October 21, 2026

Mr. Mark Balling
Executive Vice President and General Manager, Skanska USA
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Email: Mark.Balling@Skanska.com

Subject: $50,000 Grant Request to Support One-Week Study Tour for ACPS Students and Educators to Helsingborg, Sweden

Dear Mr. Balling,

On behalf of the City of Alexandria Sister Cities Committee, I am pleased to submit to Skanska USA, a request for $50,000 to support the full travel costs for approximately 20 students and 5 educators from Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS), to Helsingborg, Sweden, in the summer of 2028.

Special consideration will be given to the involvement of ACPS students from socio-economically disadvantaged communities.

The goals and purpose of the activities carried out under this grant will be to:

1) Strengthen cooperation between the cities of Alexandria and Helsingborg through more formal collaboration between their educational, commercial, research and civil society institutions.
2) Project a comprehensive picture of Sweden and Swedish culture to the students and residents of Alexandria, Virginia.
3) Expand the diversity and enhance the attraction to international exchange for ACPS high-school students, especially students from socio-economically disadvantaged communities and students studying themes involving to sustainable development.
4) Enhance access to pre-work professional training and higher education opportunities for ACPS students – especially at Swedish-based companies active in the greater metropolitan Washington DC region.
5) Inform ACPS programs and pedagogical practices about lessons from educational counterparts in Helsingborg, Sweden.
6) Strengthen and institutionalize global learning in the City of Alexandria and ACPS through purposeful and goal-oriented international student exchanges with counterparts in Sweden.

This project will take place in the summer of 2028.

A notional program and budget are attached below, as well as further details about the context of this request.

Please do not hesitate to communicate with me or the Sister Cities Committee. My email is xxxxx. I look forward to talking with you soon about this request.

Sincerely,

Eric Compton, Chairman

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Context / Draft Budget / Notional Timeline / Outputs:

Since 1991, the City of Alexandria and the City of Helsingborg, Sweden and cooperated as "Sister Cities". This partnership has resulted in multiple mutually beneficial educational, professional, commercial and cultural exchanges. For example, there are approximately 44 business establishments in Northern Virginia alone, that hire approximately 700 employees and contribute approximately $70 million in wages to Northern Virginia's economy.

Moreover, the designs and planning of City of Alexandria's transportation systems were informed by the work of Stockholm, Sweden and in 2023, the City of Alexandria hired the firm of Skanska/JMT to design, plan and engineer key elements of Alexandria's climate resiliency and mitigation plans. These are just a handful of examples about how the City of Alexandria undertakes global engagement that is purposeful, problem-focused and goal-oriented.

The notional dates proposed would be the first week of June, 2027 – immediately after the end of the ACPS school year (June 11 (Friday) to June 20 (Sunday).

The notional budget is $50,000. It would cover the full costs of travel for the participants.

<u>(Approximate Costs Per Person)</u>:

Airfare (fully refundable economy IAD – CPH)	$1,200
Local Travel/Meals/Host Family Compensation	$500
ACPS Administrative Costs/Overhead	$10,000
Total (for approximately 15-20 participants):	$50,000

When funded, Alexandria City Public Schools will oversee the organization and administration of the study tour, the selection of the participants.

The outputs and metrics used to determine success under this grant will include:

1) The development and execution of the one-week study tour for approximately 20 ACPS students and 5 educators.
2) The preparation of the program, dissemination of relevant briefing and background materials (e.g. case studies, summaries and articles about Helsingborg, the schools).
3) A final policy report submitted to the ACPS Board, the Alexandria City Council and Skanska that summarizes short- and long-term follow-up activities, lessons learned and prospective outcomes.
4) A webinar on the exchange, to discuss the outcomes of the two exchanges and the potential applications of lessons from Helsingborg pedagogy innovations to ACPS.

This project stands to help diversify and enhance the attraction for international exchange among high-school level students – especially those from socio-economically disadvantaged communities in ACPS programs. Approximately 127 different languages are spoken by students of ACPS – one of the most diverse and globally connected in the United States. However, according to the Association of International Educators (NAFSA), approximately 10% of high school students participating in study abroad or student travel overseas are black or Hispanic.

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