Questions and Answers for the (RFA) # CEP-SSG-02 *Collected Between 06 October and 20 October, 2017*

1. The RfA specifies the maximum grant amount that an organization can receive but is there a minimal grant amount?

There is no minimum grant amount defined. However, there is a requirement that the project activities last between 30 and 36 months. Hence, it is expected that the requested budget corresponds with the duration of the project and the planned activities.

2. We have a project idea for which we would need to rent a venue and to purchase equipment, which would be used to train interested farmers. Could the expenses for rent and equipment be covered by this type of grant?

. In general, the Strategic Support Grants do not exclude the project costs for venue and equipment. Please refer to Annex C Budget Guidelines of the application form regarding unallowable costs. However, if you have doubts regarding the type of equipment you need, please contact us at qendresa@metamorphosis.org.mk with more details about it.

3. Our organization already has a DUNS number, can we use the same one or we need to obtain a new one?

Yes, you can use the same DUNS number for this and other USAID funded grants.

4. When do we need to register on sam.gov?

Only short-listed applicants will be required to obtain DUNS number (in case they don't have one) and register on sam.gov prior to signing the grant agreement. Applicants are not required to register on sam.gov when submitting applications.

5. Our organization does not have DUNS number. We entered the SAM website, but were not sure if we need to register here just for the purposes of the application process. Can you please confirm if we need to have the DUNS number at this phase or it is just for the ones that will receive the grants?

Please see the answer to Question 4.

6. How long does the organization have to be registered to be eligible for this type of grant?

The Strategic Support Grant is open for organizations that have been registered and are operational for three years, by the time the deadline for this RfA closes In this regard, the applicant must have three years of operational experience by October 31, 2017.

7. If we are already receiving institutional support from another donor, in this case CIVICA, is it a limiting factor for applying on this RfA? Namely, can we apply for this RfA if we are already receiving a CIVICA grant?

The RfA does not exclude former or ongoing grantees of Civica Mobilitas or any other donor.

8. Is co-financing or cost-share required by this RfA?

Co-financing/cost-share is not required by this RfA, but it is allowed if the applicant plans on having cost-share.

9. Is sub-granting allowed by this RfA?

Sub-granting is not allowed under this RfA.

10. Is it considered as an advantage if the project is implemented in partnership?

The SSGs are not devised for partnerships although they do not object to cooperation between CSOs. The applying CSO is the only one evaluated for the eligibility and other criteria as the only potential receiver of the grant. Please note that the SSGs grant does not allow any sub-granting.

11. Can the partner be a CSO which now is using project from you, from the first open call?

You may engage ongoing CEP grantees as supporting partners in your project proposal.

12. What is the earliest start date for the implementation of the project?

The earliest start date, as noted on the cover page of the application form, is February 1st, 2018.

13. Will the eight grants be awarded evenly to the planning regions in the country?

CEP aims to support project proposals that have a broad geographic coverage; however, equitable geographic distribution is not a rule for the selection of grantees. For more information on the evaluation criteria, please refer to pages 5-7 of the RfA.

14. Is there a requirement for the number of regions project proposals should cover with the proposed activities?

There is no requirement for the number of regions that project activities should cover. It is up to the applicants to define the targeted locations.

15. Will the eight grants be awarded evenly according to the priority areas?

The Project aims to cover all priority areas; however, there is no quota on the priority areas or illustrative examples of the RfA. The selection of the grantees will depend primarily on the evaluation of the Grant Review Committee according to the evaluation criteria presented on pages 5-7 of the RfA.

16. Does the proposal have to fall exclusively under one priority area of the RfA or can it be an overlap of two or more areas?

Please select only one priority area and one illustrative activity that your proposed project falls under.

17. Are there rules about how to distribute the budget by budget lines, for example, how much of the total budget may be planned for salaries?

All the rules and guidelines about how to prepare the budget are presented in Annex C Budget Guidelines of the application form. Annex C also specifies that, it is strongly advisable to keep within the range of **40%** from the total budget regarding salaries.

18. Is VAT part of the total budget of the projects?

CEP and all its grantees are exempt from VAT payment; hence VAT will not be an acceptable expense. All CEP grantees are required to register at the Secretariat for European Affairs and obtain a VAT exemption letter, so please plan the project budget accordingly.

19. According to what exchange rate of the US dollar will the project budgets be implemented?

The project budget should be prepared using the official exchange rate established on the day when the applicant submits an application. During the implementation for the project, all disbursements will be made in MKD and based on the commercial exchange rate prevailing on the disbursement date at the bank used by CEP. Hence, CEP cannot propose an exchange rate ahead of time. Please note that the foreign exchange risks are borne solely by the grantee.

20. Are public or private sector entities eligible to apply for this grant?

Only registered civil society organizations are eligible to apply for Strategic Support Grants.

21. Who are we expected to have a letter of support from? What do we do in case we plan to work with municipalities and we cannot secure such letters due to the elections happening at the time of application?

Letters of support are supposed to prove that the claimed cooperation and the proposed joint activities will take place. Applicants are expected to submit letters of support from the institutions and media they plan to cooperate with, if any. CEP will be flexible in some cases if the applicant cannot provide a letter of support from the municipalities and will initially accept alternative documents that prove previous cooperation, if available. However, the failure to secure a letter of support from a municipality or any other institutions should be justified clearly in the application form under *Section 10: Project Risks.*

22. Is it allowed to hire a foreign expert under this grant program?

Priority must be given to local experts. At the time of selection, the grantee will have to justify the need to hire a foreign national for a contractual service.

23. Is it allowed to plan a study visit abroad?

Study visits outside of the country are allowed under the Strategic Support Grants.

24. Do the applicants have to submit a separate application for the capacity development program?

The capacity development program is offered to all Strategic Support grantees. The applicants do not have to submit a separate application form.

25. If a grantee has a valid strategic plan, will the activities planned under the capacity development plan be carried out, nevertheless?

If the grantee has a valid strategic plan or capacity development plan CEP conducts an assessment and offers assistance in reviewing these strategic document with the approval of the grantee. There are also additional training and learning opportunities that CEP offers to its grantees that fall under the capacity development program.

26. Can we provide the External Audit Report or the Final Account submitted to the Central Register as a substituting document for the Annual Financial Report?

The applicant may submit the Final Account for 2016 in absence of an Annual Financial Report.

27. What should the 'letter of support' contain, in what language should it be written and do you have a template for it? Is it a compulsory document?

There is no specific template to be used for the letter of support. It should be a short letter which confirms the cooperation between the applicant and the stakeholders mentioned in the application form. The official language of CEP is English and all application documents are expected to be in English. However, if you cannot obtain the original document in English we would appreciate it if you could provide us with an unofficial translation of the document in English.

Additionally, letter of support is requested only from the applicants that are planning to cooperate with external parties in the implementation of their project proposals. Therefore, organizations that do not plan such cooperation do not need to submit a letter of support.

28. Is it obligatory to have partners in the project, such as institutions or media?

Organizations are not expected to have partners for this grant program. However, if the applicant plans such a cooperation, it must submit a letter of support from the institution or media with whom cooperation is expected to take place.

29. Can CEP Grantees apply for this RfA?

As specified on page 2 of the RfA, the following are not eligible to apply for this RfA:

- Lead organizations that are currently implementing CEP`s Partnership Grants, and
- Current recipients of CEP`s SSGs.

30. If the applicant will include new stakeholders (with whom they do not collaborate until now) should it send Letter of support?

Please send a letter of support of the stakeholders you will cooperate with to prove that the cooperation will take place.

31. Does the latest financial report of the organization refer to organization's annual report for 2016 or until the deadline of the RfA on 31 October, 2017?

The RfA requests the last annual financial report of the organization for 2016.

32. Can alliances or consortiums of organizations apply for this RfA?

The SSGs are not designed for alliances and consortiums although they do not object to cooperation between CSOs. SSGs do not allow any sub-granting. At the beginning of 2018, CEP will issue the RfA for Partnership Grants which is tailored particularly for alliances of organizations. Please follow Metamorphosis` website and Facebook page as well as USAID`s CEP`s Facebook page for more information about the upcoming RfA for Partnership Grants.

33. Can we pay another organization for a communication product if the service is paid directly from the implementing organization and not from a sub-grant?

The grantee may pay a third party to provide communication services for the project, in which case a clearly documented service agreement should be signed between parties outlining the type of services

requested. The actual procurement of the product or service should be conducted in accordance with the procurement policies of the organization and/or CEP.

34. The second sheet on the budget template, called budgets notes, is empty. What information should be provided there?

Providing budget notes for the proposed budget is obligatory. In the sheet called "budget notes", please provide justification for all costs listed under the budget. Annex C: Budget Guidelines of the Application Form provides instructions on how to fill in the budget and the budget notes.

35. Can the applicant plan to cover rent for utilities under this RfA?

Office rent and utilities are allowable costs and can be covered under this grant. The applicant must indicate the basis of cost allocation. Please refer to Annex C: Budget Guidelines on the Application Form (pp. 8-9) for instruction on accurate allocation of costs.

36. Our CSO is registered in 2006 or 2005, but we have been active from 2016, however our president has long experience as Vice President in other organization and is experienced? Can we apply?

Since your organization has been registered for more than three years, you are eligible to apply. Please note that during the initial technical screening stage of your application you may be requested to submit narrative reports to further confirm the required three years of operational experience in the requested priority areas.

37. Our organization has been registered and active for more than three years but we have not had any funds for 2014. Are we eligible to apply for this RfA?

The criteria for "three years of experience" refers to the activities conducted by the organization. Lack of financial resources for a year during which you have engaged actively in the areas you work in does not make you ineligible to apply.

38. Are there any limits under the contractual services (at that budget line)?

There is no prescribed limit for contractual services. All of these should be conducted in accordance with the procurement policies of the organization and/or CEP.

39. Can a branch of a foreign organization, registered in Macedonia, apply for this RfA?

Only organizations registered in Macedonia and led by Macedonian citizens are eligible to apply.

40. Can the proposed staff be paid through honoraria? Do you have any guidelines for the amount of the budget line for Staff?

Applicants are expected to have full time employed staff to be able to effectively implement a 30-36-month project and to be able to absorb the capacity development assistance that CEP offers to its grantees. Additionally, Annex C: Budget Guidelines in the Application Form specifies that it is strongly advisable to keep the staff member's salaries within the range of up to 40% of the total budget.