

2007 OPEN WORLD CIVIC HOSTING THEMES for RUSSIA

Accountable Governance

Rationale: In recent years, Russia has enacted legislation on, and started implementation of, local self-governance reforms that expand the number of municipalities and give local authorities both more autonomy and more responsibility for providing basic public services. As a result, new and established local governments need to hire and train staff; take on new budgeting, planning, and service-delivery responsibilities; promote local business development; and become more proactive, responsive, and accountable. In addition, Russia’s 2007/2008 election cycle—which includes presidential, parliamentary, and regional elections—is well under way, so election administration, voting procedures, and campaign activities will be a supplementary focus of some of these delegations, and may be a primary focus of a select few based on grantee capability.

Target Group: Mayors, city managers and other municipal administrators, regional and local legislators, civic and political activists, policy researchers, journalists, public services providers, NGO leaders, local business leaders involved in community development, election officials, and environmental managers. Delegations may be composed of people holding similar positions in different cities or regions, or of people from the same community or region (to support sister-city partnerships, specific projects, or cross-sectoral programming). Within this theme, Open World will also host a limited number of delegations with a special focus on community economic development or environmental management.

This theme may also include delegations of national- or regional-level leaders and policy experts involved with policies affecting local self-governance, and delegations with a special focus on “women as leaders.”

Possible Grantee Activities: Local programs on accountable governance would emphasize administrative capacity-building, transparency, service delivery, financing of government services, community economic development, and environmental management. Possible topics include local-government planning; state-local relations; citizen participation in government; constituent services; budgeting, accounting, and auditing; government-employee training; government record-keeping; revitalization; public-private economic devel-

opment partnerships; and election administration and procedures. Programs should emphasize the particular types of local-governance, election-related, economic-development, or environmental-management activities being undertaken by delegation members.

Appropriate activities for accountable governance delegations include meeting with state and local legislators and other elected officials; job-shadowing county executives, mayors, and city managers; having workshops with independent government auditors, city planning and zoning officials, voter registration and election officials, and state municipal-league officials; visiting private voluntary organizations involved in community development and improvement; observing campaign activities and voting procedures; touring wastewater plants and volunteer fire departments; attending budget hearings; and holding Q-and-A with city-desk editors, reporters, and political party representatives.

Appropriate activities for community economic development delegations include having roundtables at chambers of commerce, economic development corporations, and banks; briefings with state and municipal economic development and tax officials; and site tours of public-private economic development projects, business incubators, and local businesses. Possible focuses for environmental management delegations are environmentally friendly development projects; reclamation efforts; ecotourism; civic initiatives; and the conservation of parks and reserves. Energy and the environment, including the issues of nuclear cleanup and non-proliferation, may also be explored by some of these delegations.

Possible settings for delegate presentations include city council meetings, university seminars, and civic-association meetings.

Rule of Law

Rationale: Rule of law is one of the foundations of civil society. Russia made significant rule of law gains in the early and mid-1990s, and passed major judicial and legal reforms in 2001–2002. Open World’s rule of law programming is designed to build on the gains made during the 1990s, to support the implementation of the more recent reforms, and to provide comparative insights into legal education, juvenile justice, and the

prevention and prosecution of human trafficking and domestic violence. Through Open World's specialized rule of law program, individual U.S. federal and state judges host Russian judicial delegations in cooperation with Open World grantees. In 2007 Open World will also host a limited number of general rule of law delegations where a host judge is not required.

Target Group: Most specialized rule of law delegations will be composed entirely of judges. The target group for the general rule of law delegations and "mixed" specialized rule of law delegations includes judges, judicial administrators, law school faculty, judicial educators, legal specialists from NGOs and the private sector, legislative experts, lawyers, court administrative staff, court press officers, and legal reporters.

Possible Grantee Activities: Delegates might explore U.S. approaches to court proceedings, the jury-trial process, the adversarial system, plea-bargaining, alternative dispute resolution, law enforcement and corrections practices, and the legislative process. Other possible topics include judicial independence, judicial ethics, juvenile justice practices, human trafficking prevention and prosecution, financial dispute resolution, judicial administration, legal advocacy, judicial-media relations, domestic violence awareness, and legal/judicial training. Appropriate activities include job-shadowing experiences; courtroom observations; judges' roundtables; site visits to corrections facilities, forensics laboratories, and victims' shelters; and group discussions with officers of the court, court administrative staff, and victims' services providers. Possible settings for presentations, consultations, etc., by delegates include bench and bar association meetings, law-school colloquia, meetings of advocacy groups, and panel discussions.

Social Issues (Health-Care Provision, Elementary and Secondary Education, Social Services)

Although in recent years Russia's economic growth has raised overall living standards in some places, significant problems still remain for vital segments of the population. In addition, both Russia and the United States share an interest in preventing the spread of communicable diseases and making information technology accessible to all levels of society. Open World seeks to address some of these issues by giving exchange participants new strategies for strengthening health-care practices and delivery, elementary and secondary education, and social services in their regions and communities. Some delegations may have a special focus on "women as leaders" within the assigned subtheme.

■ Health-Care Provision (subtheme)

Rationale: High rates of communicable and chronic diseases, outdated medical equipment and facilities, and inadequate health-care financing have contributed to a health-care crisis in Russia. Issues relating to the delivery of services for patients with communicable or non-communicable diseases as well as at-risk individuals will be a major focus of this subtheme.

Target Group: Government officials (with an emphasis on regional and local executive-branch officials), heads of health and medical associations, health-care administrators, health-care providers involved in policy-making, health educators, women's health advocates, members of patient advocacy organizations, NGO leaders, and journalists.

Possible Grantee Activities: Local programs might include visits to major medical centers, community-based clinics, county health departments, women's health centers, and volunteer organizations. Topics for consideration include health-care management and financing, disease monitoring and control, prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS and TB, and health-care quality monitoring and reporting. Appropriate formats for information exchange include site tours; conferences; workshops; and group discussions with health-care providers, health-care system managers, and government officials overseeing health-care programs and financing. Possible settings for presentations by delegates include panel discussions, roundtables, and scheduled meetings at health-care facilities or institutions.

■ Elementary and Secondary Education (subtheme)

Rationale: Russian education has a proud tradition, with graduation rates and literacy levels that are among the highest in the world. Russia's educational system, like that of the United States, faces challenges with financing, administration, teacher recruitment and retention, access to and integration of information technology, and outdated teaching materials. Open World delegates from the federal, regional, and local levels will examine educational issues within the context of the highly decentralized American model, with a focus on educational policy, technology integration into classrooms, alternative financing of public education, equity/access, the role of testing in educational assessment and access to higher education, community involvement, extracurricular and after-school activities, and school-to-work programs.

Target Group: Regional and local government officials involved in education policy and reform, school administrators, teachers in leadership roles, heads of public-private sector initiatives, NGO leaders, and journalists.

Possible Grantee Activities: Appropriate activities might include attending school board and parent-teacher association meetings; viewing learning activities for special populations; discussing financing issues with mayors and legislators; visiting community college school-to-work and other transitional programs; sharing ideas with potential private sector partners; and meeting with curriculum development specialists, state education officials, and education researchers. Possible settings for delegate presentations, consultations, etc., include faculty and parent-teacher association meetings, classroom lectures, and university seminars.

■ Social Services (subtheme)

Rationale: Russia is facing a demographic crisis, with decreases in population and life expectancy. At the same time, more responsibility for social services delivery has been shifted from the national government to regional and local governments without a corresponding transfer of funds. Challenges that American communities face—including substance abuse, the care and inclusion of people with mental and physical disabilities, unstable home environments, homelessness, and elder care—have affected the viability of many Russian communities. Open World will invite mixed delegations of government, NGO, and other community leaders to the United States to see how their counterparts here work to address both social services delivery and funding issues.

Target Group: Social service officials and providers; municipal executives; regional and local legislators; NGO leaders, including leaders of social services advocacy organizations; and editors and other journalists.

Possible Grantee Activities: Programs should enable delegates to learn on-site about the operations, structure, and funding of leading public and private social service agencies; job-shadow professional counterparts; and meet with NGO leaders who work with or advocate for special populations (e.g., disabled, elderly, or economically disadvantaged citizens; substance abusers; victims of domestic violence; and abused, neglected, or abandoned children). Other preferred activities for delegates include attending county commission and city council meetings or hearings on social service issues; visiting women's centers and shelters; participating in or observing workshops on recruiting, training, and managing volunteers; having briefings on, and, if possible, observing NGO fundraising and marketing activities; and developing work plans for improving social-support services in their home communities. Host organizations are encouraged to schedule an overview session at the beginning of the community visit to provide background on the roles that government agencies (federal, state, and local) and nongovernmental organi-

zations play in funding and providing social services in the host community. Possible forums for delegate presentations include panel discussions, university seminars, and roundtables.