



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

**COLOMBIA**

**Issue Date: January 19, 2024.**

**Deadline for Submitting Questions: March 15, 2024, 5:00 PM (17:00) Colombia Time (GMT -05:00).**

**Deadline for Submitting the Expression of Interest Survey: ~~April 5~~ April 12, 2024, 5:00 PM (17:00) Colombia Time (GMT -05:00).**

**Subject: Request for Applications Number: 72051424RFA00001**

**Program Title: ROOTS**

**Federal Assistance Listing Number: 98.001**

Ladies/Gentlemen:

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is seeking applications for **one or more multiple** assistance awards from qualified entities to implement the Roots program. Eligibility for this award is restricted to local non-governmental entities.

USAID intends to make an award to the applicant(s) who best meets the objectives of this funding opportunity based on the merit review criteria described in this NOFO subject to a risk assessment. Eligible parties interested in submitting an application are encouraged to read this NOFO thoroughly to understand the type of program sought, application submission requirements and selection process.

To be eligible for award, the applicant must provide all information as required in this NOFO and meet eligibility standards in Section C of this NOFO. This funding opportunity is posted on [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov), and may be amended. It is the responsibility of the applicant to regularly check the website to ensure they have the latest information pertaining to this notice of funding opportunity and to ensure that the NOFO has been received from the internet in its entirety. USAID bears no responsibility for data errors resulting from transmission or conversion process. If you have difficulty registering on [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) or accessing the NOFO, please contact the Grants.gov Helpdesk at 1-800-518-4726 or via email at [support@grants.gov](mailto:support@grants.gov) for technical assistance.

USAID may not award to an applicant unless the applicant has complied with all applicable unique entity identifiers and System for Award Management (SAM) requirements detailed in Section D.6.g. The registration process may take many weeks to complete. Therefore, applicants are encouraged to begin registration early in the process.

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Please send any questions to the point(s) of contact identified in Section G. The deadline for questions is shown above. Responses to questions received prior to the deadline will be furnished to all potential applicants through an amendment to this notice posted to [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov).

Issuance of this notice of funding opportunity does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the Government nor does it commit the Government to pay for any costs incurred in preparation or submission of comments/suggestions or an application. Applications are submitted at the risk of the applicant. All preparation and submission costs are at the applicant's expense.

Thank you for your interest in USAID programs.

Sincerely,

**William Sedlak**

**Agreement Officer**

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**Section A** – Program Description

**Section B** – Federal Award Information

**Section C** – Eligibility Information

**Section D** – Application and Submission Information

**Section E** – Application Review Information

**Section F** – Federal Award Administration Information

**Section G** – Federal Awarding Agency Contacts

**Section H** – Other Information

## **SECTION A: NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY OR FULL APPLICATION DESCRIPTION**

This funding opportunity is authorized under the Foreign Assistance Act (FAA) of 1961, as amended. The resulting award(s) will be subject to 2 CFR 200 – Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards, and USAID’s supplement, 2 CFR 700, as well as the additional requirements found in Section F.

### **A.1 BACKGROUND AND DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES**

In 2018, USAID/Colombia designed, co-created, and procured a Request for Application (RFA) focused on supporting “ethnic organizations.” Ethnic organizations are defined as those organizations that have a majority of members who were representative of Colombian Afro-Colombian or Indigenous populations and that were managed by a governing body, the majority of whose members were Colombian Afro-Colombian or Indigenous. This resulted in four direct awards to the following Colombian organizations: *Consejo Comunitario Mayor de La Asociación Campesina Integral del Atrato (COCOMACIA)*, *Manos Visibles*, *Asociación Nacional De Afrocolombianos Desplazados/Organización Nacional Indígena de Colombia (AFRODES/ONIC)*, and *Centro de Estudios Médicos Interculturales (CEMI)*. These efforts furthered localization and local ownership in Colombia, in alignment with the Mission’s Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) and ethnic inclusion cross-cutting strategic priority.

Based on the lessons learned and successes of the prior RFA, USAID/Colombia now seeks to streamline the process for local organizations to partner directly with USAID, further strengthen locally led inclusive development, and publish a new funding opportunity, *Roots*, to advance the rights of Afro-Colombians and Indigenous Peoples.

The development and empowerment of Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombian communities has been a key element of USAID/Colombia programming for more than 20 years. The Mission recognizes these communities’ essential role in biodiversity conservation, in leading peace efforts such as collective reconciliation, fostering people-to-people connections and community-driven leadership, developing, and implementing locally led solutions to development challenges advocating for legislation in democratic processes, and adopting environmentally sustainable economic opportunities.

Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombian communities hold collective titles to almost 34 percent of Colombia’s land territory. More than 55 percent of Indigenous Peoples and around seven percent of Afro-Colombian people live in these collective territories, while the rest of the Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombian communities have migrated to urban areas over the last several years. These communities, constituting approximately one-fifth of Colombia's population, have borne a disproportionate burden of violence, exclusion, and poverty, with a staggering 38 percent of Afro-Colombians and 27 percent of Indigenous Peoples registered as conflict victims. Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombians live in areas that are strategic for illegal actors whose influence and actions threaten their human rights, land rights, territories, livelihoods, and culture, and where State presence and institutions are fragile or absent. The proposed RFA is an important step forward in addressing the enduring challenges confronted by

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Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombians following over six decades of conflict, and centuries of systemic racism, and historical exclusion and discrimination.

This RFA adheres to a bottom-up, people-centered approach centered on local voices, that places Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombians at the forefront of their own development. The guiding principle of "*nothing about them, without them*" underscores the RFA's commitment to empowering and placing at the center of our work local actors who will themselves design and implement development solutions that benefit their communities while advancing shared U.S.-Colombia development goals. To inform this design, in recent months, USAID/Colombia held listening sessions with local actors from six regions to elicit perspectives on development priorities, possible solutions, and opportunities to advance development in Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombian communities via this RFA. By harnessing and amplifying Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombians expertise and providing the necessary support, Roots aims to embark on a transformative journey to address deep-seated development challenges and empower communities to thrive on their own terms.

The historical and current context of Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombians' exclusion in Colombia is marked by structural racism and discrimination, violence rooted in prejudice, and systemic barriers hindering social and economic mobility. Despite collaborative efforts spanning decades, discrimination remains pervasive, and inclusion remains elusive. The critical necessity for a targeted intervention, one that addresses these entrenched challenges comprehensively and directly, is evident.

Colombia is the second most biodiverse country in the world due to its strategic location and diverse ecosystems, and over 52 percent of its land territory is covered in natural forests. However, since 2017, more than one million hectares of forests have been lost to deforestation, making it the greatest threat to biodiversity and main source of carbon emissions. Sixty-two percent of Colombia's greenhouse gas emissions are caused by agriculture, forestry, and land use changes, of which, 70 percent are linked specifically to deforestation. Considering that over half of Colombia's natural forests are found in Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombian territories—46 percent in Indigenous territories and seven percent in collective territories of Afro-Colombian communities (MADS and IDEAM 2017)—Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombians have an important role in the conservation of biodiversity and natural resource management. In addition, Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombian communities are highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and play an important role in the global fight against climate change. Integrating sustainable land use strategies aligns with the Mission's broader goal of creating a more stable, peaceful, and prosperous society by bolstering the resilience of underserved communities to climate change impacts.

This RFA recognizes that real, sustainable change must be driven by local organizations and communities. By empowering Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombians to lead their own development, through this RFA USAID seeks to strengthen agency and ownership among Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombian organizations and individuals. This participatory ethos extends beyond consultation, embodying true partnership where decision-making is shared, and power dynamics rebalanced. The lived experiences of Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombians, and knowledge of local context and dynamics, are

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indispensable assets in shaping effective solutions and development impact.

The purpose of this RFA is to contribute to the self-determined development of Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombians while advancing their participation in peacebuilding and sustainable development.

The RFA's fundamental purpose is aligned with the overarching goal of USAID/Colombia's 2020-2025 CDCS. By fostering inclusive governance, enhancing social cohesion, and promoting equitable growth among Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombian communities, the RFA contributes to Colombia's journey toward a more stable, peaceful, and prosperous future.

This alignment with the 2020-2025 CDCS is best illustrated through the CDCS' three Development Objectives (DO):

- DO1 - A More Cohesive and Inclusive Society Resilient to Conflict: The RFA's emphasis on empowering Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombian communities directly contributes to the creation of a more cohesive and inclusive society. By addressing historical disparities, promoting social inclusion, and enhancing community capabilities, the RFA seeks to foster resilience and social cohesion in Colombia.
- DO2 - Strengthened Governance to Meet Citizen Needs and Increase Citizen Confidence in the State: Through its focus on strengthening Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombian communities and leaders, the RFA inherently strengthens governance at the local level. By amplifying community voices, enhancing representation, and fostering engagement with State authorities, the RFA aligns with the goal of enhancing citizen-State interactions and building mutual confidence.
- DO3 - Promote Equitable and Environmentally Sustainable Economic Growth: The RFA's core principle of biodiversity conservation and climate adaptation resonates strongly with the objective of promoting environmentally sustainable economic growth. By engaging Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombian communities as stewards of biodiversity and natural resources, the RFA contributes to fostering equitable economic development that preserves Colombia's rich environmental heritage.

In conclusion, the proposed RFA represents a pivotal opportunity for USAID to empower local organizations and actors to address the deep-rooted development challenges faced by Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombians in Colombia, in the areas of conservation, biodiversity, climate adaptation, governance, and peacebuilding.

### **A.2 ACTIVITY OBJECTIVES AND THEORY OF CHANGE**

IF Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombian communities have strongly performing organizations that advance rights; conserve biodiversity and mitigate effects of climate change; have access to environmentally sustainable economic opportunities; and if Colombians increase their awareness of the importance of diversity; THEN these historically marginalized groups will be able to advance their self-

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determined development priorities, including peacebuilding and conservation.

This RFA has four objectives:

### **Objective 1: Afro-Colombian and Indigenous Peoples' cultures preserved through biodiversity conservation.**

Ethnic communities are essential contributors to biodiversity conservation. According to the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF, 2022), Indigenous Peoples are responsible for the conservation of 80 percent of the biodiversity and forests they inhabit, and account for over 30 percent of the carbon stocks of the planet. They play a pivotal role in safeguarding fragile ecosystems like tropical forests, mountains, and grasslands, whether their land rights are formally recognized or not. In Colombia, Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombians inhabit 34 percent of the national territory. In addition, 10 percent of the Andean peatlands and 22 percent of wetlands are titled to Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombian communities; two ecosystems that are instrumental in the provision of environmental services for Colombian citizens, such as water. Likewise, 19 Afro-Colombian communities, organized in one collective territory, conserve 24,600 hectares of coastal, marine and land ecosystems with the Government along the Pacific corridor, and Indigenous Peoples protect 46 percent of the natural and pristine forest in Colombia through their land titles as indigenous collective territories.

Sustaining biodiversity requires effective engagement and partnership with Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombian communities. These communities not only depend on biodiversity for their livelihoods (i.e., food, medicine, fuel, construction materials), but also build their cultural identity and spiritual practices in close relation to biodiversity. Governance systems are also tied to traditional knowledge and management of the ecosystems Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombian communities inhabit. Traditional knowledge is an important source of information on uses and appropriation of biodiversity; for example, adaptation strategies of Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombian communities in response to seasonal ecological dynamics offer lessons that are of interest at the national and international level in the face of the global climate crisis. Consequently, supporting Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombians provides benefits beyond their communities, for all Colombian citizens and the world, through constant environment service provision to support human livelihoods and improve resilience to climate change. This aligns with the Convention on Biological Diversity, which calls on states to promote the wider use of traditional knowledge relevant for conservation and sustainable use, with the approval and involvement of Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombians and local communities.

In Colombia, encroachment by illegal actors and illegal activities, pollution from illegal mining, marginalization, and displacement, amongst others, affect biodiversity and the survival of Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombians. Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombians are also more vulnerable to climate change and, simultaneously, play a central role in providing knowledge on climate change resilience and greenhouse gas emission mitigation through ecosystem protection.

Therefore, it is instrumental to strengthen Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombian communities' abilities to protect their territories and safely implement their life plans and traditional environmental governance

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structures. Legacy of traditional and ancestral knowledge is also key to pass along to new generations for the permanence of Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombian communities and therefore for the conservation of biodiversity. Equally vital is the imperative to collaboratively cultivate economic opportunities with Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombian communities stemming from biodiversity conservation, including promising avenues such as payment for environmental services and nature tourism. These initiatives not only generate new income sources for future generations but also incentivize their continued presence in their ancestral lands, ensuring the preservation of their culture.

### **Objective 2: Environmentally sustainable socio-economic opportunities fostered and created.**

In Colombia, basic living conditions for Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombians are worse than those of the rest of the population. The multidimensional poverty rate among Indigenous Peoples is 2.5 times higher than the general population, and 1.5 times higher among Afro-Colombians. Seventy-six percent of Indigenous Peoples and 66 percent of Afro-Colombians indicate their wages are not enough to live on. Limited access to education and technical training, combined with discriminatory hiring practices hinder Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombians' ability to access the formal job market. Additionally, the rise of forced displacement from rural to urban areas and forced confinement caused by increases in violence and disputes over Indigenous Peoples' and Afro-Colombian territories, have stifled traditional agricultural practices and value chains. Moreover, gender-based violence and barriers to women's political participation, intrinsically linked to economic development of communities, is further exacerbated among Indigenous and Afro-Colombian populations. Furthermore, Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombians face increased risks due to forced recruitment by illegal armed actors and the presence of illegal economies in their ancestral territories. Ethnic communities also face critical food security challenges, low rural productivity, and vulnerability to climate change due to poor agricultural practices.

This objective recognizes that Colombia's diverse ecosystems provide direct-use and indirect-use goods and services that benefit the population, foremost Indigenous Peoples' and Afro-Colombian communities, and form the basis for sustainable conservation enterprises. Access to new market opportunities, stronger enabling conditions for enterprise development, increases in income from improved productive practices, innovative benefit sharing schemes developed with the private sector and local communities, or payments for ecosystem services all present opportunities to expand environmentally sustainable socioeconomic opportunities for predominantly Afro-Colombian and Indigenous communities. During the listening sessions that USAID/Colombia convened in early 2023 as part of the RFA design process, environmental socio-economic opportunities were brought up by both Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombians organizations and the private sector as potential partnership opportunities for value-chain alliances. Developing these opportunities in partnership with the private sector is fundamental to ensure sustainable results, effective links to markets, and the creation of competitive inclusive business models within Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombian communities.

This RFA will facilitate the development of environmentally sustainable social and economic opportunities for Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombian communities by working with community, public, and private actors to create demand-driven agricultural and non-agricultural value chains. This includes improving

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producer and value chain linkages to markets, and transferring knowledge and skills related to sustainable economic opportunities, like tourism, handicrafts and cultural heritage enterprises, agroforestry, clean energy, and Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD+) projects. These efforts will also contribute to improved food security, sovereignty in Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombian communities, and greater appreciation for the cultural heritage and economic and environmental contributions of Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombians.

### **Objective 3: Ethnic organizations' performance improved, their collective and individual leadership and advocacy capacities strengthened, and their territorial governance advanced.**

Ethnic organizations have played a crucial role in advocating for the rights of Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombian communities across the country, achieving significant results. For example, the Ethnic Chapter of the 2016 Peace Accord stands as evidence of how these advocacy processes have brought greater visibility to the priorities of Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombians, even though implementation has faced challenges. However, Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombian organizations, including their authorities, continue to grapple with ongoing obstacles, such as organizational capability limitations, insufficient access to quality organizational and individual training, administrative issues, financial sustainability challenges, and sub-optimal self-advocacy, particularly in the areas of natural resource management, land stewardship, and biodiversity conservation.

In addition to these challenges, Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombian communities, along with their traditional authorities and representatives, bear a disproportionate burden of armed conflict and violence. Despite the Peace Accord, there has been a rise in the killings of Indigenous and Afro-Colombian leaders and environmental defenders from these communities. In 2022, according to United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights data, the number of Indigenous and Afro-Colombian leaders killed doubled compared to 2016, accounting for 16 percent of the total social leaders murdered in Colombia.

The capacity and performance shortcomings of Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombian organizations significantly hinder their ability to deliver concrete benefits to the communities they represent. These shortcomings also hinder Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombian authorities from accessing public funds, such as those authorized under Decree 1953/2014 (on the administration of Indigenous Peoples' self-governing systems). Additionally, the lack of reliable data on Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombian populations limits their ability to advocate for essential services. Furthermore, organizations often work in isolation, failing to build coalitions for collective advocacy. Violence directed at their leaders and representatives further erodes their individual and collective advocacy capabilities and weakens trust within their communities.

USAID/Colombia has been instrumental in supporting and strengthening hundreds of Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombian organizations and has partnered with these organizations to identify their needs, address community challenges, hold public institutions accountable, foster productive ecosystems, build self-governance capacity, and enhance self-protection mechanisms that respect cultural beliefs and collective protection approaches. Through this RFA, the Mission aims to continue establishing direct

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relationships with Colombian organizations that serve Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombians and traditional governing bodies, empowering them to advocate for their communities' needs and access public and private funds.

To nurture leadership and advocacy skills within Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombian communities and safeguard Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombian communities' cultural practices and heritage, USAID/Colombia will also support efforts that strengthen community cohesion and mental health, facilitate effective generational turnover, and involve youth in the preservation of cultural practices, natural ecosystems, and biodiversity.

### **Objective 4: Social awareness, unconscious biases acknowledged, and cultural appreciation towards diversity by Colombians advanced.**

Colombia's Constitution recognizes the country's multiculturalism and protects Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombian groups' legal rights. According to the United Nations Declaration on Indigenous Peoples Rights, protecting the right to cultural heritage means supporting traditional knowledge such as the properties of fauna and flora, oral traditions and literature, and traditional games and visual and performing arts. However, despite constitutional, legal, and policy advances, broader society does not embrace its multi-cultural heritage and respond to the needs of its Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombian communities who, in turn, continue to face exclusion, discrimination and violence. Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombian populations disproportionately face structural racism, barriers to social and economic mobility, and limited access to services. Statistical invisibility, particularly of Afro-Colombians, exacerbates myths of racial equality and prevents the country from fully understanding the extent of discrimination and exclusion.

By expanding awareness of unconscious biases, increasing cross-cultural understanding and respect, and promoting cultural practices and traditions, this RFA will encourage Colombian society to better understand, acknowledge, and respect Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombian communities' contribution to history and society and recognize and transform legacies of discrimination and racism. Furthermore, by fostering the continuation of cultural heritage and traditions, the RFA will also ensure they are passed to future generations and young leaders and will increase society's awareness of and respect for diversity. Through this RFA, USAID/Colombia will also support local and national cultural heritage and inclusion initiatives by creating partnerships with public and private entities, including the media (including community and regional media groups).

### **A.3 GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

#### **A. Gender and Inclusion**

The RFA will recognize and address the diverse needs of Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombian communities and place an emphasis within Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombian populations on women, youth, LGBTQI+ persons, people living with disabilities, and populations severely affected by violence. This approach must be integrated throughout all objectives (please see updated [USAID Gender](#)

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[Policy](#)). The RFA will be closely aligned with the Agency's [Policy on Promoting the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#) (Pro-IP), and the USAID's [Equity Action Plan](#).

This RFA strongly emphasizes the Agency's commitment to the well-being and empowerment of Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombians. By centering its efforts on advancing the self-determined development of Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombian communities, the RFA directly resonates with the Pro-IP Policy's principles of inclusivity, respect for cultural diversity, and recognition of the rights and aspirations of Indigenous Peoples.

Co-creation will be conducted with Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombian organizations during the procurement process, and applicants will be expected to follow the Pro-IP Policy's principles and guidelines, including regarding significant consultation during activity design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.

### **B. Environmental Sustainability and Climate Change**

This RFA places environmental conservation and climate change mitigation/adaptation at the forefront of its guiding principles. Recognizing the invaluable insights and capacities of Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombian communities in biodiversity conservation, it intertwines their unique knowledge with the pursuit of climate adaptation strategies. This integration aligns seamlessly with [USAID's Climate Change Strategy 2022-2030](#), which aims to drive equitable and ambitious actions to address the climate crisis, which also disproportionately affects Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombians.

In adherence to USAID's Climate Change Strategy, this RFA is rooted in the principles of locally led development and equity and inclusion. By leveraging the profound local expertise of Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombian communities, the RFA exemplifies [locally led development](#), ensuring that its interventions resonate with local contexts and are community driven. Moreover, the RFA embodies the principle of equity and inclusion by empowering Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombian communities, working to rectify historical disparities, and championing just and equitable climate adaptation efforts.

### **C. Private Sector Engagement**

This RFA places a key focus on private sector engagement (PSE) as a guiding principle. It aligns with USAID's [Private Sector Engagement Policy](#), recognizing the private sector's role in achieving scale, sustainability, and effectiveness in development outcomes. By strategically partnering with the private sector, the RFA aims to leverage resources, expertise, and influence to enhance the impact of its initiatives. It acknowledges the private sector's capacity to shape and influence investments for greater developmental impact, in line with USAID's overarching objectives. Importantly, the RFA will remain attuned to community preferences and concerns, ensuring that PSE is aligned with local needs and priorities. This approach underscores the RFA's commitment to achieving impactful and sustainable development results by harnessing the strengths of private sector collaboration while sensitively responding to the aspirations of local communities. USAID/Colombia encourages applicants to include private sector stakeholders across all components of this Activity, with a specific focus on the economic empowerment component.

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Additionally, during the co-creation phase, whenever applicable the USAID/Colombia PSE team can facilitate linkages between applicants and private sector partners to positively engage them early on. For USAID/Colombia the private sector includes not only companies and for-profit entities, but also private equity funds, family foundations, corporate foundations, chambers of commerce, cooperatives, private academia, *cajas de compensación*, among others.

### **D. Localization**

This Activity will be a central part of USAID/Colombia's "Colombia Local" Mission-wide localization strategy. It builds on the 2018 RFA, "Strengthening Colombia's Ethnic Communities", which resulted in the Mission's four first-ever direct awards to Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombian organizations. Local ownership and leadership will underpin all the RFA's engagements with Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombian organizations, the Government of Colombia, civil society, the private sector, and other Colombian stakeholders.

The RFA also embodies USAID's localization policy and local capacity strengthening policy by prioritizing the empowerment of Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombian communities. By directly engaging and collaborating with Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombian communities, the RFA reflects the principles of local ownership, decision-making, and capacity-building. Through tailored interventions that stem from community insights and priorities, the RFA contributes to fostering self-determined development, aligning with USAID's commitment to a more localized approach to development programming.

### **E. Regional Integration and Coordination with other USAID Activities**

USAID activities are expected to build upon, and coordinate and collaborate with, one another and in line with USAID/Colombia's [Regional Integration Strategy \(RIS\)](#). To this end, USAID activities that are developed through this RFA will be expected to coordinate with other USAID activities that work in the same geographic and/or thematic areas. Awards signed as a result of this RFA will most closely coordinate with the Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombian Empowerment Activity, Productive Ecosystems, Amazon Alive, and the Strengthening Together Activity. They will also connect with USAID's Human Rights for Peace Activity to address and preempt potential risks faced by Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombian defenders as a result of any increased visibility resulting from the awards, necessitating coordinated efforts to ensure their safety. In addition, this RFA will align with USAID's Restoring our Future Activity. Given the significant number of Indigenous and Afro-Colombian victims registered from the armed conflict, the awards will work to enhance coexistence, tolerance, and inclusion of Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombian communities within the broader society.

Furthermore, the RFA will complement and closely coordinate with other Sustainable Ecosystems and Economic Development Office (SEED) activities and programs, as well as initiatives from the Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI), mostly those focused on biodiversity conservation, combating deforestation, and climate change adaptation. This collaborative approach ensures synergy across various Mission portfolios, optimizing the collective impact on critical environmental and developmental challenges.

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### F. Digital Innovation

Innovation and technology will play an important role in strengthening civil society and Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombian organizations. The RFA will use digital technologies to engage participants in new ways, and improved access to technology will help these communities improve self-governance, connect with organizations to share experiences around the country and the region, and improve oversight of natural resource management. This RFA will integrate lessons learned from USAID's Digital Development Strategy, the recommendations from the Digital Ecosystem Country Assessment, and the recent Digital Appropriation study, to explore innovative, digital solutions to challenges faced by Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombian communities. Any new intervention including digital tools will take into account, at a minimum, the following approaches: 1) improving community digital literacy; 2) closing, not expanding, the gender digital divide; and 3) strengthening institutions' and communities' capacities to address cybersecurity.

### G. Collaborating, Learning, and Adapting (CLA)

Throughout the project lifecycle, the RFA will actively engage in continuous learning processes, consultations, and listening sessions with Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombian communities. This ensures an ongoing dialogue that remains responsive to the changing needs of Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombian communities. Moreover, the CLA approach will create a robust community of learners, facilitating the exchange of insights between selected local organizations, other USAID activities, and the communities themselves. This collaborative learning environment will enable agile programming, allowing the RFA to swiftly respond to emerging needs and capitalize on windows of opportunity.

### A.4 MONITORING, EVALUATION, AND LEARNING

USAID views performance management as an iterative, collaborative, and utilization-focused approach. Assessments, planning, and design throughout the activity design and implementation require ongoing analysis and real-time monitoring and evaluation to assure flexibility and evidence-based adaptation.

The Recipient(s) will be responsible for developing and implementing an Activity Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Plan (AMELP). The AMELP is a tool for planning, managing, documenting, and evaluating performance and context. The AMELP describes the process for tracking and documenting progress against the activity's theory of change and results framework over the life of the activity. It must be reviewed and validated annually and revised when appropriate in consultation with USAID. The AMELP will describe the monitoring, evaluation, and learning tasks for the activity, the composition of related staff along with the level of effort and costs, and an overview of the strategy that will be used to track progress towards achieving the desired results. Its implementation will be used to identify challenges and lessons learned; influence decision-making for ongoing improvement and resource allocation; and serve for adaptive management.

As part of the AMELP, the Recipient(s) must include indicators and targets based on the technical approach and interventions of the activity. These indicators must incorporate Foreign Assistance Standard

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Indicators, USAID/Colombia Performance Management Plan (PMP) standard indicators, and custom indicators relevant for tracking outputs, outcomes, and impacts aligned with the results framework, including indicators related to cross-cutting topics (gender, youth, PSE, environment/climate, and others). The AMELP should also describe the efforts that the activity will undertake for context monitoring. Context indicators should be selected to track the most relevant assumptions and/or risks that may affect the activity's implementation, and flag relevant political, environmental, and security concerns. Performance and context indicators will include their corresponding Performance/Context Indicator Reference Sheets to describe specific definitions, data sources, methodologies, frequency, responsible parties for data collection, and baselines and targets for each of the indicators.

The list of required indicators for each award resulting from this RFA will be defined jointly with USAID during the co-creation phase. Below is an illustrative list of a selection of potential indicators:

- Number of civil society organizations (CSOs) receiving USG assistance engaged in advocacy interventions (standard).
- Percent of USG-assisted organizations with improved performance (standard).
- Number of local women participating in a substantive role or position in a peacebuilding process supported with USG assistance (standard).
- Number of people using climate information or implementing risk-reducing actions to improve resilience to climate change as supported by USG assistance (standard).
- Number of community-driven initiatives supported by USAID promoting local ownership and engagement (custom).
- Economic progress indicated by enhanced income generation enabled by USAID, supporting economic growth and livelihood development (custom).
- Number of community-led climate adaptation initiatives supported by USAID, enhancing resilience and sustainable resource management (custom).
- Number of advocacy initiatives led by Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombian communities with USAID support, enhancing their influence and representation in State decision-making (custom).
- Percentage increase in Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombian community members' knowledge of legal rights and civic engagement, facilitated by USAID support (custom).
- Number of community-led initiatives supported by USAID promoting cultural heritage preservation and awareness (custom).
- Number of hectares of biologically significant areas under improved natural resource

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management as a result of USG assistance (standard).

- Number of people that apply improved conservation law enforcement practices, as a result of USG assistance (standard).
- Number of Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombian communities with improved capacity to address environmental management and governance in their territories (PMP).
- Number of specific pieces of land tenure and property rights legislation or implementing regulations proposed, adopted, and/or implemented positively affecting property rights of the urban and/or rural poor as a result of USG assistance (standard).
- Number of people with improved economic benefits derived from sustainable natural resource management and/or biodiversity conservation as a result of USG assistance (standard).
- Number of USG engagements jointly undertaken with private sector enterprises to support U.S. foreign assistance objectives (standard).

As part of its learning plan, the Recipient should identify knowledge gaps to articulate learning questions and potential activities that could help address them, develop meaningful indicators to measure key results, and engage in a collaborative design of potential evaluation questions. Use of appropriate qualitative methods and measurements will also be required, especially for hard to quantify and/or long-term results to gauge the activity's contribution to the results.

*Note: The term "program" as used in 2 CFR 200 and this NOFO is typically considered by USAID to be an Activity supporting one or more Project(s) pursuant to specific Development Objectives. Please see 2 CFR 700 for the USAID specific definitions of the terms "Activity" and "Project" as used in the USAID context for purposes of planning, design, and implementation of USAID development assistance.*

**[END OF SECTION A]**

## **SECTION B: FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION**

### **B.1 ESTIMATED AMOUNT OF FUNDS AVAILABLE AND NUMBER OF AWARDS CONTEMPLATED**

Subject to funding availability, USAID intends to provide up to USD \$20,000,000 in total funding for all awards signed under this “Roots” RFA. USAID intends to award multiple assistance awards and reserves the right to fund any or none of the applications submitted.

### **B.2 GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE**

The RFA will prioritize regions with the largest Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombian populations, while aligning with USAID/Colombia’s and the Colombian Government’s geographic priorities.

USAID anticipates supporting initiatives in one or several of the following regions:

**Pacific:** Chocó, Cauca, Valle de Cauca, Nariño.

**South:** Amazonas, Guaviare, Guainía, Vaupés, Putumayo, Caquetá, Meta.

**Central:** Antioquia.

**North:** La Guajira, Cesar, Bolívar, Magdalena, Córdoba, Sucre.

**East:** Casanare, Arauca, Vichada.

Recognizing that urban centers congregate large Indigenous and Afro-Colombian populations displaced by the armed conflict and that face unsatisfied basic needs, the RFA will also consider supporting initiatives in cities like Cali, Medellín, Cartagena, Riohacha, Buenaventura, and Bogotá.

The RFA will target Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombians and will integrate an intersectional approach to ensure the full participation and engagement of women, LGBTQI+ persons, people living with disabilities, youth, and persons severely affected by violence within Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombian communities (see Guiding Principles above). The final geography will be defined in the co-creation phase.

### **B.3 START DATE AND PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE FOR FEDERAL AWARDS**

USAID plans to fund activities with an anticipated period of performance of up to five years. The estimated start date will be in Summer/Fall 2024 depending upon the results of the co-creation process.

### **B.4 SUBSTANTIAL INVOLVEMENT**

USAID reserves the right to include substantial involvement under this award(s). Any such involvement will be defined during the co-creation period.

## **Procurement Sensitive**

### **B.5 AUTHORIZED GEOGRAPHIC CODE**

The geographic code for the procurement of commodities and services under this program is **937**. Code 937 is defined as the United States, Colombia (Recipient country), and developing countries other than advanced developing countries, but excluding any country that is a prohibited source.

### **B.6 NATURE OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN USAID AND THE RECIPIENT(S)**

The principal purpose of the relationship with the Recipient(s) and under the subject program is to transfer funds to accomplish a public purpose of support or stimulation of the Roots program which is authorized by Federal statute. The successful Recipient(s) will be responsible for ensuring the achievement of the program objectives and the efficient and effective administration of the award through the application of sound management practices. The Recipient will assume responsibility for administering Federal funds in a manner consistent with underlying agreements, program objectives, and the terms and conditions of the Federal award.

**[END OF SECTION B]**

## Procurement Sensitive

### SECTION C: ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

#### C.1 ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Eligibility for this funding opportunity is limited to local non-governmental entities as statutorily defined (see full definition in ADS 303.6). To qualify as a local entity, the organization or authority must meet the following criteria:

- (a) Is ~~incorporated or~~ legally organized under the laws of Colombia;
- (b) has its principal place of business or operations in Colombia; and
- (c) is majority owned by individuals who are citizens or lawfully ~~admitted~~ permanent residents of Colombia; and
- (d) is managed by a governing body, ~~of which at least 50 percent of the members are citizens or lawfully admitted permanent residents of Colombia~~ the majority of who are citizens or lawful permanent residents of Colombia.

For purposes of this definition, the terms “majority owned” and “managed by” include, without limitation, beneficiary interests and the power, either directly or indirectly, whether exercised or exercisable, to control the election, appointment, or tenure of the organization's managers or a majority of the organization's governing body by any means.

Local non-governmental entities do not include subsidiaries, affiliates, or member entities of organizations organized or headquartered outside Colombia. Local entities also do not include public international organizations as described in USAID’s Automated Directives System (ADS) Chapter 308 or their subsidiaries, affiliates, or member entities.

Pursuant to Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 2 CFR 200.400(g), it is USAID policy not to award profit under assistance instruments. While for-profit firms may participate, pursuant to 2 CFR 700.13(a)(1) Prohibition against profit: no funds will be paid as profit to any for-profit entity receiving or administering Federal financial assistance as a recipient or subrecipient and as such, for-profit organizations must waive profits and/or fees to be eligible to submit an application.

Each applicant must be found to be a responsible entity before receiving an award. The Agreement Officer (AO) may determine that a pre-award survey is required in accordance with ADS 303.3.9.1 to determine whether the applicant has the necessary organization, experience, accounting and operational controls, and technical skills – or ability to obtain them – in order to achieve the objectives of the program and comply with established U.S. Government standards, laws, and regulations. Applicants who do not currently meet all USAID requirements for systems and controls may still be eligible under special award considerations and should not be discouraged from applying.

USAID welcomes applications from organizations, which have not previously received financial assistance

**Procurement Sensitive**

from USAID. Faith-based organizations are eligible to apply for federal financial assistance on the same basis as any other organization and are subject to the protections and requirements of Federal law.

**[END OF SECTION C]**

## SECTION D: APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

### D.1 APPLICATION PROCESS

This RFA will utilize a multi-tiered review in accordance with [ADS 303.3.6.1\(c\)](#). Selection under this RFA will be based on a three-step process:

#### D.1.1. Step #1: Expression of Interest

USAID/Colombia will have all interested applicants complete an expression of interest survey to determine organizational experience, alignment with the RFA's objectives, geographic focus, and past experience. This survey will be used by USAID to assess interested organizations' eligibility to participate in this RFA, and applicants will receive a pass/fail rating based on their survey responses. Expressions of Interest will be collected until April 5, 2024, 5:00 PM (17:00) Colombia Time (GMT -05:00). Expressions of Interest can be submitted in Spanish or English through the linked survey form:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScniZ67FINbY-DbJykosxJp7eHftvbsSiIzYtBgR7qR8Q9o7A/viewform>

#### D.1.2. Step #2: Concept Paper Submission

USAID/Colombia will invite (via e-mail) potential applicants that received passing ratings in the Expression of Interest round to submit a six-page concept paper outlining their proposed activity. Applicants are advised that any pages exceeding these limits will not be considered for evaluation. Concept Papers will be evaluated in accordance with the merit review criteria set forth in SECTION E. Upon review, a limited number of Applicants will be invited to proceed to the Co-Creation phase and will be informed before the end of May 2024.

#### General Content and Form of the Concept Paper

**CONCEPT PAPERS WILL ONLY BE ACCEPTED FROM ORGANIZATIONS THAT HAVE BEEN INVITED BY USAID TO ADVANCE TO STEP #2.**

**USAID reserves the right to adjust the instructions below in the instruction letter sent to organizations selected to advance to Step 2. In the event of adjustments to the concept paper instructions, this RFA will not be amended.**

Concept papers must be submitted in PDF format. They can be written in either English or Spanish, single-spaced, using Calibri, font size 12, with each page numbered consecutively, and have at least one-inch margins on the top, bottom, and sides. Note that there is no need to include a separate title page and/or institutional logos. USAID will provide a suggested format for the submission of concept papers.

## Procurement Sensitive

The concept paper must demonstrate an understanding of the activity and outline the applicant's strategy and methodology, including its strategic approach and illustrative interventions. Likewise, concept papers must include an estimated total budget and timeframe. Even though applicants are not required to address all the aforementioned objectives in a single application, proposals may integrate more than one objective.

The concept paper should be organized in the following order: Basic Information; General Technical Approach; Organizational Management and Staffing; and Institutional Capability and Past Performance. The following provides more detailed requirements for the Concept Paper.

*Basic Information (1 page max.):* Title of the proposed activity; Name and address for the lead organization; Contact point (lead contact name, telephone, email); Names of any other organizations that are part of the concept; Proposed total estimated cost (full detailed budget not required) in U.S. dollars (please use an exchange rate of COP \$3600/USD\$1); and Proposed duration of the activity.

*General Technical Approach (3 pages max.):* In this section, the Applicants should present an overall vision for the proposed activity and how each applicant can support this vision. The Applicant must clearly present its general technical approach and rationale. The Applicant must demonstrate a sound understanding of the challenges and opportunities in implementing the activity. The Applicant must identify objectives, the anticipated target locations, and communities, and describe the rationale for their selection. This section must also adequately describe how the Applicant intends to feasibly achieve the desired outcomes based on the approach described.

*Organizational Capacity and Staffing (2 pages max.):* The Applicant's management plan must summarize how the Applicant's proposed organizational structure and management approach will effectively achieve the activity objectives. The management plan must include the roles and responsibilities of the prime organization, sub-partners, consortium members, and use of local networks (as each is applicable). It must also briefly refer to how the Applicant (and its sub-partners and/or consortium members, as applicable) possesses the experience and institutional capacity to successfully implement the proposed activity. The Applicant must also describe how its proposed staffing plan will efficiently and effectively provide the greatest likelihood of results in the target locations and communities.

### **D.1.3. Step #3: Co-Creation**

Following the evaluation of concept papers, USAID/Colombia will convene a select number of applicants to proceed to co-creation. This stage will develop the concepts into a full activity description and support the submission of the application package to receive USAID funding. Moreover, co-creation will take place over a series of weeks and will involve experts from across USAID/Colombia and applicant organizations. The specific date(s), time(s), and location(s) of the co-creation workshop(s) will be determined once the concept paper stage is finalized.

### **D.1.4. Full Application Submission**

## Procurement Sensitive

USAID/Colombia will invite successful applicants from the co-creation process to submit final applications. **It should be noted that USAID will accept a full application by invitation ONLY.** The full application will expand upon applicants' original submissions and will provide details about the planned activities and results to be achieved, incorporating ideas, adjustments, and feedback that arose during co-creation. Additional information regarding the full application will be provided at the time of its request, including additional guidance for a detailed budget submission, if any.

A request for full application via an RFA should not be interpreted as a commitment to funding or guaranteed issuance of an award. USAID reserves the right, at any point during the multi-tiered evaluation process, to not fund a submitted concept. If a Full Application is successful and an award is issued, the AO will appoint an Agreement Officer's Representative (AOR) and an Alternate AOR at that time.

**[END OF SECTION D]**

## **SECTION E: APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION**

### **E.1. TECHNICAL REVIEW CRITERIA**

The merit review criteria prescribed here are tailored to the requirements of this particular RFA. Applicants should note that these criteria serve to: (a) identify the significant matters which the applicants should address in their applications, and (b) set the standard against which all applications will be evaluated.

#### **E.1.1. Expression of Interest**

USAID will evaluate the Expression of Interest based on the following factors, each of which holds equal importance:

- Relevant technical experience related to USAID's RFA Objectives and Target Population: This factor refers to the size, complexity, duration, and technical scope of past projects that demonstrate the ability to successfully implement projects of a similar scale and nature. This factor will also assess the extent to which the applicant's past projects and experience align with the goals and priorities of this RFA, including the focus on collaborative work with Indigenous Peoples and Afro-Colombian communities. This encompasses completed projects, successful outcomes, and lessons learned from relevant past experiences.
- Geographic Focus: This factor refers to the extent to which the applicant's operational coverage and capacity align with the geographic scope of the RFA. This includes evaluating the applicant's local presence or partnerships in the targeted areas, which may involve having local offices, staff with local expertise, a local network, or collaborations with local stakeholders. The applicant should also demonstrate the capacity to navigate the regulatory, cultural, and logistical challenges specific to the designated geography.

Step #1 Applicants will be assigned a pass/fail rating. To ensure a manageable number of concept papers, USAID reserves the right to rank order applications that received a "pass" rating and limit the number of applicants advancing to Step #2 for the purposes of efficient competition if necessary.

#### **E.1.2. Concept Paper Submission**

USAID will review concept papers based on the following factors, which will be considered with equal importance. Technical and other factors will be evaluated relative to each other, as described here.

- Context understanding and holistic view: Concept papers must demonstrate that the applicant understands Indigenous and Afro-Colombians racial inclusion issues in the Colombian context, and in the specific regions where applicants anticipate implementation of the activity. Even though applicants are not required to address all the aforementioned objectives in a single application, proposals may integrate more than one objective.
- Impact and Sustainability: Concept papers must present the potential for transformational and

## **Procurement Sensitive**

sustainable development by ensuring that their proposals align with the communities' development priorities, safeguard them against inadvertent harm, and outline how the results achieved will continue over time once USAID's participation ends.

- **Targeted Geography:** Concept papers must focus on the areas detailed in Section B.2 above; in case other regions are included, a relevant justification must be presented. Please note that USAID may elect to eliminate a concept paper proposing a similar scope in order to avoid duplication of efforts.
- **Implementation Capacity and Roles:** Concept papers must demonstrate an adequate capacity and management structure to implement the requested budget and technical components of the applications. If an applicant will partner with other Indigenous and Afro-Colombian organizations or other local organizations, including private sector actors, the concept paper must clearly state the specific implementation roles and related capacity of the organization and each of its proposed partners.

**[END OF SECTION E]**

**SECTION F: FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION**

**F.1. FEDERAL AWARD NOTICES**

Award of the agreement(s) contemplated by this RFA cannot be made until funds have been appropriated, allocated and committed through internal USAID procedures. While USAID anticipates that these procedures will be successfully completed, potential applicants are hereby notified of these requirements and conditions for the award.

**F.2. ADMINISTRATIVE & NATIONAL POLICY REQUIREMENTS**

The resulting award(s) from this NOFO will be administered in accordance with the following policies and regulations for Non-U.S. organizations: ADS 303, Standard Provisions for Non-U.S. Non-governmental Organizations, or ADS 303mat, Standard Provisions for Fixed Amount Awards to Nongovernmental Organizations.

**[END OF SECTION F]**

**SECTION G. FEDERAL AWARDING AGENCY CONTACTS**

**G.1 RFA POINTS OF CONTACTS**

Name: William Sedlak

Title: Agreement Officer

Email: [wsedlak@usaid.gov](mailto:wsedlak@usaid.gov)

Name: Elkin Romero

Title: Acquisition & Assistance Specialist

Email: [elromero@usaid.gov](mailto:elromero@usaid.gov)

**G.2 ACQUISITION AND ASSISTANCE OMBUDSMAN**

The A&A Ombudsman helps ensure equitable treatment of all parties who participate in USAID's acquisition and assistance process. The A&A Ombudsman serves as a resource for all organizations who are doing or wish to do business with USAID. Please visit this page for additional information: <https://www.usaid.gov/work-usaid/acquisition-assistance-ombudsman>

The A&A Ombudsman may be contacted via: [Ombudsman@usaid.gov](mailto:Ombudsman@usaid.gov)

**[END OF SECTION G]**

**Procurement Sensitive**

**SECTION H. OTHER INFORMATION**

USAID reserves the right to fund any or none of the applications submitted. The Agreement Officer is the only individual who may legally commit the Government to the expenditure of public funds. Any award and subsequent incremental funding will be subject to the availability of funds and continued relevance to Agency programming.

Applications with Proprietary Data

Applicants who include data that they do not want disclosed to the public for any purpose or used by the U.S. Government except for evaluation purpose, should mark the cover page with the following:

“This application includes data that must not be disclosed, duplicated, or used – in whole or in part – for any purpose other than to evaluate this application. If, however, an award is made as a result of – or in connection with – the submission of this data, the U.S. Government will have the right to duplicate, use, or disclose the data to the extent provided in the resulting award. This restriction does not limit the U.S. Government’s right to use information contained in this data if it is obtained from another source without restriction. The data subject to this restriction are contained in sheets {insert sheet numbers}.”

Additionally, the applicant must mark each sheet of data it wishes to restrict with the following:

“Use or disclosure of data contained on this sheet is subject to the restriction on the title page of this application.”

**[END OF SECTION H]**

**[END OF RFA NUMBER 72051424RFA00001]**