



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

APS-182-16-000001

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Subject: Annual Program Statement: APS-182-16-000001 for Tourism as a Leading Edge

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID), in collaboration with the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), is seeking concept papers to implement activities to promote sustainable tourism in Albania. The purpose of the activities is to contribute to improvements in tourism sector, including improvements to Albania's business enabling environment and workforce capacities, to serve as catalysts for job creation and economic growth.

Subject to the availability of funds, USAID intends to make 3-5 awards as a result of this APS. The resulting awards are expected to have a period of performance between 24-36 months with a funding range from \$250,000 to \$750,000 (exclusive of cost share).

This APS and any future amendments (including answers to questions) can be downloaded from <http://www.usaid.gov/albania/partnership-opportunities.htm> and www.grants.gov.

Concept papers may be submitted at any time during the active date of this APS and will be reviewed on a rolling basis. All concept papers must comply with the instructions in this APS. Concept papers received after the deadline of the APS, as noted above, will not be considered unless the reason for delayed submission is deemed justified or it is in the best interests of USAID to consider the concept paper, as determined by the Agreements Officer.

Selection under this APS will consist of a two-step process: applicants must first submit a concept paper for an initial competitive review. Full applications will not be reviewed at this stage. All concept papers will be evaluated according to the criteria specified in this APS. USAID will then request full applications only from those successful in the first stage for further award consideration. Request for a full application is not a guarantee of award.

Any questions regarding this APS and/or its attachments must be submitted via email to the Agreement Officer at pristinausaidrcopackages@usaid.gov, and AlbaniaAPS@usaid.gov. Questions received will be responded to as quickly as practicable but NLT than 30 days from submission.

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 a concept paper or full application. In addition, any resultant award in response to this APS cannot be made until funds have been fully appropriated, allocated, and committed through

internal USAID procedures. While it is anticipated that these procedures will be successfully completed, potential applicants are hereby notified of these requirements and conditions for award. All preparation and submission costs incurred are at the applicant's expense.

Sincerely,



Suhaib Khan
Regional Agreement Officer

SECTION I—PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

1. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

A. TITLE

Tourism as a Leading Edge

B. INTRODUCTION

The overall objective of this APS is to strengthen sustainable, broad-based, and inclusive economic development in Albania through a more vibrant tourism sector. The purpose of the project is to contribute to improvements in tourism sector, including improvements to Albania's business enabling environment and workforce capacities, to serve as catalysts for job creation and economic growth. By strengthening critical elements of Albania tourism sector, this program will contribute to economic growth and Albania's European integration path.

C. BACKGROUND

The Eurozone crisis and the contraction of the economies of southern Europe brought an end to Albania's post-communist growth model, which had been based largely on domestic consumer demand, construction, large-scale emigration and consequent remittances from abroad. Close economic links to Italy and Greece that in the past were advantageous because of proximity are now less appealing, and at least 200,000 guest workers have returned home. Albania's fiscal situation is serious, necessitating emergency International Monetary Fund and World Bank packages to help the Government of Albania (GOA) begin to pay down longstanding arrears and engage in fiscal consolidation. Lending to the private sector has largely ground to a halt as the percentage of non-performing loans has exceeded 25%.

Unemployment remains a serious challenge, at around 17% according to the Albanian Institute of Statistics (INSTAT), with youth unemployment becoming a more serious problem. The labor market is distorted by a large informal sector. A substantial labor force potential exists with more than 40% of the working age population, especially women, inactive. According to a recent Sida report, the share of youth not in education, training or employment is about twice the EU average.

Albania's government has prioritized job creation and adding value in key sectors including tourism and agriculture. The direct contribution of travel and tourism to GDP in 2013 was 4.8% of GDP while the total contribution (including wider effects from investment and the supply chain) was about 17% according to the World Travel and Tourism Council. It is expected that the contribution to GDP from this sector will increase in coming years. The most noticeable economic argument in favor of tourism is the multiplier effect. Thus, tourism can generate revenues and act as a driver for general economic development while

supporting a variety of local and national businesses that act as suppliers or service providers to restaurants, hotels, transportation and touristic guides all over the country.

Another important factor is the connection of tourism to supply chains such as food processing, handicraft and transport. This interconnectedness means that improvements in the tourism sector will have positive impacts on many sectors because of supply chains as well as local economic development.

D. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Albania does not have a positive track record in fostering the business enabling environment (to include norms, standards, laws, regulation, policies, and enforcement) that would allow the expansion of a tourism industry worthy of the country's beauty and opportunities. Despite its unique combination of beaches and mountains, mild climate, and tourism potential as evidenced by the countries on Albania's maritime borders that have been relatively successful in parlaying such natural advantages into dynamic drivers of economic growth and development, the tourism industry in Albania is still underperforming. Both public and private sectors have engaged in harmful, short-term actions in the past that threaten to permanently damage Albania's tourism potential.

Activities which boost the advocacy capacity of the tourism industry to create strong, indigenous demand for key reforms and local infrastructure improvements would greatly improve Albania's tourism potential and would more generally support the business enabling environment for the entire economy. In addition, other interventions which contribute to the development of tourism potential areas of interest such as: improving soft infrastructure and planning for sustainable tourism through pilot economic development activities with local governments, tourism sector actors, and civil society; strengthening the capacity of industry associations and educational institutions to provide targeted vocational training and job placement, etc. are also considered within the scope of this APS.

Strengthening "Agro-tourism" to better connect the agriculture and tourism sectors promote job generation, and to facilitate connections between high-quality local production and touristic services is another area of interest within the scope of this APS. In addition, requirements for sustainable tourism can stimulate improved local governance outcomes including improved environmental protection, better urban and regional planning, and better service provision—therefore all elements are mutually reinforcing.

No new construction activities will be financed under assistance agreements resulting from this APS, however small-scale improvements, renovations, alterations or refurbishments amounting to less than 50% of the USAID-financed portion of the project budget is acceptable.

The policy stated in Mandatory Reference for USAID Automated Directive System ADS 303 – USAID Implementation of Construction Activities will strictly apply.

<https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1868/303maw.pdf>

E. GENDER CONSIDERATIONS

Promoting gender equality and advancing the status of all women and girls around the world is vital to achieving U.S. and Sweden foreign policy and development objectives. As part of the design of any proposed activity, the Recipient will assess and identify gender issues which impact the participation of men and women equally in the participation of this program. Refer to USAID ADS 205 found at <http://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1870/205.pdf> for more information on integrating this policy into their approach.

2. AUTHORIZING LEGISLATION AND APPLICABLE REGULATIONS AND POLICIES

The authority for this APS and any resulting award is from the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended. Applicable policies of ADS 303 and any Standard Provisions will apply to any awards.

For U.S. organizations, 2 CFR 700, 2 CFR 200, and ADS 303maa, Standard Provisions for U.S. Non-governmental Organizations are applicable.

For non-U.S. organizations, ADS 303mab, Standard Provisions for Non-U.S. Non-governmental Organizations will apply.

[END OF SECTION I]

SECTION II—AWARD INFORMATION

1. ESTIMATED FUNDING AND NUMBER OF AWARDS

Subject to the availability of funds, USAID, in partnership with Sida, intends to provide up to \$6,000,000 (exclusive of cost share) in total USAID funding for the overall program. USAID intends to make 3-5 awards as a result of this APS. The dollar value of each award range is expected to be from \$250,000-\$750,000.

2. PROGRAM DURATION

Awards under this APS will be for a minimum of 24 months and a maximum of 36 months. Because award selection will be made on a rolling basis, specific start dates will vary per award. Individual award start dates will be mutually determined during the Step 2, Full Application Request and Evaluation phase (see Attachment 1). USAID reserves the right to fund activities incrementally over the duration of the program, if necessary, depending on the program length, performance against approved indicators and availability of funds.

3. TYPE OF AWARDS

USAID anticipates the awards issued under this APS to be assistance instruments, such as grants or cooperative agreements, as deemed appropriate by the Agreement Officer in consultation with the applicant organization.

Potential applicants should note that USAID policy prohibits the payment of fee/profit to the prime recipient under assistance instruments and that foregone profit does not qualify as cost sharing or leveraging.

No new construction activities will be financed under assistance agreements resulting from this APS, however small-scale improvements, renovations, alterations or refurbishments amounting to less than 50% of the USAID-financed portion of the project budget is acceptable.

The policy stated in Mandatory Reference for ADS 303 – USAID Implementation of Construction Activities will strictly apply.

<https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1868/303maw.pdf>.

4. AUTHORIZED GEOGRAPHIC CODE

The authorized geographic code for the procurement of services and commodities is 935. Code 935 is defined as any area or country including the recipient country (Albania), but excluding any country that is a prohibited source per USAID regulations. There are currently no prohibited source countries, but the list is updated regularly and can be found here:

<http://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1864/310mac.pdf>.

5. BENEFITING GEOGRAPHIC AREA

The benefiting geographic area is exclusively Albania.

[END OF SECTION II]

SECTION III—ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

1. TYPES OF ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Eligible Applicants are US and non-US NGOs, including indigenous, local Albanian NGOs; Private Voluntary Organizations based in the United States (U.S. PVOs); Public International Organizations (PIOs); International Organizations (IOs); U.S. and Non-U.S. For-Profit Organizations, and U.S. and Non-U.S. Colleges and Universities. USAID will not accept applications from individuals. All applicants must be legally recognized organizational entities under applicable law and authorized to operate in Albania. All qualified applicants are eligible to apply.

USAID encourages concept papers from potential new partners.

2. COST SHARE

The cost share minimum for each award is 33% of the award value.

Applicants may propose cost share in cash, in-kind, or a combination of both. Cost-share contributions may include cash, existing or additional investments, and/or in-kind support such as donated skilled and unskilled labor, donated employee time, transportation, donated supplies or equipment, and donated rent or office space. The nature and value of the cost-share contribution must be described in all applications (concept paper and full application) including the budget section as described in the APS. If an award is made, the proposed cost share contribution will be incorporated as part of the award document. For additional guidance on cost share please see [2 CFR 200.306](#).

3. NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS

Organizations are only permitted to submit one concept paper under this APS. If more than one concept paper is submitted by the same organization under this APS, only the first concept paper received will be reviewed.

[END OF SECTION III]

SECTION IV—APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

1. APS DISTRIBUTION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

The APS funding opportunity and any subsequent amendments can be found at <http://www.usaid.gov/albania/partnership-opportunities.htm> and www.grants.gov.

Concept papers must be submitted according to the directions outlined in this APS. Specifically, concept papers must be sent via e-mail to AlbaniaAPS@usaid.gov.

CONCEPT PAPER SUBMISSION (Step 1)

Selection under this APS will be based on a two-step process:

Step 1: Concept Paper submissions (open to all eligible organizations as described in this APS)

Step 2: Full Application submissions (by invitation only to applicants selected under Step 1 evaluations)

Applicants must first submit a concept paper for review. All concept papers will be evaluated according to the criteria specified in this APS. If the concept is determined to warrant further evaluation per the selection criteria established, full applications will be requested. Full applications will not be reviewed at this stage.

Concept Papers under this APS will be accepted on an on-going basis from the Issue Date until the Close Date of the APS as listed on the cover page. Applicants are however encouraged to apply sooner rather than later because funds are limited and award decisions will be made on a rolling basis.

Concept Paper Submission Instructions:

Submit concept papers strictly according to the instructions below. All concept papers received by the close date of the APS will be reviewed for responsiveness to the specifications outlined in these guidelines and compliance with the application format.

- Concept papers must be submitted electronically via email. Email submissions must include the following in the subject line:

“Concept Paper under APS-182-16-00001 submitted by: [name of organization].”

Concept papers must be sent via e-mail to AlbaniaAPS@usaid.gov.

- Concept Papers must not exceed 5 single-spaced typed pages (excluding cover page and annexes), utilizing Times New Roman 12pt font, single spaced, typed on standard 8½” x 11” sized paper with one-inch margins (both right and left) and each page numbered consecutively.

Applicants are advised that any pages exceeding the limit will not be considered for evaluation.

Unless otherwise specified, all concept paper must be in **English**.

Concept Paper Contents:

General guidelines:

- The concept paper must clearly demonstrate an in-depth understanding of the development challenges in context, outline specific activities, and explain how the proposed activities would help address the Problem Statement stated in Section I. Applicants are encouraged to propose innovative yet realistic approaches that are most appropriate in the context of the presented issues as well as methods by which new approaches will be analyzed and adapted as needed throughout implementation.
- The concept paper must clearly address the factors outlined in the selection criteria found in Section V.

The Concept Paper, at a minimum, must contain the following **all of which count towards the page limit**:

i. Cover Page (not to exceed one page)

A single page with the project title, the APS number, and the name of the organization applying as the lead or primary applicant clearly identified. Any proposed sub-awardees should be listed separately under heading “Sub-awardees”. In addition, the Cover Page must provide a contact person for the prime applicant, including: Name (both typed and his/her signature), Title or position with the organization/institution, Street address, telephone number(s), and email address. State whether the contact person has the authority to contract for the applicant. If not, please also provide the name and contact information of the individual who has the authority to negotiate terms, conditions and countersign any award, if issued, under this APS. If available, the TIN and DUNS numbers of the applicant should also be listed on the Cover Page.

In addition, the Cover Page must contain the following statements acknowledging specific requirements under this jointly-funded (USAID and Sida) APS:

- A statement indicating a willingness to comply with USAID’s co-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 and Swedish support in all project activities. The BSMP, once approved, will become part of the award document.
- A statement indicating the grantee’s willingness to follow USAID’s environmental compliance policy guidelines. If selected for award, applicants will work with USAID staff to determine any environmental compliance requirements, implementation procedures, and reporting requirements on the compliance activities/results.

ii. Technical Approach and Timeline (not to exceed 5 pages)

In this section, applicants must focus on describing how they propose to achieve the program objectives and elaborate on how the technical approach is the most effective way to address the problem statement as described in the APS and defined in your concept paper. At a minimum, this section must contain

- **Summary Statement:** A brief statement of the problem(s)/issue(s) being addressed, proposed project, and project location(s)
- **Timeline:** Proposed timeline, i.e. project duration or time needed to complete the proposed activities. All programs should be 24 to 36 months in duration.
- **Project Beneficiaries:** The number of and description of the project beneficiaries (i.e., the people and/or organizations who will benefit from the project).
- **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, the public benefit, any activities relevant to the project that have already been completed, a list and description of proposed project activities, main objectives, and expected results. Also include in the project description a brief discussion regarding:
 - Sustainability (how the project will be supported and can continue without donor funding). Comments may include how the proposed activities will nurture beneficiaries’ sense of project ownership.
 - Gender considerations
 - Environmental risk mitigation

The following Annexes must be attached to the Concept Paper and **do not count towards the page limit.**

Annex 1 (not to exceed 1 page): A timeline (chronogram) indicating when proposed project activities will be implemented per month or week, as appropriate.

Annex 2 (not to exceed 2 pages): Estimated cost summary, direct, indirect and cost share, including brief cost breakdown by cost category, as well as the estimated cost and cost share contributions of sub-partners.

- **Annex 3 (not to exceed 1 page);** Brief description of applicant’s previous work and experience in development, if any, including that of any informal organizations or other partners, as applicable.

[END OF SECTION IV]

SECTION V—CONCEPT PAPER REVIEW INFORMATION

1. SELECTION CRITERIA

The criteria presented below have been tailored to the requirements of this particular APS. Applicants will note that these criteria serve to: (a) identify the significant matters which applicants must address in their applications and (b) set the standard against which all applications will be evaluated.

The selection criteria can help the applicants identify the significant matters that they should address in their applications, as the same criteria will be the standard against which all applications will be evaluated.

A. SELECTION CRITERIA (Concept paper)

The criteria described in this section will be used to evaluate all concept papers.

The four evaluation factors (technical and cost) are provided below.

1. The viability/feasibility/public benefit of the activities and proposed technical approach, which much address the objectives of this APS, risk mitigation, and gender considerations.
2. Potential impact compared to project cost, cost-effectiveness, and appropriateness of the budget as related to proposed activities, including adherence to cost share requirements.
3. Evidence of local ownership or beneficiary support for the project, including project sustainability as appropriate given the project type and complexity.
4. The previous experience of the applicants. Prior experience with USAID is not required.

B. COST

Costs included in the proposed budget will be reviewed to assess proper allocation of resources, overall reasonableness and cost share requirements per this APS. A general cost realism analysis will be done to assess the Applicant's understanding of the requirements, cost effectiveness and the degree to which the cost proposal reflects the approaches in the technical solution proposed and programmatic requirements set forth in the APS. A full budget narrative with the basis of estimate is not required at this time. However, because Cost Share is a requirement for award consideration, please provide an associated budget narrative which clearly describes the cost share contribution proposed. The budget narrative should not exceed one page.

2. COST SHARE AND LEVERAGE EVALUATION

As per Section III, cost share must be no less than 33%. Any proposed cost share will be considered under Cost, but will not be evaluated as a separate factor.

3. REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS

Concept papers will be reviewed by USAID and Sida.

4. NOTIFICATION OF CONCEPT PAPER EVALUATION

All applicants will receive written notification to acknowledge the receipt of their Concept Paper within 5 working days, and notification on selection status within 90 days from the previous notification.

Only applicants successful at the Concept Papers stage will be invited to submit a full application.

Instructions regarding the Full Application process are provided as Attachment I to this APS **for informational purposes only**. Applicants are strongly encouraged to review Attachment I thoroughly to understand the requirements of a full application, but **must not submit full applications unless invited to do so by USAID**.

[END OF SECTION V]