

HOSTING THEMES

The **2018 Open World Program** will offer a different set of themes for each participating country. Country themes were developed in close consultation with the U.S. Embassy in each participating country, NGOs, experts on the region, and participating-country organizations. Delegates will be selected based on their activities and background in one or more of the themes.

Since Open World is a legislative branch agency that serves the U.S. Congress, its historical mission includes exposing delegates to the role of legislatures and legislators in a successful democracy. Open World, therefore, asks grantees and their local host organizations to set up meetings and other professional activities for their delegates with Members of Congress or their staff, state legislators, and city council members and other local lawmakers. The purpose of these activities is to give delegates firsthand insights into how American legislators carry out such functions as lawmaking, legislative oversight, and constituent relations, especially as these functions relate to a delegation's Hosting Theme. Meetings with staff of state legislative committees and legislative support agencies are also encouraged, when feasible.

Open World staff oversees the process of forming and placing Open World delegations and will work to place delegates in host communities that are comparable to their own communities and that can offer experiences and information directly relevant to the delegates' interests. Open World staff will also work closely with grantees on matching specific delegates or specific types of delegates with approved grantee programs. Wherever possible, these placements will be based on already-established ties or plans specified in grant applications to forge new ones. Open World staff will also work with grantees to ensure that host-community visits include opportunities for delegates to give voluntary presentations and to meet with lawmakers and legislative staff.

The host-community visit should give delegates firsthand experience with their professional counterparts' daily work routines and offer a view of American life through community and cultural activities and homestays. All programming, regardless of Hosting Theme, should include extensive exposure to legislative processes, and how these processes affect the Hosting Theme. Delegates will prepare for their host-community activities by attending a pre-departure program (usually held in their home country's capital city) followed by an arrival orientation program conducted in Washington, D.C. The orientation programs will review the Open World program's goals and provide an overview of the delegations' Hosting Theme(s); federal, state, and local governments and their interrelationships; a general overview of the federal legislative process; the balance of powers; current issues in U.S. governance and politics; the rights of individual citizens; and American culture. The delegates will also learn about American home life and practices to prepare them for their homestays.

Below, listed by country, are the Hosting Themes, each with an accompanying rationale and a general description of the types of delegates who will participate.

AZERBAIJAN THEMES

Disability Advocacy and Reform

Rationale: According to government figures, there are roughly 550,000 people with disabilities in Azerbaijan. This segment of the population remains underserved and even marginalized. People with disabilities encounter barriers that limit their access to education and employment, and prevent their full participation in society. This program will allow the U.S. Mission in Azerbaijan to support disability rights in that country, an important area in the human rights spectrum. This delegation could consist of activists, lawyers and experts working on disability issues with the goal of learning about the U.S. experience related to disability advocacy and reform. Upon their return to Azerbaijan, program participants will be better prepared to raise the profile of disability related issues and actively promote legislative and policy reforms in this sector. This delegation is expected to be a youthful and dynamic

group of individuals that are already enthusiastically working on these issues, and going to the U.S. with Azerbaijani legal experts will increase their efficacy and increase the impact of their work.

Cyber – Intellectual Property Rights

Rationale: This Open World program will be aimed at improving Azerbaijan’s ability to protect and develop its network and critical infrastructure control systems, while at the same time helping to develop a more attractive operating environment for U.S. companies seeking to enter the Azerbaijani market. Recent Ransomware attacks, such as WannaCry and Petya, have highlighted the close connection between network security and compliance with Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) best practices. Azerbaijan faces ongoing challenges in cyber security policy and IPR compliance: for example, Azerbaijan was recently rated among the ten most at-risk countries for cyber security incidents. An Open World program, focused on cyber security and IPR, with specific focus on IPR in high-tech industries, would provide government and private-sector Information Technology managers and professionals with an improved understanding of how the two related fields intersect – and how they can leverage both to develop more secure networks in Azerbaijan. It would also lay the groundwork for law makers in Azerbaijan to prepare cybersecurity legislation as current legislation/practices are not sufficiently in place.

KAZAKHSTAN THEMES

Support for Small and Medium Enterprises

Rationale: On January 30th, 2017, Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev announced the “Third Modernization for Kazakhstan” – a series of priorities which help form the “Kazakhstan 2050” vision. This program seeks to lay the foundations of sustainable and long term growth, with the country aiming to join the 30 most developed economies by 2050. A key element of this program is the promotion of small and medium business enterprises in Kazakhstan. Participants in this program, including entrepreneurs and small and medium enterprises, from Kazakhstan will learn how the government and legislators facilitate the business climate and small business development in low-population density regions of the U.S. Participants will examine accessible credits, tax preferences, reduction of bureaucratic obstacles and other means of encouraging SMEs.

Prison Reform and Alternatives to Incarceration

Rationale: Recent reporting has raised serious concerns about shortcomings in detecting and investigating cases of torture and ill-treatment in closed institutions in Kazakhstan. According to the Penal Committee of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Kazakhstan, in 2015 only one officer faced criminal prosecution for an alleged offence, and in 2016, 12 employees were prosecuted for 4 offences. Other top issues include: prison healthcare, the responsibility of the prison service (shifting from the Ministry of Internal Affairs to an independent agency), radicalization in prisons, capital punishment, and the use of life imprisonment. An Open World Program in this theme will examine the criminal justice system as a means of upholding social control, deterring and mitigating crime, and sanctioning those who violate laws with appropriate criminal penalties and rehabilitation efforts. Participants will learn how those accused of crime are protected against abuse of investigatory and prosecution powers. Participants will learn about punishments other than prison or jail time. The program will also examine effective prison management to reduce alienation, violence, and organized crime. The program will connect participants to law enforcement agencies, community organizations and other key stakeholders that reduce crime, and raise public confidence in the fairness of the system. Participants will examine the impact of an effective criminal justice system to balance the goals of crime control and prevention, and justice, to increase the security of the people. Participants will be exposed to criminal justice policies implemented at the federal, state and local levels. Participants may include representatives of law enforcement, judicial and prosecutorial agencies.

KOSOVO THEMES

Preventing and Combatting Corruption of Public Funds

Rationale: In an attempt to increase its capacities to combat corruption in public procurement, Kosovo's National Audit Office (NAO) is planning to set up an anti-corruption unit to help it improve its ability to detect corruption within the Government of Kosovo. This program is aimed at strengthening anti-corruption efforts in Kosovo by looking at specific ways Kosovo can detect and reduce fraud, waste, and abuse. The Open World program will help expose government officials to models and techniques to detect corruption and would help the U.S. Mission in Kosovo in working with the NAO to secure commitment to set up the unit within a specified amount of time. Participants in the program would include members of the NAO, Anti-Corruption Agency, municipal auditors, and procurement specialists. The delegation may also include a judge and/or prosecutor involved in these anti-corruption efforts.

Agricultural Subsidies

Rationale: Agricultural issues are increasingly becoming a priority for the Government of Kosovo. In particular, subsidies are a major concern, as the budget for them has increased 10 fold since 2008 without yielding significant improvement in agricultural productivity. Kosovo has been spending most of its subsidies in row crops in which it lacks a comparative advantage (e.g., wheat and corn) while neglecting specialty crops (e.g., raspberries) that earn more on the market. The aim of the project is for Kosovar officials to better gain an understanding of agricultural subsidy policies and best practices in the United States. Upon their return to Kosovo, participants will be encouraged to use their gained knowledge to reform agriculture policies, including subsidies, in attempt to increase both the efficiency and the volume of agricultural production. Participants in the program will include professionals from the Agency for Agricultural Development, the Kosovo Agricultural Institute, a leading municipality and, likely, a Member of Parliament from the agricultural committee.

KYRGYZSTAN THEMES

Tourism Destination Management

Rationale: Development of a robust tourism industry is vital for Kyrgyzstan's future economic growth and is a key component of the Government of Kyrgyzstan's and the U.S. Mission's development goals. The purpose of the Open World program is to increase the productivity, output, investment, employment, and market share in domestic and foreign markets for the tourism industry in Kyrgyzstan. With tourism contributing 4 - 5% of total GDP for the past years, the sector formally employs about 38,000 workers, but is estimated to provide a total of 118,000 direct and indirect jobs. The Kyrgyz participants in this program will represent various regional tourism destinations and it will provide an excellent opportunity for them to explore the development of tourist sites and best tourism promotion and practices in the field. These tourism professionals seek to attract larger numbers of tourists to their destinations through improvements in basic infrastructure, tourism product development, improved quality of services and enhanced marketing and sales capability.

RUSSIA THEMES

Nelson Fellows/Cardiology

Rationale: Open World's Board of Trustees created the Senator Ben Nelson Fellows program to honor Senator Nelson's contribution to Open World and improve ties between the U.S. and Russia in the medical field. Open World Leadership has hosted five annual delegations of Senator Ben Nelson Fellows. The 2018 program focus will be on cardiology. Throughout the program, delegates will gain insight into recent development, and treatment options for cardiology problems and further working relations with their American peers. The delegation will consist of leaders in the field of cardiology from Russia.

Social Integration of Children and Adults with Disabilities

Rationale: Russians with disabilities are often vulnerable, neglected, and excluded from society. Despite some progress in integrating disability issues into the economic, legal, educational, and social agenda, the needs of the disabled, including people with Down Syndrome and Autism Spectrum Disorder, are ignored by a large portion of Russian society. Since September 2014, all schools in Russia must include children

with disabilities and new standards on inclusive education went into effect at the end of 2016. There are more than 500,000 children with disabilities in Russia and nearly 200,000 are still segregated in residential institutions and special (correctional) schools or isolated in their homes, and more than 13,000 of these children receive no education at all. Civic organizations estimate that there are another 1.5 million children who have special education needs and are getting little or no support. Although more than 20,000 children with disabilities attended mainstream schools in 2014/2015, the majority of them still do not receive sufficient support, or are in separate classrooms or are home schooled or in distance learning programs. Adequate legislation, health insurance, economic and social incentives, education and training are needed to build a sufficient infrastructure of social support for people with disabilities and their families in Russia. It would be beneficial for Russian NGO activists, educators, and socially-oriented business people working to promote inclusion and tolerance to learn from the American experience of integrating people with disabilities into general society. This program would equip the Russian professional community with new ideas, materials, and contacts in this field.

Indigenous Groups (Finno-Ugric, Arctic Regions, and Others)

Rationale: The indigenous people of Russia face the pressure of assimilation and they tend to live in economically marginalized areas. Indigenous people throughout Russia have lost the ability to pursue their traditional way of life in areas where resource extraction occurs, and alcoholism and suicide amongst Russian indigenous groups, many who live in the Arctic, is higher than the Russian population at large. In particular, the Finno-Ugric peoples of Russia face pressures of assimilation, and the loss of their native languages. Assimilation is taking place against a background of depopulation of Finno-Ugric areas through migration and low birth rates, leading to a further decline of economic opportunity in these impoverished regions. These ethnic groups often also lack a familiarity with modern information technology and the role it can play in language preservation. During their Open World program, participants will learn about strategies in the U.S. that ensure hunting and fishing rights for indigenous communities and other ways to preserve their economic viability. Indigenous activists focused on language and cultural preservation could learn from Native Americans such as the Navajo who have made great strides in recording their language. Through this program young indigenous leaders will be given the chance to familiarize themselves with the system of governance that exists on Indian reservations and the use of digital technology to preserve language and cultural heritage.

National Parks/Nature Preserves

Rationale: Russian protected areas can potentially serve as a source for both revenue and environmental education within Russia. Some Russians that live in protected areas worry that expanded use of national parks and nature preserves can only be detrimental. Russian protected area managers see the U.S. system of national parks as a model and many Russians are working to create a culture change within their system in relation to how public lands are maintained and enjoyed. Younger Russian park managers are seeking to help the Russian national park system better develop its outreach and visitor education programs, including the use of visitor centers. This program will support the goal of developing environmental/green tourism in and around national parks in Russia. The program will also help support Russian civil society, by fostering the establishment of “friends of parks” associations and societies, which are organized to assist national parks and nature reserves through volunteer work and the collection of private donations. This program should demonstrate hands on training in environmental education, proper ways to develop new trails and infrastructure. This visit would give Russian experts a better understanding of how U.S. park management works. It is recommended that the hosting location be situated near a national park/refuge/reserve with recognized excellence in outreach and visitor support activities, and ecotourism, especially parks that have established partnerships with “friends” societies and other NGOs that support them.

STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) Education for Women Leaders

Rationale: At a Graduate Women International Conference in Cape Town, South Africa in August 2016, a new Russian-American initiative was announced to expand women’s professional contribution in the STEM fields. Changing societal norms and increasing women’s ability and representation in technical fields will help to ensure the application of technological thinking to the exercise of finding solutions for issues that particularly affect women, and the development of opportunities that would particularly benefit them. The program would look at U.S. programs designed to create programs that create opportunities and encourage girls/women to participate in STEM education and careers and would be

targeted to government officials and civic leaders charged with development of school curriculums and outside activities, youth leaders, and advocates of increased opportunities for girls and women.

Small and Medium Business and e-Commerce

Rationale: Small business in Russia is experiencing a long-term crisis and Russian cities and towns see closing shops and businesses with little optimism from their owners for improvements in the near future. Developing e-commerce might be a way out for many companies. The participants in the program, consisting of policy makers and business/technology leaders, will learn about American best practices in establishing online shops and marketing it through social media, as well as logistics, tax regulations and other related issues.

Women Business Leaders

Rationale: A new generation of Russian businesswomen has in recent years developed a nurturing environment for female entrepreneurs. And despite Russia's often patriarchal work culture, some women business leaders believe their country could become a model of gender equality in the workplace. At first glance, Russian women seem unusually influential in business. In a 2015 study of 35 countries by the consultancy Grant Thornton, Russia had the most women in senior management positions: 40%, nearly double the rates in the UK (22%) and the US (21%). Look closer, however, and the picture is less rosy. PWC found that women in senior management are most often found in auxiliary roles, such as chief accountant or head of human resources. Any advances women are making, however, are happening despite, rather than because of, government policy. The Russian Parliament began work on gender equality legislation in 2003, and again in 2011. Both times it was put on hold. The surprise, for many, is that Russia has made the advances it has. Today, an aspiring woman entrepreneur in Russia can tap support groups, conferences, mentors, angel investors, even a hotline, all focused on shepherding her to success. An Open World program in this theme is aimed at furthering these advances and providing Russian women business leaders from small towns or rural areas the opportunity to compare practices with their American colleagues and to discuss problems such as poor infrastructure, high rates of unemployment, alcoholism and decline of population. Even though women are traditionally focused on their families, they often prove to be capable managers and improve situation within their communities.

Women Civic/Political Leaders

Rationale: Although Russia has a relatively large share of female political leaders in regional legislatures, the number of influential women decreases sharply at the top of both the legislative and executive branch, and in the civic realm. Many young Russian women either do not view politics or civic leadership as a worthwhile venture or do not believe they can successfully partake in it. There are very few women in politics and civic leadership in Russia, and the women in power are usually in spheres "traditional" to women, such as human rights and education. Exposing young, female, aspiring Russian politicians and civic leaders to their successful peers in America will inspire and help them navigate fields that are traditionally dominated by men. Women-lead leadership and public speaking workshops, meetings with successful female politicians, and roundtables with other young female leaders would help Russian women civic and political leaders develop a skillset that is underappreciated and underdeveloped for women in Russia at the current time.

Russia also lacks formal mentorship programs for female politicians and civic leaders that have thrived elsewhere. This program would engage Russian women at the start of their political and civic careers and link them with American leaders and organizations engaged in the mentorship of women. The goals are to: build relationships with Russia's future leaders; increase the capacity of Russian women to organize and reach the highest echelons of politics and civil society; and encourage Russian women active in politics and civic leadership to develop mentorship networks.

Ecological Protection of Seaports

Rationale: Seaports in Russia's Far East are polluted by oil, waste, and other emissions from ships and factories upstream. Local officials, shipping industry workers, and the general public lack awareness of how severely the issue affects the health of the oceans and lack knowledge of how to best combat such problems. This delegation will consist of local officials, seaport administrators, and shipping industry representatives to observe, discuss and learn about best practices in the field of preventing and combating pollution of seaports. There is a preference for this program to be Pacific Ocean seaport based.

Zoo Management

Rationale: Russian zoos remain popular and play an important education role but they have a lot of areas where they can improve. Cooperation among Russian and American zoos mainly involves exchanges of certain captive-held animals and birds to increase genetic diversity but funding has declined markedly in recent years. An Open World visit of Russian zoo specialists to the U.S. could accomplish a great deal including: viewing U.S. zoo housing and maintenance of animals (a world leader in such technology); learning more about global databases of zoo collections, and bloodlines; seeing how U.S. zoos carry out conservation education; and exposing the delegation to American designers and constructors of zoo facilities. This program would also promote future collaboration between zoos (and with wildlife biologists in non-zoo settings) and provide information on Russia's vast trove of information about zoos.

Young Arms Control Experts

Rationale: Arms control has been a mainstay of U.S.-Russia relations since the late 1960s, and it remains a key pillar of global stability. Russia's large cadre of experts—many of them former Soviet negotiators—have a long history of engaging with their U.S. counterparts, and these ties have sustained dialogue during periods of tense bilateral relations. Expertise on these issues is rapidly aging in Russia, just as in the United States. Most of the U.S. Mission in Russia's arms control contacts are in their mid-to-late 60s, with several preeminent individuals suffering apparent health issues. Additionally, Russia's top-down academic system seems to have limited scholarship and travel opportunities for younger experts, compounding the yawning gap in expertise. Working with a new generation of Russian arms control experts by exposing promising young practitioners to U.S. policymakers, facilitating their development of a network of American colleagues, and familiarizing them with U.S. foreign and security policy decision processes (including the agencies that implement them and the domestic pressures that shape policy) will be of great benefit to both countries.

Countering Violent Extremism in Muslim Communities

Rationale: Countering Violent Extremism (CVE), as defined by the Department of State in a “refers to proactive actions to counter efforts by violent extremists to radicalize, recruit, and mobilize followers to violence and to address specific factors that facilitate violent extremist recruitment and radicalization to violence.” In a region susceptible to radical extremism, debates regarding measures to counter extremism and discussions promoting deeper understanding of the Islamic faith are key to maintaining peace locally and fighting radicalized terror internationally. Through their Open World program, Russia experts in Islam (clergy, journalists, and scholars) and inter-ethnic issues will meet their American counterparts (and other experts in the U.S.) to explore efforts to educate the public regarding the Muslim faith and its practices and discuss methods to lessen the devastating radicalization of those that would use faith for nefarious purposes both locally and globally.

Prison Officials and Prison Rights Activists

Rationale: Violence in prison and torture and ill-treatment of detainees is widespread in Russia, and there is little public oversight of detention facilities. Prison populations are high, reflecting harsh sentencing policies and practices, and prison continues to be used at the expense of non-custodial alternatives. The overuse of pre-trial detention and imprisonment, along with associated problems of overcrowding, are persistent challenges. Other challenges concern the absence of separate systems for the administration of juvenile justice, weak systems for re-integrating prisoners into society, and the arbitrary detention of political dissidents. Having prison officials and prison rights activists from Russia participate in Open World will allow them to learn how their U.S. counterparts handle issues related to prisons and imprisonment as both countries face enormous challenges in this respect and both would benefit from an exchange of best practices and exploration of effective prison reform and alternates to incarceration.

Public Defenders

Rationale: In Russia, there are large numbers of arrests and people who face prison time because they lack information about their rights as accused. Additionally, Russian often faces a shortage of lawyers who able to represent these people. While there is an NGO that has a “public defender school” which offers a week long course, leaders of Civil Society Organizations in Russia could benefit from exposure to the functions of the U.S. legal system, as well as how lawyers and non-lawyers are trained on the role of public defenders. Such a program would be important in the effort to educate people on their rights as defendants.

Municipal Elected Officials and Constituent Outreach

Rationale: Elected deputies at the municipal level in Russia have different functions and responsibilities from their U.S. counterparts, but both groups face similar needs to work directly with constituents to solve day-to-day problems and ensure that government provides key quality-of-life services. Connecting Russian elected municipal officials with their American counterparts offers the opportunity for young – often aspiring – up-and-coming Russian politicians to experience firsthand the grassroots democratic process and will be beneficial for increasing the role of the citizenry in the democratic process.

Foreign Affairs Journalism

Rationale: In many respects, Russian journalism revolves around the reporting on press conferences, which limits the ability to report on that country's leaders and foreign policy. Exhaustively comprehensive press conferences are the norm, with newsmakers presenting information in workman-like fashion and with limited access to politicians or business leaders. For the media, much is manufactured and closely controlled. Most Russian media outlets are now owned or controlled by the state or by private individuals or companies loyal to the Russian government. This Open World program will be aimed at providing Russian foreign affairs journalists with insight as to how policy is made and reported on in the United States and they will meet with journalists, policymakers, NGOs, media organizations to underscore importance of impartial reporting and the role of the media as a watchdog.

Digital Media

Rationale: The use of mobile platforms and social media, as well as the search for an efficient business model for online news are the key challenges facing media outlets in Russia. Journalists who can make their articles interactive and interesting to the reader have greater reach and impact. Through this Open World program, digital media representatives from Russia will be able to gain insight and compare practices with U.S. news media outlets as to how they use new technologies to reach their audiences, integrate curated content, implement multimedia cross-promotion, present user generated content, and use a variety of mobile platforms.

Media Literacy

Rationale: Now more than ever, producers and consumers of news must be able to process information, identify biases and inconsistencies, and make decisions quickly. As such, the concept of “media literacy” has become a global theme with societies all over the world dealing with new phenomena like “fake news,” “troll factories,” and other aspects of the “weaponization” of information. Through this Open World program, participants would visit media outlets (including U.S. based foreign outlets like BBC and Al Jazeera America), civil society organizations, and online companies that host news aggregators (Facebook, Google, etc..) in order to observe and explore how the various players create, distribute, and analyze the news in a broadly open society.

Monitoring Human Rights Cases

Rationale: This program is geared toward journalists who cover human rights cases and NGO representatives who monitor such cases. The objective is to examine how the American justice system allows access to court proceedings and records in the interest of informing the public while protecting the accused, victims and other parties. Participants will meet with judges, prosecutors, lawyers, legal experts, NGO leaders, activists, and reporters who cover court cases.

Existing Partnerships

Rationale: Agreements, both formal and informal, between American and Russian sister cities/regions/clubs have long existed, and these relationships are waning in the current environment of worsening relations between the United States and Russia. Many of the cities/clubs that still maintain such relations were formed during the Soviet era, and in the early days of the Russian Federation (1990s). As these partnerships matured, the focus changed to sustainable development of economic and human resources, and the promotion of trade. These Open World programs will be aimed at hosts that either have ongoing partnerships with these cities/region/clubs or indicate that they are able to sustain such relationships. These projects must be clearly defined and be goal oriented and the partnership representative(s) from Russia that will participate must be integral to the future ability to sustain and grow the partnership, as well as be a leader in the proposed partnership activity under the grant.

Serbia Themes

Education System Reform

Rationale: Serbia is currently undertaking higher education reform to bring its system closer to the ones adopted in most European countries under the Bologna Declaration and its recommendations. This has been a long and painful process in Serbia, particularly at some state universities. This program would expose important higher-education decision-makers in Serbia to alternative ways of accrediting courses that students take outside their host institution and allowing internships to become part of curricula, to be more in line with the demands of today's job market, and creating a higher education system that would enable more practical and hands-on knowledge for students, all with the utmost aim of making Serbia a more democratic society, with better economic opportunities for future generations. The participants will see, learn and hopefully adopt some higher education practices in the U.S., such as: systems of accrediting courses and how accreditation allows for mobility of students; internships and how they can be integrated into the course curriculum; the U.S. approach to lifelong learning (e.g., how universities accommodate the needs of working students); and mentoring programs. Participants may include mid-level managers and decision-makers in the Serbian Ministry of Education and Science and the National Education Council, as well as Serbian university administrators and representatives.

English Access Program/Education

Rationale: The past three years of the implementation of the English Access Microscholarship Program by the U.S. Mission in Serbia has shown marked success. The program would greatly from exposing the Access Program teachers to a firsthand experience of the American society. The U.S. experience will allow the teachers to better implement the Program in Serbia prepare students for better educational, and possibly, economic opportunities through advancing their language skills. The Program goal is to give students the opportunity to gain appreciation for U.S. culture and values, diversity in population, and mutual understanding through cultural enhancement activities. The Open World program will those in the leadership of the Microscholarship Program to better understand U.S. educational system, and the principles of a democratic society. Leading English language teachers engaged in the Access Program, with no prior U.S. experience, will be selected for this program

Tajikistan Themes

Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development

Rationale: Entrepreneurship and small business development are vital to promoting economic growth and social stability in Tajikistan. This program will focus on the strategic goal of economic growth and business development. The program will highlight the critical role entrepreneurship plays in the U.S. economy and examine U.S. interests in promoting small businesses worldwide to foster economic development and contribute to the development of free and open societies. Participants in the program will include

NGO Development

Rationale: Tajikistan has dedicated NGO leaders who face the challenge of developing better-managed and more effective organizations. NGOs in Tajikistan rely heavily on funding from foreign donors and financial institutions and often do not consider that funding can also be raised from members of the community, including the business sector. There is also a great need for the development of effective rural NGOs that promote local economic development and/or provide services to the needy. The delegates for this program, consisting of NGO leaders, will look at ways to improve their administrative, advocacy, and fundraising skills. The program will also enable the delegates to formulate strategies for providing leadership and services in the community. The programming should demonstrate how government entities, NGOs, and the business community work closely together to help meet public needs.

Ukraine Themes

Role of Local Legislators/Staff (Four Delegations)

Rationale: As part of Open World's efforts to ensure programming for legislatures and legislators/staff, programming is planned in the first three months of the year to coincide when most U.S. state legislatures are in session for broad programming in legislative processes. Ukraine is currently in the process of overhauling much of the legislative basis for its procurement, education, energy, civil service, and health (and all other) systems as it works for greater transparency, battles the forces of corruption that are endemic to its society, and devolves power from the center to the regions/localities through the process of decentralization. These groups will consist of legislators and staffers (and those advising these bodies) on both the national and regional/local level in themes that will be refined with the selected grantee(s).

Fire Department/EMS Management/Volunteerism

Rationale: In Ukraine, emergency medical and fire services are provided by the Ukrainian Emergency Medical Services (UEMS), a government rescue service, the main task of which is to provide assistance free of charge to victims, rescuers and any other persons who take part in the response to and/or recovery process after incidents of any kind. UEMS is a state service that functions at both a national level (central level) and regional level.

Since early 2014, tens of thousands of Ukrainian troops have taken part in a bloody war with pro-Russian separatists in East Ukraine adding a great burden to EMS management in Ukraine, including the treatment of those suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). An Open World program in this theme would provide fire department and EMS professionals with the opportunity to see how these services are provided in the United States, and how volunteerism is an important element in this work.

Community Relations with Law Enforcement

Rationale: In July 2015 a new patrol police force of Ukraine was launched as result of reforms that were made in the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the National Police. The new police substituted the old Soviet-style militsiya (militia), which had a very low level of trust. In a 2012 poll, the militia assessed positively by 26%, and negatively by 64% of the population. Apart from reforming the police structure and recruiting new officers, the goal of these reforms is to improve police-community relations and to educate the citizens about their rights and responsibilities. Ukrainian police leaders will benefit from this program by learning about the strong police-community ties that exist in some parts of the United States and that have played an essential role in providing safety to citizens and improving the effectiveness of law enforcement bodies.

Community Development/Activism/Volunteerism

Rationale: Since the "Revolution of Dignity" in 2014, the Ukrainian NGO sector has grown very active. With Russia's annexation of Crimea, military aggression in the East, and enormous economic losses aggravated by endemic corruption, the Ukrainian state was totally unprepared to face the outside aggression that started in Spring 2014. However, an unprecedented wave of grassroots volunteerism helped the Ukrainian army and continues to be on the forefront of social, economic, and military and social advancements. At the same time many newly-established community organizations lack the capacity to plan, budget and implement local development strategies. Therefore, learning from the long-standing tradition of U.S. volunteerism and community activism could help Ukrainian NGO leaders in developing their organizations and creating new local initiatives.

Social Entrepreneurship

Rationale: In the past few years, many Ukrainian activists have established businesses aimed not only at spreading their products and services but also at developing and helping in their local communities. Some entrepreneurs allocate a part of their income to helping orphanages, the poor and women who suffer(ed) from domestic violence and abusive relationships. In addition, some volunteer soldiers returning from the war zone have established businesses, where they employ other veterans and help them overcome PTSD, work with injuries/handicaps, and integrate back into society. This program will provide an excellent chance for socially-conscious legislative, business and social leaders to hone their skills and make social entrepreneurship more broadly accepted in Ukraine.

Child Welfare, including Adoption/Foster Care

Rationale: Ukraine is working to reform its current system of guardianship as well as its education system for disadvantaged and orphaned children. According to government statistics, more than 106,000

children are currently living in 750 orphanages. Meanwhile, human rights organizations have reported that orphanages from the Soviet-era had a disastrous effect on children being housed and educated there. Half of the children brought up in the facilities committed some sort of crime, and 25 percent of them ended up homeless. The U.S. experience in replacing orphanages with smaller institutions that provide a group home or boarding school environment and simplified procedures of adoption will be extremely useful for Ukrainian civil workers, NGOs representatives and children's rights lawyers.

Combating Human Trafficking

Rationale: Ukraine is a source, transit, and destination country for men, women, and children subjected to forced labor and sex trafficking, and human trafficking remains an acute problem in the country. The problem is addressed in numerous laws and implementing regulations. The Ministry of Social Policy is the government agency that coordinates the activities of national and regional (local) government bodies working to combat human trafficking. The Ministry reviews all human trafficking cases, decides whether to grant an individual the status of a human trafficking victim, and runs rehabilitation facilities for the victims. Because of the ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine, over 1.5 million people have been displaced since March 1, 2014. According to experts, these people are especially vulnerable to exploitation. There have been reports of kidnappings from conflict-affected areas for the purpose of sex and labor trafficking, as well as employing minors as soldiers and informants or using them as human shields. Ukraine has declared its adherence to international standards for combatting human trafficking and these two delegations (one looking at issues of human trafficking in the sex trade and one looking at migrant labor/labor exploitation) will assist it as it better develops its ability to prevent such actions.

Citizen Engagement in Legal Reform

Rationale: The aim of this program is to strengthen the capacities and cooperation of local activists, journalists and lawyers that monitor the actions and decisions of Ukrainian law enforcement bodies and the courts during this period of reform (including the election of a new Supreme Court, a review of judicial qualifications and the introduction of e-courts). In Ukraine, there is a great need for the citizenry to increase the demand for implementation of measures to protect against violations of human rights, and increase awareness and public dialogue on legal and judicial and enhance citizens' involvement in policymaking and policy implementation at all levels in Ukraine.

Decentralization/Intergovernmental Relations

Rationale: In late August 2015, clashes erupted at a protest against a decentralization law passed by Ukraine's parliament. Key opposition figures and parliamentary coalition parties protested the reform, claiming it would legalize Russian forces and proxies in Ukraine by expanding some of the local authorities in areas that are occupied in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions as a result of the Minsk agreements aimed at ending the war in Southern and Eastern Ukraine. Nevertheless, the decentralization reforms that began in 2014, although incomplete, have already brought significant change to Ukraine. After two decades of power being concentrated in the capital, new regional administrations now have more responsibility for local services. Many of these authorities have larger budgets than their predecessors and are using these funds to improve roads and schools. The new administrations have greater prospects for economic development and enjoy more respect in Kyiv. Now municipal and village authorities and legislators need to be better prepared to take on and handle those government functions. These officeholders need to improve staff hiring and training procedures; learn new budgeting, planning, and service-delivery practices; and promote economic development effectively - and they need to become more transparent, proactive, responsive, and accountable. The Open World delegation under this theme will have the opportunity to observe the American system of federalism and how so many policy and spending decisions are managed at the local level in a transparent way.

Health Care Management and Quality Assurance

Rationale: Ukraine is in the midst of undergoing significant reform of its healthcare system. One of the main goals of this reform is an efficient allocation of funds. Therefore, through late 2017– early 2018 the Ministry of Health of Ukraine plans to introduce a new National Health Service, which will focus specifically on procurement. The current reforms envision a healthcare system that reforms primary, emergency, and palliative care simultaneously. The new National Health Service would be an independent body in the executive branch under the Cabinet of Ministers. The new reforms also aim to introduce medical insurance into the daily life of Ukrainians. Such a radical transformation of the healthcare system

in Ukraine will benefit if healthcare managers and practitioners have an opportunity to learn from the American experience and current health care debate to see what works best for Ukraine.

Health Care Practitioner Innovation, Including Telemedicine

Rationale: A great majority of Ukrainian clinics and hospitals are state owned. Due to complications in Ukraine's economy medical enterprises often have to use old or even outdated equipment and practitioners have little opportunity to develop new skills. Medical workers lack opportunities to obtain new knowledge and keep up with changes in global health care. With health care reform underway in Ukraine, now is a critical time for Ukrainian health professionals (managers, practitioners, and government officials) to familiarize themselves with the experiences of their American counterparts. Telemedicine is particularly important considering the combat in the Eastern and Southern part of the country and the number of displaced persons.

Government Funding/Oversight of Educational Institutions

Rationale: Ukraine is a highly literate society with a strong and proud history of education at all levels, although the level of education in metropolitan areas is generally higher than that in rural areas. The country has made it a priority to ensure equal access to a quality education for rural and low-income students and to enhance the professionalism of educators, and has made great strides in its standardization of testing to fight corruption in this sector. Ukraine has opened 24 "hub" schools with the goal of improving the quality of education for children in rural areas as well as to improve the effectiveness of the use of public funds for education. In the course of the project, one school was selected in each region to receive funding for new equipment and additional material supply. These hub schools shall receive resources for the renovation of their class rooms, learning equipment and IT applications aimed to provide high quality of school education for children living and going to school in rural areas. In support of these initiatives and to assist Ukrainian education managers and professionals, these Open World delegations will explore best practices in educational systems development during their visit to the United States and will have the opportunity to compare and exchange information with leading educational administrators at all levels, particularly in the area of government funding and the oversight of these funds, including the role of parent teacher associations.

Innovation and Education

Rationale: The Ukrainian government is making significant strides in reforming its education system, with attention being paid to reform of secondary education, while providing universities and colleges with more autonomy. Higher education institutions are mostly underfunded and are outfitted with old and outdated equipment and facilities. Thus, administration staff and professors are interested in updating their curriculum and teaching methods and techniques to compensate the lack of modern technology. Ukraine is one of the largest and best educated countries in Europe, with an excellent base of talent and an improving technology infrastructure. It would be beneficial for Ukrainian education professionals to get familiarized with the experience of their American colleagues in terms of new innovative approaches to teaching and learning through this program.

Promoting STEM Education/Alternative Learning

Rationale: Informal/nontraditional education in Ukraine is a comparatively young field, although there is a base of NGOs and activists promoting the development of such means of education/development of careers. It is important for the development of a democratic society that there is a diverse means to obtaining an education and developing modern skills. Ukrainian youth can benefit from opportunities for learning STEM, art, and other nontraditional fields of education as currently there is very limited access at state schools due mostly to economic reasons. By observing how STEM and other alternative paths to education in the United States, Ukrainian educators and STEM learning activists can see how capacity is maximized and how creative educational ideas are implemented in the United States.

Ethics and Quality Reporting

Rationale: Investigative journalism in Ukraine has no uniform ethical standards. Investigative reporters routinely use hidden cameras, do not always identify themselves as journalists when interviewing people, and in their reports, use dramatic music and effects, like over-the-top re-enactments, to heighten drama. Ukraine's journalism schools are partly to blame for the lack of quality reporting. Most are stuck in a Soviet mode in which professors with little or no newsroom experience teach theory—not the practical

application of reporting and editing, and certainly not the modern skills of shooting video and using social media. Students themselves often lack the ambition to tackle investigative stories, another legacy of the Soviet system, which seldom rewarded hard work. As a result, journalism graduates arrive in their newsrooms unprepared to do basic stories, let alone investigative pieces. But, since the events on the Maidan (the “Revolution of Dignity”) in 2014 journalism in Ukraine has rapidly transformed. New independent media outlets have emerged that focus on the most pressing societal issues. Although the new generation of reporters aims to be as transparent, unbiased and ethical as possible, there is still a long way to go. It would be beneficial for young media/news professionals through these Open World programs to observe and learn from the practices of their American colleagues and to get acquainted with the well-established tradition of solid investigative reporting that is, for the most part, free of bias and unethical practices.

Media Coverage of Political Leaders and Elections

Rationale: Election press coverage in Ukraine has always been complicated by such issues as non-transparent state bodies/administrative resources, corrupt individuals, the widespread use of “fake news”, and journalists being threatened by candidates and their influential supporters. Since the “Revolution of Dignity” Ukrainian reporters have been aiming to reach new standards of investigative and ethical journalism/reporting. The 2018 U.S. Congressional Election race would provide a great opportunity for such young Ukrainian media professionals to observe their more experienced American counterparts in action. This experience can help a lot covering upcoming Presidential and Parliamentary elections in Ukraine in 2019.

Parliamentary Programs

In addition to the above thematic programs, Open World is also soliciting expressions of interest/capability statements for delegations of parliamentarians (possibly parliamentarians and staffers in one delegation) from countries abroad. Through this program, Open World is seeking to match delegations from these countries (it is likely that delegations will come from the following countries: Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Serbia, Tajikistan, Ukraine (2), and Uzbekistan) with key counterparts in the U.S. Senate, the House of Representatives, and in state governments. These delegations may be defined by the committees the members serve on or by subject area. Currently, these delegations are not yet defined for specifics, such as date of travel, number of members, and duration of program.

The proposed illustrative programming should identify a Member of Congress who would be responsible for some aspect of the delegation’s program (preferably in Washington, D.C. and in the Member’s state or district). It should also include proposed high-level meetings in Washington, D.C. with other Members of Congress, executive branch officials, congressional staff and policy experts, and in-depth discussions with a variety of political, civic, and business leaders in the relevant state/district.