

US-Russia Social Expertise Exchange Independent Professionals Project Initiative (Round Six)

Competition Description

Eurasia Foundation (EF) works to engage citizens and empower communities to take responsibility for their own social and economic prosperity. Since 1992, EF has invested in the development of vibrant socially-oriented organizations and socially conscientious citizens throughout the former Soviet Union. Today, EF utilizes best practices in international engagement, institutional development, and cutting-edge online training tools to cultivate the next generation of social experts in the Middle East and North Africa, China, and the Eurasia region.

EF's US-Russia Social Expertise Exchange (SEE) (<http://www.usrussiasocialexpertise.org>) is a diverse network of social experts and entrepreneurs from Russia and the US engaged in a meaningful exchange of ideas and best practices to produce positive change in the lives of citizens in both countries. These experts implement mutually beneficial collaborative initiatives that address common societal issues across a diverse range of thematic areas. SEE also offers opportunities for social experts to receive short-term professional awards to travel to the opposite country and to help implement these bilateral projects while expanding their own networks

SYNOPSIS

The Independent Professionals Project Initiative, implemented within the SEE program, is a competition that supports independent initiatives that advance US-Russian collaboration in at least one of SEE's socially-oriented thematic areas. Eligible candidates¹ from the Russian Federation and the United States are invited to apply for support in the development and implementation of an original project that will produce a significant and measurable social benefit in both countries.

Projects are expected to forge or strengthen partnerships among Russian and US professionals who are engaged in addressing common societal challenges. These connections may be furthered by enabling the development of institutional partnerships, producing original research in cooperation with local organization(s), creating educational and/or technical curricula, or engaging in other similar activities that involve the creation of meaningful outputs.

To advance their project and promote the flow of knowledge and experience between the Russian and American societies, independent professionals will travel to their counterpart country for a period of seven to fourteen days. While abroad, participants will be exposed to new skills, methods, and professional networks that will allow them to contribute to their home societies in specific ways. Successful independent professional candidates will receive up to \$1,000, as proposed within their submitted budget, to implement their project across both countries².

¹ See the "Eligibility" section on page 3 for more details.

² For Round 6 of the competition, projects will be selected based on availability of funding at the time of the award decisions.

Upon returning home, independent professionals will carry out at least one clearly defined activity designed to convey or apply the knowledge and/or expertise gained during their visit for the benefit of their colleagues and/or community members. This activity (or activities) must be credibly shown to provide a clear and measurable benefit to at least 100 individuals. Illustrative examples of such activity may include the holding of training sessions on relevant skills, the public presentation of results of their host country activities, or the implementation of a skill or product developed in collaboration with overseas partners for the direct benefit of the community.

THEMATIC AREAS

Projects must address at least one of the socially-oriented thematic areas listed below. Projects may combine multiple thematic areas.

1. Social support and protection of citizens (e.g., children, women or vulnerable groups, such as people with disabilities or the elderly)
2. Protection of flora and fauna and promotion of animal welfare
3. Promotion of philanthropy and volunteerism
4. Youth development, extracurricular and alternative education
5. Public health and promotion of healthy lifestyles
6. Preservation of national identities, cultures, languages and traditions of indigenous peoples
7. Social and cultural adaptation and integration of migrants
8. Medical and social rehabilitation and/or social and economic reintegration of persons engaged in the illicit use of narcotic drugs or psychotropic substances
9. Promotion of economic and labor mobility

HOST ORGANIZATION

While abroad, independent professionals must be affiliated with a thematically-relevant host organization³ that will serve as a venue for in-person professional collaboration. Host organizations are expected to provide organizational support in connection with the participants' planned project activities. These support duties may include, but are not limited to, facilitating activities and site visits, arranging workspace and relevant materials, and providing professional networking opportunities.

In developing their project, candidates are expected to establish their own connections with appropriate host organization(s) and conceptualize how they would be incorporated into the proposed project. Application materials must include a letter of support from each host organization that reflects their willingness to serve as base for the duration of their stay abroad. Candidates must also demonstrate how their involvement with this particular organization will

³ Independent professionals may be associated with multiple host organizations during their time in the host country, depending on approved project components and the needs of host organizations.

contribute to the realization of their proposed projects and their development of new skills and knowledge. Independent professionals will be expected to continue relations with their host organization(s) upon return to their home countries.

NOTE: All independent professionals traveling to Russia must budget to spend two days in Moscow upon arrival for visa and registration purposes. For these two days, SEE may arrange for these US participants to be hosted by a university to facilitate logistics and provide a platform for networking and presentations. US participants must still arrange for at least one other thematically-relevant organization to host them for the remainder of their time in the Russian Federation.

ELIGIBILITY

To be considered eligible, candidates must:

- Be a citizen of the Russian Federation or the United States⁴
- Have a proven academic and/or professional track-record in the thematic area/s of interest
- Demonstrate a general professional proficiency in both the English and Russian languages⁵
- Develop a project that is not politically motivated and does not include political activity, focus on public policy reform, or the changing of public opinion
- Be primarily affiliated with organizations and/or institutions that work on issues within EF priority areas
- Have not previously participated as an SEE Invited Professional, Independent Professional, Special Exchange Participant or as an Emerging Professional or Advanced Practitioner Fellow.

SEE strives to support Russian and US organizations and individuals that do effective work in one or more of its nine thematic areas but do not already have access to consistent streams of financing. During the application evaluation process, therefore, strong preference will be given to individuals whose proposed project participants do not receive primary financing from federal, regional, state, or local government sources. SEE defines “project participants” as the independent professionals, their places of employment or education, their chosen host organizations in the counterpart country, and any other project implementers in either the Russian Federation or the United States. For this reason, the following types of organizations and their representatives may not participate in the project as participants or direct beneficiaries: federal, regional, state, or local government bodies; government-funded social institutions (e.g. orphanages, nature preserves); and federal academic and research institutions (except for full-time students, who may participate).

Projects may not involve content and/or activities that are contrary to the laws of the United States or the Russian Federation, that engage in political activity, that attempt to influence host

⁴ Individuals with US Permanent Residency status are eligible, as are individuals with equivalent status in the Russian Federation.

⁵ Certain candidates whose non-native language skills are below “general professional proficiency” (as defined in [Part I: Application Form](#)) may still be considered provided that they propose a workable plan to overcome linguistic barriers while in country and/or communicating with host organization counterparts. Project Funds may not be used to provide linguistic assistance.

government policy, or that involve subject material that could be deemed controversial or offensive in either country.

USE OF FUNDS

The Independent Professional Award may be used only for activities directly connected to the proposed project. The award includes funds earmarked for participant travel and logistics⁶ while visiting the counterpart country and additional “Project Funds” of up to \$1,000 to support the implementation of project activities. Project Funds may be used during the entire funding period between September 19, 2017 and December 22, 2017. Candidates will be required to submit detailed budgets as part of their application. Reimbursement for certain expenses will be contingent on submission of required documentation and all reports no later than December 30, 2017.

Independent professionals may supplement SEE funds with additional resources (i.e. cost-share) to implement projects. Plans to make use of external funding must be reflected in the proposed budget.

REPORTING

Independent professionals will be expected to submit periodic reports that capture the practical benefits achieved as a result of the collaborative activities conducted through their project. These reports will include at least one digital blog entry while abroad and one report upon their return home, providing a summary and analysis of activities and learning in the host country. They will also be required to submit a final report that will describe the activities they have undertaken in their local communities since returning from abroad and how these activities furthered the desired objective(s) of their projects. Photos and videos demonstrating this impact should also be submitted. Detailed reporting guidelines, including required formats and word counts, will be communicated to participants upon selection.

⁶ Eligible expenses include: international and domestic travel (economy class), visas, lodging, health insurance, and a per diem living allowance.

PROJECT EVALUATION AND SELECTION

Candidates will be evaluated based on:

- Relevance of their project to a social issue in one or more of SEE’s chosen nine thematic areas
- The soundness of the proposed project design
- Its potential for practical benefit in both the Russian Federation and the United States
- Demonstration of collaboration across both countries

Preference will be given to proposals that also reflect the following:

- Clear, attainable, and measurable project goals
- Concrete deliverables to be attained as a result of project implementation
- Extent and quality of engagement of project participants and beneficiaries
- Number of people impacted by project (e.g. at least 100)
- Realistic timeline and budget for accomplishing project activities
- Clear approach to project monitoring and evaluation
- Strategy for sustaining the project’s positive impact beyond the funding period

IMPORTANT DATES

July 24, 2017 at 11:59 PM EDT [July 25, 2017 at 6:59 AM (Moscow time)]	Deadline for submission of applications via online form, including supporting documents via email (see @eurasia.org)
July 26 - August 24, 2017	Application Review, including interviews with semi-finalists
Thursday, August 25, 2017	Estimated notification of selected independent professionals
Monday, September 19, 2017	Project Period begins
Friday, December 22, 2017	Project Period concludes