



**US-Russia Social Expertise Exchange  
Independent Professionals Project Initiative (Round Six)  
Frequently Asked Questions**

**1. I don't have either US or Russian citizenship. Can I apply to be an independent professional?**

Only individuals with US or Russian citizenship or permanent resident status are eligible for participation.

**2. I have both US and Russian citizenship. For which country should I apply?**

We ask that dual citizens of the US and Russia apply based on their current country of residence.

**3. I am not bilingual in English and Russian. Am I eligible to apply?**

Independent professionals are strongly encouraged to have at least a working proficiency with both the English and Russian languages. Depending on the nature of their projects, independent professionals may find it difficult to successfully achieve their objectives without an ability to communicate with their overseas counterparts. Candidates who do not speak both languages should present a robust plan in their application to explain how potential language barriers will be overcome. In this situation, candidates should build in extra flexibility and include interpretation costs in their budget. It is possible, but not guaranteed, that host organizations may provide linguistic assistance or have bilingual employees.

**4. In what language should I submit my application?**

Applications and other additional materials are available in both English and Russian. Candidates may provide their application information in either language.

**5. I am currently a student. Can I apply?**

We encourage all candidates who meet independent professional eligibility criteria to apply. Graduate students have participated in previous program cycles.

**6. Is it possible to continue working while serving as an independent professional?**

Due to the concentrated nature of the program, participants are expected to commit their full time and attention to the project while in the host country. Participants may return to their positions upon return home, with the expectation that all outstanding responsibilities be completed before December 22, 2017.

**7. Once I have completed my time as an independent professional, would I be eligible to apply again?**

No. Each independent professional may only participate in the Independent Professionals Project Initiative once. Independent Professional Alumni may, however, participate in the implementation of project team initiatives in subsequent competitions.

**8. I am a previous SEE Fellowship participant. Am I eligible to apply to be an independent professional?**

No. Candidates that previously participated in the SEE program as an Invited Professional, Independent Professional, Special Exchange Participant or as an Emerging Professional or Advanced Practitioner Fellow are not eligible to participate as independent professionals.

**9. What is the required validity of passports for participants traveling internationally?**

Russian and US visa regulations require that submitted passports be valid for a fixed period after the traveler's scheduled departure from the host country. Therefore, the passport expiry date for all independent professionals must be six months beyond the conclusion of the project period (December 2017). We therefore require that all independent professionals have a passport that is valid through May 2018.

**10. Will all candidates be notified of their status?**

No, only those selected as semi-finalists and finalists will be contacted by SEE staff. Due to the volume of applications SEE receives each year, it is impossible to provide individual feedback on applications.

**11. Can participation as an independent professional be deferred?**

Participation as an independent professional may not be deferred. If you accept your selection as an independent professional, you must complete your participation by December 22, 2017.

**12. May a group of independent professionals who are working jointly on the same project submit an application together?**

The independent professional competition focuses on collaboration between a single professional and a host organization in the corresponding country. Applications for the independent professional competition may be interrelated but each must be distinct.

If you have a larger, multifaceted project, please keep in mind that there will be additional rounds of the SEE project team competition later in 2017. Be sure to connect with SEE via social media to receive more information as it becomes available. Please follow our website: <http://www.usrussiasocialexpertise.org>, Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/usrussiasocialexpertise> and Twitter postings: <https://twitter.com/seeosoz>.

**13. I am an interested participant but do not have a partner in the corresponding country (independent professional with no corresponding host organization or a host organization with no corresponding independent professional). May I submit an application to participate in the independent professional competition?**

Candidates are expected to establish their own connections with appropriate host organization(s) prior to the submission of an application. SEE is not currently in a position to facilitate new connections.

**14. What kinds of support are host organizations expected to provide individual independent professionals?**

A host organization is a thematically relevant organization or institution in the United States or the Russian Federation that provides a venue for in-person professional collaboration while independent professionals are in the host country. A host organization is expected to provide independent professionals with a general orientation to the organization and indicate a staff member who will be the primary point of contact for the

independent professional. The identity and contact information of this person must be shared with SEE as well.

A host organization is expected to provide the independent professional with organizational support in connection with planned activities related to the completion of the project in the host country. These support duties may include, but are not limited to, organizing activities and site visits, arranging workspace and relevant materials, and providing professional networking opportunities. Participants must be associated with a host organization for the full extent of their time in the host country and may be associated with multiple host organizations, depending on the needs of the invited professional and the project.

**15. Who will arrange my affiliation with a host organization?**

Applicants to become a SEE independent professional are themselves responsible for identification of a relevant host organization with which to be affiliated during their time abroad. Prior to submitting an application, candidates must make arrangements with (and secure a letter of support from) a host organization. Candidates should keep in mind that they may need to reach out to several target organizations in the process. They should plan accordingly to ensure sufficient time for the completion of the application.

**16. Will SEE contact my chosen host organization?**

SEE staff will contact each semi-finalist's host organization as part of the application review process.

**17. Will the host organization be responsible for helping me get a visa?**

No, SEE staff will handle all visa applications internally.

**18. Are any kinds of organizations ineligible to host independent professionals?**

The following types of organizations and their representatives may not host independent professionals: 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).

**19. May I stay in the host country for longer than two weeks?**

The maximum duration of participant travel is two weeks. Independent professionals must return home after their activities in the host country are completed. They are, however encouraged to continue to be in contact with their host organization after their return.

**20. May I travel outside of the counterpart country during my trip as an independent professional?**

No. SEE will arrange participant travel from their home city to their counterpart country and back. Due to the limited amount of time available for participants to carry out project-related work in the counterpart country, they must not leave the host country during their trip.

**21. May spouses and/or other dependents accompany independent professionals during their travel to the host country?**

No, SEE strongly discourages the travel of spouses and/or other dependents. No additional funding or support will be provided for independent professionals' spouses and/or other dependents to accompany them to the host country.

**22. What financial support do independent professionals receive as part of the program?**

Support to successful candidates can be divided into two categories: (1) logistical arrangements and (2) project funds.

- 1) Logistical issues, including travel, visas, health insurance, and lodging will be arranged directly by SEE, according to approved project parameters. A living allowance, calculated using the length, location and timing of travel will also be provided. These funds are intended to be used for participant meals, incidentals, local transportation (metro, taxi, local bus, etc.) and a local cell phone to be used in the case of emergency while in the host country.
- 2) Participants will also have the opportunity to receive up to \$1,000 to be used for expenses directly related to the implementation of a project.

**23. How will the Independent Professionals award be disbursed?**

SEE staff will directly arrange and pay for international and domestic travel (economy class), visas, lodging, and health insurance and will provide the candidate with a per diem living allowance. Project funds will be disbursed at regular intervals during project implementation. All reporting materials and receipts for project-related expenditures must be presented for SEE to release the final tranche. Details regarding disbursement of funds, receipt requirements, and reporting requirements will be provided to selected participants in the participant handbook.

**24. For what should I budget to use the \$1,000 in Project Funds?**

Project funds should be used to purchase items or services that directly relate to the implementation of the proposed project. Such items or services will vary widely depending on the nature of the project. Potential examples may include hall or equipment rental, costs for design and printing of presentation materials, cost of purchasing needed project supplies, etc. Project funds may not include personal expenses (illustratively including travel, baggage fees, local transportation, hotels, incidentals, etc.). Project Funds also may not be used to provide linguistic assistance.

**25. I can only spend my \$1,000 in Project Funds while abroad, correct?**

No. Independent professionals may spend their project funds during the entire funding period across both countries. Some project funds may be used to implement the required post-travel activities in participants' home communities.

**26. Can I budget to spend less than \$1,000 in Project Funds?**

Yes. Candidates should only budget what they expect to spend in their project implementation. The \$1,000 sum is a maximum sum that candidates may request. Independent professionals must provide SEE with receipts for all items and services purchased with Project Funds in order to receive the final tranche of project funds.

**27. Should I use US dollars or Russian rubles in preparing my budget?**

Candidates must prepare their budget in US dollars.

**28. Should I include living expenses and meals in my budget?**

No. The budget is only intended to reflect how participants plan to use \$1,000 in Project Funds.

**29. What does the Independent Professional Award not cover?**

The award does not cover personal expenses unrelated to the proposed project or travel to the counterpart country (e.g. souvenirs, clothing, luxury items, etc.).

**30. Should I keep track of the money that I spend on implementing my project?**

Independent professionals must save receipts for all expenses incurred using Project Funds. These receipts must be submitted to SEE, in order to receive the final tranche of Project Funds.

**31. Will there be a pre-departure orientation?**

Yes. All individuals who travel using SEE funding must participate in a virtual orientation prior to travel to the host country.

**32. Who will be my contacts at SEE during my time in the host country?**

SEE staff will provide all necessary information and emergency contacts in advance of departure from your country of residence.

**33. What if I fall ill during my travels abroad?**

Independent professionals will be provided with health insurance for the duration of the trip to the host country. More details on this issue will be discussed with successful candidates at the pre-departure orientation.

**34. Will technological equipment be provided to independent professionals?**

Independent professionals are expected to bring their own electronic devices, including laptops, tablets, and mobile phones. Please keep in mind that US and Russian cellular and electronics systems are different and require additional adapters, SIM cards, etc. Participants should research roaming and other international charges in advance.

Independent professionals must provide SEE and their host organization with a local mobile phone number that the participant will use while they are in the host country.

**35. What is the required length of blog entries and reports?**

Blog entries and reports should be long enough to adequately explain the independent professional's activities and impact achieved. SEE staff will provide detailed reporting requirements, along with deadlines and word limits to selected participants.

**36. What are independent professionals' responsibilities after returning to home country?**

Upon their return home, independent professionals are required to:

- 1) Submit a blogpost documenting their travels, providing summary and analysis of activities and learning in the host country
- 2) Conduct an activity in the home country designed to convey or apply the knowledge and/or expertise gained during their visit to benefit their colleagues and/or community members
- 3) Upon completion of project activities in the home country, the participant must submit a final report that will describe the impact of the project in general and the home country activities in particular
- 4) Submit receipts for all project fund expenses. Independent professionals will not receive the final tranche of Project Funds until they fulfil all reporting and other responsibilities.

**37. What qualifies as a post-travel activity?**

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

If you have any additional questions not covered by this FAQ, please email [see@eurasia.org](mailto:see@eurasia.org).