

KOSOVO UNITED STATES ALUMNI

Notice of Funding Opportunity

Funding Opportunity Title: The University Support Grant Program 21/22

Funding Opportunity Number: US21FO

Deadline for Applications: July 30, 2021

Total Amount Available: \$174,000.00

Award Amounts: awards may range from a minimum of \$10,000 to a maximum of \$50,000.

Number of awards anticipated: up to 5 awards (dependent on funding and award amounts)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The University Support Grants Program is an annual grants program that aims to support higher education in Kosovo in their further development. Each year, the U.S. The Embassy in Kosovo grants around \$200,000.00 annually for Higher Education Institutions in Kosovo, supporting HEIs to address social and economic development challenges through research, development, and extension services. Since the beginning of its existence, almost all public universities, several private universities, and education-related NGOs have benefited from these funds.

Grants awarded as part of this program seek to help institutions of higher education establish positive changes in their operations through the U.S. Embassy funds.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Kosovo United States Alumni (KUSA) announces an open competition for the U.S. Embassy University Support Grants Program. KUSA will award a series of small grants to support higher education institutions to better address social and economic development challenges through research, development, and extension services. Follow the instructions below when writing your project proposal.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

With funding support from the University Support Grants Program, the U.S. embassy seeks to support Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Through the University Support Program, KUSA aims to:

Objective 1: Improve resources at HEIs and support teaching and research in STEM.

We intend to cooperate with HEIs in increasing access to STEM for all students in HEIs and prepare the next generation for careers in STEM-related fields.

Objective 2: Strengthen Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA) to regain its membership in ENQA.

To achieve this objective, KUSA will work closely with the Kosovo Accreditation Agency to support projects that address ENQA's recommendations and best practices.

Objective 3: Develop study programs lined with labor market needs.

KUSA will cooperate with HEIs in Kosovo, aiming to foster cooperation among Kosovo HEIs and labor market, with a particular emphasis on curriculum design, identification of specific challenges that are faced by the HEI on designing curricula based on the labor market needs, and drawing specific recommendations to improve the current situation.

AVAILABLE GRANTS

Proposals should articulate a clear strategic rationale for how it advances policies and priorities set for this round. It should address the needs of the higher education system in Kosovo and propose new perspectives on improving. Throughout the implementation of this program, HEIs in Kosovo succeeded in establishing research centers, centers for excellence in teaching, centers for energy and sustainability, research projects to support the Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA), and an Albanian plagiarism prevention platform, amongst other impactful projects.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Higher Education institutions and/or NGOs whose operations are focused on education/higher education are eligible to apply. Keep in mind that the institution as an entity is not eligible to apply. The institution should assign a project coordinator who will be responsible for implementing the project. Eligibility is limited to HEIs and NGOs registered in the Republic of Kosovo.

Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible for consideration, applicants must meet the following criteria:

- Be an active player in the higher education field in Kosovo;
- Apply with a project that is related to the program's objectives;
- Proposals tackling the second objective (Strengthen Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA) to regain its membership in ENQA) are *limited* to NGOs whose focus is on higher education.

Projects that are not eligible for consideration are the following:

- Organizations with affiliation to elected officials, political parties, or religious groups;
- Humanitarian or charitable activities, including direct social services to populations;
- Fundraising campaigns;
- Career development;
- Political or partisan activities;
- Scientific research;
- Individual trips abroad;
- Trade activities;
- Health projects.

Evaluation Process

A review committee composed of three to five members will evaluate applications. Each technically eligible application submitted will be assessed and rated by the Review Committee on the basis of the criteria outlined below. It will take the committee up to two weeks after the application deadline to complete its review process. Applicants may be contacted with questions during this review process.

Evaluation Criteria

The following evaluation criteria will be used to evaluate and rate each technically eligible application:

- **Quality and Feasibility of the Project Idea** - The project idea is well developed with sufficient detail about how activities will be carried out. The proposal demonstrates originality and outlines clear and achievable objectives.

- **Organizational Capacity and Record** - The applicants have expertise in the subject area and demonstrate the ability to perform the proposed activities. The applicant demonstrates the capacity for successful planning and responsible fiscal management. The role of each partner and team member is detailed and additional documents of these representatives are provided.
- **Budget** - The budget plan and justification are sufficiently detailed, well-organized, and reasonable. Costs are reasonable in relation to the proposed activities and anticipated results. There are no budget lines labeled miscellaneous expenses. Applicants are encouraged to provide as much detail as possible so that the committee may determine the extent to which the request represents an efficient use of U.S. government resources. The budget demonstrates that the applicant has devoted time to plan for and assess actual expenses associated with the project instead of providing rough estimates. ***Cost-sharing is strongly encouraged***; however, it is not a requirement of an application in response to this funding announcement.
- **Innovative Idea** - The project idea and approach are creative and provide solutions to an issue present within the higher education sector. Proposed project activities must be concrete, detailed, and supported by a reasonable work plan.
- **Measurement** - The applicant has clearly articulated its Monitoring and Evaluation Plan and state how it will assess and measure its performance throughout the project implementation phase using concrete quantitative and qualitative assessment tools.
- **Sustainability** - The project proposal describes clearly the approach that will be used to ensure maximum sustainability of the project's results after its completion.

FUNDING LEVELS AND ALLOWABLE EXPENSES

Requests for funding provided by this grant program should not exceed \$50,000.00. Allowable costs are directly related to project activities. The budget should be consistent with the narrative description of the program and should reflect the applicant's understanding of the allowable cost principles described below. The applicant must submit the budget narrative form, which provides many details and information about each budget line and its allocation.

**Costs incurred before or after the official grant period will not be reimbursed.*

APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

Applicants must follow the instructions and conditions contained herein and supply all information required. Failure to furnish all information or comply with stated requirements will result in disqualification from the competition. Applicants must set forth full, accurate, and complete information. Providing false or misleading information in an application will result in disqualification from this and future Alumni Small Grants competitions.

Application materials must be submitted by email to info@kusalumni.org. The subject line of submission emails should follow this format: [USGP21/22 "Project Title" - Name of University/Organization"]. For assistance with the requirements of this solicitation, please email info@kusalumni.org.

Application Files

In addition to the completed application form, proposals should include the following documents:

- Application Form
- Budget Form
- Budget Justification
- Short bios of team members

Please ensure:

- The proposal clearly addresses the goals and objectives of this funding opportunity
- All documents are in English
- All budgets are in U.S. dollars

Deadline for submission of the application

All applications must be submitted by email on or before **July 30, 2021**, at info@kusalumni.org, with the subject line "USGP21/22 "Project Title" - Name of University/Organization". Applications submitted after that time will be ineligible for consideration. There will be no exceptions to this application deadline.

Period of Performance: This program supports projects up to 12 months in duration.

Contact Information

Should additional information be required, please contact Kosovo United States Alumni at info@kusalumni.org or +383 44 573 066.

Disclaimer

Applicants can expect to be notified of the status of their application within approximately 40 days of the submission deadline. It does not commit KUSA to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of proposals. KUSA reserves the right to reject any or all proposals received. If a proposal is selected for funding, KUSA has no obligation to provide any additional future funding in connection with the award. KUSA reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposal budgets in accordance with the needs of the project evaluation requirements.

** When the grant contract is successful please be aware that KUSA and U.S. Embassy logos need to be shown in all material corresponding to the grant. This includes programs, educational material, and posters. Banners indicating support by the Embassy need to be displayed at all events.*

APPLICATION CONTENT AND FORMAT

The following documents **are required**:

1. Application Form

The Application Form should contain sufficient information that anyone not familiar with it would understand exactly what the applicant wants to do. Your proposal, as described in the Application Form, must include all the items below and it must not exceed 15 pages:

Summary Page: Cover sheet stating the applicant name, proposal date, program title, program period proposed start and end date, the objective of the program you have chosen to tackle, and brief purpose of the program, information about the individual applying (who is also the project leader), including the name of the U.S. government-funded exchange program in which the applicant participated, and the program year.

Proposal: The proposal should contain sufficient information that anyone not familiar with it would understand exactly what the applicant wants to do. You may use your own proposal format, but it must include all the items below.

Proposal Summary: Short narrative that outlines the proposed plan to implement the project, intended goal, and significant activities.

Program Activities: Describe the project in detail, linking project activities to intended results. Explain why the project is important and how and why the particular audience and project location were selected.

Program Goals and Objectives: The goals describe what the program is intended to achieve. The objectives refer to the intermediate accomplishments on the way to the goals. These should be achievable and measurable.

Proposed Program Schedule and Timeline: The proposed timeline for the program activities. Include the dates, times, and locations of planned activities and events.

Targeted Audience: Provide information about the target audience. Who is the audience? Are they students, organizations, implementers, etc.?

Program Monitoring and Evaluation Plan: This is an integral part of successful grants. Throughout the time frame of the grant, how will the grant activities be monitored to ensure they are happening promptly, and how will the program be evaluated to make sure it is meeting the goals of the grant.

2. Budget Justification Narrative

Please state the funding amount requested. Budget Narrative should contain detailed descriptions of all categories. Budget items should be concrete and linked to the narrative. Also, explain why you are seeking funding for this project and what, if any, other funding sources are anticipated.

- Budgets should contain an estimated amount of bank fees.
- Funding should not duplicate ongoing activities but could supplement such initiatives.
- Funds should not be used for food expenses. However, if coffee breaks or working lunches for seminar/conference participants are an integral part of the overall project, and funding is not available from other sources. Meals should not include alcoholic beverages.
- The use of "*miscellaneous expenses*" or any similar term as a budget item is unacceptable.

Guidelines for Budget Justification

Personnel and Fringe Benefits: Salaries should not exceed **20%** of the total budget. Whenever necessary, compensation in reasonable amounts can be paid to the project's key personnel for the portion of their time devoted to the work in this project. Compensation levels should be no higher than other local salaries (where appropriate), and should include all applicable taxes and contributions; otherwise, they will be automatically deducted.

Travel: Estimate travel costs and per diem for this program, program staff, consultants or speakers, and participants/beneficiaries.

Equipment: Describe any machinery, furniture, or other personal property required for the program, which has a useful life of more than one year (or a life longer than the duration of the program), and costs at least **\$5,000** per unit. Please provide a clear description of the sustainability plan and the necessity of the equipment; otherwise will not be supported.

Supplies: List and describe all the items and materials, including any computer devices needed for the program. If an item costs more than **\$5,000** per unit, put it in the budget under Equipment. International purchases are not recommended; however, if mandatory, please include shipping costs, customs fees, and fees for local companies that will provide services for transportation of the product.

Contractual: Describe goods and services that the applicant plans to acquire through a contract with a vendor.

Other Direct Costs: Describe additional costs directly associated with the program, which do not fit in the different categories. All "Other" or "Miscellaneous" expenses must be itemized and explained.

AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

Applicants will be notified electronically about selection results. An email message will be sent to the email account included in the application form. Grants Program Staff might also contact the applicants to request additional information or clarify certain aspects of the application documents; therefore, it is crucial to provide accurate contact information.

The Grant Agreement will be written, signed, awarded, and administered by the Project Coordinators. Grant Award is the authorizing document, and it will be provided to the recipient for review and signature by email. The recipient may only start incurring program expenses beginning on the start date shown on the grant award document.