



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

Issuance Date: December 28, 2012

Closing Date: December 28, 2013

Subject: Annual Program Statement (APS) Number APS-182-13-000001,
Albania Critical Economic Growth Areas (ACEGA)

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Mission in Albania is seeking applications from Albanian for-profit and not-for-profit organizations to implement activities that support USAID/Albania's development objectives in Economic Growth.

The objective of this APS is to support targeted small and medium-scale development activities that serve as catalysts for job creation, increased trade, and economic growth. By strengthening critical elements of Albania agriculture, this program will contribute to economic stabilization and reintegration efforts of returnees in the context of the Eurozone crisis.

USAID/Albania seeks funding applications from organizations that:

- Improve access to capital for farmers and agribusinesses
- Enable farmers and agribusinesses to better compete on price and quality on domestic and international markets through sustainable improvements in production, quality control, packaging or marketing in key high-value crops such as greenhouse vegetables, citrus, olives and herbs and spices.

The authority of this APS is found in the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended. Awards shall be made and administered in accordance with all pertinent USAID policies and regulations, including the Standard Provisions for Non-US Non-Governmental Organizations (ADS 303). Please note that no profit/fee is allowed under assistance.

Subject to availability of funds, the United States Government intends to provide up to \$3,000,000 in annual funding for activities grants under this program. Individual activities will not be less than \$500,000 and may not exceed \$1,500,000 over a period of implementation between 27 and 36 months. USAID intends to make approximately 3 to 5 awards as a result of this APS. USAID reserves the right to enter into more, or not to enter into any awards. The award(s) will be made in accordance with the eligibility guidelines and evaluation procedures provided in Sections III and IV. Should additional funds become available, an amendment to this APS may be issued.

Applications under this APS will be accepted throughout the year (see the Issuance and Closing Dates specified above). Because USAID funding under this APS is limited and will be apportioned on a rolling basis, applicants are strongly encouraged to submit their applications as soon as possible to ensure funding availability.

This APS consists of this cover letter and the following Sections:

Section I – Description of the Funding Opportunity

Section II – Award Information

Section III – Eligibility Information

Section IV – Application Submission and Review Information

Section V – Agency Contacts

Issuance of this APS does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the Government, nor does it commit the Government to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of an application. If selected, applicants will be requested to provide additional information and/or certifications (such as Branding Strategy and Marking Plan, Certifications, etc.). Full applications are submitted at the risk of the applicant.

This APS and any future amendments can be downloaded from http://albania.usaid.gov/gj2/133/category/Requests_for_Proposals.htm and www.grants.gov. All answers to questions will be posted http://albania.usaid.gov/gj2/133/category/Requests_for_Proposals.htm. All interested parties are highly encouraged to register on www.grants.gov to receive automatic notification of amendments to this APS. It is the responsibility of the recipient to ensure that they have downloaded all documents completely. USAID bears no responsibility for data errors resulting from transmission or conversion errors. If you have difficulty accessing the APS, please contact the individuals named in Section V - Agency Contacts.

Thank you for your interest in USAID programs.

Sincerely,

Brian Aaron

R. Brian Aaron
Agreement Officer

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I. DESCRIPTION OF THE FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

A. BACKGROUND AND AREA OF FOCUS

The Albania Critical Economic Growth Areas Annual Program Statement enables USAID/Albania to support innovative programs that enhance competitiveness in Albania's critical agricultural sector to help create jobs in rural areas at a time of considerable macroeconomic challenges.

Agriculture is key to broader, sustainable economic growth for Albania. The sector, in which nearly half of the Albania workforce is active, only contributes 20.6% of GDP. Despite Albania's diverse growing areas and moderate climate, there is a 9:1 import:export ratio in agricultural goods.

In the context of the Eurozone crisis, Agriculture is particularly important. An estimated 180,000 Albanians¹ have returned from Greece. Returnees are mostly concentrated in south Albania, with approximately 50% in the rural regions of Korca, Gjirokastra, Saranda and Fier. There have been positive experiences with returnees successfully using agricultural ventures as a means to reintegrate into the local economy.

Major constraints facing agriculture include structural problems, especially small average plot sizes and the small domestic market, lack of access to capital for expansion, and weaknesses in technical and marketing know-how. Credit to the agricultural sector is significantly lower than to the economy as a whole, even though the percentage of non-performing loans is less than one-half of overall loans. The European Union is providing increasing levels of financing to the agricultural sector, but it is critical that farmers and agribusinesses possess the know-how to effectively access and utilize this support.

Know-how in production techniques, quality control, packaging and marketing is also critical if Albanian agriculture is to compete successfully on domestic and international markets.

Long-term structural problems such as land titling and small plot sizes cannot be effectively addressed within the budgetary and time parameters of this program.

B. OBJECTIVE

The objective of this Annual Program Statement (APS) is to support development activities that will enhance the competitiveness of Albanian agriculture producers and processors thereby allowing them to expand operations and employment through improved access to capital or know-how. By strengthening critical elements of Albania agriculture, this program will contribute to stabilization and reintegration efforts of returnees in the context of the Eurozone crisis.

[END OF SECTION I]

¹ Study on the Economic Impact of the Greek Crisis in Albania, The Albanian Centre for Competitiveness and International Trade (ACIT), Tirana, August 2012.

II. AWARD INFORMATION

A. FUNDING

Subject to availability of funds during FY 2013 – FY 2014, USAID/Albania intends to provide up to \$3,000,000 in total funding for activities under this program. Individual activities will not be less than \$500,000 and may not exceed \$1,500,000 over a period of implementation between 27 and 36 months.

B. NUMBER OF GRANTS AND USAID'S RIGHT TO FUND

USAID/Albania intends to award an estimated 3 to 5 awards, but reserves the right to fund all, some, or none of the applications submitted.

C. PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE

The anticipated period of performance for each award may vary but will not exceed a period of 36 months.

D. PLACE OF PERFORMANCE

The exclusive place of performance in Albania. Activities or training held outside of Albania will not be supported.

E. AUTHORIZED GEOGRAPHIC CODE

The authorized geographic code under the resultant agreement(s) is 937. Code 937 is defined as the United States, the cooperating/recipient country (Albania), and developing countries other than advanced developing countries, and excluding prohibited sources. USAID maintains a list of developing countries, advanced developing countries, and prohibited sources, which will be available in USAID's Automated Directives System, ADS 310.

F. AUTHORIZING LEGISLATION

This program is authorized in accordance with the Foreign Assistance Act of 1965, as amended.

G. AWARD INSTRUMENTS

To the extent possible and when feasible, USAID will use a simplified grant format or fixed obligation type grant agreement. USAID will determine the appropriate form of an award, in consultation with the applicant organization, based upon the nature and amount of the funded application and the type of relationship to be established. Given the focus of this APS on local Albanian entities, various USAID policies and regulations may apply, including the Standard Provisions for Non-U.S. Non-Governmental Organizations, in USAID's Automated Directives System (ADS) 303 (found at: <http://www.usaid.gov/policy/ads/300/303.pdf>)

H. NOTICE OF AWARD

The Notice of Award signed by the Agreement Officer is the authorizing document. The Notice shall be transmitted electronically to the authorized agent of the successful organization for countersignature to be followed by original copies for execution.

I. IMPLEMENTATION OVERSIGHT

The recipient shall be responsible to USAID/Albania for all matters related to the execution of the agreement, specifically, the recipient shall report to the USAID Agreement Officer's Representative (AOR) and to the Agreement Officer.

[END OF SECTION II]

III. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

A. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR APPLICANTS

Applicants may include private for-profit or non-profit entities. Profit (or fee) is not allowed.

To be considered a local Albanian entity, the entity:

- (1) is legally organized under the laws of Albania;
- (2) has as its principal place of business or operations in Albania; and
- (3) either is--
 - (A) majority owned by individuals who are citizens or lawful permanent residents of Albania; or
 - (B) managed by a governing body the majority of whom are citizens or lawful permanent residents of Albania.

B. REQUIRED ELEMENTS FOR APPLICATIONS

To be considered for funding under this APS eligible applicants should submit applications with proposed activities that demonstrate awareness and compliance with the following general guidelines:

- The design of any proposed project must be technically sound, economically feasible, produce quantifiable impacts, aim for long-term benefits and sustainability to the greatest degree possible.
- Applications must clearly describe how the proposed project activities will promote improved opportunity and competitiveness in Albanian agriculture.
- Successful applicants must be prepared to manage a USAID grant which will require, but is not limited to, making representatives available to finalize award documentation, opening a bank account specifically dedicated for managing program funds, responding to USAID questions and general communication in a timely manner, and submitting monitoring and evaluation data and reports.
- All applications must contain a statement indicating a willingness to follow USAID branding requirements and be prepared to incorporate a “Branding Strategy and Marking Plan (BSMP)” into their project. USAID will provide successful applicants with guidelines for creating a branding and marking strategy which will be formalized in all awards and used to acknowledge USAID’s support in all project activities. The purpose of the BSMP is to recognize USAID’s support to the project and it will follow the guidelines of ADS 320 and will become part of the award document.
- All successful applicants will be required to sign the certifications required by USAID for recipients under this program. The certifications may include, but are not limited to:
 - Survey on ensuring equal opportunity for applicants
 - Certification regarding terrorism financing
 - Data Universal Numbering System
- All applications must contain a statement indicating the grantee’s willingness to follow USAID environmental compliance policy. In case of award, successful applicants with projects must be prepared to work with USAID staff to determine any environmental compliance requirements, implement procedures, and report on the compliance activities/results. For proposed projects that have been determined by USAID to not affect the environment, such as classroom training events, the environmental compliance requirement might be categorically excluded from further mitigation requirements or reporting.

USAID funds shall not be used for:

- a. Purchase of land and/or facilities.
- b. On-going operational costs or institutional administrative expenses such as rent, utilities, office supplies, etc., or other expenses not specifically related to completing project-related activities.
- c. Costs associated with salaries for routine administrative operating costs not associated with the project unless approved on an exceptional basis. USAID funds may be used for short-term payments to acquire the technical expertise needed to complete project activities.
- d. Explosives or surveillance equipment.
- e. Pharmaceutical and contraceptive products.
- f. Abortion equipment and services.
- g. Pesticides and herbicides.
- h. Luxury goods or gambling equipment.
- i. Activities that take place outside of Albania including international travel to or from Albania.
- j. Religious or military activities, as well as those relating to police, prisons, or other law enforcement.
- k. Costs not identified in the grant application.
- l. Goods and services from banned sources.
- m. Benefiting personally or politically any employee (e.g. direct hire, contractor, part time) of the USG, or the spouse or family member of a USG employee
- n. Production of agricultural commodities for export that are likely to have a significant impact on competing U.S. exports
- o. To the extent permitted by USAID policies and regulations, and with proper justification, certain restrictions above may be waived or modified on a case-by-case basis. If activity applications reveal other costs that cannot be supported by USAID, the potential grantee will be informed.

C. COST-SHARING

Cost-sharing under this APS is highly encouraged but is not required. Cost-share contribution may include cash, existing or additional investments, and/or in-kind support such as skilled and unskilled labor, technical assistance, land, transportation, and the provision of materials or services. The nature and value of the cost-share contribution, if applicable, must be described in all applications, including the budget section, and will be documented in any awards. Forgone profit does not qualify as cost-sharing or leveraging.

[END OF SECTION III]

IV. APPLICATION SUBMISSION AND REVIEW INFORMATION

A. GENERAL INFORMATION

a) Submission:

USAID/Albania invites eligible applicants to submit all requests for assistance to the individuals listed in Section V Agency Contacts. Please include the following in the Subject line: APS-182-13-000001. Applications should be submitted electronically as an attached document to an email message.

b) General Submission Guidelines:

Applicants must follow application instructions closely and that they remain flexible when considering project implementation dates. Funding applications should be written in English, submitted by email, and should not contain more than three attached documents. Applicants will be informed if their application will advance for further review within 30 days of receipt. Applicants are permitted to apply for funding more than once. This also applies to previously successful applicants.

c) Submission Dates:

Applications for this APS will be accepted on an on-going basis. Applicants are however encouraged to apply sooner rather than later because funds are limited and they will be awarded on a rolling basis. Even if an application was approved based on technical merit, applicants who delay their submission may be rejected due to lack of funds.

Questions may be submitted at any time to the individuals listed in Section V Agency Contacts. Questions will be answered as they are received and published publically. See cover page for information on posting of answers to questions.

Funding applications may be submitted at any time from date of the release of this APS to the closing date on the first page of this APS and will be evaluated on an on-going basis. Due to the large number of expected applications that USAID might receive, a response indicating formal approval or rejection of the funding request may not be immediate. All applicants will receive an approval/rejection response from USAID and applicants are encouraged to exercise patience in this process.

B. APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

(a) General:

Projects do not need to be overly complicated and neither do the applications. Some of the following questions require only a short statement of fact while other questions do not apply to all applicants and therefore do not require a response. USAID suggests that applicants follow instructions carefully and that they submit an application which is concise and one that contains well-developed ideas that reflect organized planning and a realistic budget. Failure to follow instructions may result in significant delays in evaluation or rejection of the application.

Any organization or individual described as contributing funds, materials or equipment, the use of facilities, any type of in-kind support, etc. to the proposed project must provide a letter of support indicating their commitment to providing the contributions.

(b) Format of the Applications:

Applicants should submit all application documentation in a simple, organized format which includes:

Introduction/Contact Information (1 page)

1. The Annual Program Statement (APS) Number (APS-182-13-000001);

2. The full contact information of the organization applying to receive funds including name, address, cell phone and land line phone number(s), email address(es), website (if applicable), the name of the legal representative of the organization, and email and telephone information for the point of contact (person in charge) of the proposed project;
3. Type of organization (e.g., for-profit, non-profit, trade association, etc.) including a brief description.
4. Full contact information of other proposed activity partners, if applicable. Other activity partners may include other donors or implementing organizations that will complete specific project activities; and
5. Signature of the authorized representative of the applicant organization.

Project Technical Information and Timeline (maximum 15 pages).

1. Project title, brief summary statement of the proposed project, the total cost of the project, and the funding amount requested from USAID;
2. Period of performance (i.e. project duration or time needed to complete the proposed activities) and project locations.
3. The number of and description of the project beneficiaries (i.e., the people and/or organizations that will benefit from the project).
4. Concise project description focusing on project implementation and including brief narratives describing the situational context and background (limited to what is necessary to understand the project), the problem to be addressed, any activities relevant to the project that have already been completed, a list and description of proposed project activities, main objectives, and expected results;
5. A brief discussion on sustainability – how the project will be supported and can continue without USAID funding. Comments may include how the proposed activities will nurture beneficiaries’ sense of project ownership;
6. Supporting technical analysis as appropriate;
7. A timeline (chronogram) indicating when proposed project activities will be implemented per month or week, as appropriate;
8. A statement of environmental compliance indicating the grantee’s willingness, in case of award, to follow USAID environmental compliance policy; and
9. A statement of branding compliance indicating the grantee’s willingness, in case of award, to follow USAID branding and marking guidelines.
10. Brief description of applicant’s previous work and experience in development, if any, including that of any informal organizations or other partners, as applicable.

The Technical Application must be written in Arial Font, 12-point size, single space. The 12-point size requirement does not apply to footnotes and tables. Footnotes and tables must be used appropriately and not in place of basic text. Applicants will use normal 1” margins. Number each page consecutively. Note: A page in the Technical Proposal that contains a table, chart, graph, etc., not otherwise excluded below, is subject to the page limitation.

Not included in this page limitation are the following:

- Table of Contents;
- Annexes (as specified above)

Budget (this document must be submitted as a separate annex and it is not included in the total page limit)

1. A spreadsheet or chart showing the proposed cost for project activities, in detail. It must include a list of each product or service (line item), the units of each item, the cost of each unit, the total cost and it must indicate which line items will be paid for by any cost-share amount. (Cost-share

contributions may be in the form of cash, in-kind support such as technical assistance, skilled or unskilled labor, land, locally available materials, or transportation.)

2. A list of milestones or events that once accomplished would trigger progress payments, for example the submission a deliverable or the completion of a training or conference.

3. A “Budget Notes” section explaining the applicant’s rationale for preparing the cost estimates, i.e., why is the cost line item needed, why the cost estimate is reasonable, etc. Note that costs should be based on the applicant’s research at the time of application submission. If selected to receive an award, USAID will work with the successful applicant to determine pricing that is current at the time of award.

C. EVALUATION CRITERIA

Applications that meet the basic objectives of the APS will be considered and fully evaluated by a USAID team of experts.

Each application will be fairly evaluated for feasibility, strategic fit with the development objectives of USAID and against the following criteria, which will be the same for all applicants:

- The adherence of the goals of the proposed project to the goals as stated in this solicitation.
- Conformity to the basic technical parameters of this solicitation – proposed award amount, period of performance, place of performance, defined targets, etc.
- The viability/feasibility of the activities and proposed technical approach.
- Potential impact compared to project cost.
- Evidence of local ownership or beneficiary support for the project.
- Project sustainability as appropriate given the project type and complexity.
- Appropriateness of the time schedule given the proposed activities.
- The previous experience of the applicants.
- Appropriateness of the budget as related to the proposed activities.
- Any cost-share proposed.

[END OF SECTION IV]

V. AGENCY CONTACTS

The Agreement Officer for this APS is:

Mr. Brian Aaron

Agreement Officer

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