

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Procurement Number:	EUROPE2023M05o
Open Date:	April 13, 2023
Questions Deadline:	April 24, 2023
Closing Deadline:	April 26, 2023
Geographical Area Restrictions:	North Macedonia; to conduct focus group discussions
Point of Contact:	Eric Peterman; epeterman@iri.org

Background

The International Republican Institute (IRI) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, organization dedicated to advancing freedom and democracy worldwide. Since 1983, IRI has worked to develop democratic institutions and ideals, carrying out a variety of international programs to promote freedom, self-government and the rule of law worldwide. IRI provides technical assistance in the areas of political party strengthening, developing civic institutions and open elections, promoting democratic governance and advancing the rule of law.

IRI seeks to conduct Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) on undecided voters from different backgrounds to gather information on citizen attitudes and direction of their municipality and the country. Particularly IRI is interested in researching citizens trust in local government and their perceptions about the performance, responsiveness and openness towards citizens.

Period of Performance

May 1 – August 31, 2023

Statement of Work

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH IN North Macedonia

Focus Groups on Mayoral Performance

OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

IRI needs to:

- 1) **Understand how citizens in citizens of North Macedonian assess the performance of their current mayors?** How do they compare to their previous mayors? **How do they assess the behavior of their mayors?** Are there changes in the mayors' performance? In what ways do they approve of their mayor? In what ways do they disapprove? Why do they think one mayor is good and one mayor is not? What practices make a good mayor?
- 2) Identify replicable best practices for mayors, in terms of responsiveness and openness. Examine links between perceptions of mayoral performance and responsiveness to citizen requests.

METHODOLOGY

The questions above are best addressed by a focus group study. 6 groups, each lasting approximately 90-120 minutes, should take place. The groups will take place across 6 municipalities of at least 30,000 inhabitants, one municipality per each of the 6 electoral units. Two of the groups will take place in Skopje. The specific municipalities will be shared with the winning bidder at the contract stage.

All participants will be:

- Eligible to vote
- Undecided voters

Additional requirements:

- Groups will be roughly balanced for gender and age groups.
- All participants within a single group must speak the language of discussion fluently
- Participants in the same focus group session may not know one another.
- No participants may have participated in a focus group study in the past 12 months.

IRI would prefer these focus groups be conducted in person, but is open to the bidder's suggestions about them being conducted online or in person.

GENERAL RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE OFFEROR

Offeror will be responsible for managing all logistical aspects of the project above and should engage local support staff as necessary to complete the following:

- **Screener.** IRI will provide a draft screening questionnaire based on the specifications above. The Offeror will review and offer edits within three working days of receipt. Following IRI approval, the Offeror will translate the screener into Macedonian and Albanian. IRI reserves the right to review the translation prior to recruitment launch.
- **Recruiting participants.** Offeror will recruit all participants according to the screening criteria listed above. At least three weeks prior to the start of the first focus group session, the Offeror will provide a brief description of the composition of the groups in terms of age, gender, occupation, etc. Offeror should recruit 8-10 participants for each in person group as well as 2-3 alternates in case any of the original participants are unable to participate. If online groups are proposed, there will be 5-7 participants for each group. All participants will be required to give written informed consent to participate in this study. IRI will provide draft informed consent language which may be adjusted by the bidder in order to conform to any specific legal requirements in the research country. Recruitment must commence immediately upon receipt of the screener, to allow sufficient time for the pre-session assignment prior to the actual focus group session.
- **Pre-session assignment.** Recruited participants will be asked to contact their municipal government or the mayor's office immediately after recruitment, using a channel proposed by IRI and agreed between the participant and the agency, e.g. in person, by phone, or online. They will submit a suggestion, idea, or request, at their discretion, affecting the municipality. Participants will be required to keep track of the submission and do one follow up, they will be required to complete a short (1 page) worksheet. For online submissions, they will also share their original submission. Participants will be required to complete this task at least 3 weeks prior to the focus group session. They will keep track of any response from the municipality. Any in person or telephone contact will be captured on the worksheet, any online contact can be submitted in the original version. Participants will be required to also document

any action they observe, if any. For example, if they report a pothole, and the pothole is fixed between the time they reported it and the time of the focus group session, this would need to be noted on the worksheet. Participants will be asked to bring the completed worksheets and any related documents (e.g. email submissions, photos etc.) to the focus group session. If remote focus groups are held, participants will submit these in advance of the session.

- **Discussion guide.** IRI will provide the draft discussion guide. Offeror will be welcome to offer suggestions for improvement and is expected to format and translate the discussion guide into Macedonian and Albanian. IRI reserves the right to review the translation(s.)
- **Focus group moderator(s).** Offeror will provide one or more trained and experienced moderator(s) who is/are fully fluent in the language or discussion. They should familiarize themselves with the topic of discussion prior to fieldwork, and may be asked to participate in a training of up to 2 hours with IRI staff.
 - **Observation.** The Offeror will provide an opportunity for IRI staff to observe the focus group discussions in-person or remotely.
- **Recording of focus group discussions.** Audio and/or video record all aspects of research necessary for full and accurate data collection, transcript generation and inclusion of illustrative samples in the final analytical report. Offeror will film focus groups and film should be high quality with clear sound. If participants do not consent to videotaping, audio recordings are acceptable.
- **Written summaries of focus group discussions.** Offeror will provide a 2-3 page written summary of the focus group discussions (one summary for each focus group discussion) in idiomatic English with significant quotes from participants within one week after the final focus group session.
- **Transcripts.** The Offeror will provide IRI with full verbatim transcripts in Macedonian of each group that will identify each participant speaker by number or first name to link each comment to the participant's gender, exact age, education level, city and occupation. If the original language of the group is Albanian, then the bidder will translate the transcripts into Macedonian.

DELIVERABLES

- Finalized discussion guide (incl translation where applicable)
- Proposed Participant Profile
- Completed worksheets (translated into Macedonian, where submitted in Albanian)
- Written summaries as specified above.
- Video/Audio recordings of the discussions, with clear audio. Recording should be delivered to IRI electronically (for example via a file transfer service) or delivered to the local IRI office.
- Full transcripts of all discussions, as described above.

TIMING

The focus group discussions should be held in May and June 2023; the exact timing needs to be determined in close consultation with IRI.

Technical Proposals

All proposals submitted to IRI must include:

1. Information addressing Bidder's experience in providing each of the services identified in the above Statement of Work and Bidder's proposed specific approach for providing those

services to IRI under this contract, including sufficient information to determine a clear definition of services as it relates to other providers that may be involved.

2. The name, address, and telephone and facsimile numbers of the Bidder (and electronic address if available). If the Bidder is a firm, name(s) should be provided for individuals authorized to conduct business on behalf of the firm.
3. Bidders may provide a list of up to three references for work performed of a similar nature during the last three years, along with contact details. IRI may contact the references to evaluate past performance.
4. If the Bidder is a U.S. organization/resident, or a foreign organization/resident which has income effectively connected with the conduct of activities in the U.S. or has an office or a place of business or a fiscal paying agent in the U.S., the information submitted must contain Bidder's Taxpayer Identification Number.
5. Proposals will not exceed 5 pages (not including cover page).
6. List qualitative projects you conducted with similar specifications in this market and links if they are publicly available
7. Name and explain the role of subcontractors (if any)
8. State if you are to comply with all requirements listed on this SOW without alterations. If any proposed alterations, explain.
9. Describe recruitment plan
10. Describe fieldwork quality assurance measures (if any)
11. Provide proposed moderator(s) CV/Resume
12. Describe anticipated challenges if any
13. Describe bidder's Macedonian and Albanian language skills
14. Please attach valid business registration which confirms bidder is licensed to conduct public opinion research in North Macedonia

Price Proposals

Bidders must propose a firm-fixed Unit Price for each of the deliverables identified below and in the format of the table below. The Bidder's pricing must be valid for at least 60 (sixty) calendar days after the due date for proposal submission. The proposed Unit Price should be fixed and inclusive of all costs to perform, including inspection services, transportation, taxes, import duties (if any), and other levies. To the extent that a Bidder proposed to include any pricing not reflected in the table below, such pricing must be fully described in the proposal. Proposals must be submitted in USD, payments under any resulting contract will be made in this currency.

Please submit all pricing tables in a Microsoft Excel format.

Insert cost per deliverable in USD	6 FGD sessions (In person)	6 FGD sessions (remote)
Finalized discussion guide and Proposed Participant Profile (Payment 1)*		
Completed worksheets, Written summaries and Video/Audio recordings (Payment 2)**		
Full transcripts (Payment 3)		
Total:		

*This amount may not exceed 30% of the total amount quoted. **The amount of payments 1 and 2 combined may not exceed 70% of the total amount quoted.

Evaluation and Award Process

1. IRI may contact any Bidder for clarification or additional information, but Bidders are advised that IRI intends to evaluate the offers based on the written proposals, without discussions, and reserves the right to make decisions based solely on the information provided with the initial proposals. IRI may but is not obligated to conduct additional negotiations with the most highly rated Bidders prior to award of a contract, and may at its sole discretion elect to issue contracts to one or more Bidders.
2. Mathematical errors will be corrected in the following manner: If a discrepancy exists between the total price proposed and the total price resulting from multiplying the unit price by the corresponding amounts, then the unit price will prevail and the total price will be corrected. If there is a discrepancy between the numbers written out in words and the amounts in numbers, then the amount expressed in words will prevail. If the Bidder does not accept the correction, the offer will be rejected.
3. IRI may determine that a proposal is unacceptable if the prices proposed are materially unbalanced between line items or sub-line items. Unbalanced pricing exists when, despite an acceptable total evaluated price, the price of one or more contract line items is significantly overstated or understated as indicated by the application of cost or price analysis techniques. A proposal may be rejected if IRI determines that the lack of balance poses an unacceptable risk.
4. IRI will conduct a source selection based as follows:
IRI intends to make an award to the responsible Bidder based on the following evaluation factors:
 - a) Technical evaluation, (including technical capabilities, proposed technical approach, and personnel qualifications) – **40** percent
 1. *Recruitment plan* - **20** percent
 2. *Capacity to perform scope of work* **20** percent
 - b) Experience in performing similar projects – **30** percent
 1. *Experience conducting face to face or remote FGDs in North Macedonia* – **30** percent
 - c) Price – **30** percent

IRI intends to evaluate Bidders' proposals in accordance with these factors and make an award to the responsible Bidder whose proposal is most advantageous to the program.

5. If a cost realism analysis is performed, cost realism may be considered in evaluating performance or price.

Submission Instructions

Bids must be submitted via email to Eric Peterman, at epeterman@iri.org with the subject line "EUROPE2023M05o" by the deadline listed above.

RFP Terms and Conditions

1. Prospective Bidders are requested to review clauses incorporated by reference in the section "Notice Listing Contract Clauses Incorporated by Reference".
2. IRI may reject any or all proposals if such is within IRI's interest.

3. Proof of costs incurred, such as but not limited to receipts, pictures and financial documents, may be requested during and for up to three years after the end of the contract period.
4. The Bidder's initial proposal should contain the Bidder's best offer.
5. Payment will be made upon receipt of invoices and deliverables/services.
6. Discussions with Bidders following the receipt of a proposal do not constitute a rejection or counteroffer by IRI.
7. IRI will hold all submissions as confidential and submissions shall not be disclosed to third parties. IRI reserves the right to share proposals internally, across divisions, for the purposes of evaluating the proposals.
8. For any currency conversion, the exchange rate to US Dollars listed on oanda.com on the closing date of this solicitation shall be used.
9. Every contract will contain provisions governing termination for cause and termination for convenience.
10. By submitting a proposal, offeror agrees to comply with all terms, conditions, and provisions included in the solicitation and agreement to the services identified above, and will specifically identify any disagreement with or exceptions to the terms, conditions, and provisions.
11. Offerors confirm that the prices in the proposal/proposal/application/quote have been arrived at independently, without any consultation, communication, or agreement with any other Bidder or competitor for the purpose of restricting competition.
12. By applying to this RFP, applicant is certifying that if it is awarded a contract, none of funds payable under the resulting contract will be used to (1) procure or obtain, extend or renew a contract to procure or obtain; (2) enter into a contract (or extend or renew a contract) to procure; or (3) obtain the equipment, services, or systems that uses covered telecommunications equipment or services as a substantial or essential component of any system, or as critical technology as part of any system in compliance with the National Defense Authorization Act. Covered telecommunications equipment and services mean any of the following:
 - i. Telecommunications equipment produced by Huawei Technologies Company or ZTE Corporation (or any subsidiary or affiliate of such entities).
 - ii. For the purpose of public safety, security of government facilities, physical security surveillance of critical infrastructure, and other national security purposes, video surveillance and telecommunications equipment produced by Hytera Communications Corporation, Hangzhou Hikvision Digital Technology Company, or Dahua Technology Company (or any subsidiary or affiliate of such entities).
 - iii. Telecommunications or video surveillance services provided by such entities or using such equipment.
 - iv. Telecommunications or video surveillance equipment or services produced or provided by an entity that the Secretary of Defense, in consultation with the Director of the National Intelligence or the Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, reasonably believes to be an entity owned or controlled by, or otherwise connected to, the government of a covered foreign country. ([2 CFR 200.216](#)).
13. Bidders agree to disclose as part of the proposal submission:
 - o Any close, familial, or financial relationships with IRI staff and agents. For example, the Bidder must disclose if a Bidder's mother conducts volunteer trainings for IRI.

- Any family or financial relationship with other Bidders submitting proposals. For example, if the Bidder's father owns a company that is submitting another proposal, the Bidder must state this.
- Any other action that might be interpreted as potential conflict of interest.

Notice Listing Contract Clauses Incorporated by Reference

IRI is required to make the contractor subject to certain flowdown clauses of the prime award. This awarded contract will incorporate one or more clauses by reference, with the same force and effect as if they were given in full text. Where "flow-down" to the contractor is applicable, references to "USAID/Department of State" shall be interpreted to mean "IRI", "Recipient" to mean "Contractor", and "Subrecipient" to mean "lower-tier subcontractor." Included by reference are the applicable provisions contained in Appendix II to 2 CFR Part 200 and USAID Standard Provisions for Non-US Non-governmental Organizations/US Department of State Standard Terms and Conditions.

IRI Obligations

Issuance of this RFP does not constitute an award commitment on the part of IRI, nor does it commit IRI to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of a proposal or quotation.

Required Certifications

The following certificates need to be signed by all Bidders. These certifications are an integral part of the quotation/proposal. Please print them off and send back to us with your proposal after signature on each certificate. They are:

- Certification regarding debarment, suspension, ineligibility and voluntary exclusion lower tier covered transactions.
- Authorized Individuals

CERTIFICATION REGARDING DEBARMENT, SUSPENSION, INELIGIBILITY AND VOLUNTARY EXCLUSION LOWER TIER COVERED TRANSACTIONS

This certification implements Executive Order 12549, Debarment and Suspension and the requirements set forth in 2.C.F.R. 180, Subpart C.”

Copies of the regulations may be obtained by contacting the person to which this proposal is submitted.

1. By signing and submitting this proposal/application/quote, the prospective lower tier participant is providing the certification set out below.
2. The certification in this clause is a material representation of fact upon which reliance was placed when this transaction was entered into. If it is later determined that the prospective lower tier participant knowingly rendered an erroneous certification, in addition to other remedies available to the Federal Government, the department or agency with which this transaction originated may pursue available remedies, including suspension and/or debarment.
3. The prospective lower tier participant shall provide immediate written notice to the person to which this proposal/application/quote is submitted if at any time the prospective lower tier participant learns that its certification was erroneous when submitted or has become erroneous by reason of changed circumstances.
4. The terms "covered transaction," "debarred," "suspended," "ineligible," "lower tier covered transaction," "participant," "person," "primary covered transaction," "principal," "proposal," and "voluntarily excluded," as used in this clause, have the meanings set out in the Definitions and Coverage sections of the rules implementing Executive Order 12549.
5. The prospective lower tier participant agrees by submitting this proposal/application/quote that, should the proposed covered transaction be entered into, it shall not knowingly enter into any lower tier covered transaction with a person who is debarred, suspended, declared ineligible, or voluntarily excluded from participation in this covered transaction, unless authorized by the IRI.
6. The prospective lower tier participant further agrees by submitting this proposal/application/quote that it will include the clause titled "Certification Regarding Debarment, Suspension, Ineligibility and Voluntary Exclusion--Lower Tier Covered Transactions," without modification, in all lower tier covered transactions and in all solicitations for lower tier covered transactions.
7. A participant in a covered transaction may rely upon a certification of a prospective participant in a lower tier covered transaction that it is not debarred, suspended, ineligible, or voluntarily excluded from the covered transaction, unless it knows that the certification is erroneous. A participant may decide the method and frequency by which it determines the eligibility of its principals.
8. Nothing contained in the foregoing shall be construed to require establishment of a system of records in order to render in good faith the certification required by this clause. The knowledge and information of a participant is not required to exceed that which is normally possessed by a prudent person in the ordinary course of business dealings.
9. Except for transactions authorized under paragraph 5 above, if a participant in a covered transaction knowingly enters into a lower tier covered transaction with a person who is suspended, debarred, ineligible, or voluntarily excluded from participation in this transaction, in addition to other remedies available to the Federal Government, the

department or agency with which this transaction originated may pursue available remedies, including suspension and/or debarment.

1. The prospective lower tier participant certifies, by submission of this proposal, that neither it nor its principals are presently debarred, suspended, proposed for disbarment, declared ineligible, or voluntarily excluded from participation in this transaction by any Federal department or agency.
2. Where the prospective lower tier participant is unable to certify to any of the statements in this certification, such prospective participant shall attach an explanation to this proposal.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Name: _____

Title/Position: _____

Entity Name: _____

Address: _____

Authorized Individuals

The offeror/bidder/applicant represents that the following persons are authorized to negotiate on its behalf with IRI and to bind the recipient in connection with this procurement:

Name	Title	Telephone	Email

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Name: _____

Title/Position: _____

Entity Name: _____