



Request for Information Number: RFI72018218R00001
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Notice Type: Request for information

Subject: USAID/Albania Request for Information

To: All Interested Respondents/Parties:

The United States Government, represented by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) through the Mission in Albania, is publishing the subject Request for Information in order to obtain information and input from all interested public and private parties on its proposed concept to establish a Leadership Training Program in Albania known as *NextGen Albania* to provide training to mid-level public officials and private sector leaders.

This announcement is a Request for Information (RFI), issued solely for information and planning purposes, and does not constitute a Request for Applications (RFA) or a Request for Proposal (RFP). Responses to this RFI are not official applications or proposals and will in no way be deemed to form any binding agreement with the RFI issuing authority.

It is the interested parties' responsibility to monitor for the release of any further information. It should be noted that responding to this RFI will not give any advantage to any organization in any subsequent procurement. All comments must be submitted electronically to arexhepi@usaid.gov. No questions will be accepted. Responses to this RFI will be accepted through October 19, 2018, 5:00 pm local time. You will receive only an electronic confirmation acknowledging receipt of your response; you will not receive individualized feedback or suggestions. No basis for claims against the U.S. Government shall arise as a result of a response to this request for information or from the U.S. Government's use of such information.

Please note that release of this RFI in no way obligates USAID to release a solicitation for a resulting activity. USAID is not responsible for any costs incurred in responding to this RFI.

Thank you for your interest in USAID/Albania programs and we look forward to your comments.

Best,

Sascha Kemper
Contracting Officer

Next Generation Albania Leadership Program **“NextGen Albania”**

Background

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has instituted a framework around the Journey to Self-Reliance in which USAID works more closely with host-country partners to address their development challenges with the goal of ending the need for foreign assistance. As part of this effort, country metrics and roadmaps have been developed that identify strengths and weaknesses in a country’s commitment and capacity to lead their development trajectory. Through this process, Albania has been identified as one of the countries most advanced in managing its development needs. Albania is expected to soon begin negotiations on EU accession, which has traditionally been a milestone in USAID reducing its assistance. As such, USAID is working with our partners in Albania to implement a Strategic Transition that will reduce USAID’s footprint in the country while enhancing support for key Albanian partners in developing sustainable legacy institutions and programs.

As part of this effort, USAID is considering development of a Leadership Program to build the next generation of Albanian leaders in the public and private sectors. This program, known as Next Generation (NextGen) Albania has the stated goal of:

Developing a cadre of mid-level public and private sector professionals to become more effective leaders in Albania’s Journey to Self-Reliance

Problem Statement

Albania has demonstrated significant progress in key development metrics and thus has been identified as a country that can develop solutions in response to its development challenges. As part of this Strategic Transition, USAID would like to support Albania in building capacity of mid-level public and private sector managers that will play a key role in the country’s path to EU integration and create the next generation of leaders. The program will focus on two tracks. The first is to build capacity for mid-level civil servants to develop and implement policies that will meet EU standards and improve service delivery to citizens. The second is to support managers of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) to enhance their business management skills in order to drive growth that generate significant job creation to overcome the issue of chronically high unemployment.

Activity Overview

This activity would engage with Albanian Government counterparts, education institutions, training organizations, and other suitable service providers, in partnership with one or more counterparts based in the U.S., Europe, or elsewhere, in designing and delivering new curricula to develop Albania’s next generation of public administrators and small business leaders.

Two separate training tracks are foreseen. The first will focus on working with mid-level public administrators to improve service delivery for citizens while enhancing overall governance and transparency. The training will seek to build capacity in policy development, analysis, drafting laws and soft skills related to communication and leadership. The objective of this track is to contribute to a professional civil service in the country, and develop the Government’s capacity to meet the EU requirements of policy development and public engagement. The Government of Albania’s

Department of Public Administration (DPA) has recently launched an initiative called “The Administration We Want” that is focused on further professionalizing the 10,000 civil servants in the national Government through several activities, including Training and Capacity Building. The NextGen Albania program will seek to provide services in support of this initiative and work with the Albanian School of Public Administration (ASPA) to develop and deliver content.

The second track will focus on building managerial competencies of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) that have high growth potential and can spur job creation. This track will be similar to an Executive Education format with content in such areas as financial management, marketing, risk analysis, business planning, and other areas based on market demand. The objective of this track is to contribute to the growth of SMEs to address the country’s chronically high unemployment rates of 15% overall and above 35% for youth. Addressing unemployment is needed to reverse the country’s brain drain and allow for rational economic integration with the EU and the West.

USAID plans to invest an estimated \$5 million into this program for 3-5 years to support the curricula development based on Albania’s needs and context, and to train the local counterpart/s to deliver the content. USAID envisions that this activity will be based on a partnership between at least one counterpart based in the U.S., Europe, or elsewhere, and at least one Albanian-based counterpart to establish this professional education program. The training is intended to be practical so that participants can immediately apply this learning in their current roles. The applicability and impact must be measurable and demonstrate the quality of the content.

Following this initial support from USAID, the objective is to have established a fully sustainable training program implemented by one or more Albanian partner/s. It is expected that the local Albanian partner/s will provide space, materials and equipment required for delivery, and that the international partner/s will also provide in-kind contributions to the development of the program. While the public sector training portion is envisioned to be partially subsidized by the Government of Albania, the private sector is expected to pay for the full cost of courses. In order to be sustainable, the program must have sufficient demand, and be recognized as meeting high quality international standards.

RFI's Audience

USAID is seeking input from universities, academic and educational experts, public administration reform experts, SME development experts, service providers in public and private sector training, training institutes, think tanks, foundations/NGOs and other stakeholders in professional education development and other related sectors, both for-profit and not-for-profit. USAID also welcomes input from other donors, including the EU and bilateral European donors, who are involved in public administration reform, governance, private sector/SME capacity building, and overall leadership programs. The respondents may be based in the US, Europe or in Albania. Consortia of respondents are also welcome, particularly if they can together address two tracks of this program.

Requested Information from the Public

USAID is seeking input on types of courses and content that would be most relevant, how to implement the program, lessons learned from past work on similar initiatives, and approaches to ensure sustainability of these programs, including business planning and fee/cost structures.

USAID seeks input on three specific areas: 1) the content, approach and measuring impact of the public sector training; 2) the content, approach, and measuring impact of the private sector training; and, 3) ways to advance sustainability of the program given that the estimated investment by USAID is \$5 million.

Respondents can answer any of the questions where they have expertise and there is no requirement to answer all. Any responses received to the questions below will be treated confidentially by USAID and will not be shared outside of USAID.

USAID is looking for feedback on the following questions:

1. Public Sector Training Content and Approach

Content

- With regard to building capacity of mid-level civil servants in policy formulation and implementation, what types of training content is most needed in Albania? The content of two similar USAID programs in other countries are described below to provide examples of topics that could be included:
 - Program 1: Foundations of Public Policy Development and Analysis; Techniques of Effective Leadership; Policy Cycle (from agenda setting to implementation and policy evaluation); Strategies for Stakeholder Engagement; Tools and Practice in Writing Effective Policy Memos (evidence-based decision making, cost benefit analysis, and policy evaluation).
 - Program 2: Governance; Ethics in the Public Sector/Organizational Culture; Project Management; Monitoring and Evaluation; Human Resource Management; Strategic Planning Legislative Framework; Process of Policy Development; Civic Participation in Governance; Presentation and Writing Skills.
- Are you aware of similar programs in Albania? If so, what content did they provide, what were the results, and are there lessons learned from this experience?

- Are there other donors in Albania currently implementing similar programs? If so, who are they and what is the area of focus?
- If you have any direct experience in implementing a similar initiative in a developing country context, what areas of content did you focus on?
- We believe the training should be certified to provide designation of quality and increase the value and demand for the course/s. Are you aware of any internationally or U.S. recognized certifications for public administrators that could be sought for this program (i.e., Certified Public Managers)? Are you aware of accreditation bodies in Albania that could certify such a program?

Approach and Structure

- One area of concern is to allow participants time away from their jobs to complete the courses without interruption, while also minimizing disruption of the functioning of government. In light of that, how would you suggest structuring the courses, i.e., one day a week for several weeks, one week at a time several times a year, etc.
- Would you suggest any integration of online content vs classroom training?
- What are the appropriate selection criteria for participants in this type of program?
- Should exams be required to obtain the certification?

Role of the Government

- What should be the role of the Government of Albania (GoA) in implementing and financing the program?
- Do you have similar experience in another country that would be relevant to structuring the relationship with the host country Government?
- How can the GoA ensure staff retention and provide promotion opportunities to staff that complete this training?
- What should be the role of the GoA in selecting participants for the program?

Measuring Impact

- How can we measure impact of the program?
- Are there policy analysis tools and methods that can be used to measure the effectiveness of the program?

2. Private Sector Training Content and Approach

Content

- What types of training content is most needed for the Albanian SME sector? The content of two previous USAID programs in other countries are described below to provide examples of content:
 - Strategy and Leadership; Marketing and innovation; Finance and Accounting; International Business Marketing; and Agro Technology
 - Business Planning Principles; External Environment Analysis, Marketing Concepts; Basic Financial Accounting; Basic Financial Analysis; Risk Analysis
- Are you familiar with or have direct experience with other similar programs in Albania? If so, what content was provided, what were the results, and are there lessons learned?
- Are there other donors currently implementing similar programs in Albania? If so, who are they and what areas do they focus on?
- If you have any direct experience in implementing a similar initiative in a developing country context, what areas of content did you provide?

- We believe the training should be certified to provide benefit to participants and increase the value and demand for the courses. Are you aware of any certifications that would be relevant and could be aligned to this program? Are you aware of accreditation bodies in Albania that could certify such a program?

Approach and Structure

- How many hours of content should the program include for each course and overall?
- How would you structure the program, i.e., nights and weekends, one week at a time, etc? Would you recommend integrating online content vs classroom training?
- Should participants be required to take exams to obtain certification? Rather than an exam, should they be required to develop an initiative directly related to their current roles in the private sector?

Measuring Impact

- How can we measure impact of the program?
- How would you suggest monitoring the performance of the firms where the participants are employed?

3. Sustainability

- As noted above, USAID plans to invest an estimated \$5 million into this program, which will support curricula development and training the local counterpart/s in delivering the program content. Do you believe that a \$5 million investment could establish a sustainable program in Albania over the 3-5 year period? If not, would changes would you suggest to this concept to achieve a sustainable program?
- What type of fee structure would be appropriate for the private sector courses – both as short courses and for the entire certified program?
- What should be the role of the GoA in providing financial support?
- Do you have any ideas on how the Institute can develop other services that are revenue generating, including independent research?

Submission Requirements for Comments

Through this RFI, USAID/Albania seeks ideas, comments, and information from the interested parties that will assist to develop a program that will most effectively achieve the objectives described above.

Page Limitation and Format

USAID asks that the respondents submit short (**no more than 5 pages**) submissions that respond to some or all of the questions outlined above. Respondents may outline program recommendations, provide context, explain existing successful approaches, or give other information pertinent to the development of this program.

Submission **via email** is required; phone calls or hard copy delivery will not be accepted.

Submission shall use only 11 point Times New Roman font or similar size typeset, 8.5 inch by 11-inch paper, and single spaced pages for all narrative documents, with each page numbered consecutively.

Other information

If the submitter has produced relevant reports, those reports may be included, but only as embedded links. Submissions must be in English. Please do not submit applications, proposals, or resumes as they will be discarded.

The bounds of this RFI are intentionally broad as this represents a conceptual phase of strategic and sectoral planning and USAID is using this RFI to inform our market research and learning agenda in this arena. USAID reserves the right to potentially issue subsequent RFI's on this topic that target more specific questions or approaches.

Responses will be held confidential. Proprietary information should not be sent. USAID may use any information provided without incurring any obligation. USAID reserves the right to, or not to, incorporate any, some, or none of the comments received from this RFI into any subsequent solicitations.

[End of RFI]