



Issue Date: May 26, 2022

Deadline for Question: June 8, 2022, 17:00 Belgrade time

Closing Date: June 30, 2022, 17:00 Belgrade time

**Subject: Notice for Funding Opportunity (NOFO)
Request for Applications (RFA) # 72016922RFA00003**

Activity Title: Strengthening Citizen Engagement 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 Strengthening Citizen Engagement Activity. Eligibility for this award is restricted to Serbian local entities.

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 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, 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 or accessing the RFA, please contact the Grants.gov Helpdesk at 1-800-518-4726 or via email at support@grants.gov for technical assistance.

USAID may not award to an applicant unless the applicant has complied with all applicable Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) 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.

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,

Patricia Siaso
Agreement Officer

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SECTION A: PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

This 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.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION (PD)

A.1 Introduction

USAID/Serbia is seeking assistance to help strengthen Serbia’s civic activism and increase citizen engagement in community development and reform processes. The new Strengthening Citizen Engagement Activity program will accomplish this through capacity building, technical support, cross sectoral cooperation activities, and a grants program supporting formal and informal civic groups and actors.

USAID estimates a total estimated budget of up to \$10 million over five years, depending on the availability of funds and the interventions proposed, to be implemented by local Serbian civil society organizations, with an estimated \$5 million for the grants program.

A.2 Background

Informed and engaged citizens are essential for a democratic society. Serbia unfortunately faces multifaceted challenges that have slowed down its democratic progress and achievement of its goals of Euro-Atlantic integration and accelerated economic growth. According to the most recent VDem Report¹, in 2021 Serbia continued its decline in liberal democracy while other indexes such as Freedom House’s Freedom in the World Report now classifies Serbia as a partly free country due to the growing concentration of power around the ruling party, erosion of civic and political liberties and harassment of civil society organizations and independent journalists.² At the same time, research focused on citizen participation, such as the Audit of Political Engagement³, has noted a slight increase in citizen participation in Serbia over the years with the number of citizens initiating a civic action⁴ increasing from two percent in 2018 to 11 percent in 2020 and the number of citizens participating in civic action increasing from seven percent in 2018 to 20 percent in 2020. Still a very large number of citizens, as many as two thirds (68%) state that they have not participated in any action or initiative to solve a problem in their local community. Despite this, civil society in Serbia currently remains one of the main drivers of democratic resilience as democratic institutions and media freedom remain weak and pluralism continues to decline.

¹ https://www.v-dem.net/media/filer_public/74/8c/748c68ad-f224-4cd7-87f9-8794add5c60f/dr_2021_updated.pdf

² <https://freedomhouse.org/country/serbia/freedom-world/2020>

³ https://cрта.rs/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/CRTA_Atitudes-of-Serbian-citizens-about-participation-in-democratic-processes-2020_-audit.pdf

⁴ Civic action can be defined as a form of citizenship practice consisting mainly of collective initiatives aimed at implementing rights, taking care of common goods or empowering citizens. It can be addressed both to governmental or private interlocutors as well as to the general public.

In response to these findings, over the past four years USAID/Serbia has supported a number of activities focused on stimulating different forms of citizen engagement at the local and national level through provision of technical assistance, advocacy, outreach, resource mobilization support, and a grants program. This assistance has included support for formal and informal groups at the local level and advocacy engagement across a variety of topics, resource mobilization and support for cross-sectoral partnerships via public private dialogue and support for corporate-social initiatives. Lessons learned from this support reveal that:

- Citizen engagement in civic action has improved but still requires technical support to grow, organize and strategically advocate for government accountability.
- Small advocacy victories are possible at the local level, but challenges remain in turning those into policy reforms at the national level.
- With the increase in the number of new formal and informal citizen groups emerging at the local level, there is an increased need to improve connections and collaboration between smaller, less-experienced actors and national, more-experienced ones through genuine partnerships and mentorship. Top-down approaches to collaboration would not be welcomed by new activists.
- The number of youth, especially university students, engaged in the civil society sector is limited. As such, the sector lacks new voices and perspectives needed to stimulate pluralism as well as expertise in areas related to new international law practices, economy, and public health issues.
- Human rights and discourse about democratic values such as justice, common good, equality, diversity, etc. is almost completely missing from public narratives. Traditional approaches to messaging about human rights and democratic values contribute negatively to public perception regarding civil society and should be approached through new and innovative approaches.
- Mobilization of financial and non-financial resources for civic initiatives is important for resiliency of democratic actors and citizen engagement but should be further expanded among actors working on human rights issues, government accountability and with marginalized groups. The concept of public good and public benefit is still missing from legislation, which continues to hamper the enabling environment for giving in Serbia.

The Strengthening Citizen Engagement activity (SCE) is designed to complement other USAID programs by assisting citizens to effectively articulate and advocate for issues they care about and to help them stay informed of developments regarding their individual political, economic, and social goals. As such, SCE is expected to identify and utilize linkages with other [USAID programs](#), especially the following. In 2022, USAID/Serbia launched the Civil Society Resiliency Strengthening (CSRS) Activity focused on improving the ability and capacity of civil society organizations to respond to shrinking civic space and improving the enabling environment so that it may continue to foster informed citizen participation in democratic processes. In 2019, USAID Serbia also launched its [Political Process Strengthening Activity \(PPSA\)](#), whose overall objective is to foster political pluralism in Serbia by working with political parties, state institutions and civic actors on various aspects of political participation and election related process. SCE will cooperate with CSRS and PPSA to ensure potential synergies and that there is no overlap in areas related to increasing citizen participation. SCE will not work on activities related to elections, nor any work with political parties, citizen groups or individuals engaged in election related political activity including those engaged in organizing or supporting

public protests. The primary beneficiaries of the SCE activity will be citizens and civil society organizations and informal groups, as well as local communities.

A.3 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 external stresses, and sustainably advance to self-reliance.

SCE will contribute to USAID’s Development Objective focused on increasing the resiliency of democratic actors through building government responsiveness to citizen needs, building citizen capacity to demand change, and mitigating external stresses. USAID believes that if a broader range of democratic actors are engaged and able to act in the public interest and can resist external stressors, then Serbia’s commitment to self-reliance and Euro-Atlantic integration will improve.

Under the Serbia Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS), Intermediate Result 1.2, activities will support the demand side of democratic reform by providing more effective channels for citizens to take an active role in society, so they are better informed and able to achieve their individual political, economic, and life goals. Through Sub IR 1.2.3 “Strengthening the Resilience of Civil Society”, USAID intends to help civil society organizations, including youth and women’s organizations, to better aggregate and represent citizen interests and to engage in dialogue with the local or national authorities regarding those interests and the overall enabling environment for civil society. Such engagement is expected to increase the accountability of government institutions and align government programs to better meet the needs of the broader public.

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_CDCS_2020.pdf

A4. Program Objectives, Principles and Anticipated Results

Overall goal: The overall goal of SCE is to strengthen Serbia’s civic activism and increase citizen engagement in community development and reform processes.

For the purpose of this activity USAID defines *citizen engagement* as any individual or group activity addressing issues of public concern and improving the quality of life in a community.

Through provision of technical assistance, capacity building and re-granting, the SCE activity is expected to expand and diversify support for citizen activity and advocacy, to empower and

engage new youth and female civic leaders and to continue building on successful efforts related to resource mobilization for community initiatives.

The SCE Activity is divided in two budget sections: program activities, estimated \$5million and the grants program, estimated \$5million. 50% of the program activity portion will be managed by the prime awardee either through direct implementation or through management of sub-awards to sub-recipient organizations.

The remaining 50% of the overall budget, an estimated \$5 million, must be used for the grants program supporting formal and informal civic groups and actors.

Given USAID's new CDCS, the following **principles** should guide programmatic choices:

- **Supporting locally led development**

The activity should make the best use of Serbia's existing local expertise and foster locally led development in order to ensure sustainability of efforts and local ownership. International expertise and knowledge should be utilized only to augment and support Serbian civil society through genuine partnership and observation of the "do no harm" principle if there is need for expertise not available among local civil society experts. Support for mobilization of domestic financial resources and private sector engagement should also be incorporated throughout proposed activities.

- **Flexible and Adaptive Approaches**

Given the rapidly changing environment in Serbia, the activity should take on a very flexible and adaptive approach seeking to identify opportunities as they arise, responding quickly to new developments, and testing out different approaches.

- **Fostering Inclusive Development**

While support for smaller, local and informal groups has increased over the past couple of years, support for civic actors working with marginalized groups remains limited. As such, approaches to programming should make concentrated efforts to foster solidarity, inclusive development and engagement of marginalized groups across both national and local level.

- **Private Sector Engagement**

The proposed activities should engage private sector actors in developing and tackling different approaches to fostering citizen engagement and community development. It should also support the mobilization of domestic financial resources and support further development of any relevant financing mechanisms that can allow for more significant and long term investments for community development.

- **Gender Parity and Mainstreaming**

Proposed interventions are expected to promote inclusion to maximize developmental impact. Proposals must integrate appropriate recommendations from [USAID/Serbia's Gender Analysis](#) in their technical approach and monitoring and evaluation plan. The Recipient is expected to conduct a gender assessment to collect new relevant findings on women's position in civil society and in processes led by civil society. The assessment should reflect on civil society's approaches to promoting women voices and gender mainstreaming overall. The Recipient will be expected to develop and meet gender equity objectives in conjunction with other programmatic outcomes throughout the life of the activity, so that the activity can be as inclusive and responsive to gender issues as possible. Interventions that directly or indirectly involve youth and their out-migration are strongly encouraged.

In order to achieve the stated goal, the program will engage in the four objectives described below. The following is the approximate weight of importance, a list of expected results and illustrative activities that could be considered – other innovative ideas of results and activities to achieve the stated objectives are welcome

(40%) Objective 1: Broad based, diversified citizen activism increased

As part of its past civil society programming, USAID has successfully supported a number of local community initiatives and organizations for the purpose of strengthening community engagement and promoting ownership, empowerment, trust and the resolution of locally identified issues. Nevertheless, many of these initiatives and groups are still in nascent form, require further assistance to ensure their sustainability as channels for citizen engagement and would benefit from further expansion and diversification of engaged actors and audiences. Supporting local citizen engagement can contribute to building trust and cooperation among different actors, thus strengthening the social fabric of local communities, and laying a foundation for additional locally sourced and led reform efforts that can have a positive impact on citizen participation in democratic processes writ large. Through this objective, USAID is seeking to support approaches that will strengthen new and established, formal and informal local citizen groups, expand their constituency base to non-traditional audiences and support efforts to engage other groups and citizens in various democratic processes. Applicants should ensure that proposed approaches advance democratic values such as freedoms of expression, human rights, diversity, transparency, rule of law and common good. Under this objective, USAID expects that proposed approaches include a grants program supporting formal and informal civic groups and actors.

Illustrative activities: support for community activism initiatives, local and national civic initiative support, engagement and mobilization of non-traditional stakeholders, creating linkages between civil society organizations and non-traditional audiences, facilitation of cooperation and connection between new civic groups, grant support for issues of importance to underserved communities, expansion and facilitation of resource mobilization for civil society initiatives, increasing private sector cooperation with civil society on democracy promotion;

(25%) Objective 2: Citizen participation in decision making increased

Under this objective USAID will support organizations and citizen groups interested in working on a variety of citizen participation and policy advocacy issues in a more inclusive and strategic way that is grounded in citizen support and engagement. Activities should contribute to an improved understanding of citizens' role in social and civic engagement. Technical assistance and re-granting is intended to support various efforts related to citizen participation and policy advocacy at different levels that effectively engage citizens and bring them together with other relevant stakeholders, including public and government institutions, in the identification, design, implementation and evaluation of developed policies. This line of effort is intended to support and facilitate an inclusive and transparent approach to policy development, decision making, advocacy and government oversight efforts in a manner that fosters constructive dialogue between citizens, civil society, private sector actors and decision makers at the local, regional, and national levels. Activities under this objective should not focus on advocacy surrounding the enabling environment for civil society as this is being done under the USAID Civil Society Resilience Activity nor government oversight efforts related to elections.

Illustrative activities: polling on identification and prioritization of policy issues based on citizen input, outreach to citizens to inform policy and budget recommendations, utilization of existing or creating new mechanisms and tools for engaging citizens in discussion with elected officials or participation in decision making process, modernizing approaches to public policy debate and discussion, inclusion of non-traditional actors and marginalized groups in policy and decision making process, support for government oversight and watchdog activities, facilitation of dialogue between government institutions, citizens, civic and business actors, and increasing private sector engagement in policy development.

(20%) Objective 3: New civic leaders and voices empowered

Under this objective, USAID will support activities that foster development of new civic leaders, empowerment of youth within the sector and look to infuse the sector with new civic voices and perspectives. Globalization, technological advances, and the spread of social networking offer new opportunities for youth to connect and become more active participants in development, while at the same time making their lives more complex and challenging. In Serbia, many civic actors note that over the course of the last decade, there have been less youth, especially university students from the law, political sciences and economic faculties, that choose to become engaged in the civil society sector. In part this is due to a lack of university programs and clinics that promote cooperation between students and civil society organizations, however, a big reason is also the negative public perception that continues to persist regarding the civil society sector. This lack of new voices and talent within the civil society sector hampers the ability of the sector to remain relevant among the youth population, to advance innovation and creativity in its approaches and to keep up with new global trends and expertise in emerging fields related to international law, economics, cyber security, public health and environmental protection. Also, the lack of youth engagement in civil society has had a negative effect on building the youth constituency which should be one of the main anchors for the sectors. For these reasons, USAID will support activities intended to engage more youth in the work of civil society, to foster their empowerment to support technical assistance for youth capacity building and mentoring respecting principles of locally led development, USAID's Youth in Development

Policy⁵ and positive youth development (PYD)⁶ framework. Activities should focus on fostering youth participation and engagement in the civil society sector and not on fostering civic leaders among political parties. For the purpose of this activity, youth are defined as those between the ages of 14 and 30.

Illustrative activities: internship programs for university students in civil society organizations; young civic leaders training and mentoring programs; networking support among younger generations of activists from different sectors (CS, media, arts, legal, econ, IT); project and challenge grants; youth camps, other skills and network building activities.

(15%) Objective 4: Mobilization of resources for civic initiatives expanded

Over the past four years, USAID has invested significant efforts and resources towards improving the enabling environment for giving in Serbia through the “Framework for Giving Activity”. This activity has succeeded in advancing public awareness and engagement in giving, increasing the amount of resources mobilized for common good, expanding the number of stakeholders engaged in giving and advancing some policy frameworks related to giving. Nonetheless, policy challenges related to VAT exemptions on donations still persist, a number of civic actors focused on human rights and government accountability continue to be hesitant regarding public fundraising and private sector actors continue to prefer one off investment as opposed to long term support for civic actors. As such, activities under this objective should look to build on achieved results in this area and to continue furthering policy dialogue, civic actor capacity and overall resource mobilization infrastructure in Serbia.

Illustrative activities: expansion of platforms and tools for giving, support for policy dialogue around VAT reform and public good definitions, fundraising capacity support for groups working on human rights and government accountability issues, increasing longer term private sector investment in civic initiatives, advocacy and community development, and expansion of public outreach and engagement in giving for public good.

A.5 Activity Monitoring Evaluation and Learning Plan (AMELP) guidelines

The application shall contain an illustrative AMELP responding to objectives and expected results as set forth in this Program Description. The 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. Applicants will propose indicators which will assist in managing activity performance. The AMELP should contain 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. A log

⁵ https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1870/Youth_in_Development_Policy_0.pdf

⁶ PYD framework illustrates that to achieve the vision of healthy, productive and engaged youth: 1) youth should have the necessary resources, skills and competencies to achieve desired outcomes (“assets”); 2) youth perceive and have the ability to employ their assets and aspirations to make or influence their own decisions about their lives and set their own goals, as well as to act upon those decisions in order to achieve desired outcomes (“agency”); 3) youth are engaged as a source of change for their own and for their communities’ positive development (“contribution”); 4) youth are surrounded by an enabling environment that develops and supports their assets, agency, access to services, and opportunities, and strengthens their ability to avoid risks and to stay safe, secure, and be protected and live without fear of violence or retribution. An enabling environment encourages and recognizes youth, while promoting their social and emotional competence to thrive. The term “environment” should be interpreted broadly and includes social (e.g., relationships with peers and adults), normative (e.g., attitudes, norms and beliefs), structural (e.g., laws, policies, programs services, and systems) and physical (e.g., safe, supportive spaces).

frame with overall goal, objectives, outcomes and illustrative indicators should be included in the AMELP. The proposed AMELP should include gender and youth indicators where appropriate. Applicants should consult USAID ADS 205 to learn more about relevant gender indicators and integrating gender equality in programming. The applicant shall also include information as to how it proposes to tackle learning and program adaptation.

A.6 Coordination with other USAID programs and other donors

Close coordination and regular consultation with USAID are expected. This activity will coordinate closely with USAID activities on civil society, media, political processes and government accountability, as well as economic growth in order to be used as possible ways to educate stakeholders on issues of citizen concern and areas to champion for reforms. Activities include, but are not limited to, the USAID's Civil Society Resilience Strengthening Activity, USAID Political Process Strengthening Activity, as well as the new USAID Public Procurement Activity.

A.7 Gender, Youth and Minority Considerations

Gender dynamics are important for ensuring democratic and inclusive societies. In Serbia women, youth, persons with disabilities and LGBTQI+ persons continue to face discrimination, harassment, and violence, which prevents them from fulfilling their potentials as active members of society. The demand side of democratic reform involves empowering all citizens equally and building their knowledge on how to take an active role in society, so they are better informed and able to achieve their individual political, economic, and life goals. Through this activity, USAID will support both furthering gender considerations as an outcome and incorporating gender dynamics and considerations across all activities. Additionally, the activity will promote the participation of persons with disabilities, LGBTQI+ communities, women, youth, and other marginalized groups. The applicant shall note how proposed activities will work towards this and how impact will be evaluated and assessed.

A.8 Public Awareness Plan

The applicant should note its general approach to communication of the activity as well as any specific approach, including mainstream and social media, they plan to utilize to ensure stories receive coverage given Serbia's restrictive media environment. A more detailed communication, branding and marketing plan will be developed at a later stage if selected.

A.9 Grants Program

A grants program, overseen by the recipient, will be established through the Strengthening Citizen Engagement activity to support formal and informal civic groups and actors on grassroots and local initiatives. The total amount for the grants program is estimated to be \$5 million.

[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 intends to provide approximately **\$10,000,000** in total USAID funding over a **5-year period**.

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 mid-October 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 up to five (5) positions of the recipient employees working under the award).
- 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); and
 - USAID monitoring to authorize specified kinds of direction or redirection because of interrelationships with other projects.
- USAID authority to immediately halt a construction activity.

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 Strengthening Citizen Engagement 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 Entities

This activity is restricted to the following Serbian local entities: for-profit, and nonprofit non-governmental organizations, and institutions of higher education.

For the purposes of this section, local entity means an individual, a corporation, a nonprofit organization, or another body of persons that:

- (1) is legally organized under the laws of;
- (2) has as its principal place of business or operations in;
- (3) is majority owned by individuals who are citizens or lawful permanent residents of; and
- (4) managed by a governing body the majority of who are citizens or lawful permanent residents of a country receiving assistance from funds appropriated under title III of this Act.

For purposes of this section, “majority-owned” and “managed by” include, without limitation, beneficiary interests and the power, either directly or indirectly, whether exercised or exercisable, to control the election, appointment, or tenure of the organization's managers or a majority of the organization's governing body by any means.”

While local for-profit firms may participate, 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. This is discussed more specifically in Automated Directives System (ADS) 303sai “Profit Under USAID Assistance Instruments,” which can be found at this link:

<https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1868/303sai.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 mandatory under this RFA.

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

SAM.gov Requirements can be found under [this link](#). As of April 4, 2022, the federal government has moved away from the DUNS Number as its official entity identifier and replacing it with the new Unique Entity Identifier (UEI), which can be generated in [SAM.gov](#). 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: Armend Aliu
Title: A&A Specialist
Email: aaliu@usaid.gov

Name: Branislav Bulatovic
Title: A&A Specialist
Email: 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:

- USAID will not review any pages in excess of the page limits noted in the subsequent sections. Please ensure that applications comply with the page limitations.
- Written in English
- 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.
- 10 point font can be used for graphs and charts. Tables, however, must comply with the 12 point Times New Roman requirement. It is expected that tables will not take a substantial part of the application.
- Submitted via Microsoft Word or PDF formats, except budget files which must be submitted in Microsoft Excel.
- The estimated start date identified in Section B of this RFA must be used in the cost application.
- The technical application must be a searchable and editable Word or PDF format as appropriate.
- The Cost Schedule must include an Excel spreadsheet 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. File size must not exceed 25 MB. The size of each attachment is not limited as long as the total size of each individual email does not exceed 25 MB.

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) 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.

(d) Technical Approach (included in the page limit)

The Technical Approach should outline the program activities that respond to identified needs and opportunities of the civil society sector in Serbia based on demonstrated understanding of the guiding principles as stated in section A4. of the RFA.

The proposed technical approach should demonstrate technical soundness, clarity, innovation and flexibility to adjust to changing circumstances, attention to cross-cutting objectives, build upon past successes and or existing opportunities, coordination with other large civil society programs, especially USAID funded, and plans for sustainability of the program results. The proposed approach should make note of its general communication and public outreach strategy as well as, to the greatest extent possible, the approach should emphasize engagement across all Serbia and not only to Belgrade and other major cities such as Nis and Novi Sad.

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

- The technical approach should clearly outline the strategy for the grants program, where approximately 50% of the Activity budget will be towards various lines of efforts across objectives.
- The local context, key stakeholders (drivers and barriers to change), root causes, issues, and priorities faced by civil society 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. Explain how the approach will emphasize engagement across all Serbia and not only to Belgrade and other major cities such as Nis and Novi Sad.
- Public Awareness Approach: General approach to communication of the activity as well as any specific approach, including mainstream and social media, they plan to utilize 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.

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

This section shall include the following components:

Management Approach

The proposed management approach should demonstrate that the team structure is appropriate to implement the proposed technical approach, and ensure program effectiveness as well as efficiency. Proposed management approach should engage a range of local partners via informal or formal partnerships and coalitions that have the knowledge, capacity and ability to contribute to the achievement of activity objectives and that are likely to have cross sectoral traction across civil society, media, public and private sectors.

Beyond a narrative description, an organizational chart must clearly demonstrate delineation of authority, roles and responsibilities among the core project team, both full-time and non-full time staff, for prime and all subrecipients or partners. The application should also describe its management approach to the proposed program activities and the grants program.

Key Personnel

Applicants may propose up to four (4) 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 fostering citizen activism, civic leadership, mobilization of resources, citizen participation and organizational capacity building.
- Technical capacity and experience in managing a number of small grants, large and small-scale, to formal and informal groups as well as capacity to issue rapid response funding if needed.
- Administrative and financial management capacity to manage and oversee a large number of partners through the grants program.
- Ability to manage a staff and wider team of diverse partners making best use of their knowledge, capacities and resources in a way that fosters genuine partnership and joint action.
- Demonstrated experience in working with Serbian civil society.
- MEL capacity to measure and capture outcomes and results across a wide range of beneficiaries.
- Experience with previous USAID programming is an asset.

Commitment to gender equality and inclusivity in terms of overall staffing and key personnel is strongly encouraged.

(f) Organizational Experience and Capability

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

- Organizational experience in developing and managing complex civil society focused programs of a similar size and complexity, particularly in transitional countries,
- Prior experience in working with international donors, preferably in Eastern Europe and how this expertise will help in achieving the program objectives.

- Capacity to support multiple and complex field operations.
- 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: 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**.

- 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:

Instructions for SF-424	http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/form-instructions/sf-424-instructions.html
Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424)	https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/forms/sf-424-family.html
Instructions for SF-424A	http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/form-instructions/sf-424a-instructions.html

Budget Information (SF-424A)	https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/forms/sf-424-family.html
Instructions for SF-424B	http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/form-instructions/sf-424b-instructions.html
Assurances (SF-424B)	https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/forms/sf-424-family.html

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/ads/policy/300/303mav>
- (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 activity 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 activity.

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

- 1) Personnel/Salaries – 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. 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 and Allowances (if applicable) – If the applicant has a fringe benefit rate approved by an agency of the U.S. Government, must use such a rate and provide evidence of its approval. If the applicant does not have a fringe benefit rate approved, must propose a rate and explain how the rate was determined. 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. Allowances, when proposed, must be broken down by specific type and by position. Applicants must explain all assumptions in the Budget Narrative.
- 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, as applicable) – 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
- Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number generated from [SAM.gov](https://sam.gov)
- 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) 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 (UEI). 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 UEI 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.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.

SAM registration: <http://www.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.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

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.

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 Technical Approach will be evaluated in terms of the extent to which it outlines the program activities that respond to identified needs and opportunities of the civil society sector in Serbia and demonstrates understanding of the guiding principles as stated in section A4. as well as the extent to which the technical approach demonstrates technical soundness, clarity, innovation and flexibility including other required information as described in Section D.5(d) of this RFA.

2. Management Approach, Staffing and Key Personnel

The Management Approach will be evaluated in terms of the extent to which the proposed team structure is appropriate to implement the proposed technical approach, and ensure program effectiveness as well as efficiency. The extent to which the proposed management approach engages a range of local partners that have the knowledge, capacity and ability to contribute to the achievement of activity objectives.

The extent to which applicant's proposed key personnel convincingly addresses an appropriate balance of managerial and technical experience and operational skills, sufficient to successfully implement the Activity, as laid out in Section D.5(e) of this RFA.

3. Organizational Experience and Capability

Organizational Experience and Capability will be evaluated in terms of the extent to which the applicant and all proposed subrecipients and/or partners convincingly demonstrate experience and capability to implement the Activity.

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 draft Monitoring, Learning and Evaluation (MEL) Plan within 60 days of the effective date of the award, for review, comments, or suggestions to the Agreement Officer's Representative (AOR) who will provide support to the final version approval after the draft MEL Plan is submitted. The Recipient shall establish realistic expectations for what the activity 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 activity 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 activity 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 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) Request for Categorical Exclusion (RCE) **DCN: 2022-SRB-001** 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 the grants program 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]

[END OF RFA]