



REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS (RFA) # CEP-SSG-02

Strategic Support Grants

Issued on October 6, 2017

The USAID Civic Engagement Project in Macedonia (CEP) invites civil society organizations (CSOs) in Macedonia to apply for Strategic Support Grants (SSGs).

CEP is a five year USAID-funded program that contributes to achieve two objectives: (1) strengthened influence of CSOs on policies and programs related to priority issues of citizen concern; and (2) increased and sustained youth engagement in public life in Macedonia. CEP is implemented by East West Management Institute, Inc. (EWMI), in partnership with four local CSOs: the Foundation for Internet and Society “Metamorphosis” (Metamorphosis), the Association for Democratic Initiatives (ADI), the Foundation Open Society - Macedonia (FOSM), and the National Youth Council of Macedonia (NYCM). SSGs will be managed by Metamorphosis.

SSGs’ aim to support CSOs, including think tanks, that work in the following **priority areas**:

- 1) Good Governance
- 2) Local Economic Development
- 3) Environment
- 4) Community Development
 - a. Civic Engagement/Community Involvement
 - b. Citizens’ participation in planning and assessing public services

More specifically, this RfA seeks to support the following **illustrative activities** under the above listed priority areas:

- i) **Establish innovative mechanisms to ensure regular feedback from citizens** regarding their perception of and trust in public institutions at the central and local government level;
- ii) **Contribute to public services’ improvement by strengthening or introducing mechanisms for public participation and community development**, to create long-term solutions for citizens’ priority concerns;

- iii) **Increase civic engagement** through community development and beautification activities;
- iv) Support the **promotion and development of vocational and non-formal educational programs** that lead to job placement for youth and vulnerable groups, including orphans, victims of domestic violence, disabled people, ethnic minorities, and LGBTI people; and
- v) **Support the development and implementation of effective laws, regulations, and state programs** in the priority areas mentioned above.

SSGs will enable CSOs to:

- (i) Plan and implement long term and comprehensive interventions that lead to concrete results related to key reform areas listed in the paragraph above, interventions that could include policy analysis, public education and civic engagement, advocacy campaigns engaging constructively with government actors and institutions, and monitoring of the implementation of laws, public policies, programs, and budgets;
- (ii) Be proactive and creative in representing citizens' concerns and engaging citizens constantly and meaningfully in initiatives related to the key reform areas listed in the paragraph above;
- (iii) Invest in their capacity development, in particular in enhancing their impact, engaging broader segments of the society, and becoming financially stable; and
- (iv) Participate in local, regional, or international networking events (capped funding).

CEP **will not accept or review** applications that include the following activities:

- Capital expenditures, including construction activities;
- Support for or lobby on behalf of a particular political party;
- Religious activities;
- Humanitarian/charitable activities;
- Theoretical research;

CEP Project **will also not accept or review** applications by:

- Lead organizations that are currently implementing CEP's Partnership Grants;
- Current recipients of CEP's SSGs.

GRANT AWARDS

CEP plans to award up to **8 (eight)** grants under this RfA. The maximum grant award for each proposal is **120,000 USD** covering activities that may last up to 3 (three) years, and not less than 30 (thirty) months. Grant funds may be used only for activities directly related to the

implementation of the grant activities. CEP reserves the right to fund any or none of the applications submitted.

FUNDING PRIORITIES

CEP will give priority to CSOs, including think tanks, that:

- Focus on **priority issues of concern** listed above and that are important to citizens in Macedonia;
- Have a proven track record of engaging in effective and successful interventions related to the above mentioned priority issues for **at least the last three years**;
- Have a proven track record of implementing projects that benefit communities and stakeholders;
- Have a **governance structure** that ensures proper rotation of leadership and delegation of power, including, at least, a Board of Directors, a Chairperson, and an Executive Director. The same individual should not hold the position of the Board Chairperson and Executive Director. If this criterion is not met, the applicant must submit a proposed reform process that will work towards meeting these standards.
- Have a **transparent system of bookkeeping** that complies with the Macedonian legislation and International Accounting Standards (IAS). If such a system is not in place, upon grant award, the grantee must work closely with CEP to ensure that accurate financial management and transparent bookkeeping systems are developed.
- Support **multi-culturalism and inter-ethnic cooperation** and take progressive stances vis-à-vis **gender equality and social inclusion**;
- Demonstrate understanding and commitment to **cooperate with a wide range of stakeholders**, including the media, private sector, think tanks and academia, and public institutions;
- **Demonstrate a clear and feasible sustainability plan** that increases the likelihood that the CEP-funded activities will have lasting positive impact or will continue after the end of the grant; and
- Are willing to commit to **substantial capacity development** of their CSO with assistance by CEP.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

CSOs legally registered in Macedonia are eligible to submit proposals in response to this RfA. Applicant CSOs should meet the following criteria (please refer to the checklist):

- 1) Be a **Macedonian CSO**, meaning that it is managed by a governing body the majority of who are citizens or lawful permanent residents of Macedonia;
- 2) Have at least **three years of operational experience in the priority areas** of this RfA. The Project will not provide “start-up” funding;
- 3) **Must not be a debtor** of the Government of Macedonia and must have cancelled any debt to the state or arranged for debt collection by the state prior to receiving the first disbursement of grant funds by the Project;

- 4) Must operate as an **independent non-politically affiliated organization**;
- 5) Must **not be debarred, suspended, excluded or otherwise ineligible** to receive US Federal funding;
- 6) Must be able to provide its **DUNS (Data Universal Numbering System) number** and should be registered on the website: www.SAM.gov prior to signing the grant agreement.

ORGANIZATIONAL, ADVOCACY AND CAPACITY STRENGTHENING ACTIVITIES

After signing a grant agreement, CEP will provide capacity development assistance to the winning applicants. At the beginning, CEP will conduct capacity assessment of the CSO grantee using the Organizational and Advocacy Capacity Assessment (OACA) tool. OACA methodology uses a semi-structured interview format with managers and staff of the grantees and a desk review of the organization's documents. The OACA reports will summarize the assessment's findings, provide the CSOs with a clear and concrete analysis of their strengths and gaps and recommend key strategies to address the gaps.

Building upon the awarded proposal and the results of OACA, within the next three months CEP will assist the grantees to develop (or update when this plan exists) their Strategic Plan (SP), Capacity Development Plan (CDP) and Annual Work Plan (AWP). This process will be as participatory as possible, including CSO's members, staff members, board members, volunteers, beneficiaries, etc.

CEP will provide long-term support to the grantees based on the adopted SP and CDP. CEP will engage leading local experts to serve as mentors to the respective CSO for the entire duration of the grant. In addition to this, grantees' management structures and executive office staff will participate in peer learning and networking activities such as: quarterly grantee meetings, CSO learning circles, best practices and innovation events, in-country exchange visits, exchange visits with peers abroad, CSO annual weeks, training workshops and other capacity development activities.

APPLICATION SUBMISSION PROCEDURES

CEP will accept proposals only in English. Applications can be mailed or hand-delivered to the Metamorphosis' office. E-mailed and faxed applications will not be accepted. Applicants should submit **five printed copies** of their application and supporting documentations as well as **one CD or USB containing all documents submitted in hard-copy**.

Applicants must submit the following documents (please refer to the Checklist attachment):

- 1) **Five printed copies** of the Application Form and the Project Budget. At least one of the copies must contain the original stamp and signature;
- 2) **Budget notes** added to the Project Budget;
- 3) **Five copies** of the organization's Annual Financial Report;
- 4) **Five copies** of the organization's registration document not older than six months.
- 5) **Five copies** of letters of support from relevant public institution(s) or media if the applicant plans to work with public officials or media;
- 6) **One CD or USB** containing all documents submitted in hard-copy.

Applicants selected for awards will be subject to a pre-award risk assessment conducted by CEP, to ascertain whether the applicant has the minimum management capabilities required to handle US government funds. Therefore, before making the final decision, CEP may request additional documentation, such as, but not limited to:

- Auditor's report;
- Financial statements (Balance Sheet, Profit and Loss, Cash Flow);
- The most recent organizational Strategic Plan (if available); and
- The organization's policies.

Submitted proposals must be the original and sole work of the applicant organization. Plagiarism will result in disqualification from the grant competition.

CEP will retain all materials and documents submitted by applicants. It will not use this information for purposes other than proposal review and will not share it with other persons or institutions, except when required by Macedonian law or requested by USAID.

Please note that in line with our donor coordination efforts, we will share the names of the applicants and a short description of their respective projects with other Macedonian and international programs that support CSOs in Macedonia.

EVALUATION PROCESS AND CRITERIA

The selection process will be administered by a Grants Review Committee (GRC) established by CEP for the purpose of this RfA. If an application is short-listed for potential funding, the respective applicant may be requested to provide additional information.

CEP will assess proposals based on the following criteria:

I. Technical Approach– 60% of the total score

a. Project Design and Feasibility– 25%

- The degree to which the application is responsive to this RfA and adequately addresses CEP's main objectives related both to the priority areas that the applicant plans to work on in the next three years, as well as the applicant's planned organizational capacity development activities;
- Relevance of the proposed Program Description to priority areas, as identified in this RfA;
- The potential of the proposed actions to successfully and efficiently achieve the objectives outlined in the application's Program Description;
- The extent to which the proposed actions introduces innovative and potentially replicable approaches;
- The level of coordination with local, national or international stakeholders and institutions that enhance the impact and sustainability of the CEP-funded activities;
- Citizen interest in the problem that the proposed Program Description addresses, as explained in the application;
- Reliable quantitative and qualitative indicators for measuring and evaluating the proposed actions' impact;
- Clear articulation of the results and/or impact of the proposed actions; and

- The plan for ensuring that the proposed solution(s) will be sustained once the grant funding expires.
- b. *Geography– 5%*
 - The extent of the proposed Program Description’s focus in engaging citizens in CSO-led activities at the community, municipal, regional or country level;
 - Extent to which the proposed Program Description plans to engage remote or underserved communities.
- c. *Beneficiaries– 20%*
 - The level and nature of proposed actions to ensure large-scale engagement of citizens: generate awareness, support for advocacy, and/or other activities involving citizens;
 - The level and nature of proposed actions to encourage volunteerism, as well as youth engagement;
 - The level and nature of proposed actions to include girls, women, ethnic and religious minorities, people with disabilities, the LGBTI community, and/or other marginalized groups in the proposed activities.
- d. *Collaborative Posture– 10%*
 - The level and nature of proposed actions to ensure cooperation among CSOs, public institutions, media, private sector and citizens to better achieve the proposed Program Description’s goal;
 - The level and nature of proposed actions to ensure collaboration among CSOs in sharing expertise and resources to implement innovative advocacy, civic engagement, and technology approaches in fulfilling proposed Program Description goals.

II. Organizational, Technical and Management Capability and Past Performance– 40% of the total score

- a. *Technical and Management Capacity– 20%*
 The technical and managerial capacity of the applicant to successfully carry out Program Description implementation on a timely basis, and to produce the targeted results. This includes an evaluation of:
 - The track record and demonstrated commitment of the applicant to implement proposed activities and demonstrated ability to work well with other organizations and partners;
 - The experience and expertise of the management team and proposed personnel; and
 - The provision for appropriate monitoring, evaluation and reporting mechanisms and staff.
- b. *Organizational Capability – 10%*
 - The general financial strength of the applicant;
 - The organizational structure and good governance practices of the applicant;
- c. *Past Performance– 10%*
 - Past performance in achieving positive results when implementing activities similar to those proposed;
 - Experience working with USAID/other donor funds and ability to meet reporting and accountability requirements;
 - Demonstrated ability to gather and analyze data on program outcomes.

III. Cost Effectiveness (*will be reviewed for consistency and allowability but will not be an evaluation factor*)

- The budget and budget notes must be (i) complete and fully documented, (ii) reasonable, and (iii) allocated to appropriate budget categories.
- The budget must demonstrate a clear and direct relationship between proposed activities and the proposed use of funds;
- Proposed expenditures must be allowable and allocable to the proposed Program Description.

TIMELINE

RfA launch date	October 6, 2017
Info Sessions Schedule	October 12 - October 20, 2017
Deadline for submitting clarification requests to the Project	October 20, 2017
Date when the Project will issue clarifications or/and organize an Information Session for interested applicants	October 24, 2017
DEADLINE FOR SUBMITTING PROPOSALS	16:00, OCTOBER 31, 2017
Evaluation of proposals	November 8, 2017
Grant award notification to successful applicants	November 15, 2017
Grant agreement signing	January 31, 2018
Earliest starting date for grant-supported activities	February 1, 2018
Working with the successful applicants to assess their advocacy and organizational capacity needs, and develop or update their Strategic Plan and Capacity Development Plan	February 2018 - July 2018

Please note that evaluation and award dates are subject to change

CONTACT INFORMATION

Application Form: To download the application form, please find the RfA announcement at the following link: www.metamorphosis.org.mk or visit CEP Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/CEPMacedonia/>. Alternatively, please contact Metamorphosis Grants Manager, Ms. Qendresa Sulejmani, at qendresa@metamorphosis.org.mk for the application package.

Clarifications: Applicants should submit clarification requests by the deadline listed above via email to Metamorphosis’ Grants Manager at qendresa@metamorphosis.org.mk. CEP will issue clarifications to all interested organizations via e-mail and on www.metamorphosis.org.mk.

Proposals: Applicants should submit the printed application and required documents in a sealed envelope to the following address:

**Metamorphosis Foundation
Apostol Guslarot 40
Skopje, Macedonia
Attn: Qendresa Sulejmani.**

Should you choose to mail the hard copy of the proposal, please note that the time when the sealed envelope **is delivered** to Metamorphosis will be taken into consideration and **not** the time the when the envelope is mailed. The mail should be delivered to Metamorphosis' office by **16:00, October 31, 2017**.

This grant program is made possible by the support of the American People through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID.) The contents of this RfA are the sole responsibility of East-West Management Institute, Inc., and Metamorphosis and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.