

Community Self-Reliance Activity
ANNUAL PROGRAM STATEMENT (APS)

Issuance Date: November 27, 2019

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Introduction

USAID North Macedonia invites concept papers from local resource organizations¹ (LROs) for assistance awards that advance locally led development in North Macedonia. ***Locally led development refers to the extent to which local actors are empowered to lead priority-setting, decision-making, management, measurement, and other processes toward improving systems and outcomes for development.***

This Annual Program Statement (APS), entitled Community Self Reliance Activity (CSRA) is a mechanism to support development approaches that are responsive to local priorities and led by local actors. It will support North Macedonia's Journey to Self-Reliance² by empowering local actors to take the lead in identifying and addressing development challenges in their own communities³. Under this APS, USAID/North Macedonia intends to fund flexible and innovative approaches to locally led development by facilitating awards to local and non-traditional partners.

This APS serves as a funding opportunity announcement for locally led development **concept papers**. Interested Applicants must respond to the CSRA Program Description purpose and objectives outlined in the Attachment A.

_____/s/
Edward Acevedo
Agreement Officer

¹ For the purpose of this APS, local resource organization is defined as a local organization (civil society organization, private sector companies, faith-based or religious organizations, academic institutions, etc.) that is widely networked either within a specific geographic region and/or communities or around a specific issue, for example environment, youth development, human rights, etc., and that can mobilize a constituency, advocate effectively with local or national government, mobilize resources, and connect a variety of stakeholders and partners to identify, solve, and monitor local development problems. An LRO acts as a catalyst to mobilize local communities and help local stakeholders work together for the common good.

² To end the need for foreign assistance, USAID is focusing on building self-reliance – defined as the ability of a country, including the government, civil society, and the private sector to plan, finance, and implement solutions to solve its own development challenges. <https://www.usaid.gov/selfreliance>

³ For the purpose of this program, **a community can be defined geographically** (a neighborhood, part of an urban or rural settlement, village, town, municipality, or region of several municipalities) **or thematically** (a group of people gathered around a common goal or issue).

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Section 1: APS Description

Locally led development is a key tenet of USAID’s vision statement: “Our objective is to support partners to become self-reliant and capable of leading their own development journeys” (<https://www.usaid.gov/who-we-are/mission-vision-values>). The CSRA APS was designed to expand the USAID’s work on empowering local actors to lead priority-setting, decision-making, management, and measurement in their own communities. It aims to advance USAID’s capability to work with local partners, to learn from these engagements, and to share this learning broadly.

This APS invites local actors to identify flexible, innovative, and experimental approaches to address challenges in their communities, regions, or the country. Applicants are not required to propose a fully designed program for this APS but only a concept paper for the first selection phase.

Leveraging Local Resources

A respondent’s concept should leverage local resources in one or both of the following ways:

- The respondent organization or consortium contributes with cash or in-kind resources (or any combination of the two) to the proposed activity
- The activity itself strengthens the capacity of local organizations to generate or leverage local resources beyond those provided by international donors

Learning Priorities

This APS is designed to catalyze a process through which local actors can work with USAID to achieve development impact by testing and learning from approaches that incorporate at least one of the following learning priorities:

1. **Feedback Mechanisms** to ensure that information flows in various directions among local actors, partners, and USAID to improve program effectiveness and sustainability.
2. **Systems-and-Networks-Based Analytical Approaches**, which may allow us to better understand the complex environments in which we operate.
3. **Participatory Decision-Making**, which includes locally led priority-setting, collaborative design, and other means of devolving control and ensuring inclusive local leadership.
4. **Strengthening Local Networks** to connect local needs with local resources.
5. **Local Ownership Approaches to Design, Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning** that prioritize local definitions of success.
6. **Supporting Strategic Transitions**, which includes strengthening the role of local institutions and actors to sustain outcomes without foreign assistance.

Response Instructions

The CSRA APS is not a Request for Applications or a Request for Proposals. It is intended to request concept papers from local actors for locally led development approaches in response to CSRA’s purpose and objectives as stated in the Program Description (Attachment A). Based on those concept papers, the USAID/North Macedonia will determine whether to co-create an

activity or set of activities with any Applicant and then request a full application. If USAID/North Macedonia decides a full application is warranted, full application instructions and/or templates will be provided to Applicants. USAID/North Macedonia will review all concept papers and decide to invite selected Applicants.

The submission of a concept paper under this APS helps USAID/North Macedonia determine whether there is potential substantive and resource support for the concept before the prospective Applicant invests significant time and resources in the development of a full application. The co-creation process enables activity design that focuses on local priorities and draws on the knowledge of the people who will carry out the activities.

Concept papers must be submitted via email in accordance to Section 3.

Do not submit concept papers via grants.gov as they will not be accepted.

Funding

Applicants may apply for a three to five-year program with a budget ranging from \$500,000 minimum to \$2 million maximum in total funding.

While multiple awards are anticipated as a result of this APS, its issuance does not constitute an award commitment on the part of USAID nor does it commit USAID to pay for any costs incurred in preparation or submission of comments/suggestions or an application. All preparation and submission costs are at the applicant's expense.

USAID/North Macedonia reserves the right to fund any or none of the applications submitted under this APS.

Section 2: Eligibility and Award Information

This APS is open to LROs working in all sectors. USAID/North Macedonia welcomes concept papers responding to CSRA Program Description (Attachment A) from a wide variety of local actors who demonstrate an understanding of the development challenges in their communities or who propose an effective way to determine and address local priorities in their approach.

USAID/North Macedonia intends to fund programs from eligible organizations. Respondent organizations must be local resource organizations or consortia of organizations that are networked either within a specific geographic region or around a common issue, and that can mobilize a constituency, advocate effectively with local or national government, mobilize resources, and connect a variety of stakeholders and partners to identify, solve, and monitor local development problems. Organizations that have received more than \$5 million in USAID funding over the last five years are not eligible to apply. This cap applies to both prime and sub-grantees. US-based organizations are not eligible under this APS.

USAID/North Macedonia especially encourages applications from local organizations that have not worked with USAID before and applications that will target less developed communities and regions in North Macedonia. An individual cannot apply.

When determining if an entity is a “local organization” for the purposes of this APS, USAID will consider:

- Whether the entity is legally organized under the laws of North Macedonia
 - Whether the entity has its principal place of business or operations in North Macedonia
 - Whether the entity is majority owned and controlled by individuals who are citizens or lawful permanent residents of North Macedonia
 - Whether the entity is managed by a governing body, the majority of whom are citizens or lawful permanent residents of North Macedonia
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Entities which do not meet the above-listed “local organization” criteria will be considered ineligible to participate in the further award process.

While not an exhaustive list and provided for illustrative purposes only, the following types of non-U.S. organizations are encouraged to participate:

- Civic groups
- Colleges and universities
- Cooperatives
- Faith-based organizations
- Foundations
- Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)
- Private businesses
- Trade associations

Technical Instructions:

Applications should offer results-oriented approaches that enable local actors to lead the development process, going beyond and/or building upon traditional development practices in their target communities and/or regions. Applications should articulate why the proposed approach is expected to yield more locally-led and sustainable development outcomes that are self-financed or leverage resources from citizens, private sector, central and local government, or development funds, such as: European Union’s Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA), Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance Rural Development (IPARD), Government of Macedonia’s Innovation fund, and so on.

Applicants must propose geographic or thematic community/ies to target and explain the reasons for the selection of their proposed community including the major issues and opportunities for achieving CSRA’s goal and objectives. Focusing on regions and communities outside of Skopje is strongly encouraged.

Implementation Period:

Programs must be at least three years in duration and may be up to five years. Applications for programs longer than three years will be evaluated during the third year and USAID will make a determination whether to fund the subsequent year/s.⁴

Interested Applicants are expected to reflect on their own experience working in the local context and do any additional needed research to understand the topics and challenges set forth in the CSRA Program Description. Applicants should also research and understand locally led development approaches, including the learning priorities in Section 1 of this APS. Applicants are encouraged to identify and collaborate with other stakeholders to the development challenge(s) in their community; cross-sector partnerships/consortia are especially encouraged.

Section 3: Concept Paper/Application Submission Process

The application process will occur in two stages:

- (1) Submission of concept papers by prospective applicants; and
- (2) Submission of full applications upon request.

Step 1: The Applicants must submit their concept papers, following the format and instructions from Attachment B. The concept paper must not exceed 5-pages in length, single-spaced, written in no smaller than 12-point font, and in Times New Roman or a similar typeset. Each page should be consecutively numbered. Concept papers should have margins of not less than one inch on all sides and should be formatted in the portrait style (not landscape) for all text portions. In addition to the 5-pages concept paper limit a cover page and/or table of content may be added.

Concept papers must conform to the requirements outlined in Attachment A.

Concept papers must be submitted in English.

Step 2: The concept papers must be submitted via email to Rade Knezevic at rknezevic@usaid.gov and Florentin Emini at femini@usaid.gov.

The point person responds with a confirmation receipt within one week of submission. All concept papers will be reviewed based upon the criteria outlined in Section 4 of this APS.

USAID will review received applications received against the APS in two tranches, as follows:

- Tranche 1: Applications received by February 29, 2020
- Tranche 2: Applications received from March 1, 2020 through November 30, 2020

Do not submit concept papers via grants.gov as they will not be accepted.

⁴ The ability of the resulting organization to successfully implement CSRP, mobilize resources for CSRP initiatives, and mobilize external resources for their own self-reliance will be key criteria to assess whether USAID will fund the organization beyond year 3.

Step 3: Based on the concept paper review and evaluation, USAID/North Macedonia will decide whether to engage in co-creation of a program with any Applicant and then request a full application.

USAID/North Macedonia may also suggest to selected applicants to enter a period of co-creation, in which they will collaborate on and refine approach(es) with one another. These groupings of Applicants will then submit new concept papers for consideration by USAID/North Macedonia.

Applicants will also be notified if not selected.

Step 4: In the co-creation process the Applicant is expected to collaborate with USAID/North Macedonia in drafting the full application. Applicants are encouraged to ensure that any technical assistance/support for capacity development proposed as part of the application is sourced from organizations/individuals registered in the country. If in-country support is not available, Applicants are encouraged to look at possibilities in the region.

Step 5: The Applicants must submit the full application via email by the due date and guidance given by the Agreement Officer (AO). Should the Applicant experience technical difficulties in the submission process, the Applicant should consult the point person at USAID/North Macedonia for instructions.

Step 6: The full applications will be reviewed by a Selection Committee.

Step 7: Applicants will be informed by the AO of the Selection Committee's determination, whether they are deemed as apparently successful offeror/s. The AO will also convey all other pre-award requirements. Additional negotiations regarding any technical and cost applications may be necessary.

All first-time Applicants for USAID funding that are deemed apparently successful are subject to a pre-award survey to verify that the Applicant has proper procedures in place to receive USAID funding. Please see ADS 303.3.8 and ADS 303.3.9.

Step 8: The AO will send an email to the Applicant containing the award document.

Step 9: The awardee's representative will need to sign the award and return it to the AO for signature, by which the award execution will be concluded.

NOTE:

Pre-Application Conference:

USAID intends to hold up to three conferences allowing anyone interested in applying to the APS to ask questions related to the application content and process.

The location and date conferences will be provided additionally.

Section 4: Concept Paper Review Criteria

Any concept paper and thus any associated full application submitted under this APS should propose an approach that:

- Is locally owned, led, and responsive to local priorities
- Responds to the Program Description (Attachment A) under this APS
- Incorporates an approach(es) that reflect at least one of the learning priorities set forth in Section 1 of this APS
- Includes at least one of the approaches to leveraging local resources set forth in Section 1 of this APS

Concept papers and full applications that do not meet or exceed these requirements will not be considered. While merit criteria are paramount, cost considerations may also be a factor for award. Applicants are reminded that the U.S. Government is not obligated to make an award on the basis of lowest proposed cost or to the Applicant with the highest merit evaluation score.

Merit Review Criteria

The merit review criteria below will be used by the Selection Committee to review and evaluate concept papers and full applications submitted under this APS. The relative importance of all criteria is equally weighted.

A. Demonstrate Local Ownership, Leadership, and Relevance to Local Priorities

The Applicant must demonstrate a strong understanding of the local context in the proposed target community, its connection to community-based networks, responses to local priorities or present the approach to determine local priorities before beginning implementation. The approach itself must strengthen a local system within the community to sustain the locally led development results over time.

B. Alignment with CSRA's Program Description and Achievement of Development Impact

The Applicant must explain how the proposed approach aligns with CSRA's objectives set forth in the Program Description, and how the proposed approach will lead to the achievement of the anticipated results articulated in the Program Description. The approach must also integrate gender equality, and youth and female empowerment in a meaningful way at all stages of the program including program design, implementation, and measuring of results.

C. Incorporation of Learning Priorities

The proposed approach must incorporate one or more research areas included in the learning priorities set forth in Section 1 of this APS and demonstrates an understanding on how to utilize learning towards a more flexible and adaptive management in implementing the proposed approach.

D. Leveraging Local Resources & Sustainability of Results

The Applicants must clearly articulate how they will mobilize local resources over the duration of their activity. The approach must also explain how the outcomes, results, and impacts will be sustained beyond the USAID funding.

Community Self-Reliance Activity

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

INTRODUCTION

In 2017, USAID/ North Macedonia was selected to receive funding to implement a Local Works program, USAID's global initiative that seeks to support local development by investing in the creativity and resourcefulness of communities. Under the Local Works program, selected USAID missions are partnering with a variety of local actors to advance locally-led development. ***Locally led development refers to the extent to which local actors are empowered to lead priority-setting, decision-making, management, measurement, and other processes through which development assistance contributes toward improving systems and outcomes for development.***

USAID/ North Macedonia's Local Works program aims to:

- Promote community self-reliance by advancing community-led development;
- Build strong relationships and promote collaboration among local actors to initiate and lead development efforts;
- Mobilize resources for development purposes; and
- Support local leadership and community ownership of the development process.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

A. PURPOSE

The purpose of the Community Self-Reliance Activity (CSRA) is to **establish sustainable systems and develop capacities of communities so that the communities can plan, finance, and implement solutions to their own development challenges and priorities.**

For the purpose of this program, **a community can be defined geographically** (a neighborhood, part of an urban or rural settlement, village, town, municipality, or region of several municipalities) **or thematically** (a group of people gathered around a common goal or issue).

B. DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES

Many communities in North Macedonia over-rely on central government resources, and lack experience working together and mobilizing resources to finance (either entirely or partially) solutions to their local problems. A USAID funded national survey showed that only 7.6% of Macedonians engaged in activities to address a social or community problem in 2018.⁵ Most citizens look to the government, both central and local, and political party leaders to solve their

⁵ 2018 USAID North Macedonia Democracy and Governance Survey

day-to-day issues rather than taking action on their own or working with other local actors and institutions.

Besides the general issues described above, each community experiences its specific development challenges. In their concept papers, the applicants should describe the key challenges, as well as the enablers, inhibitors, and incentives that may drive the accomplishment of CSRA's goal and objectives in their target communities.

C. PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this activity is **to establish sustainable systems and develop capacities of communities so the communities can plan, finance, and implement solutions to their own development challenges and priorities**. This purpose will be achieved through three mutually supportive objectives:

Objective 1 – Local actors working together to lead local development

The efforts under this objective will result in:

- increased capacities of local actors to reach out to and engage citizens and other relevant stakeholders, as well as to establish ties to local funding opportunities;
- increased number of local partnerships among local actors;
- enhanced engagement of citizens on the local level; and
- establishment of locally-led development in selected communities.

Objective 2 – Local actors mobilize/leverage resources to address development priorities that will benefit the community

The assistance under this objective will result in:

- increased engagement of local actors in the identification and prioritization of community issues and opportunities (i.e. pollution, public health, lack of job opportunities, out-migration, social service provision, local economic development, etc.); and
- improved mobilization of local actors and resources to design and implement local solutions to address community issues or take advantage of development opportunities.

The CSRA will not fund the resolution of the identified problems, per se. If necessary, the CSRA will provide “gap funding” for the resolution of a community issue where the local actors were unable to mobilize funding from citizens, private sector, central and local government, and other sources. For each individual community initiative the “gap funding” may not exceed 40% of the full budget of the initiative (including both cash and in-kind contributions from the community) in the first year of implementation of community initiatives, 30% in the second year, and 20% in the third year.

Objective 3 - Develop replicable models that can be sustained and scaled up

The measure of success for this objective will be the effective replication of the sustainable locally-led development models in other communities, regions, and nationwide over the course of the program.

D. PROGRAM GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Activity interventions will be guided by the following principles:

- **Inclusive and Participatory Decision-Making:** To the extent possible, the proposed approach must encourage and ensure the active participation of all relevant local actors, including youth, women, ethnic minorities, private sector, local governments, etc. Local actors must lead efforts to identify community development issues and priorities.
- **Local Resource Mobilization** including community philanthropy, volunteering, partnerships that leverage resources from the local private sector, faith-based organizations, government, civil society, and academia; and other sources of local skills and finances to replace those of international donors.
- **Private Sector Engagement**⁶ to the extent possible, all activities must try to operationalize USAID's Private Sector Engagement policy, which aims to increase the involvement of the private sector as co-investors and service providers in the implementation of development activities.

E. MONITORING, EVALUATION, AND LEARNING

Applicants should propose an initial Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) Plan with expected results and illustrative indicators for each CSRA objective. The proposed results and illustrative indicators will be further developed during the process of co-creation of full applications and will conform to USAID's MEL process for Local Works.

The following are some illustrative indicators:

- Number of community-led development systems established
- Total U.S. dollar (\$) value of non-international donor resources mobilized for locally-led development
- Number of successfully replicated and sustained locally-led development models

Resulting implementing partners will closely collaborate with USAID/North Macedonia's third-party MEL contractor on monitoring and evaluating progress toward the accomplishment of CSRA's results, as well as on providing information for the following USAID/North Macedonia Local Works learning questions:

1. What are the drivers of trust among local actors?
2. What arrangements of people and relationships among local actors are effective for addressing and solving community issues?
3. What approaches to mobilizing people and resources do local partners find to be effective in their communities?

⁶ https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1865/usaaid_psepolicy_final.pdf

4. How do community-generated initiatives relate to and leverage relationships with local government?
5. What are the most effective approaches for scaling up and replicating the successful community-led development models? Which approaches were less successfully replicated?

F. SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability will be a priority in the implementation of the activity. To the extent possible, the resulting implementing partners will seek to leverage existing mechanisms for mobilizing development actors and local resources in their communities. The assistance must be provided in ways that ensure long-term solutions will continue in target communities and be replicated in other communities after USAID-funded activities end. A key outcome of this activity will be systems or processes that the local actors will be able to activate when necessary to address community issues and priorities beyond the CSRA.

G. GENDER CONSIDERATIONS

In line with the USAID Gender Equality and Female Empowerment Policy of March 2012, which aims to reduce gender disparities and increase the capacity of girls and women to realize their rights and determine their life outcomes, the CSRA should utilize a gender-sensitive approach throughout its implementation. The activity must ensure that the role of women and girls is recognized and enhanced, not undermined, by its interventions including community issue identification and prioritization, capacity building of women organizations, partnerships with private businesses owned and led by women, training, volunteering, etc. All interventions will take gender into account in the selection of participants, timing of program activities, location and training program content. Program activities must be carried out in a way that does not further marginalize women. When gender gaps arise, they will be addressed by ensuring that both women and men, girls and boys, benefit from this activity. The activity should be inclusive and represent the interests of both women and men, girls and boys.

Concept Paper Format and Instructions

The concept paper and supporting information should be submitted to the point person at USAID/North Macedonia. The concept papers must be submitted via email and may not exceed five pages in total length. Applicants must submit their concept papers in English language.

Applicants should use their concept paper to propose an approach that:

- Is locally owned, led, and responsive to local priorities
- Responds to the attached Program Description (Attachment A)
- Incorporates an approach(es) that reflects at least one of the learning priorities set forth in Section 1 of this APS
- Includes at least one of the approaches to leveraging local resources set forth in Section 1 of this APS

SECTION 1 - SUMMARY INFORMATION

- A. Name and contact information of Applicant
- B. Organization type and country of legal registration
- C. Certification that the Applicant has not received more than \$5 million in USAID funding over the last five years
- D. Title of proposed activity
- E. Overall objective of activity (1-2 sentences)
- F. Name, contact information, and country of legal registration for other partner organizations collaborating on concept note (if any)
- G. Amount of funding requested from USAID \$ _____

SECTION 2 – NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

Successful narrative descriptions will include a discussion of the components below:

1. **Local Ownership, Leadership, and Relevance:** Describe the goal of the proposed activity or set of activities. In what way will the proposed approach advance locally led development? How does the approach consider the broader system surrounding the development challenge it addresses?

Selection Criteria: Local Ownership, Leadership, and Relevance to Local Priorities

2. **Alignment:** Describe how the proposed approach aligns with CSRA’s purpose and objectives set forth in Attachment A to this APS. How might the proposed approach and activities lead to the anticipated outputs, outcomes, results, and impacts articulated in the addendum? Remember that local actors are not required to propose a fully designed program for this APS - an approach that suggests a process to identify and then act on solutions from the local context is fully within the intent of this APS.

Selection Criteria: Alignment with Program Description and Achievement of Development Impact

3. **Learning:** Describe how the proposed approach incorporates at least one of the learning priorities set forth in Section 1 of this APS. How does the Applicant demonstrate a commitment to flexibility, learning, and adaptive management in response to shifting realities as they carry out the proposed approach?

Selection Criteria: Incorporation of Learning Priorities

4. **Leveraging Local Resources:** How does the proposed approach include one or both of the approaches to leveraging local resources set forth in Section 1 of this APS? How will USAID’s investment in this work contribute to greater country self-reliance?

Selection Criteria: Leveraging Local Resources and Sustainability of Results

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