**Section 1 – General Information**

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| **Solicitation Type:** | Request for Application (RFA)  **Description:** Grant assistance for a specific activity or methodology contributing to the USAID Resilient Communities project’s objective. | | | | |
| **RFA Number:** | RFA 011 | | | | |
| **Grant Purpose/ Title:** | Innovation and Technology Transfer Grants to Empower ABL Youth through Innovate Tools | | | | |
| **Granting Party:** | CNFA  **For**: USAID  **Under**: USAID Resilient Communities Program | | | | |
| **Release Date:** | January 15, 2025 | | | | |
| **Point of Contact for Question and Application Submission:** | Name:  Title:  Address:  Email: | | Giorgi Niparishvili  Grants and Compliance Manager  47 Merab Kostava Street, 0179 Tbilisi, Georgia  [grants@cnfageorgia.org](mailto:grants@cnfageorgia.org) | | |
| **Questions:** | **Question Deadline**: **January 31, 2025 at 5:00 PM** | | | | |
| **Instructions:** Questions must be submitted in writing; phone calls will not be accepted. Only CNFA’s written answers will be considered official and carry weight in the solicitation and subsequent evaluation. Verbal information received from CNFA or any other entity should not be considered an official response to any questions. | | | | |
| **Application Workshop:** | **Workshop Date:** CNFA Office; Address: N47 Merab Kostava Street, 2nd floor, room N25, Tbilisi on **January 27, 2025** **at 2:00 PM**  **Instructions:** Application workshop(s) allow interested applicants to ask questions and receive guidance on how to complete Attachment A, Grant Application or other clarification. | | | | |
| **Application Submission:** | **Application Deadline: February 14, 2025 at 5:00 PM**  Applications received after the specified deadline will be considered late and will be considered only at the discretion of CNFA. | | | | |
| **Via:** | Email: | | [grants@cnfageorgia.org](mailto:grants@cnfageorgia.org) |  |
| **Language:** Applications will be accepted in English/Georgian. | | | | |
| **Instructions:** Applications will only be accepted in the format provided in this solicitation. Applicants are additionally instructed to:   * Include the RFA number in the email subject line * Request a confirmation of receipt to ensure the submission was received | | | | |
| **Required Submission Documentation** | Application package should include the following documentation:   * Attachment A – Application Form * Updated (no later than seven calendar days) extract from the National Agency of Public Registry ([www.napr.gov.ge](http://www.napr.gov.ge)). | | | | |
| **Terms and Conditions:** | * Applicants understand by submitting a response to this RFA that submission does not constitute an award or commitment on the part of CNFA, the USAID Resilient Communities Program, or USAID. * USAID is not party to this solicitation. Any and all communications regarding this solicitation will be conducted with CNFA, not USAID. * CNFA will not pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of an application. * CNFA reserves the right to accept or reject any or all applications received and/or issue amendments revising RFA terms before or after application receipt. * Applicants will be informed in writing of the decision made regarding their application. | | | | |
| **Language:** | Responses to this RFA will be accepted in English or Georgian. | | | | |
| **Attachments:** | * Attachment A – Grant Application | | | | |

**Section 2 – Program Description**

**2.1. Introduction:** USAID Resilient Communities Program is a five-year activity of United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in Georgiaand implemented by CNFA. CNFA is an international agricultural development organization that specializes in the design and implementation of sustainable, enterprise-based agricultural initiatives.

The primary objective of the USAID Resilient Communities Program is to is to improve the resiliency of target communities to benefit from inclusive and sustainable socio-economic development to empower communities, develop the socio-economic infrastructure in the communities, create jobs, increase incomes, and increase micro, small, and medium enterprises’ (MSME[[1]](#footnote-2)) revenues, thereby countering protracted malign influence.

**2.2. Grant Program Purpose:** The purpose of this RFA is to seek a sectoral association or Business Service Provider (BSP) with relevant focus that will invite digital nomads with expertise in AI tools to deliver educational programs to youth in the ABL communities of Georgia. This initiative is part of a broader effort to support the innovation ecosystem and increase the adoption of technology and digital tools in ABL regions. By empowering ABL youth with AI and digital skills, the Program contributes to the long-term resilience of these communities, ensuring that businesses in these areas can innovate, create alternative economic and job opportunities, and remain competitive. Additionally, this initiative will not only equip local students with modern digital skills, but also position Georgia as a hub for digital nomads.

**2.3. RFA** **Purpose:** The grant recipient should identify and engage 2-4 international digital nomads who will provide AI tools training to young students from ABL communities (Mestia, Kazbegi). In exchange, these digital nomads will be offered the opportunity to live in and experience tourist destinations and local culture. The selected implementer will also be responsible for mobilizing students who are interested in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) disciplines and motivated to learn innovative technologies.

**Key Activities planned under the FAA:**

1. **Recruitment and Selection of Instructors (Digital Nomads):**
   * Identify and engage 2-4 digital nomads with expertise in AI tools and technology.
   * Ensure that the digital nomads have experience in teaching or mentoring in digital/AI fields.
   * Facilitate travel and living arrangements for the instructors, providing accommodation, food, and access to local tourism attractions.
2. **Participant Selection:**
   * Collaborate with local schools and community organizations in Kazbegi and Mestia to identify and select students who would benefit from the AI training.
   * Ensure that the selection process is inclusive, with a focus on students who have a strong interest in technology and innovation.
3. **AI Tools Curriculum Development:**

* First, define a basic curriculum structure for the AI tools learning program, then collaborate with Digital Nomads to create a comprehensive AI tools curriculum tailored to the needs of young students in ABL communities.
  + The curriculum should cover (but may be not limited to) fundamental AI concepts and hands-on experience with tools such as:
    - **Machine Learning Basics:** Introduction to AI and machine learning principles, including supervised and unsupervised learning.
    - **AI Applications:** Overview of how AI is applied across different industries (e.g., health, agriculture, finance).
    - **AI Tools for Students:** Practical training on AI platforms such as Google Colab, TensorFlow, and OpenAI, focusing on basic coding and data manipulation.
    - **Ethics in AI:** Discussion on the ethical considerations of AI, including bias, privacy, and the societal impact of AI technologies.

1. **AI for Problem-Solving:** Case studies and exercises demonstrating how AI can address real-world problems.
2. **Facilitation of Effective Training Delivery:**
   * Organize and support digital nomads to:
     + Deliver AI training sessions to young students in Kazbegi and Mestia gathering participants from the Program's target communities (see the list of the Program’s target communities in the Attachment 2). However, up to 50% of the students can come from other locations within Mestia and Kazbegi municipalities. The sessions can be conducted either in-person or in a hybrid format, if needed.
     + Ensure that the training is interactive and suited to the students' knowledge levels.
     + Incorporate practical exercises and projects that allow students to apply their learning.
3. **Monitoring and Evaluation:**
   * Grantee(s) must track progress through regular reports on training outcomes, student engagement, and feedback from the instructors.

Provide an assessment of the training's impact on student skill development and offer recommendations for future improvements.

CNFA expects grants awarded under this RFA to meet the following parameters:

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| **Estimated Value:** | Maximum $20,000 (for two locations: Kazbegi and Mestia municipalities). CNFA may consider the separate applications for each single locations with the grant budget not to exceed $10,000. |
| **Anticipated Period of Performance:** | Maximum six months |
| **Minimum Grantee Leverage:** | 20% or more of the total project cost. Leverage can be either cash or in-kind. |
| **Target Geographic Location:** | * Mestia Municipality (Target communities: Idliani, Chuberi, and Khaishi) * Kazbegi Municipality (Target communities: Kobi and Gudauri) |
| **Target Recipients:** | For-profit or non-profit organizations (including NNLE, JSC, Cooperative, Sole Proprietor, Ltd, etc.) |

**2.4. Award Mechanism:** CNFA anticipates awarding fixed amount award-type grants to selected applicants. Other grant mechanisms may be considered depending on the results of a specific applicant’s application, pre-award assessment, and site visit, as applicable. Award mechanism(s) are defined as:

* **Fixed Amount Award:** Intended to reduce administrative burden and record-keeping requirements for the grantee, grant payments are based on completion of milestones (activities) that demonstrate performance for results. Goals and activities must be measurable, and there must be adequate cost, historical, or pricing data available to establish an award value. Real property cannot be purchased (i.e. land, land improvements, structures, and appurtenances thereto – excluding moveable machinery and equipment).

**Section 3 – Applicant Eligibility**

**3.1. Eligibility Requirements:** To be considered eligible for grant receipt, applicants must meet the following eligibility criteria:

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| **Category** | **Requirement** |
| Administrative | * Submit an application, with all supporting annexes, in the format required in Section 1 * Be one of the following types of entities: for-profit or non-profit organizations (including NNLE, JSC, Cooperative, Sole Proprietor, Ltd, etc.) * Be legally registered in Georgia * must submit registration documents as a pre-requisite for receiving grant resources. |
| Programmatic | * Be located within or directly target beneficiaries within the geographic location(s) identified in Section 2.3 * Propose objectives aligned with the project objective and grant program purpose * Impact a significant number of beneficiaries * Share data related to the grant with CNFA |
| Financial | * Meet minimum Leverage requirements identified in Section 2.3 * Implement Georgian Accounting Standards * Be prepared to undertake an independent financial review or audit, as requested * Maintain business, financial, and technical records – either manually or electronically |
| Compliance | * Adhere to high ethical business standards, including transparency in business dealings and record keeping * Complete and pass a site-visit and pre-award assessment, as applicable * Agree to and sign applicable certifications, such as but not limited to the Certifications Regarding Lobbying; Terrorist Financing; Prohibition on Assistance to Drug Traffickers; etc. * Certify the applicant and its principals are not debarred, suspended, or proposed for exclusion from receipt of USG funds * Reach an aggregate evaluation score of at least 70 points to be considered for a site visit; * Submit all mandatory documents prior to the deadline stipulated in the RFA |

**3.2. Ineligible Applicants:** The following entities are ineligible for grant funds:

* Government Ministry, Agency, or another public agency
* Entities with a conflict of interest or appearance of conflict of interest with CNFA, the USAID Resilient Communities Program, USAID, or CNFA’s implementing partners
* Entities with key staff who are direct relatives (spouse, child, parent, sibling) of CNFA, the USAID Resilient Communities Program staff, USAID staff, or CNFA’s implementing partners’ staff
* Entities or members that appear on the US Department of Treasury Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) Specially Designated Nationals (SDN) and Blocked Persons list, the UN Security Council consolidated list, or in the System for Award Management (SAM) database
* Entities or members engaged in any activities related to Trafficking in Persons
* Entities or members engaged, transacting with, or providing resources to individuals or organizations associated with terrorism
* Entities which have been debarred, suspended, or otherwise considered ineligible for an award by the US Government

**3.3. Unallowable Costs:** Applicants may not use grant funds for any of the following:

* Private ceremonies, parties, celebrations, or “representation” expenses
* Purchases or activities deemed unnecessary to accomplish grant purposes, including any applicant headquarters’ expenses that are not directly linked to the implementation of the proposed project
* Profit
* Previous obligations and/or bad debts
* Fines and/or penalties
* Creation of endowments
* Indirect costs – such as overhead or indirect fringe – unless the applicant has documented proof of such rates through audits, USG-issued NICRA, or is claiming the de minimis rate[[2]](#footnote-3)
* Any other costs unallowable per the applicable Cost Principles[[3]](#footnote-4)
* While not unallowable, applicants are discouraged from including restricted goods in their application(s) unless they are critical to accomplishment of grant objectives, which include: agricultural commodities, motor vehicles, pharmaceuticals, pesticides, used equipment, or fertilizers. Purchase of these goods requires additional approvals from USAID before they may be procured.
* Ineligible goods, including military equipment; surveillance equipment; police or law enforcement equipment; abortion equipment and services; weather modification equipment; luxury goods; and gambling equipment.
* Construction, defined as construction, alteration, or repair (including dredging and excavation) of buildings, structures, or other real property, including – without limitation – improvements, renovation, alteration, and refurbishment[[4]](#footnote-5). Construction includes, without limitation, roads, power plants, buildings, bridges, water treatment facilities, and vertical structures. It does not include emplacement and removal of prefabricated structures and humanitarian structures designed and constructed to be readily moved, erected, disassembled, stored, and reused (i.e. relocatable building) unless the emplacement and removal requires site preparation work that meets the definition of construction.

**Section 4 – Application Evaluation**

**4.1. Evaluation Criteria:** All applications submitted in response to this solicitation will be evaluated in accordance with the following criteria:

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| **Criteria /Description** | **Points** |
| **Soundness of Recruitment/Selection of Instructors (Digital Nomads) and Participant Selection** | **30** |
| *Instructors/Digital Nomads Selection*  The applicant must explain how they will promote the intervention to attract AI experts, which platforms and networks they will apply. Higher scores will be awarded to implementers who demonstrate an established network or database of international experts, or partnerships with international digital agencies and platforms specializing in AI or digital nomads.  The applicant has explained their method for identifying, engaging, and assessing qualified instructors, including details on their teaching or mentoring experience. | 20 |
| *Participant Selection*  The applicant has demonstrated how they will select participants from ABL and engage them in the process. | 10 |
| **Experience and Capacity** | **20** |
| Higher scores will be given to organizations that demonstrate a successful track record in delivering similar programs, including specific examples of past work related to AI tools, digital skills development, or technology-based education.  Applicant should provide detailed descriptions of past projects, partnerships, and outcomes/results. | 20 |
| **Technical Staff and Ability to Co-Create AI Tools Curriculum** | **20** |
| This criterion assesses the applicant’s ability to provide technical staff to co-create an AI curriculum tailored to young students with the digital nomad. Priority will be given to applicants who can support the AI instructor in developing interactive exercises, case studies, and hands-on projects to ensure students gain both theoretical knowledge and practical AI skills. | 20 |
| **Facilitation of Smooth Training Delivery Plan** | **15** |
| This criterion assesses the clarity of the training plan, including the total hours, session duration, weekly frequency, and delivery method (in-person or hybrid). Higher scores will be awarded for plans that incorporate interactive methods such as hands-on exercises and projects, ensuring students effectively apply their AI knowledge. | 15 |
| **Monitoring and Evaluation** | **15** |
| This criterion evaluates the implementer’s plan for monitoring the progress and success of the program. Higher scores will be given to those who clearly detail methods for tracking student engagement, learning outcomes, and gathering feedback from instructors | 15 |
| **Total**: | **100** |

**4.2. Evaluation and Pre-Selection:**

Members of the USAID Resilient Communities Program Grant Selection Committee will evaluate applications in accordance with the above selection criteria. Applicants will be notified in writing whether their application was considered acceptable or not.

If the application is considered acceptable for pre-selection, CNFA will contact the applicant to engage in further discussions. A decision to engage in a more in-depth and specific discussion following initial selection is **not** a commitment to funding; it is simply a decision to move forward in the collaborative and joint effort to develop an impactful grant project.

* If discussions do not – in the USAID Resilient Communities Program’s sole opinion – result in the development of a grant activity worthy of further pursuit, CNFA will inform the applicant that it is no longer interested in advancing the grant application.
* If the discussions result in a promising design and concept, CNFA will inform the applicant of that determination.Pre-selected applicants will be required to complete additional due diligence checks, which may include but are not limited to:
  + **Pre-Award Assessment**: to assess the operational, administrative, financial, and governance structures of the applicant
  + **Site Visit**: to verify the information asserted in the application
  + **Vetting**: to ensure the applicant and its principals are not excluded from receipt of funding

If the due diligence uncovers no major issues, CNFA will provide the necessary instructions, technical requirements, and next steps of grant award.

**Section 5 – Authority and Governing Regulations**

Any grant awards by the USAID Resilient Communities Program under this Solicitation are made under the authority of the US Foreign Affairs Act and USAID’s Automated Directive System (ADS) Chapter 303, “Grants and Cooperative Agreements to Non-Governmental Organizations”. Grants administered by CNFA will adhere to the terms of the applicable USAID Standard and Required as Applicable Provisions, as well as the USAID Resilient Communities Program grants procedures. The USAID Resilient Communities Program is required to ensure that all applicants receiving USAID grant funds comply with the requirements found in these regulations, as applicable to the respective terms and conditions of individual grant awards.

Applicants are made aware that USAID retains the right, at all times, to terminate, in whole or in part, the USAID Resilient Communities Program’s grant-making authorities or any grants in progress.

1. MSMEs are defined by size. Micro is 1-10 employees, small from 11 to 49, and medium from 50 to 249 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. See [2 CFR 200.414(f)](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/subtitle-A/chapter-II/part-200/subpart-E/subject-group-ECFRd93f2a98b1f6455/section-200.414) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. For non-profits, see [2 CFR 200 Subpart E](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/subtitle-A/chapter-II/part-200/subpart-E); for for-profits, see [FAR 31.2](https://www.acquisition.gov/far/subpart-31.2) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Improvements, renovation, alteration, and refurbishment includes any betterment or change to an existing property to allow its continued or more efficient use within its designed purpose (renovation), or for the use of a different purpose or function (alteration). Improvements include improvements to or upgrading of primary mechanical, electrical, or other building systems. It does not include non-structural, cosmetic work. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)