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AKT LS

Request for Applications (RFA)

For Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)

(CSOs: including Non-Governmental Organizations, Associations, Foundations and other Community-based organizations)

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1. Contents

1. <i>Background</i>	2
2. <i>AKT LS Introduction</i>	2
3. <i>Grant Purpose</i>	3
4. <i>Technical Application (Project Application)</i>	4
5. <i>Budget</i>	7
6. <i>Applicants' financial and accounting system</i>	7
7. <i>Evaluation Criteria</i>	7
8. <i>Application Procedure</i>	11
9. <i>Deadline for Submission</i>	11
10. <i>Questions and Clarifications for RFA</i>	12
11. <i>Responsiveness</i>	12
12. <i>Evaluation and Determination of Subcontract Award</i>	12
13. <i>Ownership of Application</i>	12
14. <i>Terms & Conditions</i>	13
15. <i>Standard Provisions</i>	13

1. Background

Advancing Kosovo Together - Local Solutions (AKT - LS) is a three-year project that aims to increase constructive inter-ethnic cooperation and interaction, primarily between the majority Kosovo Albanian community and non-majority communities, which is vital to the security and stability of the Balkans. The AKT – LS is part of the USAID Forward, the new USAID strategy of development aid delivery, where involvement of local know-how and expertise is essential for maximizing aid efficiency.

2. AKT LS Introduction

AKT Program (also AKT – LS) is implemented in 16 municipalities with considerable presence of non-majority communities. In essence, all three interventions are designed to contribute to expedited inclusion of non-majority communities in the institutional and political life in Kosovo and increasing the exchanges between majority and minority communities across all spheres of life. Improvement of community initiatives and service delivery systems, coupled by increased ability to deliver quality services on the part of local governments and the efficient advocating of community needs and priorities, are encompassed in the project as different dimensions of intervention. These dimensions are expected to lead to improvement of both horizontal linkages across municipalities and vertical linkages with line ministries, through which lives of communities will be improved.

Employment and economic development are also envisaged by the project as key intervention measures aimed at contributing to the overall inclusion of the economies in the 16 beneficiary municipalities. Provision of opportunities for savvy entrepreneurially predisposed individuals and labor force development measures are the two main tools to be used for promoting employment and self-employment in the targeted communities.

In addition, the program will offer assistance to local municipalities to provide services in the most efficient manner, using transparent processes, which resulted in the setting of many standards across all municipalities, such as the creation of annual work plans, Service Improvement Action Plans (SIAPs) and citizen engagement plans. Such assistance was particularly helpful for the newly created municipalities, which did not typically have experienced leadership. This assistance will help target municipalities to continue instituting practical and concrete initiatives that will strengthen the legitimacy of Kosovo's local government system and improve service delivery in the targeted municipalities.

This RFA supports AKT LS Objective 1: *Improve autonomous, horizontal communication between: (a) Kosovo Albanian and non-majority communities; and (b) the GoK and non-majority communities.*

3. Grant Purpose

Establishment of Local Youth Action Councils (LYAC) in Four Northern Municipalities (municipalities of Mitrovia north, Zvecan/Zveqan, Leposavic/q and Zubin Potok/u): The AKT LS is inviting Locally Registered NGO's to submit applications for establishment of LYAC's in four northern municipalities. All ethnic groups from each respective municipality shall be represented in the LYAC. Applicant should conduct series of activities aiming to establish LYAC in each respective municipality following as per list of activities described below.

Indicative activities are listed below but not limited to:

- Conduct series of consultative meetings with youth CSO's in respective municipality and high school representatives. Ensuring representation of all ethnic communities in the work of LYAC.
- Develop a statute of the LYAC;
- Develop a LYAC stamp
- Submit and obtain Certificate of registration with the Ministry of Public Administration;
- Develop an Inventory registry
- Develop Memorandums of Understanding with all active members (participating CSO's and high school representatives)
- Submit and obtain Recognition letter by the municipality;
- Open Bank account for LYAC
- Organizing elections according to the timeframe specified in its statutes, since regular elections are necessary to guarantee that the LYAC board is composed of members representing the voice of the majority of the youth CSOs active in the municipality

AKT LS under Component 1 aims at fostering positive and constructive inter-ethnic cooperation between the Kosovo non-majority and Kosovo majority communities in all 16 targeted municipalities listed in section 7a.

An organization may apply for grants in any or all of the thematic areas, but AKT LS will not make more than one award to a single applicant under this RFA.

The maximum amount AKT LS expects to award any single grant applicant is € 40,000.

The proposed duration of the projects should not exceed 6 months.

Grant Criteria for application

To be minimally eligible for funding, the organizations must comply with the following conditions:

- Civil society organizations receiving grants under this RFA must be registered under the Department for Registration and Liaison with NGOs under the Ministry of Public Administration of Kosovo. Applicants should therefore: 1) have completed registration with the Department for Registration and Liaison with NGOs; 2) be in the process of registration and willing to complete the process prior to receiving any funds; or 3) be willing to start and complete the process of registration prior to receiving any funds.
- The proposal is in line with the overarching AKT LS objective(s) listed in section 2 and the specific grant objective(s) and program priorities outlined in section 3 and 7.a.

Eligible organizations could include, for example, foundations, associations, non-governmental organizations, community based organizations/groups and/or organizations grouped together in an application as a formal or informal consortium. Applicants must be able to provide evidence of programmatic, technical and managerial capacity to carry out intended activities, as well as past achievement of successful results in the above mentioned areas.

A partnership in the form of a consortium may provide an effective mechanism to rapidly scale-up, increasing the role of non-majority communities as active stakeholders in society. Applicants are encouraged to undertake joint applications or other group arrangements to accommodate participation of new partners, improve geographic coverage, and improve the potential for success through capacity building partnerships. In the case where an application is submitted by a consortium, at least one partner must meet the above eligibility requirements and the lead partner in the consortium should be clearly identified.

Eligible Size of the Grant

Size of the total amount available under this RFA (financing round) is € 40,000. The maximum period of project duration is 6 months. The budget must be prepared in Euros and be clearly based on activities described in the application.

4. Technical Application (Project Application)

This section of the RFA describes the parameters for preparing a project application, budget and narrative; the process of application, USAID/AKT LS' evaluation of received applications, and terms and conditions that will apply to the awarded grants.

The attached application form should be completed in full, along with the proposed project, which should not exceed **10 typed pages**.

Grant Application Package

The grant application package contains:

1. This Request for Applications (RFA)
2. Application Form
3. Budget Template
4. Budget Guidelines (Instructions)

Application Form

SECTION I - The Applicant – presents the basic information on the applicant such as name, address, legal representative, and contact numbers.

SECTION II - Project Application – is the main body of the application presenting the following:

1. **Justification and Background**

Provide a clear description and justification about the problem/issue the proposal is tackling. It should be concrete in describing its relevance to the country/region/target groups.

2. **Project Goal and Objectives**

Describe the goals and objectives of the proposed project. Each specific objective should be clearly stated, measurable and attainable during the proposed project timeline.

3. **Compliance with AKT LS Objectives**

Demonstrate how the proposed activities and overall objectives support the overarching AKT LS objective(s) in section 2 and the specific grant objective(s) listed in section 3.

4. **Expected Results**

Expected results should directly correspond to specific objectives, project activities and timeline. They should be concrete, practical and achievable.

5. **Target Groups**

Describe specific target groups of the project, relevant stakeholders to be addressed and potential allies. It should contain a plan to mobilize/inform/engage broader community/citizens.

6. Geographic Coverage

Provide justification for selection of the geographic coverage of the project.

7. Description of Activities

The proposed activities should be specific and concise, explaining how they will help achieve the project goal and objectives. Please provide what the outputs or tangible outcomes of activities will be.

8. Grant Activity Monitoring Plan

Explain how you will monitor grant activities to ensure that they progress as scheduled and achieve the intended results.

9. Sustainability of the project

Describe how proposed project shall attain sustainability beyond the life of the project.

10. Management Team

List the proposed project staff implementing the activities under the proposed grant, and include a brief job description. If applicable, any experts that will be engaged should be described under this section. If volunteers are being used, indicate their purpose

11. Partnerships (if any)

If the project is implemented in partnership, this section should contain clear division of roles and description of what the applicant and its cooperating partner(s) respectively will contribute to the project.

SECTION III - Institutional Capacity – gives an overview of the organization and its past performance, previous project and donors and annual budgets for the last three years:

1. Brief description of your organization

Needs to describe the organization's main areas of work and the role it plays in the community with description of the level of cooperation with other sectors and networking.

2. Other Donors

This section should contain information on all donor support in the past three years. AKT LS reserves the right to verify presented data. This section will be the basis for verification of the organizational past history.

5. Budget

Budget Template

The Budget Form is an Excel table with clear division of sections. Please refer to Budget Guidelines for details.

The Budget Form, when properly completed, reviewed and approved serves as mutual agreed upon roadmap for grant financial management. This document should identify all grant implementation costs. The identified costs should be accurately based on the accurate market prices. These costs should be realistic and should not be in disproportion with the existing market costs.

The Budget Form is presented in Attachment 2. All line items must be represented by narrative in line with Budget Guidelines describing details of purpose of that specific line for available cost to be used for. Upon requirement, applicant should be able to provide clear, accurate and concise justification for each line item proposed.

While cost share is not required under this RFA, projects with higher level of cost share by other donors or the organization itself will be prioritized. We understand many organizations may not have their own resources to provide, but if resources are available for an organization to do so, as well as volunteer time, it is welcome. Volunteer work can be accounted for as cost-share. The total application cost should be the sum of USAID/AKT LS funding required plus cost-share value. The cost incurred during preparation of application will not be considered as cost-share.

Currency of Cost Data

All cost data must be presented in EUROS (€) only.

6. Applicants' financial and accounting system

By signing the agreement for support from AKT LS, the Grantee is obliged to use the funding in accordance with the signed agreement with AKT LS. Funding used should follow U.S. federal regulations for this purpose. Before any agreement is signed, AKT LS will assess the accuracy and adequacy of the financial and accounting system of the applicants in order to ensure accountability and capacity to handle the available funding.

7. Evaluation Criteria

During this course the Selection Committee will employ **eligibility criteria** to determine if the application fits into the scope of the program and is eligible for further detailed analysis and evaluation and this will include:

- Civil society organizations must be registered under the Department for Registration and Liaison with NGOs under the Ministry of Public Administration of Kosovo, or be in the process of registration and be willing to complete the process prior to receiving any funds, or if not already in process be willing to start and complete registration prior to receiving the funds.
- The proposal is in line with the USAID/AKT LS program and RFA objectives

If an application scores negatively in one of the eligibility criteria, the application will automatically be disqualified and not considered for the next round of evaluation.

If the eligibility criteria are passed, then the following **evaluation criteria** will be considered to ensure AKT LS awards grants to the best evaluated application:

7.a Focus and Priorities for Evaluation and Scoring

Geographic focus

The focus of this RFA is on activities and initiatives in AKT LS target municipalities: North Mitrovica, Leposavic/q, Zubin, Potok/Zvecan/Zveqan.

Creation of linkages

Projects that promote networking, links and partnership within non-majority communities to help decrease isolation and to improve the ability of these communities to address the challenges they face may be favorably received. Similarly, this applies to the projects that propose innovative ways to capitalize on opportunities for networking with non-majority and majority communities and with various civil society organizations such as associations, informal groups as well as NGOs and actions that engage marginalized populations such as youth, women and isolated non-majorities.

Networking should not be pursued as an end in and of itself, but rather as a means of making progress towards the overall program objectives and goal. Similarly, partnerships should not be forced or artificial, rather encouraged and proposed where they exist for mutual benefit.

Cross-cutting issues: inclusion of youth, women and traditionally marginalized groups

One of the thematic areas for this RFA is focused on women and another on youth. Project proposals in any thematic area that involve youth or address youth issues will be positively considered, as will projects that seek to engage women actively as partners and beneficiaries. The inclusion of people with disabilities is also actively encouraged.

Applications do not create conflict in the community or between communities

AKT LS is aware that certain applications if funded can create potential for conflict in the community or between communities. The Selection Committee will closely evaluate and analyze each application and determine potentials for conflict creation. If determined so, and if application is not subject for modification and improvement, AKT LS will not take in consideration such application. AKT LS considers that all funding and support provided should build bridges in community or between communities instead.

Past performance of the applicants

Past performance with other donors will be taken in consideration when evaluating the proposals. Organizations with good reputation in the past will be received more favorably. Poor performance or misuse of funds under other donor projects will be scored negatively. All applications to be considered for funding will be verified by AKT LS.

Evaluation Method and Criteria

All applications clearly responding to the focus of this RFA will be evaluated on a competitive basis (scoring system) in accordance with the criteria presented below conducted by AKT LS and independent experts from other USAID programs. These criteria were developed to address the particular goals of the Advancing Kosovo Together/Local Solution. The number of points assigned indicates the relative importance of each factor. To make the evaluation process as objective as possible, each applicant must clearly demonstrate how its application meets the following criteria.

Eligibility Criteria for application to be evaluated for support

Eligibility Criteria	Positive	Negative
CSO is registered with NGO Department or in process of registration	Positive	Negative
Is the proposal submitted by a lead organization from the non-majority community?	Positive	Negative
Is the proposal in line with the AKT LS and RFA objectives?	Positive	Negative

If the proposal does not meet any of the eligibility criteria, it will not be evaluated and scored.

Criteria for evaluation with scoring

Evaluation Grid	Score	Total
Project rationale/justification <i>The application should clearly state problem well explained and well reasoned.</i>	10	
Project description and feasibility, <i>The application will be evaluated on the extent and quality to which the applicant demonstrates a reasonable approach to the project, sufficient resources to complete the project, and a capability to complete the project in a timely manner. Work plan will be reviewed for detailed actions and an accompanying timetable for implementing the components of the application. Clear, logical, realistic, and efficient plans will result in a higher score</i>	15	
Project sustainability, outcomes and benefits <i>The application will be evaluated to determine whether and to what extent the project's anticipated outcomes promote improvement of predefined areas of RFA The application will be evaluated to determine whether the applicant has included outcome-based performance measures and whether the project achieve sustainable results beyond the life of the project .</i>	20	
Project target objectives and beneficiaries/communities <i>The application will be evaluated to determine relations to intended objectives and target groups</i>	20	
Organizational capacity, staffing and past experience <i>The application will be reviewed to determine whether the applicant has the capacity to implement project, and if key personnel have appropriate knowledge, skills, and abilities to funds control, grants management, performance monitoring and evaluation, or other activities relevant to the success of the proposed program.</i>	15	
Financial section/ Budget cost effectiveness and rationality <i>Budget will be reviewed for completeness and interconnection with proposed activities and outcomes</i>	20	
TOTAL POINTS	100	

8. Application Procedure

Interested applicants are required to complete Grant Application Form with all relevant annexes which can be:

- a. Downloaded at the AKT LS website: <http://www.kcdf.org/AKT-LS> and also CDF consortium partner's website www.ngocpt.org and www.ngoaktiv.org
- b. Requested by email from grants@kcdf.org

USAID/AKT LS is not responsible for any costs associated with the development of the application.

Public Information Sessions

USAID/AKT LS will provide the possibility for all interested individuals and organizations to receive more information on the RFA and the selection process or ask additional questions.

Information days with potential applicants will be organized as follows:

1. Regional Community Resource Center (RCRC), Cika Jovina St. 13, Mitrovica North on October 18, 2016 at 12:00 pm
2. Municipal Assembly, Gračanica/Gračanicë on October 19, 2016 at 10:00 am

9. Deadline for Submission

Proposals may be submitted at any time before 4.00 p.m. on November 15, 2016. Applications should be submitted in English.

Applicants need to submit one original hard copy of their full proposal and budget in English and send electronic copy in Word and Excel format, grants@kcdf.org. All applications will be received in sealed envelopes and AKT – LS will stamp and provide a receipt.

All applications must be:

- Submitted in the required format with all required attachments (Full application form, budget, a copy of registration certificate, fiscal number)
- USAID/AKT LS will not accept applications submitted by fax.
- USAID/AKT LS will not return any submitted application.

Applicants will be informed of the status of their application and awarding grants through the e-mail address provided in their application form.

Documents to Verify Eligibility Criteria

All application packages must, besides the required forms, contain the following documents:

1. Copy of the registration with the Department for Registration and Liaison with NGOs under the Ministry of Public Administration of Kosovo; or signed statement confirming that process is underway or that the Applicant is willing to register.
2. Signed certification of willingness to share financial statements in accordance with USAID regulations if required.

10. Questions and Clarifications for RFA

All potential applicants can submit their questions to grants@kcdf.org. The questions should be raised latest by October 21st, 2016. All answers will be addressed within two working days from the receipt.

11. Responsiveness

Those applications that are not submitted in accordance with the RFA requirements will not be considered for review.

12. Evaluation and Determination of Subcontract Award

Proposals may be submitted at any time before 4.00 p.m. November 15, 2016. An independent panel consisting of experts from this and other USAID programs will review all proposals and score them in line with the above mentioned criteria. The short-listed organizations will be visited by the AKT LS team to perform site assessments and verify information presented in their proposals. Once the information is verified and the eligibility of applicant organizations are confirmed, the technical review committee, including AKT LS management will recommend the highest ranked proposals for grant awards. The proposals will then be presented to USAID for formal concurrence. Once all the approvals are obtained, AKT LS will proceed with implementation. AKT LS reserves the right to cancel this RFA in whole or in part if none of the proposals match requirements and criteria. Only the proposals within the budgetary limit of this RFA will be considered for funding.

During the course of review, CDF as implementer of the USAID AKT LS program may request additional information from the applicant regarding the grant proposal or about the organization in general. A request for further information does not imply that AKT LS will or will not support the project; it simply indicates that further information is necessary in order to complete the review process.

13. Ownership of Application

All applications submitted in response to this RFA will be property of the USAID/AKT LS and will not be returned to applicants under any circumstances.

14. Terms & Conditions

Preparation cost

AKT LS is not responsible for any costs associated with the development of Application.

Amendments

AKT LS reserves the right to issue any amendment(s) to RFA at any time and at its discretion. The amendment(s) will follow the same procedure as the RFA announcement.

Withdrawal of RFA

AKT LS reserves the right to withdraw and/or void RFA at any time and in its discretion.

Voiding Application by the Applicant

The applicant is eligible to void its application at any time. This action should be communicated in written to grants@kcdf.org. The announcement should contain signature and personal data of the applicant for AKT LS verification.

15. Standard Provisions

AKT LS grant awards are made under the authority of the United States Foreign Assistance Act and will adhere to the guidance provided under ADS Chapter 303, "Grants and Cooperative Agreements to Non-Governmental Organizations" and will be within the terms of the USAID Standard Provisions for Non-U.S. Non-Governmental Recipients, as well as CDF/AKT LS' internal policies and procedures.

Transparency and Visibility

All recipients agree to act in a transparent manner between stakeholders, communities, AKT LS and USAID and make reasonable efforts to promote the visibility and transparency of their actions.

Grant Agreement

A grant agreement will include the approved project description, approved budget, reporting requirements and other relevant provisions. Once executed, the grant agreement becomes a legally binding document between AKT LS and the recipient

organization. Once the grant agreement is signed, it cannot be modified without prior written approval from AKT LS.

Grant Disbursement and Financial Management

Recipients of grant funds will need to open a separate bank account or sub-account in Kosovo bank before any funds are transferred from AKT LS. The grants will be disbursed in Euro and transferred only through bank transactions.

Reporting

The grant agreement will detail the reporting requirements. Recipients must be willing to adhere to the reporting schedule and requirements for both programming activities and financial monitoring.

Monitoring

AKT LS staff will monitor programmatic performance. AKT LS and USAID reserve the right to review finances, expenditures and any relevant documents at any time during the project period and for three years after the completion of the project and closeout. All original receipts must be kept for three years after the formal closeout has been completed.

Environmental Considerations

AKT LS will not fund activities that have, pose or can create negative environmental effects. AKT LS reserves the right to conduct environmental impact assessment of any proposed activity or application as a whole, suggest mitigation measures and if necessary cancel the grant agreement.

Indirect rates

Indirect rates such as fringe, overhead, and general and administrative costs will not be covered by AKT LS.

Ineligible Expenses Under no circumstances shall the recipient use AKT LS funds to procure any of the following under this award:

- a) Private ceremonies, parties, celebrations, or "representation" expenses
- b) Purchases of restricted goods, such as certain agricultural commodities, motor vehicles (including motorcycles), pharmaceuticals and contraceptive items, pesticides, used equipment, U.S. Government excess property and fertilizers, without the previous approval by the AO through AKT LS. If procurement of these restricted goods is necessary, AKT LS may decide to procure items directly and provide them in-kind to the grantee after receiving approval from the AO.
- c) Prohibited goods under USAID regulations, including but not limited to: military and surveillance equipment, police or law enforcement equipment,

abortion equipment and services, weather modification equipment, luxury goods, and gambling equipment.

- d) Purchases of goods or services restricted or prohibited under the prevailing USAID source/nationality regulations per 22 CFR 228 and relevant Standard Provisions; or from countries or suppliers as may be identified by USAID's consolidated list of debarred, suspended, or ineligible grantees at www.sam.gov.
- e) Any purchases or activities deemed unnecessary to accomplish grant purposes as determined by AKT LS, including any grantee headquarters expenses that are not directly linked to the implementation of the proposed project
- f) Previous obligations and/or bad debts.
- g) Fines and/or penalties.
- h) Creation of endowments.
- i) Other costs unallowable under USAID and/or federal regulations, such as alcoholic beverages. Refer to OMB 122 "Cost principles for Non-profit organizations" and FAR.
- j) Indirect costs such as but not limited to overhead or indirect fringe (unless the applicant has documented proof of such rates through audits or U.S. Government-issued NICRA). Indirect costs are never allowed under simplified grants.

Certifications for Non-US Non-Governmental Recipients

The following Grant & Subcontractor Certifications are required by AKT LS and USAID:

- a) Certification Regarding Terrorist Financing
- b) Certification of Recipient
- c) Representation by Organization Regarding a Delinquent Tax Liability or a Felony Criminal Conviction

Should you have any questions regarding the RFA, please send an e-mail to: grants@kcdf.org