



News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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STEVENS INITIATIVE TO OPEN GLOBAL COMPETITION TO FUND VIRTUAL EXCHANGE PROGRAMS CONNECTING YOUTH IN THE UNITED STATES, MIDDLE EAST, AND NORTH AFRICA

Washington, DC, October 26, 2016 —The Aspen Institute Stevens Initiative today opened the second in a series of competitions to fund virtual exchange programs in the United States and the Middle East and North Africa that improve understanding, respect and dialogue across cultures and equip young people with the skills they need to succeed in a global economy.

The competition is open to organizations in the United States as well as the Middle East and North Africa. Interested and qualified parties are invited to submit letters of interest. The Stevens Initiative will solicit full applications from selected organizations. More information about the competition can be found at www.stevensinitiative.org.

The Initiative is particularly interested in proposals that demonstrate that they meet the educational needs of refugee students from the Middle East and North Africa; programs focused on teaching science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) skills; programs that are rooted in project-based learning; programs that include in-person exchange as well as those that use innovative methods in their proposed programs.

“The Stevens Initiative offers the opportunity for a generation of young people to engage with the world around them,” said Elliot Gerson, executive vice president of policy and public programs for the Aspen Institute. “They learn together, acquiring the skills and perspectives they need to succeed.”

The Initiative, managed by the Aspen Institute, is a lasting tribute to Ambassador J. Christopher Stevens, a public servant who dedicated himself to building understanding between people from different countries. It is a collaboration between the Stevens family; the J. Christopher Stevens Fund; the U.S. Department of State; the Bezos Family Foundation; the governments of the United Arab Emirates, Morocco, and Algeria; in addition to LRNG, Microsoft, Twitter and Vidy.

— *MORE* —

The Initiative made awards to 10 U.S. organizations in 2016, reaching more than 21,000 students in 25 U.S. states and 17 countries in the Middle East and North Africa.

“The Stevens Initiative enabled us to take existing course materials on civic tech -- developed in partnership with Stanford University’s Center for Democracy, Development and the Rule of Law -- and reach a broader audience of nearly 3,500 enthusiastic, young, aspiring civic technologists across the Middle East, North Africa and beyond,” said Scott Hubli, Director of Governance Programs at National Democratic Institute. “More importantly, these individuals were able to collaborate with peers across geographic and cultural lines on projects to develop tech tools to engage their communities - whether through platforms to crowdsource reports of nepotism in government hiring or to report incidents of sexual harassment on public transport.”

Another award recipient, Chicago Sister Cities International, will connect students in Chicago and Casablanca to build a digital museum. “The STEAMuseum, a virtual museum focusing on the STEAM disciplines, will allow students on opposite sides of the globe to share ideas, collaborate, and learn from each other as they work together to create a new kind of digital cultural space that is appealing to their generation,” said Project Director Lisa Roberts.

In addition to award making, the Stevens Initiative provides partnership support, outreach and promotion, access to evaluation instruments and best practices, and access to technology platforms. To learn more about the Initiative’s activities and competition, please visit www.stevensinitiative.org. To apply, go to aspens.fluidreview.com.

More Information

The U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) builds relations between the people of the United States and the people of other countries through academic, cultural, sports, professional and private exchanges, as well as public-private partnerships and mentoring programs. These exchange programs improve foreign relations and strengthen the national security of the United States, support U.S. international leadership, and provide a broad range of domestic benefits by helping break down barriers that often divide us. Visit eca.state.gov.

The Bezos Family Foundation supports rigorous, inspired learning environments for young people, from birth through high school, to put their education into action. Through investments in research, public awareness, systems building and programs, the foundation works to elevate the field of education and improve life outcomes for all children.

LRNG is a nonprofit initiative that provides a youth-first, technology-enabled network of learning opportunities to young people of all means and backgrounds. We do this online and by working in 12 LRNG Cities. We are bringing together employers, mayors, community institutions such as libraries and museums, nonprofits and schools to build an

ecosystem of learning that combines all experiences - out-of-school, in-school, online, and employer-based - and provides evidence of learning through digital badges.

Twitter is a social platform whose mission is to give everyone the power to create and share ideas and information instantly, without barriers. Based in San Francisco, Twitter supports more than 40 languages and has 35 offices around the world.

Millions of users around the world visually connect every day with **Vidyo's** secure, scalable technology and cloud-based services. Vidyo is the leader in embedded video communications and offers video collaboration solutions for companies that require the highest quality video interaction available. Recognized with over 120 patents, the company's software platform and APIs are used to create innovative HD quality video-enabled applications embedded into workflows and emerging IoT devices.

The Aspen Institute is an educational and policy studies organization based in Washington, DC. Its mission is to foster leadership based on enduring values and to provide a nonpartisan venue for dealing with critical issues. The Institute is based in Washington, DC; Aspen, CO; and on the Wye River on Maryland's Eastern Shore. It also has offices in New York City and an international network of partners. For more information, visit www.aspeninstitute.org.

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