



**Issue Date:** September 9, 2021  
**Deadline for Question:** September 17, 2021, 17:00 Belgrade time  
**Closing Date:** October 9, 2021, 17:00 Belgrade time

**Subject:** Notice for Funding Opportunity (NOFO) RFA #72016921RFA00007

**Activity Title:** Together for Environmental Protection Activity in Serbia

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 98.001

Ladies/Gentlemen:

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is seeking applications for a cooperative agreement from qualified entities to implement the Together for Environmental Protection activity. USAID intends to make an award to the applicant who best meets the objectives of this funding opportunity, based on the merit review criteria described in this RFA, and subject to a risk assessment. Eligible parties interested in submitting an application are encouraged to read this RFA thoroughly to understand the type of program sought, application submission requirements and selection process.

To be eligible for award, the applicant must provide all information as required in this RFA and meet eligibility standards in Section C of this RFA. This funding opportunity is posted on [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov), and may be amended. It is the responsibility of the applicant to regularly check the website to ensure they have the latest information pertaining to this notice of funding opportunity and to ensure that the RFA has been received from the internet in its entirety. USAID bears no responsibility for data errors resulting from transmission or conversion process. If you have difficulty registering on [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) or accessing the RFA, please contact the Grants.gov Helpdesk at 1-800-518-4726 or via email at [support@grants.gov](mailto:support@grants.gov) for technical assistance.

USAID may not award to an applicant unless the applicant has complied with all applicable unique entity identifier and System for Award Management (SAM) requirements detailed in Section D.6.g. The registration process may take several weeks to complete. Therefore, applicants are encouraged to begin registration early in the process.

Please send any questions to the point(s) of contact identified in Section D. The deadline for questions is shown above. Responses to questions received prior to the deadline will be furnished to all potential applicants through an amendment to this notice posted to [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov).

Issuance of this notice of funding opportunity does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the Government nor does it commit the Government to pay for any costs incurred in preparation or submission of comments/suggestions or an application. Applications are submitted at the risk of the applicant. All preparation and submission costs are at the applicant's expense.

Thank you for your interest in USAID programs.

Sincerely,

Boryana Boncheva  
Agreement Officer

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## SECTION A: PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

### I. Introduction

USAID/Serbia is seeking assistance to help advance Serbia's biodiversity and environmental protection through provision of capacity building, advocacy support, public awareness and cross-sectoral cooperation in the new Together for Environmental Protection Activity. This multi-year activity is intended to contribute to improving equitable prosperity, defined as the economic and social well-being of Serbian citizens, as well as helping Serbia's progress towards European Union accession. The funding opportunity is authorized under the Foreign Assistance Act (FAA) of 1961, as amended. The resulting award will be subject to 2 CFR 200 – Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards, and USAID's supplement, 2 CFR 700, as well as the additional requirements found in Section F.

### **Background**

Serbia is a country with rich natural resources and a terrain that varies from fertile flat plains to high mountains, gorges and valleys with rivers large and small. Due to its complex geological history, a moderate-continental climate and close aquatic and terrestrial connections with the rest of Europe, Serbia has a high level of biodiversity. Nevertheless, the biodiversity of Serbia faces a number of direct threats and drivers (indirect threats) that challenge species and ecosystems throughout the country. This was also highlighted by the EU Progress Report Chapter 27 review which found that Serbia made limited progress in this area and "should considerably step up ambitions towards a green transition." Serbia's weak environmental protection is a clear issue affecting the quality of life for its citizens and is also a challenge for the country's sustainable development and EU accession progress. This became even more apparent in 2020: when in-country rural tourism exponentially increased as a result of COVID-19 travel restrictions, resulting in increased visits to national parks many of which were not well prepared and equipped to deal with this influx; when a number of cases of illegal construction and logging surfaced in environmentally protected areas; and when citizens increasingly began to demand action on improving air quality. The lack of attention to natural resource management and conservation, combined with low citizen participation in policy making, has seriously impeded Serbia's progress toward sustainable, eco-friendly and innovative development, especially in rural areas.

About 7%<sup>11</sup> of Serbia's land is under some type of protected status, which is less than the regional average of 19.9%. In addition, management of existing protected areas is challenging due to limited available technical support for land managers, lack of financial resources and

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<sup>1</sup> [World Bank Indicators Terrestrial and marine protected areas \(% of total territorial area\) - Serbia 2018.](#)

limited cooperation between different relevant environmental protection stakeholders, including national and local governments, businesses, and civil society.

Per the 2018 [USAID Serbia Biodiversity Analysis](#), the main drivers behind biodiversity and environmental protection threats are the following policy, institutional and economic factors:

- Lack of Sustainable Biodiversity Financing Mechanisms;
- Weak Enforcement and Implementation of Existing Mechanisms;
- Limited Capacity in Environmental Conservation Efforts;
- Lack of Accessible and Shareable Data;
- Limited Administrative and Management Coordination;
- Low level of public awareness regarding the importance of biodiversity;
- Ineffective Management of Protected Areas;
- Poverty in Rural Areas.

Various research notes that there is insufficient funding for environmental protection initiatives made available from the government, donors and private sector resources. According to the Serbian Fiscal Council's findings and recommendations related to environmental protection investment<sup>2</sup>, the government budget allocations were not fully utilized while its 2020 budget was reduced by 25% to address urgent COVID-19 related needs. The Fiscal Council notes that the government 2021 budget proposal for "investments into communal infrastructure and environment protection have, once again, been neglected. The 2021 budget does not plan for a major increase in capital expenditures for these purposes - although these are probably the most neglected segments of public infrastructure which pose a serious risk for the health of the population. Fiscal Council's analyses, however, show that Serbia should invest, at the very least, four times as much in these areas<sup>3</sup>" In addition, income generated from environmental fees is not earmarked for environmental purposes and there is limited investment capital coming from the private sector.

Cooperation on environmental protection between citizens, civil society and the public sector remains spotty, although there has been an increase in the number of citizens engaged in this area that have gained significant public interest. Examples of this include protecting *Stara Planina* mountain from mini-hydro construction, establishment of authentic Serbian seed banks, and initiatives focused on preventing illegal commercial construction in protected areas. Despite this, there are still very limited opportunities for non-state actors to participate in the policy and decision-making processes in the field of environment at both the national and local levels,

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.fiskalnisavet.rs/doc/analize-stavovi-predlozi/FS-Rezime-Investicije-u-zastitu-zivotne-sredine.pdf>

<sup>3</sup>

[http://www.fiskalnisavet.rs/doc/analize-stavovi-predlozi/2020/FC\\_Summary\\_Assessment\\_of\\_the\\_draft\\_budget\\_2021.pdf](http://www.fiskalnisavet.rs/doc/analize-stavovi-predlozi/2020/FC_Summary_Assessment_of_the_draft_budget_2021.pdf)

which is an issue affecting not only environmental protection but government transparency as well.

Previous and current USAID programming has had positive experience with private sector engagement in addressing local challenges, leveraging expertise, resources and working together with civil society and government on tackling systemic and social challenges. At the same time, a number of emerging grassroots initiatives and groups have emerged to also work on these issues at the community level, such as air pollution to protection of authentic Serbian fruit and seed sorts, in a way that resonates with citizens and elicits constructive government interaction. The new Together for Environmental Protection activity should build on these efforts and continue cross-sectoral and citizen engagement through its activities.

### **Alignment with USAID's Strategic Goal**

USAID's strategic goal over the next five years is to foster: *'A more economically-productive and democratic Serbia pursuing Euro-Atlantic integration and self-reliance.'* USAID will help Serbia advance political and economic reforms, meet the challenge of malign influence, and sustainably advance to self-reliance.

The Together for Environmental Protection (TEP) Activity will contribute to USAID's Development Objective 2, focused on increasing equitable prosperity for citizens by broadening collaboration with the private sector and other donors and increasing the Government of Serbia's co-investment in programs to achieve longer-term success, ensure the sustainability of efforts, and identify opportunities to replicate interventions across different economic sectors. Under Intermediate Result 2.2, USAID support will focus on improving social equality and sustainability through three targeted efforts focused on specific challenges to sustainability.

The first line of effort seeks to provide additional support to specific underserved communities to improve their equitable access to opportunities for personal and community advancement, especially in terms of economic empowerment. The second line of effort focuses on Serbia's weakness in biodiversity and habitat protection, a clear issue for sustainability and a specific challenge for EU accession. The brunt of these environmental challenges is felt most by the rural, poor communities near Serbia's remote protected areas. For this reason, USAID will adopt a targeted approach to improve biodiversity protection in the impoverished rural areas in order to address these challenges. The third line of effort under this IR focuses on mobilizing public and private resources and actors to support and sustain social, environmental and other community initiatives.

USAID also believes that engagement with youth, businesses, women and gender minorities holds significant opportunities to advance CDCS objectives. USAID engagement with these

populations throughout programming will help to mainstream these groups in society, assist them to meet their potential, gain influence in their government and society, and achieve greater prosperity.

The full Country Development Strategy can be found here:

[https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/External\\_Serbia\\_CDSCS\\_2020.pdf](https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/External_Serbia_CDSCS_2020.pdf)

## **2. Program Objectives and Expected Results**

USAID's Together for Environmental Protection Activity will improve environmental and biodiversity protection in Serbia. The activity will utilize a sustainable approach that engages relevant actors across sectors in interventions such as: capacity building, piloting sustainable financing mechanisms, building greater demand for valorization of Serbia's natural resources and increasing citizen engagement in oversight and decision making related to environmental protection issues. Through the provision of technical assistance, capacity building, monitoring, cross-sectoral engagement and sub-grant support the TEP Activity is expected to improve capacity and commitment of relevant actors for greater environmental protection and valorization.

**Overall Goal:** To improve Serbia's Environmental and Biodiversity Protection.

In order to achieve the stated goal, the program will engage in three objectives described below.

The following is a list of anticipated results and objective descriptions that should be considered when proposing approaches and activities.

### **Objective 1: Management capacity of protected areas improved**

This objective will aim to improve the ability of environmental protection actors to manage protected areas (resources, finances, equipment, etc.), collect, analyze, and provide relevant information that affects protected areas, monitor these areas and the institutions that maintain them, and promote the value of natural environments to citizens. This may include provision of capacity building, establishment of sustainable professional development services for protected areas managers, establishment of participatory processes to define, prioritize, and build different co-management arrangements (public/private partnerships), facilitation of cooperation among different stakeholders from public, private and civic sectors, knowledge exchange and professional cooperation with relevant regional, EU and US based environmental management and protection institutions. Focus may be on already established, protected areas as well as on natural areas that are likely to receive "protected" status in the near future. Applicants should note how they will select or target their assistance to particular geographic areas based on



existing need and opportunities for engagement under this objective.

**Illustrative Results:**

- Result 1.1 Improved transparency of information provided to citizens;
- Result 1.2 Improved capacity of relevant nature protection actors, including protected area managers;
- Result 1.3 Established cooperation with international/US-based environmental protection actors.

**Objective 2: Enabled sustainable biodiversity financing mechanisms**

This objective addresses the finance that supports investments in the maintenance or expansion of protected areas and environmental protection in Serbia. Funding for environmental protection initiatives in Serbia from both public and private funding remains limited. The 2020 European Commission Progress Report on Chapter 27 “Environment and Environmental Change”, recommends that Serbia should considerably step up ambitions towards a green transition and continue focusing on, among other things, enhancing financial capacity of public central and local environmental protection bodies, earmarking and utilising income from environmental fees for environmental purposes as well as building an effective institutional set-up to manage environmental investments. As such, efforts under this objective should support dialogue and advocacy for greater commitment of government resources towards environmental protection as well as greater engagement of the private sector in development of innovative funding mechanisms that can complement public funding.

To that end, this objective aims to develop, pilot and expand innovative, eco-friendly revenue-generating and philanthropic activities that can supplement any public or donor funding and can contribute to sustainable economic development of communities surrounding protected areas. It will look to involve the private sector more in mobilizing funds for environmental protection activities, and seek greater allocations of public funds for the establishment, protection, and maintenance of natural areas. This can include support for community eco-business development initiatives, payments for ecosystem services, eco-tourism expansion, establishment of community conservation groups/foundations, philanthropic environmental investments etc. Any proposed and/or piloted revenue generating activity must take into account community needs, social equity, economic, and environmental factors and adhere to “do no harm” principles. Applicants should note how they will select or target their assistance to particular geographic areas based on existing need and opportunities for engagement under this objective.

**Illustrative Results:**

- Result 2.1 Increase in committed/invested GoS resources focused on environmental protection;
- Result 2.2 Eco-friendly revenue generating services, products and initiatives piloted at the community level;
- Result 2.3 Private sector resources for environmental protection mobilized.

### **Objective 3: Increase citizen demand for environmental, biodiversity protection and clean air**

While citizen interest in environmental protection has been steadily increasing over the past couple of years, opportunities for citizen engagement in policy development and decision making in this area has been fairly limited. In addition, available information regarding different aspects of environmental protection, value of Serbia's biodiversity and need for its protection, as well as ways to address chronic problems such as air pollution are lacking. This objective will address the demand for clean, natural environments and biodiversity protection. It will provide opportunities for citizens to learn about the environment around them, access information about what the local and national government institutions are doing to protect these natural resources, and get involved in community mobilizing, policy and decision making that affects the environment. Activities under this objective should make efforts to engage non-traditional civic groups (both formal and informal) such as grassroots, academia, media etc. in various environmental protection initiatives. Given increased citizen concern around air pollution a specific line of effort should focus on supporting activities focused on air pollution challenges and ways forward.

#### Illustrative Results:

- Result 3.1 Increased citizen knowledge regarding environmental protection including air pollution;
- Result 3.2 More opportunities for citizen participation in environmental policy and decision making created;
- Result 3.3 More civil society and non-traditional civic groups engaged in environmental protection advocacy and monitoring, including on topics related to air pollution.

#### **Cross-Cutting Principles**

USAID believes the following cross-cutting principles will be essential to assure sustainable gains in the aforementioned areas:

- **Supporting locally-led development**

The activity should make best use of Serbia's existing local expertise and capacity and foster locally led development and strengthening of local systems in order to ensure sustainability of

efforts and local ownership. International expertise and knowledge can be utilized to augment and support Serbian actors through genuine partnership.

- **Fostering Inclusive Development**

While pollution and environmental degradation affects all citizens of Serbia, some of the most serious effects and challenges are often felt by the poorest, most remote communities as well as by marginalized populations living in those areas. As such, programming should make concentrated efforts to work and engage these communities especially in efforts related to policy, decision making and piloting of revenue making services. Approaches to programing should make concentrated efforts to foster solidarity and inclusive development across both national and local level and to provide needed support to groups working with these communities and groups on environmental issues.

- **Promoting Private Sector Engagement**

Environmental protection is one of the key areas in which both international corporations operating in Serbia and domestic companies invest their corporate social responsibility resources. As such, many of Serbia's businesses will have objectives in common with this activity. USAID foresees many opportunities to collectively tackle environmental issues. Thus, the activity is expected to integrate private sector participation into its efforts to promote quality natural resource management and biodiversity protection. Developing sustainable, market-driven solutions to manage protected areas is expected to be critical to success. Similarly, mobilization of domestic financial resources and the development of financing mechanisms to allow for greater investments in protected areas is also viewed as an approach with significant potential for success. These opportunities should be thoroughly considered, and any solution designed in this context will be seen as an asset to the proposal.

USAID's experience suggests that the following private sector contributions could be possible:

- funding to share intervention costs;
- understanding of relevant behaviors and dynamics;
- access to target beneficiaries and relevant local networks;
- specialized knowledge and expertise.

- **Gender**

Integrating gender considerations into the activity involves identifying and addressing gender blind or neutral approaches during design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. The activity should look to increase engagement of women and youth in management, policy setting

& revenue generating activities across all lines of effort . It must involve integrating women and men meaningfully into the activity results framework and indicators, and ensuring that activities alleviate gender related constraints and capitalize on gender related opportunities, such as under national conversations and dialogue, legislations and policies, in all areas and at all levels. Interested parties are encouraged to read [USAID/Serbia's 2020 Gender Analysis](#).

- **Monitoring Evaluation and Learning guidelines**

The application must include an illustrative Activity Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Plan (AMELP) responding to objectives and expected results as set forth in this Program Description. Proposed AMELP should clearly demonstrate how it **will** experiment with interventions, assess impact, adapt to programmatic and contextual changes, and seek to scale up successful practices. The applicant must also include information as to how it proposes to tackle learning and program adaptation. Applicants will propose indicators which will assist in managing project performance. The AMELP must contain project objectives and results, outcome and performance/output indicators, data sources and collection methods, baseline information or a timeline for collecting it, annual targets (disaggregated by gender and focusing on youth), and references to staff responsible for data collection and analysis. The proposed AMELP should include gender and youth indicators where appropriate and to the extent possible. Applicants may propose additional analyses that they believe would be important for the success of the activity, including additional gender analysis. Applicants should consult USAID ADS 205 to learn more about relevant gender indicators and integrating gender equality in programming.

**The following activities and programs will not be considered for funding:**

- Programs or activities that directly engage in support of political parties or any individual.
- Programs or activities which are partisan or political in nature.
- Program or activities containing any large-scale construction activities.
- Programs or activities involving the purchase of large-scale equipment.

**[END OF SECTION A]**

## **SECTION B: FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION**

### **1. Estimate of Funds Available and Number of Awards Contemplated**

USAID intends to award one Cooperative Agreement pursuant to this notice of funding opportunity. Subject to funding availability and at the discretion of the Agency, USAID contribution to the activity is \$5,000,000, over the 5-year period of performance.

USAID reserves the right to fund any one or none of the applications submitted, or to fund parts of applications. Issuance of this RFA does not constitute an award commitment on the part of USAID, nor does it commit USAID to pay for any costs incurred in the preparation and submission of any application.

### **2. Expected Performance Indicators, Targets, Baseline Data, and Data Collection**

For more information on the AMELP requirements, please see Sections A and F of this RFA.

### **3. Start Date and Period of Performance for Federal Awards**

The anticipated period of performance is 5 years. The estimated start date is the end of January 2022.

### **4. Substantial Involvement**

It is anticipated to have substantial involvement in this activity and specific elements of substantial involvement will be tailored in accordance with ADS 303.3.11 and final program description.

Cooperative agreements are identical to grants except that USAID will be substantially involved. USAID will make a determination on the intended substantial involvement by the Agency upon award. The specific areas of USAID substantial involvement will include, but not be limited to

- USAID approval of the recipient's annual implementation plans;
- USAID approval of specified key personnel (limited to five (5) positions or five percent (5%) of the recipient employees working under the award, whichever is greater);
- USAID and recipient collaboration or joint participation, which includes one or more of the following:
  - USAID concurrence on the substantive provisions of sub-awards;

- USAID approval of the recipient's AMELP (to the extent that such information is not included in the application);
- USAID monitoring to authorize specified kinds of direction or redirection because of interrelationships with other projects; and
- If the prospective recipient proposes a grant program under their application, within a reasonable time after the signing the agreement, the recipient must submit a draft Grants Management manual to the Agreement Officer for approval prior to the implementation grants scheme as described in the Program Description. The manual will guide applicants in their application to sub-awards under this award.

## **5. Authorized Geographic Code**

The geographic code for the procurement of commodities and services under this program is 937, as described in [ADS Chapter 310](#).

In anticipation of final implementation guidance issued by USAID, the Applicant is notified of recent changes to cost allowability regulations - specifically 2 CFR 200.216, finalized on August 13, 2020 - concerning the procurement of prohibited technology goods and services under assistance awards.

## **6. Nature of the Relationship between USAID and the Recipient**

The principal purpose of the relationship with the Recipient and under the subject program is to transfer funds to accomplish a public purpose of support or stimulation of the activity which is authorized by Federal statute. The successful Recipient will be responsible for ensuring the achievement of the program objectives and the efficient and effective administration of the award through the application of sound management practices. The Recipient will assume responsibility for administering Federal funds in a manner consistent with underlying agreements, program objectives, and the terms and conditions of the Federal award.

## **7. Title to Property**

Property title under the resultant agreement shall vest with the recipient in accordance with the requirements of Mandatory Standard Provision for Non-US Organizations, [Title To And Use Of Property \(December 2014\)](#).

## **8. Special Award Requirement Relating to the Prohibition on Certain Telecommunication and Video Surveillance Services or Equipment (November 2020)**

USAID has been granted a temporary waiver under Section 889(d)(2) that will allow the recipient to use award funds through September 30, 2022, to procure certain telecommunications and video surveillance services or equipment as specified in the standard provision “Prohibition on Certain Telecommunication and Video Surveillance Services or Equipment (NOVEMBER 2020).” Based on this waiver, all costs incurred for covered telecommunications and video surveillance services or equipment will be allowable through September 30, 2022, without regard to the cost principle at 2 CFR 200.471. Procurements made on or after October 1, 2022, will be unallowable in accordance with 2 CFR 200.471

**[END OF SECTION B]**

## **SECTION C: ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION**

### **1. Eligible Applicants**

All U.S. and non-U.S. nongovernmental organizations, either for-profit or nonprofit, as well as institutions of higher education, are eligible to submit an application. Further, the organization must be a legally recognized organizational entity under applicable law. Applications from individuals will not be accepted nor reviewed.

While for-profit firms may participate, pursuant to 2 CFR 200.400(g), it is USAID policy not to award profit to prime recipients and subrecipients under assistance instruments. However, the prohibition does not apply when the recipient acquires goods and services in accordance with 2 CFR 200.317 -326, "Procurement Standards." This is discussed more specifically in ADS 303sai "Profit Under USAID Assistance Instruments," which can be found at this link: <http://www.usaid.gov/ads/policy/300/303sai.pdf>.

Each applicant must be found to be a responsible entity before receiving an award. The Agreement Officer (AO) may determine that a pre-award survey is required in accordance with ADS 303.3.9.1 and if so, would establish a formal survey team to conduct an examination that will determine whether the applicant has the necessary organization, experience, accounting and operational controls, and technical skills – or ability to obtain them – in order to achieve the objectives of the program. Applicants who do not currently meet all USAID requirements for systems and controls may still be eligible under special award considerations and should not be discouraged from applying. USAID welcomes applications from organizations that have not previously worked with the Agency.

USAID strongly encourages applications from potential new partners who meet the above eligibility requirements and are willing to be subjected to a Pre-Award Responsibility Determination, which is a pre-award audit to determine fiscal responsibility (i.e., whether the prospective recipient has the necessary organization, experience, accounting and operational controls, and technical skills – or ability to obtain them – in order to achieve the objective of this program and comply with the terms and conditions of the award).

Each applicant organization is limited to one application submission as the Prime applicant. There is no limitation on being included as a potential Sub-awardee. USAID discourages the use of exclusive teaming arrangements.

Submissions from organizations that do not meet the above eligibility criteria will not be reviewed and evaluated.



## **2. Cost Sharing or Matching**

Cost Share is desirable and encouraged, but it is not a mandatory eligibility criterion under this RFA.

## **3. Unique Entity Identifier and System Award Management (SAM)**

Dun and Bradstreet and SAM.gov Requirements can be found under [this link](#). USAID will not award the applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable SAM requirements and has obtained a unique entity identifier. Each applicant is required to:

- i. Be registered in SAM before submitting its full application;
- ii. Provide a valid unique entity identifier in its full application; and
- iii. Continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active Federal award or an application or plan under consideration by a Federal awarding agency.

**[END OF SECTION C]**

## SECTION D: APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

### 1. Agency Point of Contact

Name: Dukagjin Hasani  
Title: A&A Specialist  
Email: [dhasani@usaid.gov](mailto:dhasani@usaid.gov)

Name: Branislav Bulatovic  
Title: A&A Specialist  
Email: [bbulatovic@usaid.gov](mailto:bbulatovic@usaid.gov)

### 2. Questions and Answers

Questions regarding this RFA should be submitted by e-mail no later than the date and time indicated on the cover letter. Any information given to a prospective applicant concerning this RFA will be furnished promptly to all other prospective applicants as an amendment to this RFA, if that information is necessary in submitting applications or if the lack of it would be prejudicial to any other prospective applicant.

### 3. General Content and Form of Application

#### Preparation of Applications:

Each applicant must furnish the information required by this RFA. Applications must be submitted in two separate parts, Technical Application and the Business (Cost) Application. This subsection addresses general content requirements applying to the entire application. Please see subsections 5 and 6, below, for information on the content specific to the Technical and Cost applications. The Technical application must address technical aspects only while the Cost Application must present the costs, and address risk and other related issues.

Both the Technical and Cost Applications must include a cover page containing the following information:

- Name of the organization(s) submitting the application;
- Identification and signature of the primary contact person (by name, title, organization, mailing address, telephone number and email address) and the identification of the alternate contact person (by name, title, organization, mailing address, telephone number and email address). Applications signed by an agent on behalf of the applicant must be

accompanied by evidence of that agent's authority, unless that evidence has been previously furnished to the issuing office;

- Program name;
- Notice of Funding Opportunity number;
- Name of any proposed sub-recipients or partnerships (identify if any of the organizations are local organizations, per USAID's definition of 'local entity' under ADS 303).

Applications must comply with the following:

- Use standard 8 ½" x 11", single sided, single-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman font, 1" margins, left justification, and headers and/or footers on each page including consecutive page numbers, date of submission, and applicant's name.
- Written in English.
- Graphics and charts may use a 10-pt font, however, tables must comply with the 12-point Times New Roman requirement. Graphs and charts should be for illustrative purposes only and should not comprise the majority of the application text.
- Submitted via searchable and editable Microsoft Word or PDF formats, except budget files which must be submitted in Microsoft Excel.
- Must be compliant with the page limitations. USAID will not review any pages in excess of the page limits noted in the subsequent sections.
- The estimated start date identified in Section B of this RFA must be used in the cost application.
- The Cost Schedule must include the Budget Template Excel spreadsheet (Attachment 1 to this RFA) with all cells unlocked and no hidden formulas or sheets. A PDF version of the Excel spreadsheet may be submitted in addition to the Excel version at the applicant's discretion, however, the official cost application submission is the unlocked Excel version.

Applicants must review, understand, and comply with all aspects of this RFA. Failure to do so may be considered as being non-responsive and may be evaluated accordingly. Applicants should retain a copy of the application and all enclosures for their records.

#### **4. Application Submission Procedures**

Applications in response to this RFA must be submitted no later than the closing date and time indicated on the cover letter, as amended. Late applications will not be reviewed nor considered at the discretion of the Agreement Officer. Applicants must retain proof of timely delivery in the form of system generated documentation of delivery receipt date and time/confirmation from the receiving office/certified mail receipt.

### **Sample Language for email submission:**

Applications must be submitted by email to both individuals indicated in section D.1. Email submissions must include the RFA number and applicant's name in the subject line heading. In addition, for an application sent by multiple emails, the subject line must also indicate whether the email relates to the technical or cost application, and the desired sequence of the emails and their attachments (e.g. "No. 1 of 4", etc.). For example, if your cost application is being sent in two emails, the first email should have a subject line that states: "[RFA number], [organization name], Cost Application, Part 1 of 2".

USAID's preference is that the technical application and the cost application each be submitted as consolidated email attachments, e.g. that you consolidate the various parts of a technical application into a single document before sending it. If this is not possible, please provide instructions on how to collate the attachments. USAID will not be responsible for errors in compiling electronic applications if no instructions are provided or are unclear.

After submitting an application electronically, applicants should immediately check their own email to confirm that the attachments were indeed sent. If an applicant discovers an error in transmission, please send the material again and note in the subject line of the email or indicate in the file name if submitted via grants.gov that it is a "corrected" submission. Do not send the same email more than once unless there has been a change, and if so, please note that it is a "corrected" email.

Applicants are reminded that email is NOT instantaneous, and in some cases delays of several hours occur from transmission to receipt. Therefore, applicants are requested to send the application in sufficient time ahead of the deadline. For this RFA, the initial point of entry to the government infrastructure is the USAID mail server.

There may be a problem with the receipt of \*.zip files due to anti-virus software. Therefore, applicants are discouraged from sending files in this format as USAID cannot guarantee their acceptance by the internet server. USAID can accept emails up to 25M. The size of each attachment is not limited as long as the total size of each individual email does not exceed 25M

### **5. Technical Application Format**

The technical application is limited to **25 pages, excluding annexes if any**. The technical application should be specific, complete, and presented concisely. The application must demonstrate the applicant's capabilities and expertise with respect to achieving the goals of this program. The application should take into account the requirements of the program and merit review criteria found in this RFA, and should include the following:

**(a) Cover Page (not included in the page limit)**

See Section D.3 above for requirements

**(b) Table of Contents (not included in the page limit)**

Include major sections and page numbering to easily cross-reference and identify merit review criteria.

**(c) List of acronyms (not included in the page limit)**

**(d) Executive Summary (not more than two pages, included in the page limit).**

The Executive Summary must provide a high-level overview of key elements of the Technical Application.

**(e) Technical Approach (included in the page limit)**

The Technical Approach should demonstrate technical soundness, clarity, innovation and flexibility to adjust to changing circumstances, attention to cross-cutting principles, as well as sustainability of the program results. The Technical Approach should also include details on how proposed interventions will be implemented, specify which stakeholders will be engaged in the process, discuss opportunities/barriers that could speed/hinder progress, and suggest solutions to address the barriers. Merely repeating the narrative in the Program Description without sufficient elaboration will not be considered responsive.

In the Technical Approach, the applicants should provide the following information:

- Objectives, sub-objectives, outlined program activities and anticipated results that respond to identified needs and opportunities for environmental protection in Serbia.
- The local context, key stakeholders (drivers and barriers to change), root challenge causes, issues, and priorities for environmental protection in Serbia. Also, identify the risks and the means for addressing them; existing opportunities for engagement; innovative tools and lessons learned from similar programs implemented elsewhere.
- Commitment to empowerment of local actors and proposed plan for addressing issues related to gender, youth and minority group inclusion and empowerment during activity implementation.

- Public Awareness Approach: General approach to communication of the activity as well as any specific approach, including mainstream and social media, planned to be utilized to ensure stories receive coverage given Serbia's restrictive media environment.
- **Draft AMELP (as an Annex to the Technical Application, not to exceed 2 pages):** Illustrative AMELP for identification of expected intermediate and final results of the activity, monitoring of the activity to include suggested indicators of activity impact and success, targets, data sources and collection methods, baseline information and follow-on data, benchmarks, and strategy for the phase-out and sustainability of activities.

**(f) Management Approach, Staffing and Key Personnel (included in the page limit)**

This section shall include the following components:

**1) Management Approach**

- A management plan narrative that illustrates the management structure and staff for the prime and all subrecipients. The narrative must describe the roles, responsibilities, and clear lines of authority of staff, partners, and subrecipients, with an emphasis on engaging local resources where possible.
- A clear approach to managing technical and financial reporting, harmonizing program logistics, personnel, travel, and procurement systems, while taking advantage of organizational strengths, emphasizing cost-effectiveness, and avoiding duplication of effort. The applicant must also describe concrete steps for close communication, coordination, collaboration, and knowledge sharing between USAID project partners, other donors and any other relevant actors.
- An organizational chart that illustrates the management structure of both full-time and non-full time staff for prime and all subrecipients. The organization chart should not exceed one page, **be attached as an Annex, and will not be included in the overall page limitation.**

**2) Staffing Plan**

Applicants must propose a staffing plan that includes a narrative section in the main body of the Application and a matrix as part of the Annexes. The narrative must describe how the skill set of the proposed non-key personnel positions (managerial, technical, and operational) complement that of the proposed Key Personnel and how the skill sets of the entire team contribute to the overall success of the program. The staffing matrix must depict the managerial, technical, and operational skill sets needed to implement the Award. For each individual already identified and for TBD positions, the matrix must indicate whether the personnel are proposed as full time or

part time, including the % level of effort (LOE). The staffing matrix should not be more than one page, attached **as an Annex, and will not be counted in the overall page limitation**;

### 3) **Key Personnel**

Applicants may propose up to five (5) key personnel roles in accordance with the proposed approach and staffing plan. For each proposed key personnel position, the applicant should identify the position title and provide position descriptions, including roles and responsibilities and minimum qualifications (experience, education, skills, etc.), as **Annex to the technical application not to exceed 5 pages**.

The skill set for the proposed key personnel including other technical staffing mix, collectively should include at a minimum the following:

- Demonstrated experience in environmental protection, natural resource management, capacity building and eco-business development.
- Demonstrated experience in building and effectively supervising a diverse team of employees.
- Demonstrated experience with adaptive management approaches.
- Demonstrated experience with the approaches to local capacity development.
- Demonstrated effective interpersonal skills, creative problem-solving and ethical management skills.

The Applicants should submit CVs/resumes for Key Personnel candidates **as an Annex (not included in the overall page limitation)**, and document the candidates' most recent, relevant experience, including three references for each Key Personnel candidate. The CVs with references are limited to **3 pages** for each key personnel candidate.

#### **(g) Organizational Experience and Capability (included in the page limit)**

The applicant should describe its organizational knowledge and capability to effectively implement the proposed approach, including:

- Organizational experience in developing and managing environmental protection and eco-business development programs of a similar size and complexity.
- Prior experience in working with international donors, preferably in Eastern Europe and how this expertise will help in achieving the program objectives.
- Experience in coordinating with other donors and key stakeholders in achieving objectives, including governments, civil society organizations, associations, private sector, and educational institutions.

- Experience utilizing, employing, and building local and regional talent in promoting sustainability.

Past performance information: In addition, the applicant should describe a maximum of five relevant contracts, grants, and/or cooperative agreements that the organization has implemented involving similar or related programs over the past five years. The applicant should include the following past performance information as an **Annex to the Technical Application, not to exceed 5 pages, not included in the overall page limitation.**

- Name, address, current telephone number, and email address of responsible representative(s) from the organization for which the work was performed.
- Contract/grant name, number, place of performance, annual amounts received, and beginning and end dates; and
- Brief description of the project/assistance activity.

#### **6. Business (Cost) Application Format**

The Cost Application must be submitted separately from the Technical Application. While no page limit exists for the full cost application, applicants are encouraged to be as concise as possible while still providing the necessary details. The cost application must illustrate the entire period of performance, using the budget format shown in the SF-424A.

Prior to award, applicants may be required to submit additional documentation deemed necessary for the Agreement Officer to assess the applicant's risk in accordance with 2 CFR 200.206. Applicants should not submit any additional information with their initial application.

The Cost Application must contain the following sections:

**(a) Cover Page** (See Section D.3 above for requirements)

**(b) SF 424 Form(s)**

The applicant must sign and submit the cost application using the SF-424 series. Standard Forms can be accessed electronically using the following links:

<b>Instructions for SF-424</b>	<a href="https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/forms/sf-424-family.html">https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/forms/sf-424-family.html</a>
<b>Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424)</b>	<a href="https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/forms/sf-424-family.html">https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/forms/sf-424-family.html</a>
<b>Instructions for SF-424A</b>	<a href="https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/forms/sf-424-family.html">https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/forms/sf-424-family.html</a>



<b>Budget Information (SF-424A)</b>	<a href="https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/forms/sf-424-family.html">https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/forms/sf-424-family.html</a>
<b>Instructions for SF-424B</b>	<a href="https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/forms/sf-424-family.html">https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/forms/sf-424-family.html</a>
<b>Assurances (SF-424B)</b>	<a href="https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/forms/sf-424-family.html">https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/forms/sf-424-family.html</a>

Failure to accurately complete these forms could result in the rejection of the application.

### **(c) Required Certifications and Assurances**

The applicant must complete the following documents and submit a signed copy :

- (1) “Certifications, Assurances, Representations, and Other Statements of the Recipient” ADS 303mav document found at <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1868/303mav.pdf>
- (2) Certificate of Compliance: Please submit a copy of your Certificate of Compliance if your organization's systems have been certified by USAID/Washington's Office of Acquisition and Assistance (M/OAA).

### **(d) Budget and Budget Narrative**

The applicants must provide a complete budget by cost element, including the budgets for each sub-awardee if any, by utilizing the provided budget template in Attachment 1 to this RFA. The Budget must be submitted as one unprotected Excel file (MS Office 2000 or later versions) with visible formulas and references and must be broken out by project year. Files must not contain any hidden or otherwise inaccessible cells. Budgets with hidden cells lengthen the cost analysis time required to make an award and may result in a rejection of the cost application. The Budget Narrative must contain sufficient detail to allow USAID to understand the proposed costs. The applicant must ensure the budgeted costs address any additional requirements identified in Section F, such as Branding and Marking. The Budget Narrative must be thorough, including sources for costs to support USAID’s determination that the proposed costs are fair and reasonable.

The Budget must include the following worksheets or tabs, and contents, at a minimum:

- Summary Budget, inclusive of all program costs (federal and non-federal), broken out by major budget category and by year for activities implemented by the applicant and any potential sub-applicants for the entire period of the program. See budget template in Attachment 1 to this RFA.

- Detailed Budget, including a breakdown by year, sufficient to allow the Agency to determine that the costs represent a realistic and efficient use of funding to implement the applicant's program and are allowable in accordance with the cost principles found in 2 CFR 200 Subpart E.
- Detailed Budgets for each sub-recipient, for all federal funding and cost share, broken out by budget category and by year, for the entire implementation period of the project.

The Detailed Budget must contain the following budget categories and information, at a minimum:

- 1) Salaries and Allowances – Must be proposed consistent with 2 CFR 200.430 Compensation - Personal Services. The applicant's budget must include position title, salary rate, level of effort, and salary escalation factors for each position. Allowances, when proposed, must be broken down by specific type and by position. Applicants must explain all assumptions in the Budget Narrative. The Budget Narrative must demonstrate that the proposed compensation is reasonable for the services rendered and consistent with what is paid for similar work in other activities of the applicant. Applicants must provide their established written policies on personnel compensation. If the applicant's written policies do not address a specific element of compensation that is being proposed, the Budget Narrative must describe the rationale for all costs and the supporting market research.
- 2) Fringe Benefits – (if applicable) If the applicant has a fringe benefit rate approved by an agency of the U.S. Government, the applicant must use such rate and provide evidence of its approval. If an applicant does not have a fringe benefit rate approved, the applicant must propose a rate and explain how the applicant determined the rate. In this case, the Budget Narrative must include a detailed breakdown of all items of fringe benefits (e.g., superannuation, gratuity, etc.) and the costs of each, expressed in U.S. dollars and as a percentage of salaries.
- 3) Travel and Transportation – Provide details to explain the purpose of the trips, the number of trips, the origin and destination, the number of individuals traveling, and the duration of the trips. Per Diem and associated travel costs must be based on the applicant's normal travel policies. When appropriate, please provide supporting documentation as an attachment, such as company travel policy, and explain assumptions in the Budget Narrative.
- 4) Procurement or Rental of Goods (Equipment & Supplies), Services, and Real Property – Must include information on estimated types of equipment, models, supplies and the cost per unit and quantity. The Budget Narrative must include the purpose of the equipment and supplies and the basis for the estimates. The Budget Narrative must support the necessity of any rental costs and reasonableness in light of such factors as: rental costs of comparable

property, if any; market conditions in the area; alternatives available; and the type, life expectancy, condition, and value of the property leased.

- 5) Contractual (Subawards, Contracts and Consultants) – If applicable, specify the budget for the portion of the program to be passed through to any subrecipients. See 2 CFR 200 for assistance in determining whether the sub-tier entity is a subrecipient or contractor. The subrecipient budgets must align with the same requirements as the applicant’s budget, including those related to fringe and indirect costs.
- 6) Other Direct Costs – This may include other costs not elsewhere specified, such as report preparation costs, passports and visas fees, medical exams and inoculations, as well as any other miscellaneous costs which directly benefit the program proposed by the applicant. The applicant should indicate the subject, venue and duration of any proposed conferences and seminars, and their relationship to the objectives of the program, along with estimates of costs. Otherwise, the narrative should be minimal.
- 7) Indirect Costs – Applicants must indicate whether they are proposing indirect costs or will charge all costs directly. In order to better understand indirect costs please see Subpart E of 2 CFR 200. The application must identify which approach they are requesting and provide the applicable supporting information. Below are the most commonly used Indirect Cost Rate methods:

Method 1 - Direct Charge Only

Eligibility: Any applicant

Initial Application Requirements: See above on direct costs

Method 2 - Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA)

Eligibility: Any applicant with a NICRA issued by a USG Agency must use that NICRA

Initial Application Requirements: If the applicant has a current NICRA, submit your approved NICRA and the associated disclosed practices. If your NICRA was issued by an Agency other than USAID, provide the contact information for the approving Agency. Additionally, at the Agency’s discretion, a provisional rate may be set forth in the award subject to audit and finalization. See [USAID’s Indirect Cost Rate Guide for Non Profit Organizations](#) for further guidance.

Method 3 - De minimis rate of 10% of modified total direct costs (MTDC)

Eligibility: Any applicant that does not have a current NICRA

Initial Application Requirements: Costs must be consistently charged as either indirect or direct costs but may not be double charged or inconsistently charged as both. If chosen, this methodology once elected must be used consistently for all Federal awards until such time as

a non-Federal entity chooses to negotiate an indirect rate, which the non-Federal entity may apply to do at any time. The applicant must describe which cost elements it charges indirectly vs. directly. See 2 CFR 200 for further information.

Method 4 - Indirect Costs Charged as A Fixed Amount

Eligibility: Non-U.S. non-profit organizations without a NICRA may request, but approval is at the discretion of the AO.

Initial Application Requirements: Provide the proposed fixed amount and a worksheet that includes the following:

- Total costs incurred by the organization for the previous fiscal year and estimates for the current year.
- Indirect costs (common costs that benefit the day-to-day operations of the organization, including categories such as salaries and expenses of executive officers, personnel administration, and accounting, or that benefit and are identifiable to more than one program or activity, such as depreciation, rental costs, operations and maintenance of facilities, and telephone expenses) for the previous fiscal year and estimates for the current year
- Proposed method for prorating the indirect costs equitably and consistently across all programs and activities using a base that measures the benefits of that particular cost to each program or activity to which the cost applies.

If the applicant does not have an approved NICRA and does not elect to utilize the 10% de minimis rate, the Agreement Officer will provide further instructions and may request additional supporting information, including financial statements and audits, should the application still be under consideration after the merit review. USAID is under no obligation to approve the applicant's requested method.

**(e) Prior Approvals in accordance with 2 CFR 200.407**

Inclusion of an item of cost in the detailed application budget does not satisfy any requirements for prior approval by the Agency. If the applicant would like the award to reflect approval of any cost elements for which prior written approval is specifically required for allowability, the applicant must specify and justify that cost. See 2 CFR 200.407 for information regarding which cost elements require prior written approval.

**(f) Approval of Subawards**

The applicant must submit information for all subawards that it wishes to have approved at the time of award. For each proposed subaward the applicant must provide the following:

- Name of organization
- DUNS Number
- Confirmation that the subrecipient does not appear on the Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) list
- Confirmation that the subrecipient does not have active exclusions in the System for Award Management (SAM)
- Confirmation that the subrecipient is not listed in the United Nations Security designation list
- Confirmation that the subrecipient is not suspended or debarred
- Confirmation that the applicant has completed a risk assessment of the subrecipient, in accordance with 2 CFR 200.332(b)
- Any negative findings as a result of the risk assessment and the applicant's plan for mitigation.

#### **(g) Duns and Bradstreet and SAM Requirements**

USAID may not award to an applicant unless the applicant has complied with all applicable SAM requirements and has obtained the unique entity identifier (DUNS number). Each applicant (unless the applicant is an individual or Federal awarding agency that is exempted from requirements under 2 CFR 25.110(b) or (c), or has an exception approved by the Federal awarding agency under 2 CFR 25.110(d)) is required to:

1. Provide a valid DUNS number for the applicant and all proposed sub-recipients.
2. Be registered in SAM before submitting its application. SAM is streamlining processes, eliminating the need to enter the same data multiple times, and consolidating hosting to make the process of doing business with the government more efficient ([www.beta.sam.gov](http://www.beta.sam.gov)).
3. Continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active Federal award or an application or plan under consideration by a Federal awarding agency.

The registration process may take many weeks to complete. Therefore, applicants are encouraged to begin the process early. If an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements above by the time USAID is ready to make an award, USAID may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive an award and use that determination as a basis for making an award to another applicant.

DUNS number: <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform>

SAM registration: <http://www.beta.sam.gov>

Non-U.S. applicants can find additional resources for registering in SAM, including a Quick Start Guide and a video on how to obtain an NCAGE code, on [www.beta.sam.gov](http://www.beta.sam.gov), navigate to Help, then to International Registrants.

#### **(h) Branding Strategy & Marking Plan**

The apparently successful applicant will be asked to provide a Branding Strategy and Marking Plan to be evaluated and approved by the Agreement Officer and incorporated into any resulting award

#### **(i) Funding Restrictions**

Profit is not allowable for recipients or subrecipients under this award. See 2 CFR 200.331 for assistance in determining whether a sub-tier entity is a subrecipient or contractor.

Construction will not be authorized under this award.

USAID will not allow the reimbursement of pre-award costs under this award without the explicit written approval of the Agreement Officer.

Except as may be specifically approved in advance by the AO, all commodities and services that will be reimbursed by USAID under this award must be from the authorized geographic code specified in Section B.4 of this RFA and must meet the source and nationality requirements set forth in 22 CFR 228.

#### **(j) Conflict of Interest Pre-Award Term**

##### **Personal Conflict of Interest**

1. An actual or appearance of a conflict of interest exists when an applicant organization or an employee of the organization has a relationship with an Agency official involved in the competitive award decision-making process that could affect that Agency official's impartiality. The term "conflict of interest" includes situations in which financial or other personal considerations may compromise, or have the appearance of compromising, the obligations and duties of a USAID employee or recipient employee.

2. The applicant must provide conflict of interest disclosures when it submits an SF-424. Should the applicant discover a previously undisclosed conflict of interest after submitting the application, the applicant must disclose the conflict of interest to the AO no later than ten (10) calendar days following discovery.

### **Organizational Conflict of Interest**

The applicant must notify USAID of any actual or potential conflict of interest that they are aware of that may provide the applicant with an unfair competitive advantage in competing for this financial assistance award. Examples of an unfair competitive advantage include but are not limited to situations in which an applicant or the applicant's employee gained access to non-public information regarding a federal assistance funding opportunity, or an applicant or applicant's employee was substantially involved in the preparation of a federal assistance funding opportunity. USAID will promptly take appropriate action upon receiving any such notification from the applicant.

### **(k) Potential Request for Additional Documentation**

Upon consideration of award or during the negotiations leading to an award, applicants may be required to submit additional documentation deemed necessary for the AO to make an affirmative determination of responsibility (such as, bylaws, constitution, articles of incorporation, travel, procurement, financial management, accounting manual, and personnel policies and procedures, especially regarding salary, promotion, leave, differentials, etc.) Applicants should not submit this information with their applications. The information in this paragraph is provided so that applicants may become familiar with additional documentation that may be requested by the AO.

**[END OF SECTION D]**

## **SECTION E: APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION**

### **1. Merit Review Criteria**

The merit review criteria prescribed here are tailored to the requirements of this particular RFA. Applicants should note that these criteria serve to: (a) identify the significant matters which the applicants should address in their applications, and (b) set the standard against which all applications will be evaluated.

Technical and other factors will be evaluated relative to each other, as described here and prescribed by the Technical Application Format. The Technical Application will be rated by a Selection Committee (SC) using the criteria described in this section.

### **2. Review and Selection Process**

The Agreement Officer (AO) makes the final selection of the Selection Committee (SC) member. SC members will be USAID personnel (DHs and PSCs), also, representatives from the American Embassy, host government, or private sector individuals may be included as well.

#### **(a) Technical Merit Review**

USAID will conduct a merit review of all applications received that comply with the instructions in this RFA. Applications will be reviewed and evaluated in accordance with the following criteria shown in descending order of importance.

##### **1) Technical Approach**

The extent to which the applicant demonstrates technical soundness, clarity, innovation and flexibility to adjust to changing circumstances, attention to cross-cutting principles and sustainability of the program results, as laid out in Section A and Section D.5(d) of this RFA.

##### **2) Management Approach, Staffing and Key Personnel**

The degree to which the applicant's management approach convincingly addresses the requirements; the staffing plan includes personnel positions with an appropriate balance of managerial, technical, and operational skills sufficient to successfully implement the Award, and the Key Personnel have appropriate skills and experience to provide effective leadership for the successful implementation of the Award, as laid out in Section A and Section D.5(e) of this RFA.

##### **3) Organizational Experience and Capability**



The degree to which the applicant and all proposed subrecipients convincingly demonstrate experience and capability to implement the Award.

**(b) Business (Cost) Review**

The Agency will evaluate the cost application of the applicant(s) under consideration for an award as a result of the merit criteria review to determine whether the costs are allowable in accordance with the cost principles found in 2 CFR 200 Subpart E.

The Agency will also consider (1) the extent of the applicant's understanding of the financial aspects of the program and the applicant's ability to perform the activities within the amount requested; (2) whether the applicant's plans will achieve the program objectives with reasonable economy and efficiency; and (3) whether any special conditions relating to costs should be included in the award.

Proposed cost share, if provided, will be reviewed for compliance with the standards set forth in 2 CFR 200.306, 2 CFR 700.10, and the Standard Provision "Cost Sharing (Matching)" for U.S. entities, or the Standard Provision "Cost Share" for non-U.S. entities.

The AO will perform a risk assessment (2 CFR 200.206). The AO may determine that a pre-award survey is required to inform the risk assessment in determining whether the prospective recipient has the necessary organizational, experience, accounting and operational controls, financial resources, and technical skills – or ability to obtain them – in order to achieve the objectives of the program and comply with the terms and conditions of the award. Depending on the result of the risk assessment, the AO will decide to execute the award, not execute the award, or award with “specific conditions” (2 CFR 200.208).

**[END OF SECTION E]**

## SECTION F: FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

### 1. Federal Award Notices

Award of the agreement contemplated by this RFA cannot be made until funds have been appropriated, allocated and committed through internal USAID procedures. While USAID anticipates that these procedures will be successfully completed, potential applicants are hereby notified of these requirements and conditions for the award.

### 2. Administrative & National Policy Requirements

The resulting award from this RFA will be administered in accordance with the following policies and regulations.

For US organizations: [ADS 303](#), [2 CFR 700](#), [2 CFR 200](#), and [Standard Provisions for U.S. Non-governmental organizations](#).

For Non-US organizations: [Standard Provisions for Non-U.S. Non-governmental Organizations](#).

### 3. Reporting Requirements

The Recipient must adhere to all reporting requirements listed below. All plans and reports must be submitted in English. Documents must be submitted electronically by email. All reports must be submitted by the due date for review by the USAID Agreement Officer's Representative (AOR) designated by the Agreement Officer. The Agreement Officer and designated Acquisition & Assistance Specialist must be copied on each submission. The Applicant will consult the AOR on the format and expected content of reports prior to submission.

#### (a) Plans

- 1) **Annual Work Plan**: The Recipient shall submit an Annual Work Plan of its activities during the first year of the program within 45 days of the effective date of this Award for review, comments, or suggestions to the Agreement Officer's Representative (AOR) who will respond with comments/revisions or the approval within 10 days after the Annual Work Plan is submitted. The Recipient shall then submit the revised Work Plan to the AOR for approval not later than 15 days from receipt of USAID's comments and/or suggestions. Subsequent Annual Work Plans shall be submitted 30 days prior to commencement of the subsequent year of the Cooperative Agreement. The Work Plan shall include a timeline and benchmark indicators for achieving the objectives of each component of the program, all major activities that will be undertaken, rationale behind these activities, anticipated results of these efforts

and how they will be measured. A sub-section with details of collaboration with other USAID- funded programs and other donors shall also be included. A gender action plan is also required to be integrated as a component of the annual work plan,

The Recipient shall submit significant changes or revisions to the Work Plan to the USAID Agreement Officer's Representative (AOR) for his/her approval.

2) **Monitoring, Learning and Evaluation (MEL) Plan:** The Recipient shall submit a Monitoring, Learning and Evaluation (MEL) Plan within 90 days of the effective date of the award to the USAID Agreement Officer's Representative (AOR). The Recipient shall establish realistic expectations for what the project can produce in its various phases of implementation. The MEL Plan shall at a minimum include, and not be limited to the following:

- (1) the results to be achieved by the program.
- (2) qualitative or quantitative indicators to be used to measure achievement of the results.
- (3) the method of data collection to be used to obtain the indicator data.
- (4) baseline data and targets for each indicator by year.

The Recipient shall consult with USAID and the Impact Evaluation team while developing its MELP. Once developed, the MELP will be submitted to USAID for review and approved by the Agreement Officer's Representative (AOR).

3) **Close-out/Demobilization Plan:** Four months prior to the completion date of the Cooperative Agreement, a close-out/demobilization plan must be submitted to the USAID Agreement Officer for Approval with a copy to the AOR. The Plan must outline a clear phase-out exit strategy and timeline of execution, including a description of the methodology it will use in determining areas and levels of sustainability. The plan will also include a list of actions that are typically required for close-out activities to ensure that all activities are completed; conduct an analysis of progress to date and, if necessary, expedite timelines to ensure completion. The close-out plan must include:

- Current financial status report with a thorough pipeline analysis to ensure that there are sufficient funds available to finalize activities and complete all requirements.
- Final Financial Status Report timeline.
- A final inventory of residual non-expendable property, which was acquired or furnished under the cooperative agreement.
- A disposition report of the following types of property, along with a proposed disposition of such property: (1) All equipment that has a per unit current fair

market value at the end of this award of \$5,000 or more; (2) New/unused supplies with an aggregate current fair market value at the end of this award of \$5,000 or more. The plan will include proposed beneficiaries of the property as well as schedule for the transfers.

- A request for disposition instructions for any property acquired or furnished by the Government under the activity.
- Subcontractor/sub grantee/partnership phase out plan.
- Status of all program audit reports per the instrument's provisions.
- Final audit report timeline.
- Personnel phase-out timeline (who is expected to serve until when).
- Personnel phase-out plan (to include severance pay plan).

**(b) Financial Reporting:**

- 1) **Quarterly Financial Reports:** The Recipient shall submit the Standard Form (SF) SF-425 Federal Financial Report on a quarterly basis to the Financial Management Office and Agreement Officer's Representative, within 30 days following the end of each fiscal year quarter, regardless of the effective date of the Agreement. Each financial form shall be identified by the appropriate award number.
- 2) **Final Financial Report:** The original of the final financial report shall be submitted to the Paying Office, the Agreement Officer and the Agreement Officer's Representative not later than 90 calendar days after the estimated completion date of this award.

**(c) Program Performance Reporting**

- 1) **Quarterly Performance Reports:** The Recipient shall submit Quarterly Program Performance Reports to USAID during the duration of this Award. The quarterly performance reports are due 30 calendar days following the end of each fiscal year quarter, regardless of the effective date of the Agreement. Depending on the project start date, the first quarterly report may include somewhat more or less than one quarter's activities. The Recipient shall submit one copy of each Quarterly Program Performance Reports to the Agreement Officer's Representative (AOR) for her/his review and approval.

The quarterly reports shall describe project accomplishments and the progress made during the reporting period, include information on all activities, both ongoing and completed during the quarter, as well as any issues or problems that are affecting the delivery or timing of services provided by the Recipient. The reports shall also briefly present the following information:

- (i) Reasons why established goals were not met, if applicable.
- (ii) Other pertinent information including the status of finances and expenditures and, when appropriate, analysis and explanation of cost overruns or high unit costs.

The Recipient will report on activity performance quarterly, using a format agreed to with the AOR. The Recipient is encouraged to consult with the USAID Agreement Officer's Representative (AOR) in finalizing the reports.

- 2) **Annual Performance Report:** The annual performance report shall include the fourth quarter performance report and is due 30 calendar days following the end of each fiscal year. Annual Report will include performance reporting for the last quarter (July through September) as well as aggregated reporting for the entire fiscal year and will include the elements listed above, as well as a description of key lessons learned and how the lessons will be used to inform the coming year's Annual Work Plan. The annual report will also include the following information:

- An Executive Summary of major findings, challenges, and achievements
- Extent to which objectives and results in the Annual Work Plan were achieved;
- Highlights of major achievements.
- Significant implementation problems and challenges encountered during the year (if applicable) and mitigation measures taken to address these.
- Description of efforts to ensure coordination, collaboration, and information sharing during the reporting period and any problems encountered, agreements reached, and/or actions taken to ensure coordination with relevant stakeholders.
- Description of efforts and progress achieved with activities to address gender issues.
- Description of efforts and progress achieved with regards to sustainability of project activities.
- Progress achieved regarding MEL Plan indicators and targets for the fourth quarter and the entire fiscal year.
- Lessons learned, observations, and recommendations that might be relevant to the design and implementation of other related activities.
- Success stories, highlighting the role of USAID and the American people in improving opportunities for Serbia. Success stories must include quality photos that will be shared for public outreach purposes.

- 3) **Ad hoc, Interim Reporting:** Events may occur between the scheduled performance reporting dates that have significant impact upon the activity. In such cases, the Recipient must notify the AOR and AO as soon as the following types of conditions become known:

- Problems, delays, or adverse conditions, which will materially impair the ability to meet the objective of the Federal award. This disclosure must include a statement of the action taken, or contemplated, and any assistance needed to resolve the situation.
- Waste, fraud, or abuse detected in the activity, and actions being taken to investigate the situation as well as to mitigate future occurrences. This reporting does NOT absolve the Recipient of the duty to disclose waste, fraud, or abuse to the USAID Inspector General Hotline (ig.hotline@usaid.gov); and
- Events or conditions that could have negative political or public relations perceptions affecting the activity. These include statements in the press or on social media, relationships with local officials or actors, etc. The Recipient will work with the AOR to determine a response strategy and to assist in mitigating any negative effects.

On the other hand, the Ad hoc reporting might also be required occasionally by the AOR, such as for example during Portfolio Review, or asking for a Monthly Success Story to be submitted for the purpose of promoting our activities in Washington, or similar events.

Regular activity monitoring events and communication will be established between the Implementing partner and the AOR.

- 4) **Final Report:** The Recipient is required to submit a Final Report within 90 calendar days following the estimated completion or termination date of this award. The final performance report shall contain at a minimum the following information:
- (i) An executive summary of the accomplishments and results achieved.
  - (ii) An in-depth analysis of progress and results that synthesizes achievements that contributed towards program objectives. This section should clearly describe activities, major accomplishments and results achieved under the award.
  - (iii) Final data, compared to baseline data, for all indicators included in the monitoring, learning and evaluation plan. This section should include disaggregated data by gender, regions, disenfranchised groups and other relevant groups identified.
  - (iv) A summary of problems/obstacles encountered during the implementation, and how those obstacles were addressed and overcome if appropriate.
  - (v) Lessons learned, best practices, and other findings from the implementation of the program, along with recommendations for future programming under each of the program objectives.

***A list of all reports, publications, evaluations, and information and media products produced under this agreement, as well as confirmation that all products were submitted to the USAID Development Experience Clearinghouse (DEC). For DEC submission instructions, see***

**Standard Provision M.8 for Non-US NGOs and M.21 for US NGOs, entitled “SUBMISSIONS TO THE DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCE CLEARINGHOUSE AND PUBLICATIONS (JUNE 2012)”.**

**4. Environmental Compliance**

- (a) The Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended, Section 117 requires that the impact of USAID’s activities on the environment be considered and that USAID include environmental sustainability as a central consideration in designing and carrying out its development programs. This mandate is codified in Federal Regulations (22 CFR 216) and in USAID’s Automated Directives System (ADS) Chapters 201 (<http://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1870/201.pdf>) and 204 (<http://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1865/204.pdf>), which, in part, require that the potential environmental impacts of USAID-financed activities are identified prior to a final decision to proceed and that appropriate environmental safeguards are adopted for all activities. The Recipient’s environmental compliance obligations under these regulations and procedures are specified in the following paragraphs of this cooperative agreement.
- (b) In addition, the Recipient must comply with host country environmental regulations unless otherwise directed in writing by USAID. In case of conflict between host country and USAID regulations, the latter shall govern.
- (c) No activity funded under this cooperative agreement will be implemented unless an environmental threshold determination, as defined by 22 CFR 216, has been reached for that activity, as documented in the approved Request for Categorical Exclusion (RCE).
- (d) A Request for Categorical Exclusion (RCE) **DCN\_2021\_SRB\_009** has been approved for this activity, see Attachment 2 to this RFA. It has been determined that the activity is fully within the class of Categorical Exclusions. As per 22 CFR 216.2(c)(2), neither an Initial Environmental Examination, nor an Environmental Assessment is required for an activity which is determined to fall within one or more of the categories listed at 22 CFR 216.2(c)(2)(i) education, technical assistance or training programs; and at 22 CFR 216.2(c)(2)(iii) analysis, studies, academic research, workshops and meetings.
- (e) As part of its Annual Work Plan, the Recipient, in collaboration with the AOR and Mission Environmental Officer (MEO), shall review all ongoing and planned activities under this cooperative agreement to determine if they are within the scope of the approved Regulation 216 environmental documentation. If the Recipient plans any new activities outside the scope of the approved Regulation 216 environmental documentation, it shall prepare an amendment to the documentation for USAID review and approval. No such new activities

shall be undertaken prior to receiving written USAID approval of environmental documentation amendments. Any ongoing activities found to be outside the scope of the approved Regulation 216 environmental documentation shall be halted until an amendment to the documentation is submitted and written approval is received from USAID.

- (f) Subaward Provision: A provision for subawards is included under this award; therefore, the Recipient will be required to use an Environmental Screening Report (ESR) or Environmental Review (ER) checklist using impact assessment tools to screen grant proposals to ensure the funded proposals will result in no adverse environmental impact, to develop mitigation measures, as necessary, and to specify monitoring and reporting. Use of the ERF or ER checklist is called for when the nature of the grant proposals to be funded is not well enough known to make an informed decision about their potential environmental impacts, yet due to the type and extent of activities to be funded, any adverse impacts are expected to be easily mitigated. Implementation of sub-grant activities cannot go forward until the ERF or ER checklist is completed and approved by USAID. Recipient is responsible for ensuring that mitigation measures specified by the ESR or ER checklist process are implemented.

The Recipient will be responsible for periodic reporting to the USAID AOR, as specified in this award.

**[END OF SECTION F]**



## **SECTION G: FEDERAL AWARDING AGENCY CONTACT(S)**

### **1. RFA Points of Contact**

See Section D.1

### **2. Acquisition and Assistance Ombudsman**

The A&A Ombudsman helps ensure equitable treatment of all parties who participate in USAID's acquisition and assistance process. The A&A Ombudsman serves as a resource for all organizations who are doing or wish to do business with USAID. Please visit this page for additional information: <https://www.usaid.gov/work-usaid/acquisition-assistance-ombudsman>

[The A&A Ombudsman may be contacted via: Ombudsman@usaid.gov](mailto:Ombudsman@usaid.gov)

**[END OF SECTION G]**

## **SECTION H: OTHER INFORMATION**

USAID reserves the right to fund any or none of the applications submitted. The Agreement Officer is the only individual who may legally commit the Government to the expenditure of public funds. Any award and subsequent incremental funding will be subject to the availability of funds and continued relevance to Agency programming.

### Applications with Proprietary Data

Applicants who include data that they do not want disclosed to the public for any purpose or used by the U.S. Government except for evaluation purpose, should mark the cover page with the following:

“This application includes data that must not be duplicated, used, or disclosed – in whole or in part – for any purpose other than to evaluate this application. If, however, an award is made as a result of – or in connection with – the submission of this data, the U.S. Government will have the right to duplicate, use, or disclose the data to the extent provided in the resulting award. This restriction does not limit the U.S. Government’s right to use information contained in this data if it is obtained from another source without restriction. The data subject to this restriction are contained in sheets {insert sheet numbers}.”

Additionally, the applicant must mark each sheet of data it wishes to restrict with the following:

“Use or disclosure of data contained on this sheet is subject to the restriction on the title page of this application.”

**[END OF SECTION H]**

## **SECTION I: STANDARD PROVISIONS**

(Note: the full text of these provisions may be found at:

<https://www.usaid.gov/ads/policy/300/303maa> and

<https://www.usaid.gov/ads/policy/300/303mab>). The actual Standard Provisions included in the award will be dependent on the organization that is selected. The award will include the latest Mandatory Provisions for either U.S. or non-U.S. Nongovernmental organizations. The award will also contain the following “required as applicable” Standard Provisions:

**Please note that the resulting award will include all standard provisions (both mandatory and required as applicable) in full text.**

**[END OF SECTION I]**