



REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS (RFA) # CEP-SSG-03

Strategic Support Grants

Issued on September 21, 2018

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 are managed by Metamorphosis.

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

- 1. Support for sustainable cities and communities.** This includes initiatives that transform and make cities and communities more inclusive, safer, resilient and sustainable; addressing the link between quality of life in cities and how cities manage natural resources; providing solutions for accelerated demand for basic services, infrastructure, jobs, land, and affordable housing, without neglecting the urban poor communities living in informal settlements. Illustrative objectives that CEP seeks to support include, but are not limited to:
 - Enhancing inclusive and sustainable urbanization processes with emphasis on participatory approaches;
 - Addressing issues related to public transportation with attention to needs of various vulnerable groups;
 - Supporting economic, social, and environmental harmonization between urban, suburban, and rural areas with focus on regional development planning;
 - Protecting and safeguarding national cultural and natural heritage;
 - Reducing environmental impact of cities with particular attention paid to air quality and municipal/regional waste management;
 - Preserving public spaces;
 - Strengthening direct engagement by local communities in developing sustainable cities and rural areas;
 - Creating strong and lasting cooperation among central and local government institutions, businesses, citizens, and the media to advance sustainable development of cities and rural areas.

2. Supporting the community resilience component of the Government of Macedonia's National Strategy on Countering Violent Extremism (CVE). This includes initiatives that strengthen social cohesion of communities at higher risk of experiencing religion and ethnic-based radicalization. Illustrative objectives that CEP seeks to support include, but are not limited to:

- Supporting efforts to build efficient, responsive, and inclusive public institutions that will earn public trust in them;
- Promoting and strengthening inter-cultural integration and religious tolerance;
- Promoting and supporting young people role as agents of change in ensuring peaceful and culturally diverse and inclusive communities;
- Supporting initiatives to broaden education and employment opportunities for youth and people at higher risk of being radicalized;
- Minimising the impact of risk factors for violent behaviours such as substance abuse, school based issues (like, for example, bullying), illiteracy, and unemployment;
- Supporting enhanced role for the families in shaping young people's positive outlook and in building resilient and safe communities;
- Assisting the creation of Community Action Teams (CATs) to enhance communities' cooperation with state and local authorities;
- Developing and embedding with communities measures to counter disinformation that aim to divide communities;
- Increasing on-line literacy of vulnerable groups to address hate speech.

3. Promoting and supporting social entrepreneurship and social enterprises. This includes initiatives that focus on addressing the needs of marginalized and vulnerable groups by combining social innovation and social responsibility. Illustrative objectives that CEP seeks to support include, but are not limited to:

- Supporting the advancement and expansion of existing social enterprises that have a proven track record of success;
- Supporting locally-driven initiatives to develop social entrepreneurship using the existing legal framework and benefiting from best international, regional, and local practices;
- Strengthening cooperation among central and local public institutions, the private sector, and CSOs in supporting social entrepreneurship initiatives;
- Piloting professional skills training and job placement programs for marginalized or vulnerable groups, and ensure that these programs yield concrete results and become sustainable;

SSGs will enable CSOs to:

- (i) Plan and implement long term and comprehensive interventions that lead to concrete results related to key priority areas listed in the paragraph above, interventions that could include civic engagement, policy analysis, public education and advocacy campaigns (well-structured and defined campaign) engaging constructively with government actors institutions, business sector and other relevant stakeholders (CSOs, local councils and others) 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 focus 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 and results wise sustainable ; and
- (iv) Participate in local, regional, or international networking events (capped funding).

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

- Support for or lobby on behalf of a particular political party;
- Religious activities;
- Humanitarian/charitable activities;
- Theoretical research;
- Sub-awards.

For more details on unallowable costs under CEP, please consult Annex B – Budget Guidelines.

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 **7 (seven)** grants under this RfA. The maximum grant award for each proposal is **90,000 USD** covering activities that may last up to 27 (twenty-seven) months and not less than 24 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 areas of this RFA** listed above;
- Have a proven track record of engaging in effective and successful interventions related to the above mentioned priority areas 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 clearly their existing or likely **co-funding** from external or own sources;

- Demonstrate understanding and have a concretely elaborated 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;
- Are willing to commit to **substantial capacity development** of their CSO with assistance by CEP; and
- Allocate relevant resources for the needs of the CSO, and are willing to commit for the successful implementation of this project at least **one full-time staff member** of the CSO.

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 participatory, engaging 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 – 75% 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;
- The potential of the proposed actions to successfully and efficiently achieve the objectives outlined in the application's Program Description;
- Clear articulation of tangible results and/or impact of the proposed actions;
- Clear demonstration of citizens' interest in the problem that the application's Program Description addresses, as explained in the application—In other words, is there evidence that the proposal will trigger action or work that the community wants? Will it make a difference in the community it purports to aid or resolve the issue it addresses?;

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 – 5%

- 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. Mobilizing external resources – 20%

- The extent to which applicants can demonstrate existing or likely co-funding from external (i.e., central government institutions and/or municipal level institutions, private sector, community) sources or own-sources;
- The level and nature of proposed actions to ensure cooperation and coordination among donors, CSOs, public institutions, media, private sector and citizens to better achieve the application's Program Description's goal.

e. Sustainability and impact – 20%

- The extent to which the proposed actions introduce innovative, potentially replicable, and self-sustaining approaches;
- The level of coordination with local, national or international stakeholders and institutions that enhance the impact and sustainability of CEP-funded activities;
- The plan for ensuring that the proposed solution(s) will be sustained once the grant funding expires.
- Clear articulation of tangible results and/or impact of the proposed actions – In other words, does the activity support citizens, either individually or as organized groups, interacting with the public sector, either national or locally, to strengthen mechanisms for inclusion, accountability and participation in order to enhance citizens' role in shaping public policies, community development or improving public services;
- Reliable quantitative and qualitative indicators for measuring and evaluating the proposed actions' impact;

II. Organizational, Technical and Management Capability and Past Performance – 25% of the total score

a. Technical and Management Capacity – 10%

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 the proposed personnel; and
- The provision for appropriate monitoring, evaluation, and reporting mechanisms and staff.

b. Organizational Capability – 5%

- 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	September 21, 2018
Info Sessions Schedule	October 1 to 10, 2018
Deadline for submitting clarification requests to the Project	September 28, 2018
Date when the Project will issue clarifications	October 10, 2018
DEADLINE FOR SUBMITTING PROPOSALS	14:00, OCTOBER 22, 2018
Evaluation of proposals	November 15, 2018
Grant award notification to successful applicants	November 22, 2018
Grant agreement signing	February 1, 2019
Earliest starting date for grant-supported activities	February 1, 2019
Working with the successful applicants to assess their advocacy and organizational capacity needs, and develop or	February 2019 - July 2019

update their Strategic Plan and Capacity Development Plan

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 links: www.metamorphosis.org.mk and www.cep.mk or visit CEP Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/CEPMacedonia/>. Alternatively, please contact Metamorphosis Grants Coordinator, Ms. Elena Trifunovska, at elenat@metamorphosis.org.mk for the application package.

Clarifications: Applicants should submit clarification requests by the deadline listed above via email to Metamorphosis' Grants Coordinator at elenat@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:Elena Trifunovska.**

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 **14:00, October 22, 2018.**

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.(EWMI), and Metamorphosis and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.