope of national security has expanded to include not only the traditional concerns of protecting and promoting American well-being, but also the new challenges of a global society, including sustainable development, environmental degradation, global disease and hunger, population growth and migration, and economic competitiveness.

The Language Flagship has already achieved national success in launching new and innovative programs of advanced instruction in Arabic, Central Asian Turkic languages, Chinese, Hindi/Urdu, Korean, Persian/Farsi, and Eurasian languages. Through this solicitation we hope to identify and invest in the immediate development of one U.S. campus-based center in critical African languages.

Section A: **Program Guidelines**

The Institute of International Education (IIE) acting as the administrative agent of the National Security Education Program (NSEP) for The Language Flagship seeks proposals from U.S. institutions of higher education to develop and implement innovative on-campus and overseas programs of advanced instruction in African languages to dramatically increase the numbers of U.S. students obtaining professional levels of language competency.

BACKGROUND: THE NATIONAL SECURITY EDUCATION PROGRAM AND THE LANGUAGE FLAGSHIP

THE NATIONAL SECURITY EDUCATION PROGRAM

In December 1991, the President signed the National Security Education Act. The Act provided for the establishment of the National Security Education Program (NSEP) and the National Security Education Board. The mission of NSEP is to lead in a national effort to educate U.S. citizens to: (1) understand foreign languages and cultures; (2) strengthen U.S. economic competitiveness; and (3) enhance international cooperation and U.S. national security.

THE LANGUAGE FLAGSHIP

The Language Flagship leads the nation in designing, supporting, and implementing a new paradigm for advanced language education. Through an innovative partnership among the federal government, education, and business, The Language Flagship seeks to graduate students who will take their place among the next generation of global professionals, commanding a superior level of fluency in one of many languages critical to U.S. competitiveness and security.

The Language Flagship began awarding grants to institutions in 2002 to accelerate language training programs. In its first three years, The Language Flagship focused on post-baccalaureate study. It has transitioned to a more comprehensive approach to language learning at the undergraduate level. The Language Flagship has grown to encompass Arabic, Central Asian Turkic languages, Chinese, Hindi/Urdu, Korean, Persian/Farsi, and Eurasian languages. More than 100 students have successfully completed Flagship programs, and the number of students enrolling in these programs is rapidly accelerating. Our objective is to enroll 2,000 students in Flagship programs by 2010. Up to date information on programs is available at the Flagship website: www.thelanguageflagship.org.

Foreign language programs in the U.S., both federal and academic, at best aim toward a “limited working proficiency” (level 2)¹ goal. This level of language is generally insufficient in more complex and sophisticated work-related tasks. Simply put, a professional working at a level 2 proficiency in a language cannot communicate effectively in that language. The Language Flagship addresses the urgent and growing need for significantly higher levels of language competency among a broader cross-section of professionals, particularly for those who will join Federal agencies. The goal of The Language Flagship is to produce students with “professional

¹ Level 2 on the Interagency Language Roundtable Scale is equivalent to the Advanced level on the ACTFL scale.

proficiency” (level 3 and beyond) in critical foreign languages, where the individual is capable of, for example, speaking with sufficient structural accuracy and vocabulary to participate effectively in most formal and informal conversations on practical, social, and professional topics.

In sum, the goal of The Language Flagship is to address critical and expanding national needs for language by establishing a set of centers for advanced language learning which will produce students with professional proficiency. The objectives of The Language Flagship are to:

- Establish programs for the teaching of critical languages to the professional level (ILR 3, ACTFL Superior) and beyond;
- Develop curricular, institutional, and instructional models for advanced language learning;
- Test those models;
- Stimulate institutional support and long-term commitment to reforming language learning; and
- Improve national capacity in critical languages.

ESTABLISHING THE AFRICAN LANGUAGES FLAGSHIP CENTER

This solicitation seeks to identify and establish undergraduate programs of study in critical African languages. Languages to be considered should include Swahili, Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba, and Zulu. It is not a requirement that all of these languages be included with the exception of Swahili. The programs should generally be designed as four-year undergraduate efforts that offer students from all majors an opportunity to achieve professional level language proficiency. Plans might include a fifth year option for undergraduates. Additionally, plans should include periods of intensive language study in an overseas environment. Applicants should identify and survey any existing overseas language programs when describing plans for the development of an overseas Flagship language program.

We fully understand that the current state of African language instruction may require an investment and implementation strategy that is somewhat different from Flagship approaches to other languages. We invite innovative and creative approaches to establish a curricular track that facilitates movement of a student from basic to more advanced levels of proficiency in critical African languages. We also actively encourage cooperation and collaboration across universities to produce the outcomes envisioned by The Language Flagship.

AMOUNT OF FUNDING

NSEP will make substantial funding available for the development and implementation of an African Languages Flagship Center. Grants will be administered by the Institute of International Education (IIE). IIE anticipates awarding one grant, in the range of \$250,000 - \$500,000 for the first year. The first year of the grant should be devoted primarily to planning and development. A pilot curriculum should be ready as early as the spring semester of 2009 but no later than summer/fall 2009. The Language Flagship seeks demonstration of significant institutional commitment to support and sustain Flagship efforts. These include the advancement of a

language education infrastructure required for institutionalization and sustainment of these efforts over time. Flagship is committed to continuing and hopefully expanding its investment in African language learning in the U.S.

PARTNERSHIP ARRANGEMENTS AND COOPERATION ACROSS UNIVERSITIES

The Language Flagship expects and encourages a collaborative approach to the African language effort. We will consider proposals reflecting cooperative arrangements across universities, led by a U.S. institution of higher education, that embody substantive and cost-effective partnerships to provide major elements of the curricular emphases detailed below.

PROGRAM EMPHASES

The Language Flagship is dedicated to producing students who are proficient in an array of critical languages. The Language Flagship is committed to an approach that combines investment in U.S.-based language learning infrastructure coupled with overseas immersion.

We strongly encourage all potential applicants to review curricula and approaches at each of the current Flagship Centers (links to each Center are found at www.thelanguageflagship.org). Directors at each Center are available to answer questions. We encourage applicants to thoroughly research and incorporate Flagship curricular approaches that are applicable to the African languages effort.

Our experience developing Flagship Centers has demonstrated to us that existing language programs need to be radically re-engineered to achieve the goal of producing graduates with professional proficiency. The Language Flagship encourages applicants to consider a broad range of transformative activities, with respect to curricular design, institutional enhancements, and institutional commitment to advanced language programming. We believe that each of these emphases is integral to the achievement of long-term, sustained transformation of language programming in higher education. Each proposal must carefully address the elements laid out below.

CURRICULAR DESIGN

The proposed African Languages Flagship Center must make clear and explicit the curricular model it seeks to implement. We seek innovative curricular designs which should include the factors below but need not be limited to them. If applicants do not already have these factors in place, they will need to propose how they will proceed to do so.

- **Diagnostic assessment:** Given that students at more advanced levels will enter the program with varying skills, competencies, language learning backgrounds, and disciplinary interests, successful programs will have in place a rigorous diagnostic assessment system which places students in the program and tailors courses of study directed at the strengths and weaknesses of the individual learner.
- **Customized and individualized language learning:** Insofar as the proficiency target for The Language Flagship is set high, and the cadre of students will vary in background,

strengths and weaknesses, rates of progress, and disciplinary interests, learning must be customized to the needs of each student. Such customization may entail:

- A modularized curriculum, where learners can take the configurations of sub-course units appropriate to their needs, strengths, and weaknesses;
 - Variable credit according to work done;
 - An ongoing process of assessment and feedback for students and instructors; and
 - Access to rich and varied learning, ideally through an on-line delivery system for “anytime, anywhere” availability.
- Incorporation of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) research: While the intuition and practice of experienced teachers is invaluable, the field of SLA has made significant contributions to the understanding of how learners acquire language and how programmatic factors influence that acquisition. The successful program will make use of SLA research and faculty expertise in SLA in its curricular design and on-going operation. Successful applicants will demonstrate significant incorporation of on-campus expertise in SLA or firm commitments to secure off-campus expertise.
 - Experiential and interdisciplinary language learning: Given that the desired graduating cohort of Flagship students includes a range of academic majors, the successful program will prepare students able to use their language skills professionally, in a range of disciplines. Preparation will require that the program incorporate in its curriculum:
 - Significant collaboration with campus units in other disciplines in curricular design and program implementation; and
 - Experiential learning opportunities, including disciplinary modules and/or courses in the target language, and local internships.
 - Integration of evaluation in curricular design and the program: Given the high standards for success and continued funding for individual projects, evaluation of student progress and program performance must be incorporated into the program and curricular design.

MAXIMAL EXPOSURE TO AND USE OF THE LANGUAGE

The road to attaining professional proficiency requires a significant amount of “time on task.” Consequently, the successful program’s curricular design will maximize the exposure to and significant, consequential use of the target language, drawing on partnerships with the full and best resources of the particular language field, through a combination of:

- Additional classroom instruction;
- Rich access to target-language materials;
- On-campus immersion environments, such as language houses and language tables;
- Immersion learning opportunities and internships in local heritage language communities; and
- Summer term intensive-immersive language learning opportunities.

INSTITUTIONAL ENHANCEMENTS

The feasibility of attaining the goals of The Language Flagship rests on certain assumptions regarding the institutional context of successful programs. Applicants should address the following:

- **Autonomy and flexibility:** The requirement to design, implement, and test a curriculum in a short time frame while reaching across disciplines and internal institutional boundaries requires an agile and effective organizational approach within the university. In either case, the applicant must concretely identify the location of the program, its leadership, its staffing, its campus “chain of command,” and the procedures by which it will implement the proposed curriculum.
- **Recruitment:** Applicants must demonstrate a commitment to recruiting and describe a recruiting plan. Applicants are strongly encouraged to design for success by describing a full range of recruitment possibilities, including recruitment of learners already at the Intermediate/Advanced levels. Applicants must describe current and potential recruiting pools, to include ethnic heritage students already enrolled at the campus and students with sufficient experience in the target language. Ideally, applicants will supply data on the size and median proficiency levels of recruiting pools. Applicants will then target one or two subsets of the recruiting population for inclusion in this project.
- **Recruiting from disciplines:** The long-term success of The Language Flagship and the programs it funds will depend in large measure on the capability of U.S. higher education to identify students across disciplines that are proficient in critical languages. Applicants must demonstrate the potential to attract students from disciplines beyond language and literature and the humanities.
- **Funding incentives:** The Language Flagship provides limited scholarship funding to each Flagship Center to incentivize language study. Successful applicants will describe models that capitalize on existing funding programs that contribute to subsidizing a student’s enrollment in the program.

INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENT

Given the ambitious aim of The Language Flagship, the curricular and structural implications of the Center for potential applicants, and in particular considering the difficulty of supporting courses with low enrollments, the Language Flagship seeks continuity, institutionalization and sustainment in these projects, requiring a tangible commitment on the part of an institution (or consortium of institutions) to guarantee the success of the Center. Successful applicants will:

- Establish a reporting relationship for the Center to a central administrator at a level no lower than the decanal;
- Suspend, as necessary, institutional limits on course size, as well as remove other institutional barriers to low-density programs; and

- Provide significant matching funds. Matching funds may consist of cost-sharing of new faculty lines, release time for faculty and senior administrators, budgetary support, travel costs, capital equipment, and so forth.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES & TIMELINES

IIE expects to award this grant on or around June 1, 2008. Applicants will address important outcomes and timetables in their proposals for the follow time periods:

Project year 1 (July 1, 2008 – May 31, 2009)

Project Year 2 (June 1, 2009 – May 31, 2010)

The National Security Education Program (NSEP) anticipates long-term support for Flagship Centers. Funding levels may vary depending on program performance and funding availability. NSEP also expects each Flagship Center to develop a plan for long-term sustainment that includes support from other sources including government, foundations, and private sector organizations.

Section B: **Application Procedures**

Please refer all inquiries to: flagship@iie.org.

All inquiries must be submitted by email. Telephone calls will not be accepted.

FORMAT

NOTICE: Failure to abide by the following requirements or failure to submit a complete proposal will result in disqualification.

1. Margins: 1” on all sides
2. Type face: 12 pt, times new roman
3. Spacing: double-spaced throughout
4. Binding: binder clip
5. Copies: one (1) signed original and eleven (11) copies
6. Pages numbered consecutively, starting with title pages, and in the order specified in “proposal contents” below

PROPOSAL CONTENTS

1. Transmittal letter, signed by cognizant authority at the applicant’s institution
2. Title page
3. Abstract of not more than 250 words
4. Narrative: Length of no more than twenty-five (25) pages
5. Budget
6. Budget narrative: two (2) pages maximum
7. Background information: If appropriate, background material about the institution, or the institutional arrangements for consortia, stressing how the institution will cooperate and collaborate. The length of the background information must be no more than ten (10) pages, which do not count against the 25 page narrative limit. Any material in excess of these 10 pages will be considered gratuitous and may result in disqualification by the review panel. Extensive and elaborate materials and multimedia presentations are discouraged, and may be interpreted as evidence of the applicant’s inability to control administrative costs.
8. **ONE (1) COPY** of the institution's Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (negotiated with its cognizant government auditor).

Section C: Merit Review Process and Evaluation Criteria

MERIT REVIEW PROCESS

Proposals will be evaluated by an independent merit-review panel organized by the Institute of International Education (IIE). The panel will rank proposals and determine which should be funded. The panel will also be asked to review and make recommendations on proposed funding levels for each proposal. It is possible that recommendations will include levels of funding less than those proposed. Final awards will be made by IIE based on the recommendations of the review panel. Discussions may be held with any of the applicants. IIE determines such discussions are necessary. IIE reserves the right to award grants without discussion with any applicants. IIE may reject any or all applications if such action is in the public interest.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

I. Quality of leadership and proposed administrative structure: 20 points

Proposals will be evaluated on the degree to which the project leadership will be able to successfully recruit faculty to participate, communicate with, and engage other campus units, as well as the ability of the project to operate across institutional boundaries and to mobilize campus resources.

- Does the proposal show clear evidence of experienced and capable leadership? **(10 points)**
- Do the administrative structures of the proposed center provide clear reporting arrangements to senior campus administration? **(10 points)**

II. Institutional commitment and cost sharing: 20 points

Proposals will be evaluated on the degree to which the institution provides support to the project and on the degree to which superior level language learning is part of the institution's mission and long-term strategic planning. With regard to indirect rates The Language Flagship does not set a maximum limit for indirect costs, due to the varying requirements associated with program development. However, budgets must minimize costs allocated to unassigned institutional "overhead." As a general guideline, institutions should use the lowest negotiated indirect rates available to them. Indirect rates should not be calculated on grant budget items including student funding, travel funds, equipment, and sub-contracts or grants to other cooperating institutions. Exorbitant indirect costs may be seen as an indicator of a lack of institutional support and long-term commitment to the project and its goals. Applicants proposing exorbitant indirect rates are considerably less likely to be funded.

- Does the proposal show significant cost-sharing, including funds and in-kind support? **(10 points)**

- Does the institution value language learning at the superior level, as evidenced by strategic plans, mission statements, and substantive university policy and resource allocation? **(10 points)**

III. Depth of demonstrated expertise in SLA: 15 points

Proposals will be evaluated on the degree to which expertise in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) is demonstrated and applied to the proposed curricular design. While on-campus expertise is highly preferred, evidence of significant commitment by external expertise may be accepted. Applicants are encouraged to consider the range of SLA subfields, such as classroom-based research, instructional design, study abroad and immersion research, needs analysis, and others in assessing the overall resources available locally and identifying lacunae.² Applicants should concretely identify how they will supplement on-campus expertise to address lacunae.

- Does the proposal clearly demonstrate the availability and commitment of SLA expertise to the project? **(10 points)**
- Does the proposal demonstrate a solid command of the relationship between SLA theory and its application to curricular design for language learning at advanced levels? **(5 points)**

IV. Strength of recruiting plan: 10 points

Proposals will be evaluated on the likelihood of successful recruiting into the Center from a range of majors and from campus, regional, and national populations of potential participants with Advanced (2) level proficiency, “limited working proficiency.”

- Does the proposal concretely identify on-campus and other populations from which participants would be recruited, including the size of potential populations, the disciplinary spread within those populations, and existing proficiency levels? **(5 points)**
- Does the proposal provide a clear plan for recruiting, with sufficient resources allotted to recruiting, as well as defined measures of recruiting success? **(5 points)**

V. Strength of proposed curricular design: 20 points

Proposals will be evaluated on the quality of the curricular design. In particular, proposals must identify the curricular design and detail, with support, the posited relationship between that design and the desired project outcomes. That is, the applicant must make clear the theoretical and empirical basis for the curricular design, clearly stating why a particular design was chosen and what evidence exists that the chosen design will attain the desired proficiency outputs. Each component of the design similarly must be placed in the overall design and must be related to the desired project outcomes.

² It is unlikely that extensive on-campus expertise in test design and psychometrics will serve as persuasive evidence of SLA expertise.

- Does the proposal make clear the overall design and its potential to effect project goals? **(10 points)**
- Does the project specify the relationship of constituent elements of the design to the overall design and to project goals? **(10 points)**

VI. Exposure to language: 10 points

Proposals will be evaluated on the degree to which they incorporate study and work abroad, experiential and community learning, distance learning, and language learning for professional, business, and other disciplines.

- Does the proposal incorporate sound principles for study abroad, experiential learning, community learning, distance learning, languages in other disciplines, and other advances in curricular design and SLA theory and practice? **(5 points)**
- Does the proposal demonstrate partnerships and alliances with the best available study abroad, internship, and summer intensive/immersive programs? **(5 points)**

VII. Strength of linkages and collaborations with other disciplines: 5 points

Proposals will be evaluated on the degree to which they demonstrate the substantive involvement of other disciplines, in particular in the professions, in curricular and instructional design in all phases of the curriculum as well as in the recruitment of students.

- Does the proposal demonstrate involvement of and commitment from other disciplines in the design and implementation of the project? **(5 points)**

Section D: Transmission Instructions

Proposals are to be sent by U.S. Postal Service or by delivery service (e.g., FedEx) to:

The Language Flagship
National Security Education Program
Institute of International Education
1400 K Street, NW
Washington, DC 20005
[Telephone for delivery services: 202-898-0600]

The **DEADLINE FOR RECEIPT** is **4:30 p.m. (EST), Friday, May 2, 2008**. The burden of timely delivery is the applicant's. Proposals received after the deadline will be disqualified. Proposals must be mailed or delivered (e.g., FedEx). No faxed or emailed proposals will be accepted.