

(3) Partnership and Priorities (20%). This criterion indicates the degree to which the project initiates or enhances partnership with ITA and the degree to which the proposal furthers or is compatible with ITA's priorities.

(4) Creativity and Capacity (20%). Applicants demonstrate creativity, innovation, and realism in the project work plan as well as their institutional capacity to carry out the work plan.

(5) Budget and Sustainability (20%). This criterion indicates the reasonableness and effectiveness of the itemized budget for project activities, the amount of the cash match that is readily available, and the probability that the project can be continued on a self-sustained basis after the completion of the award.

The five criteria together constitute the application score. At 20 points per criterion, the total possible score is 100.

Selection Factors: The Assistant Secretary may deviate from the selection panel's ranked recommendation only based on the following factors: (1) Scores of individual selection panel members and the selection panel's written assessments, (2) Degree to which applications satisfy ITA priorities, (3) Geographic distribution of the proposed awards, (4) Diversity of industry sectors and overseas markets covered by the proposed awards, (5) Diversity of project activities represented by the proposed awards, (6) Avoidance of redundancy and conflicts with the initiatives of other federal agencies, and (7) Availability of funds.

The ITA priorities referred to under Evaluation Criteria (3) and Selection Factor (2) are listed below. ITA is interested in receiving proposals to promote U.S. exports that include, but are not limited to, projects that: (1) Improve the competitiveness of U.S. manufacturing and service industries by addressing impediments to innovation and cost reduction; (2) Increase competitiveness of U.S. industries by addressing non-tariff barriers, especially those related to standards; (3) Capitalize on trade opportunities resulting from trade agreements; (4) Increase overall export awareness and awareness of ITA programs and services among U.S. companies, by making SMEs export-ready or by facilitating deal-making; (5) Ensure compliance with trade agreements; (6) Increase the competitiveness of U.S. industries by developing commercial infrastructure in emerging economies; (7) Develop non-traditional approaches to creating demand for the products/services developed from new U.S. technologies; and (8) Support the Administration's

broader foreign policy objectives through trade-related initiatives.

The Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements

The Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements contained in the **Federal Register** notice of December 30, 2004 (69 FR 78389) are applicable to this solicitation.

Paperwork Reduction Act

This document contains collection-of-information requirements subject to the Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA). The use of Standard Forms 424 and 424A, 424B, SF-LLL, and CD-346 has been approved by OMB under the respective control numbers 0348-0043, 0348-0044, 0348-0040, 0348-0046, and 0605-0001. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person is required to respond to, nor shall any person be subject to a penalty for failure to comply with, a collection of information subject to the requirements of the PRA unless that collection of information displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Executive Order 12866

This notice has been determined to be not significant for purposes of Executive Order 12866.

Executive Order 13132 (Federalism)

It has been determined that this notice does not contain policies with Federalism implications as that term is defined in Executive Order 13132.

Administrative Procedure Act/Regulatory Flexibility Act

Prior notice and an opportunity for public comments are not required by the Administrative Procedure Act or any other law for this notice concerning grants, benefits, and contracts (5 U.S.C. 553(a)(2)). Because notice and opportunity for comment are not required pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 553 or any other law, the analytical requirements of the Regulatory Flexibility Act (5 U.S.C. 601 *et seq.*) are inapplicable. Therefore, a regulatory flexibility analysis has not been prepared.

Dated: March 7, 2005.

Robert W. Pearson,

Director, Office of Planning, Coordination and Management, Manufacturing and Services, International Trade Administration, Department of Commerce.

[FR Doc. E5-1026 Filed 3-10-05; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-DR-P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

International Trade Administration

Business Development Mission Afghanistan

AGENCY: International Trade Administration, Department of Commerce.

ACTION: Notice to business development mission to Afghanistan, April 24-27, 2005.

SUMMARY: The International Trade Administration of the U.S. Department of Commerce is organizing a business development mission to Afghanistan on April 24-27, 2005. The mission will assist U.S. businesses exploring trade and investment opportunities in Afghanistan. A senior U.S. Department of Commerce official will lead a delegation of approximately 10 to 15 U.S.-based senior executives of small, medium, and large U.S. firms. Companies may represent, but are not limited to, the following priority sectors: construction, telecommunications, agribusiness, energy, and financial services. The mission will include briefings from U.S. Embassy staff and Afghan Government officials, prearranged one-on-one meetings, and a networking reception. The mission will reaffirm the U.S. Government's support towards bilateral relations and seek to expand opportunities for U.S. companies in Afghanistan.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Office of Global Trade Programs, Room 2012, Department of Commerce, Washington, DC 20230; Tel: (202) 482-4457; Fax: (202) 482-0178.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Business Development Mission, Afghanistan; April 24-27, 2005.

Mission Statement

I. Description of the Mission

The International Trade Administration of the U.S. Department of Commerce is organizing a business development mission to Afghanistan on April 24-27, 2005. The mission will assist U.S. businesses exploring trade and investment opportunities in Afghanistan. A senior U.S. Department of Commerce official will lead a delegation of approximately 10 to 15 U.S.-based senior executives of small, medium, and large U.S. firms. Companies may represent, but are not limited to, the following priority sectors: construction, telecommunications, agribusiness, energy, and financial services. The mission will include briefings from U.S. Embassy staff and

Afghan Government officials, prearranged one-on-one meetings, and a networking reception. The mission will reaffirm the U.S. Government's support towards bilateral relations and seek to expand opportunities for U.S. companies in Afghanistan.

II. Commercial Setting for the Mission

Since the Taliban's fall from power in late 2001, Afghanistan is undergoing a transformation thanks to the United States and the international community. The Afghan Government seeks to revive the economy in order to improve the lives of Afghans, create jobs, attract foreign investment, and earn desperately needed hard currency. The agricultural, energy, housing, light industries and trading sectors present significant needs for development.

Although economic statistics on Afghanistan may not be reliable, the International Monetary Fund reports the gross domestic product (GDP) is estimated at \$4.4 billion, and GDP per capita is about \$250 per year. The estimated GDP growth rate for 2003–2004 was 16%, following a growth rate of 20% for 2002–2003. Economic recovery from more than twenty war-ravaged years is most visible in agriculture, construction and services sectors, driven by the international reconstruction effort.

The Afghan Government is taking many steps to build the mechanisms necessary for a viable commercial environment. The Afghan Government passed new investment and commercial banking laws to facilitate commercial and banking transactions. The Afghan Government created a "one-stop shop" for investors to receive necessary documents and other information for establishing a business venture in Afghanistan. With assistance from the U.S. Agency for International Development, the Ministry of Finance has embarked on an aggressive strategy to simplify and improve customs and border procedures to further facilitate trade between Afghanistan and the world. The Afghan Government is also working with the international community to reform the judicial system.

The basic business infrastructure, including telecommunications, commercial regulations and office support, is slowly improving. Given the tenuous security situation throughout the country, there is a shortage of insurance options for transporters and investors. The first of three industrial parks is scheduled to open in the Spring 2005.

U.S. Department of Commerce
Assistant Secretary William H. Lash, III

visited Kabul in August 2004. He was encouraged to see the progress in reconstruction, the potential for U.S. companies, and the entrepreneurial spirit of the Afghans. It is for this reason the mission is being planned.

III. Goals for the Mission

The mission aims to further U.S. commercial policy objectives and to advance specific U.S. business interests. The mission will

- Assess the commercial climate as well as export and investment opportunities in Afghanistan;
- Advance mission participants' specific business interests by introducing them to key Afghan government officials and potential business partners;
- Encourage continued progress in economic development in Afghanistan; and Enhance the dialogue between government and industry on issues affecting the development of bilateral commercial relations.

IV. Scenario for the Mission

The business development mission will expose participants to high-level contacts and provide access to the Afghan market. U.S. Embassy officials will provide a detailed briefing on the economic, commercial and political climate as well as current investment and reconstruction opportunities. Meetings will be arranged with appropriate government ministries, including the Afghan Investment Support Agency, the Ministries of Commerce, and Foreign Affairs, as well as sectoral ministries.

In addition to private sector representatives, U.S. Government economic agencies may also participate.

Timetable

The precise schedule will depend on the availability of local government and business officials and the specific goals of the mission participants. The tentative trip itinerary will be as follows:

Sunday, April 24, 2005:

Arrive in Kabul; Overview; Briefing by U.S. Embassy.

Monday, April 25, 2005:

Briefings by: Afghanistan Investment Support Agency/Ministry of Commerce; U.S. Agency for International Development and possible prime contractors; Ministry of Finance; Ministry of Foreign Affairs; One-on-one meetings with sectoral ministries.

Tuesday, April 26, 2005:

Meetings with Afghan businesses, Afghan-American Chamber of Commerce, and Afghanistan International Chamber of Commerce;

One-on-one meetings with sectoral ministries.

Wednesday, April 27, 2005:

Briefings by: World Bank representatives; Asian Development Bank representatives. Depart Kabul.

V. Criteria for Participant Selection

The recruitment and selection of private sector participants for this mission will be conducted according to the "Statement of Policy Governing Department of Commerce-Overseas Trade Missions" established in March 1997. Approximately 10 to 15 companies will be selected for the mission according to the criteria set out below.

Eligibility: Participating companies must be incorporated or otherwise organized in the United States. A company is eligible to participate if the products and/or services that it will promote (a) are manufactured or produced in the United States; or (b) if manufactured or produced outside the United States, are marketed under the name of a U.S. firm and have at least 51 percent U.S. content of the value of the finished good or service.

Selection Criteria: Companies will be selected for participation in the mission on the basis of

- Consistency of company's goals with the scope and desired outcome of the mission;
- Relevance of a company's business and product line to the identified growth sectors;
- Rank of the designated company representative;
- Past, present, or prospective relevant international business activity;
- Diversity of company size, type, location, demographics, and traditional under-representation in business; and
- Timely receipt of the company's signed and completed application, participation agreement, and participation fee.

Recruitment will begin immediately and will be conducted in an open and public manner, including publication in the **Federal Register**, posting on the Commerce Department trade missions calendar (<http://www.ita.doc.gov/doctm/tmcal.html>), the Afghanistan Investment and Reconstruction Task Force Web site (<http://www.export.gov/afghanistan>), and press releases to the general and trade media. Promotion of the mission will also take place through the involvement of U.S. Export Assistance Centers and relevant trade associations.

An applicant's partisan, political activities (including political contribution) are entirely irrelevant to the selection process. The fee to

participate in this mission has not yet been determined, but will be approximately USD 1,500. The fees will not cover travel expenses and lodging. Recruitment begins immediately and will close on March 31, 2005, in order to ensure sufficient time to obtain in-country appointments for applicants selected to participate in the mission. Applications received after that date will be considered only if space and scheduling constraints permit. The mission Web site (<http://www.export.gov/afghanistan/events>) will share information as it becomes available.

Disclaimer: Trade mission participants participate in the trade mission and undertake related travel at their own risk and are advised to obtain insurance accordingly. Any question regarding insurance coverage must be resolved by the participant and its insurer of choice. Trade mission participants and their companies, on behalf of themselves and any of their respective officers, employees or agents, agree to release, indemnify and hold harmless the U.S. Government from liability for any illness, injury, loss of life, or damage or loss of property, suffered by themselves or their respective officers, employees or agents, occasioned by or connected with participation in the trade mission. The U.S. Government does not make any representations or guarantees as to the safety or security of participants. Companies should consult the State Department's travel warning for Afghanistan: http://travel.state.gov/travel/afghanistan_warning.html. The U.S. Government does not make any representations or guarantees as to the success of the trade mission.

Contact Information: Jana Nelhybel, Afghanistan Investment and Reconstruction Task Force, U.S. Department of Commerce, Washington, DC 20230. Tel: (202) 482-1812. Fax: (202) 482-0980. E-mail: AfghanInfo@ita.doc.gov.

Dated: March 7, 2005.

Peter Hale,

Director, Office of Policy Coordination.

[FR Doc. E5-1024 Filed 3-10-05; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3510-DS-P

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Institute of Standards and Technology

[Docket No.: 050301051-5051-01]

NIST Center for Neutron Research Financial Assistance Program; Availability of Funds

AGENCY: National Institute of Standards and Technology, Commerce.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) announces that the NIST Center for Neutron Research (NCNR) Financial Assistance Program is soliciting applications for financial assistance for FY 2005. The *NCNR Financial Assistance Program* will offer financial assistance in the field of Neutron Research and Spectroscopy specifically aimed at developing new instrumentation for Neutron Research, conducting collaborative research with NIST scientists, and assisting visiting researchers at the NCNR.

DATES: All applications, paper and electronic, must be received at the address listed below no later than 5 p.m. Eastern Standard Time on April 1, 2005. Late applications will not be reviewed nor considered.

ADDRESSES: Paper applications must be submitted to: Kim Stavish, National Institute of Standards and Technology, NIST Center for Neutron Research, STOP 8560, Gaithersburg, Maryland 20899-8560, phone (301) 975-2672. Electronic applications and associated proposal information should be uploaded to <http://grants.gov>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: For complete information about this program and instructions for applying by paper or electronically, read the Federal Funding Opportunity (FFO) Notice at <http://www.grants.gov>. A paper copy of the FFO may be obtained by calling (301) 975-6328. Technical questions should be addressed to: Dr. Dan Neumann, at NCNR, 100 Bureau Drive, MS 8562, Gaithersburg, MD 20899-8562, or at Tel: (301) 975-5252; E-mail: Dan.Neumann@nist.gov. Grants Administration questions should be addressed to: Joyce Brigham, NIST Grants and Agreements Management Division; Tel: (301) 975-6328; joyce.brigham@nist.gov. For assistance with using <http://grants.gov> contact support@grants.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Name and Number:

Measurement and Engineering Research and Standards—11.609.

Program Description: The primary program objectives of the financial assistance program in Neutron Research are to develop new areas of neutron instrumentation with emphasis on cold neutrons; to explore and develop new areas of neutron scattering science, with emphasis on macromolecular science, condensed matter physics, and chemistry; to assist and train facility users in their research; and to conduct other outreach and educational activities that advance the use of neutrons by U.S. university and industrial scientists. This will entail stationing scientific staff at the NCNR who, in collaboration with NIST and visiting scientists, advance these objectives.

Funding Availability: Proposals will be considered for cooperative agreements with durations of up to five years, subject to the availability of funds, satisfactory progress, and the continuing relevance to the objectives of the NIST Center for Neutron Research. The anticipated level of funding is up to \$3,500,000 per year and one or more awards may be approved. Between one and five awards are likely.

NIST will give preference to full-scope proposals. However applicants may choose to submit proposals covering full or partial amounts of the funding available. Partial funding proposals may be limited to specific program objectives. NIST will determine whether to fund one award for the full amount; to divide available funds into multiple awards of any size, and negotiate scopes of work and budgets as appropriate; or not to select any proposal for funding, upon completing the selection process described below.

Statutory Authority: 15 U.S.C. 272 (b)(4,7) and (c)(8,10,16,17,19).

Eligibility: The NCNR Financial Assistance Program is open to U.S. institutions of higher education.

Review and Selection Process: All applications received in response to this announcement will be reviewed to determine whether or not they are complete and responsive to the scope of the stated program objectives. Incomplete or non-responsive applications will not be reviewed for technical merit. The Program will retain one copy of each non-responsive application for three years for record keeping purposes. The remaining copies will be destroyed.

Responsive proposals will be reviewed by an independent, objective panel composed of at least four individuals who are knowledgeable