



## **Announcement**

# **2015 Visiting Scholar Program**

## **Academic Year 2015-2016**

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## **A. Introduction**

The Vietnam Education Foundation (VEF)<sup>1</sup> was established by the U.S. Congress in December 2000 as an independent federal agency. VEF's primary purpose is to promote the bilateral relationship between the United States and Vietnam through educational exchanges, both for Vietnamese nationals to pursue graduate and post-graduate studies in the United States in the sciences (natural, physical, and environmental), engineering, mathematics, medicine (including biomedical sciences as well as epidemiology, nutrition, and biostatistics within public health), and technology (including information technology), and for American citizens to teach in the same fields of study in Vietnam.

The Visiting Scholar Program (VSP) is intended to support professional development training, which may include studies, research, and/or observational activities, to take place in cooperation with a leading U.S. academic institution or research institute. The Visiting Scholar will undertake a five-month to one-year program that may include formal courses, workshops, seminars, laboratory or field research, or other types of professional development activities. Upon returning to Vietnam, the Visiting Scholar must use the knowledge and skills acquired in the United States to teach and advise students, to train colleagues and other faculty and teachers outside of their home university ("train the trainers"), and to contribute to greater cooperation and collaboration with scientists in the United States. For the 2015-2016 academic year, VEF will fund three (3) Visiting Scholars for a period of time ranging from 5 to 12 months to pursue professional development at U.S. universities or at U.S. research institutes.

## **B. Eligibility**

1. Applicants must be Vietnamese nationals who hold a Ph.D., a D.Sc., or another research-based doctoral degree in a field supported by VEF and who are affiliated full-time with a Vietnamese university.<sup>2</sup>
2. Eligible fields of study or training are sciences (natural, physical, and environmental), engineering, mathematics, medicine (including biomedical sciences as well as epidemiology, nutrition, and biostatistics within public health), and technology (including information technology). Programs that focus primarily on the social sciences cannot be supported.<sup>3</sup>
3. Applicants must also demonstrate a high level of English proficiency that permits them to engage in the proposed project or research.

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<sup>1</sup> VEF website: [www.vef.gov](http://www.vef.gov).

<sup>2</sup> VEF employees or employees of VEF contracted agencies in both Vietnam and the United States may not apply for a grant, nor can they apply during the year following their termination from such employment. Thereafter, with VEF Board approval, they may apply.

<sup>3</sup> Priority this year will be given to applicants, whose field of study focuses on climate change (environmental sciences) or on nuclear energy, provided that all other qualifications are equal, as these fields are of great interest to Vietnam and to U.S. bilateral interests.

4. The proposed program may begin no earlier than August 1, 2015, and must end no later than September 30, 2016. *Programs proposed for less than 5 months cannot be supported.*
5. The applicant must provide a statement that outlines the way in which s/he will engage in the “train the trainer” activities required by the VSP grant.
6. The U.S. host university must approve the proposed program of the Visiting Scholar and must provide a letter that outlines all details of the university’s support, including any matching funds, in-kind contributions, and expectations of establishing or further developing collaborations between the U.S. and Vietnamese universities. The U.S. university must agree to disburse VEF funds to the grantee (see full details under **In Advance of Application**).
7. The Vietnamese home institution must approve the proposed program of the Visiting Scholar and must provide a letter that outlines all details of their support, including support for “train the trainers” activities required by the grant after return to Vietnam and for establishing or further developing collaborations between the U.S. and Vietnamese universities.
8. *A complete online application must be submitted by April 10, 2014.*
9. *VS grantees must attend the Pre-Departure Orientation provided by VEF (tentatively June 4 – 10, 2015) or forfeit the grant.*

### **C. Financial Support Provided by VEF**

1. Visa for the United States. Cost of the actual visa application, if any. (This does not include transportation, lodging, or other expenses related to the process of acquiring a visa.)
2. Health Check-up and Immunizations. Costs for a pre-departure health check in Vietnam and any vaccinations required by the U.S. host institution. The vaccinations must be acquired in Vietnam, unless there is a compelling reason that the vaccinations must be administered in the United States.
3. Pre-Departure Orientation (PDO). Costs in Vietnam for transportation, lodging, and meals for this required VEF event.
4. Settling-in Allowance. U.S. \$500 to help defray costs of arriving and getting settled in the United States.
5. Airfare. A round-trip economy air ticket from Vietnam to the U.S. academic institution and return.
6. Monthly Stipend. U.S. \$2,300 stipend per month, which is pro-rated for any partial month. The number of months or partial months is calculated according to the dates of the Visiting

Scholar's academic program as approved by the VEF Board of Directors. The Visiting Scholar must plan wisely in order to cover the following:

- a. Living expenses in the United States: lodging, meals, local transportation, and incidentals.
  - b. Required U.S. federal or state income taxes.
    - 1) All Visiting Scholars are required to file annual U.S. tax returns, even if they have returned to Vietnam.
    - 2) VEF does not withhold taxes from the stipend. The Visiting Scholar is expected to plan finances accordingly in order to pay any taxes (estimated at 17% of earnings), which might be due to the U.S. federal or state government. Taxes are paid in arrears, i.e., for the year previous to when the scholar files tax returns, which is in mid-April, reporting on income earned during the previous calendar year. The U.S. host institution is asked to document and deduct required taxes from the monthly stipend, as appropriate, in order to have already paid estimated taxes in advance of final reporting of taxes in April.
    - 3) Failure to pay U.S. taxes can result in serious fines and a ban on the Visiting Scholar re-entering the United States in the future.
7. Medical/Health Insurance. Paid one time to the insurance agent, arranged by VEF, at the beginning of the intended program to cover the Visiting Scholar during the full training period in the United States. This accident/illness health insurance is intended for emergency situations and hospitalizations and includes medical evacuation and repatriation insurance according to the coverage amounts required for international students and scholars in the United States. The Visiting Scholar is covered from the time of departure from Vietnam until the end of VSP support by VEF. VEF does not provide additional health insurance to cover doctor's visits, routine check-ups, flu shots, other vaccination shots, and/or dental and vision services. Such coverage may be purchased at the Scholar's own expense, possibly through the U.S. host institution, after arrival in the United States. If the U.S. institution agrees to provide health coverage at its own cost, the Visiting Scholar must get a written statement to this effect from the U.S. host institution and notify VEF immediately.
8. Professional Development Grant (PDG). U.S. \$300 per month for professional development expenses. The number of months or partial months is calculated according to the dates of the Visiting Scholar's academic program as approved by the VEF Board of Directors. Use of these funds by the Visiting Scholar is limited to professional development purposes, defined as follows: conference attendance and/or presentations; training workshops or seminars; books, journals, and publications; computer hardware or software; professional memberships or subscriptions; courses to improve English speaking, listening, reading, or writing; hiring a statistician; and hiring an English language expert to edit one's research or publishable article. PDG funds cannot be used for non-professional purposes, such as living expenses, costs for dependents, travel for pleasure, medical or health expenses, and entertainment. All tangible items purchased through the PDG funds become the property of the Visiting Scholar. The Visiting Scholar must report the use of PDG funds to VEF annually, so the Visiting Scholar must keep good records of any purchases (purpose, dates, amounts, and receipts) for submission to VEF upon request.

## **D. In Advance of Application**

Visiting Scholar (VS) applicants must:

1. Affirm that their Vietnamese home institution approves the proposed program of the Visiting Scholar and can provide a supportive letter as part of the application.
2. Identify a mentor at a university or research institute in the United States, who is willing to host and support the proposed program. VS applicants may want to develop their project in consultation with the U.S. mentor to make sure that the mentor and the U.S. institution fully supports the proposed program and will be able to provide a supportive letter.
3. Inform the U.S. host institution about the funding arrangements as described here and secure agreement that the host institution will comply to receipt and disbursement of VEF funds as indicated. VEF requires the U.S. host institution to disburse the VEF funds (Settling-In Allowance, stipends, and PDG) to the Visiting Scholar on behalf of VEF. While VEF uses the term “grant” in reference to VEF monies provided to the Visiting Scholar, the term "grant" is an internal term used by VEF and does not imply any particular definition that the host university/institution may have for their reference to the same term. The following details clarify the expected arrangement with the U.S. host university/institution:
  - a. Electronic Transfer. The total amount for the Settling-In Allowance (\$500), the monthly stipends (U.S. \$2,300 per month), and the total amount of PDG funds (U.S. \$300 per month), or the adjusted amounts for stipends and PDGs for a partial month, will be electronically transferred from VEF to the host university or research institution before the beginning of the Academic Year.
  - b. Administrative Fees. No administrative fees can be deducted by the U.S. host institution for administering or handling the VEF monies. The U.S. host institution may not charge fees for activities that are part of the Visiting Scholar’s project or proposed program.
  - c. Disbursement of Funds. The U.S. host institution makes all financial arrangements for distribution of monies to the Visiting Scholar according to whatever administrative system that they might already have in place to disburse such funds.
  - d. Timing of Payments (Settling-In Allowance and stipends). The first stipend payment must be made within the first month of arrival of the Visiting Scholar on campus and every month thereafter. If a Visiting Scholar chooses to arrive earlier than the stated start date of the grant, the U.S. host university is not obliged to make any stipend payments until the official start date of the VS grant. Ideally, the host institution should make arrangements to make the full payment of the Settling-In Allowance and a partial payment of the stipend upon the Visiting Scholar's arrival at the host institution. Regardless of any unforeseen delays on the part of the U.S. host institution or VEF in processing the monies, the first and all subsequent monthly stipend payments to the Visiting Scholar must be made in a timely fashion.
  - e. Process of Receiving Funds. The U.S. host institution must inform each Visiting Scholar about the procedure to secure the Settling-In Allowance, stipends, and PDG funds, providing a copy of the procedure also to VEF.
  - f. Relevant Taxes. The U.S. host institution must process documentation, if any, related to U.S. taxes that might be owed by the Visiting Scholar when disbursing all VEF funds to the Visiting Scholar.

- g. Tracking PDG Funds. VEF asks that the U.S. host university or institution do the following:
- 1) Require written evidence from the Visiting Scholar regarding the use of PDG funds, which are limited to the uses outlined above (Section C.8) and which must relate to the Visiting Scholar's professional development.
  - 2) Keep records of the use of PDG funds, which would be supported by the written evidence provided by the Visiting Scholar, and, if requested by VEF, summarize the use of the funds. Regardless of what records might be kept by the U.S. host institution, the Visiting Scholar is responsible for keeping track of use of funds (purpose, dates, amounts, and receipts).
- h. Return of Unused PDG Funds. At the time that the Visiting Scholar departs from the U.S. host university or institution, any unused PDG funds for that Visiting Scholar must be returned to VEF.

***IMPORTANT: The Visiting Scholar applicant must get written affirmation from the U.S. host institution that they agree to disburse the funds provided by VEF for the Visiting Scholar as stated above. Therefore, the VS applicant should provide the information provided above to the U.S. mentor well in advance of application so that s/he may include these details in the letter of support required by the application.***

## **E. Application Procedure**

**Applications will be available ONLY online at [www.vef.gov](http://www.vef.gov)  
OPENING AT 10:00 a.m., Monday, January 20, 2014  
CLOSING AT 10:00 a.m., Thursday, April 10, 2014  
(Vietnam time zone)**

As part of the online application, the VSP applicant must provide the following:

1. Professional Development Plan. A clear and concise description of the project, program, research, and/or the study plan to be undertaken as a Visiting Scholar. Include the objectives, timeline, and expected outcomes and how completion of this plan will contribute to the applicant's career advancement in Vietnam, the development of the applicant's field in Vietnam, and scientific progress for Vietnam (**maximum of 4 pages**).
2. Information on Other U.S. Federal Government Grants. Applicants must clarify if they are receiving any other U.S. Federal Government grant monies for a program in the United States at the time of the proposed VEF program.
3. Information on Previous VEF Grants. If the applicant has received a VEF Visiting Scholar grant in the past, then the application must demonstrate the following:
  - a. How the proposed project is different from the previous one;
  - b. What the advantage is to the U.S. and Vietnamese institutions to have the individual return to the United States; and
  - c. What the outcomes were from the previous grant and how the present request builds on the past outcomes.

4. Commitment to the Educational and Scientific Development of Vietnam. A clear and concise description of a training plan that describes how the knowledge, skills, and abilities, which the applicant will acquire in the United States, will be communicated to others in Vietnam. VEF sees the VSP as a “Training of Trainers” program, namely, training the applicant as a trainer of others, who in turn would train others, thus broadly spreading the knowledge gained by the Visiting Scholar while in the United States. Also the VSP applicant must include plans for any continued collaboration with the U.S. host institution. The applicant’s demonstration of leadership and initiative in the academic realm or the academic community should also be mentioned. Applicants may also suggest how they might serve as a scientific and cultural bridge between the two countries.
  
5. U.S. Host Institution Commitment. A written commitment from the most appropriate U.S. university/institution, department, and/or faculty member(s)/researcher(s), which/who would serve as the applicant’s host. The written commitment must include the following details:
  - a. Dates. Dates that the Visiting Scholar will be hosted, including expected start and end dates.
  - b. Roles and Responsibilities of U.S. Host Institution. The role of the host institution, department, and/or faculty member(s)/researcher(s), including which arrangements for the Visiting Scholar will be handled by the host and which must be managed by the Visiting Scholar.
  - c. Role of Visiting Scholar. Expectations of the host entity regarding the role and involvement of the Visiting Scholar.
  - d. Outcomes. The expected outcomes of the Visiting Scholar’s proposed program, including plans for continuing collaboration with the Visiting Scholar and the Visiting Scholar’s Vietnamese home institution.
  - e. Support. Expected support from the host institution for the Visiting Scholar, which should address at least the following:
    - 1) Financial support, if any.
    - 2) Furnished office or desk space.
    - 3) Use of phone for U.S. and international phone calls.
    - 4) Use of a personal computer (laptop or desktop).
    - 5) Use of other equipment, including fax.
    - 6) Use of laboratory space and equipment as well as any limitations.
    - 7) Use of libraries and other institutional facilities, including any health centers, gymnasiums, swimming pools, etc.
    - 8) Institutional identification card.
    - 9) Cost, if any, to the Visiting Scholar for any of the above.
  - f. Disbursement of Monthly Stipends and PDG Funds. Agreement by the host institution to disburse VEF funds for the Visiting Scholar, as outlined above (section **D**).
  - g. Further Clarifications. Any other information that clarifies the arrangements between the host institution and the Visiting Scholar, including the following: timing of the disbursement of the Settling-In Allowance, stipend payments, and PDG funds; and the possibility of having the host institution’s medical/health insurance plan at no cost to the Visiting Scholar.

6. Vietnamese University Commitments
  - a. Candidacy. A written commitment from the applicant's home institution or organization in Vietnam to support the candidacy of the applicant for the VEF VSP and to allow the applicant to undertake the VSP for the period of time proposed in the United States.
  - b. Training of Trainers Program. A written commitment from the applicant's home institution/organization and/or by other Vietnamese institutions to support training sessions to train others in Vietnam with the knowledge, skills, and abilities gained by the Visiting Scholar in the United States.
  - c. Institutional Collaboration. A demonstrated interest in continuing collaboration with the U.S. host institution.
  
7. Disclosures. Applicants must disclose any prior convictions of a felony or a misdemeanor (excluding minor traffic violations). If the applicant has had such a conviction, the applicant must explain how the issues have been resolved.

All completed applications for the VSP will be reviewed by VEF after the application deadline of April 10, 2014, to verify that they meet the eligibility requirements. **Up to 10 of the best qualified applicants will be interviewed in person in Hanoi or Ho Chi Minh City in late July and early August of 2014.** Candidates, who are selected as most qualified as a result of the interviews, will be recommended to the VEF Board of Directors as Visiting Scholar nominees. The Board will approve the final list of Visiting Scholars in mid-November 2014. VEF will notify all applicants of their status by **the end of November 2014.**

## **F. Selection Criteria**

VEF has an open, competitive, and transparent application and selection process. The final candidates for the VSP are selected based on their academic and professional merit, on the quality of their proposed professional development program and the expected outcomes, and on the potential of their future contributions to Vietnam.

- ✓ An emphasis during the selection process will be on fields and topics of importance to Vietnam and on programs that incorporate collaboration and partnerships.
- ✓ Preference and priority will be given to applicants that have not received a VEF Fellowship or grant in the past, provided that all other qualifications are equal. If the applicant is considered among finalists, priority will be given to individuals, whose previous VEF grant was awarded further in the past.

The following **Selection Criteria** will be used to evaluate qualified applicants for the VSP:

1. Evidence of superior academic achievement as a scholar in Vietnam
2. Quality, value, and "fit" of the professional development plan
3. Demonstrated commitment to contribute to the educational and scientific development of Vietnam
4. Supportiveness of the U.S. host institution and the applicant's home institution in Vietnam

## **G. Other VEF Support**

1. Visa Sponsorship. VEF is the J-1 visa sponsor for the Visiting Scholar and the J-2 visa sponsor for the Visiting Scholar's dependents. VEF will determine which J-1 visa category (Research Scholar or Short-term Scholar) is appropriate, based on the activities of the planned program.
2. On-going Assistance. The VEF offices in the United States and in Vietnam provide ongoing information and assistance and will help in any emergency situation.
3. VEF Network. The Visiting Scholar becomes a part of the wide network of VEF Fellows, Scholars, and Alumni, prior to, during, and after the VSP.

## **H. Additional Responsibilities**

The following provides an abbreviated list of the primary responsibilities of a Visiting Scholar. A detailed list of responsibilities will be provided in the VSP grant letter, which serves as an agreement between the Visiting Scholar and VEF and which is distributed in advance of the Pre-Departure Orientation. The Visiting Scholar is responsible to do the following:

1. Arrangements with U.S. University. Finalize all arrangements with the U.S. university/institution and communicate regularly in advance of arrival with the U.S. faculty member/researcher serving as the Visiting Scholar mentor.
2. Permission from Employer. Immediately upon selection as a Visiting Scholar, secure written permission from your present employer in Vietnam to participate in the VSP for the duration of the proposed project.
3. Housing. Upon selection, immediately arrange for housing in the United States. Typically, the U.S. academic institution has services to help Visiting Scholars find appropriate temporary housing, either furnished or unfurnished.
4. Pre-Departure Orientation. Grantees must participate in the required VEF Pre-Departure Orientation (PDO) to be held tentatively on June 4-10, 2015, in Vietnam. These dates include travel to/from the event; thus, the first day indicated is the date for arrival at the PDO and the last day indicated is the departure date. VEF organizes a PDO of 5 days to inform Visiting Scholars about their responsibilities as well as about the cultural and legal issues they may encounter in the United States. Included in the PDO is an outdoor Team Building event, which may involve one day of camping. During the PDO, official Visiting Scholar grant documents and immigration documents will be issued.
5. Dependents. Make all arrangements for, and pay for any costs related to, dependents, who accompany or visit the Visiting Scholar while in the United States. Secure, maintain, and pay for all required medical, health, and repatriation insurance for accompanying dependents while they are in the United States. Ensure that no VEF funds are used for dependents.

6. Taxes. Pay any required U.S. federal and state taxes on monies received from VEF or from other sources while in the United States. U.S. taxes are applied on money earned during each calendar year. Thus, as an example, a Visiting Scholar, who begins the VSP in August 2015 and ends in June 2016, would be responsible for taxes for 2015 and for taxes for 2016 and would need to file two tax returns in such a case. The Visiting Scholar is required to pay U.S. taxes, even if s/he has returned to Vietnam.
7. Regulations and Laws. Abide by all procedures and regulations established by VEF, by the U.S. host institution, and by U.S. immigration authorities, and abide by all applicable laws.

<b>TIMELINE FOR ACADEMIC YEAR 2015-2016</b>
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Event/Action	Timeline
Announcement of the VS 2015 program	October 14, 2013
Online application period	January 20 – April 10, 2014
<b>Deadline for applications</b>	<b>April 10, 2014</b>
Interviews of finalists in Vietnam	Late July - early August, 2014
Final decisions and notification to all applicants	Late November 2014
<b>Required Pre-Departure Orientation</b> for 2015 Visiting Scholars	Tentatively <b>June 4-10, 2015</b>
2015 Visiting Scholars begin programs in the United States	No earlier than August 2015, and no later than April 2016

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This announcement is intended to provide sufficient information about the VSP so that the applicant is confident about the basic parameters of the Program. Applicants should feel free to contact the Vietnam Education Foundation if concerns have not been addressed in this document.

*Note: VEF reserves the right to make changes to programs as circumstances require. Any changes will be posted ONLY on VEF's official website at [www.vef.gov](http://www.vef.gov).*

**If you have any questions regarding the VEF Visiting Scholar Program for AY 2015-2016, please contact VEF via e-mail at [vs@vef.gov](mailto:vs@vef.gov), or phone**

- **VEF Field Office in Hanoi, Vietnam: 04-3936-3670**
- **VEF Headquarters in Arlington, Virginia, USA: 703-351-5053**