

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

Championing the Most Beautiful Villages of Bosnia and Herzegovina Label

I. OBJECTIVE OF THIS EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

USAID Turizam is soliciting Expression of Interest (EOI) from qualified and legally registered organizations in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) to lead the roll-out, launch and management of "The Most Beautiful Villages of Bosnia and Herzegovina Label – MBV/BIH"; a platform that promotes sustainable tourism and rural preservation & development.

Up to three qualified organizations will be selected to take part in the second phase of qualifications, planned in August 2021, that is anticipated to result in the selection of one organization (**Champion**) to take on the task of managing the MBV/BiH label and nurture it to become one of the key tourism experiences in the country. The Champion will then be provided technical support to help them successfully and efficiently achieve the overall mandate and objectives of MBV/BIH label.

II. BACKGROUND ON THE MBV LABEL

The label "Most Beautiful Villages of" is a concept launched by the French association "Les Plus Beaux villages de France" in 1981. Its mission is to preserve and enhance its member villages' heritage to increase their notoriety and thus promote their economic development. This concept was later adopted by other countries such as Italy, Spain, Germany, Switzerland, Japan, Lebanon, and Russia, and collectively, they setup the international federation: "The most beautiful villages of the Earth", which brings together Champions from different countries paves the way for an international network to exchange knowledge and know-how.

To successfully carry out the mission, the Champion aligns its actions around three strategic axes constituting a virtuous circle: Quality, Notoriety, Development. The selection of candidate villages is made according to a rigorous and objective method that allows the village to be assigned the designation "The most beautiful villages of (Country Name)".

In the MBV model, three aspects of heritage intersect to maintain cultural sustainability: the natural/ecosystem heritage of the landscape and region, the built heritage (monuments, buildings, and artistic production), and local culture specificity (livelihood, language, artisanship, know-hows, gastronomy...). Collectively, and in addition to preserving heritage, these three aspects can act as a magnet for affluent visitors who are looking for authentic and immersive experiences and will be willing to pay premium for, as such, being part of the label "Most Beautiful Villages of" guarantees economic growth, heritage preservation, and sustainable development of rural areas.

Labelled villages in France witnessed an increase of 30 to 40% of tourist visitation from the first year

Presentation about the Most Beautiful Villages Model is attached in a pdf document.

III. THE MOST BEAUTIFUL VILLAGES OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Lying at the crossroad between Western and Eastern civilizations, villages and rural settlements in BiH bear witness to this rich cultural heritage that has marked its land and its people. Greek, Roman, Western medieval, and Ottoman influences are indeed revealed through many preserved monuments or their remains. This diverse cultural heritage is manifested through monuments or architectural gems and intangible living traditions perpetuated through craftsmanship, cuisine, music, dance, and hospitality.

USAID Turizam is supporting introduction of the MBV label to the country, identify and support a local Champion to lead the efforts of rolling out, launching and managing the label.

MBV/BiH Label Objectives

- 1- Preserve local heritage
- 2- Bring economic opportunities for rural communities
- 3- Create jobs and improve livelihoods of the rural communities
- 4- Improve the positioning of BiH as a sustainable tourism destination

IV. THE IDEAL MBV/BiH CHAMPION

The entity championing the Most Beautiful Villages of BiH label should be not-for-profit organization or a commercial entity/social enterprise, legally registered, with a minimum of 5 years of experience, and benefits from a good reputation and deep knowledge of BiH's tourism, culture, and hospitality sectors. The Champion should have already launched and managed initiatives in rural areas, built up a good network of key stakeholders and works in good agreement with the relevant authorities and local communities. Ideally, the organization already has benefited from the financial or technical support of donor agencies and/or government authorities (e.g., municipal, cantonal, entity, or national) and ideally from both entities – Federation and Republika Srpska. The Champion should also be self-sufficient, so that the MBV initiative would be an add on to its current portfolio and would not constitute a burden on its operations.

V. ELIGIBILITY AND CRITERIA FOR SELECTION

To be considered for championing the MBV/BiH label, and move to the next phase of qualifications, applicants responding to this EOI should:

- Be a registered legal entity in Bosnia and Herzegovina, functional and providing services for at least five years
- Have, at least, three years of proven experience in rural development, with focus on sustainable tourism
- Be able to provide service at the county level

- Have at least three full-time technical staff members, including Executive Director
- Demonstrate proven track record in receiving grants and support from donor agencies or government authorities (e.g., municipal, cantonal, entity, or national) for the purpose of developing rural development
- Be financially sustainable
- Attend the “Info Session” described under Section VIII below

VI. OVERVIEW OF MBV/BIH CHAMPION SCOPE OF WORK

The successful Champion will be responsible for the launch, roll-out, management, and day-to-day operations of the label.

In general, the Champion will be responsible for the following activities. Expanded details on the scope of work will be included in the second phase – Champion selection. The activities include:

- Strategically and effectively drive processes of launching and growing the label in a sustainable manner
- Manage the development, launching and curating MBV/BiH brand locally and internationally
- Developing and launching a multi-channel campaign to encourage villages to apply to become part of the MBV/BiH label and repeat on annual basis.
- Manage the evaluation of received applications and selection processes supported by a committee of experts to be setup and managed by the Champion
- Lead efforts to market, promote and sell the villages’ tourism experiences locally and internationally, including engaging local and international media for the purpose of PR and positive communications
- Lead efforts to generate income and revenues from activities to support the sustainability of the label under the organization’s brand
- Engage in and support the efforts to develop and create new tourism or tourism-related cultural and rural products and experiences in the selected villages, including training and capacity building for local entrepreneurs
- Support the villages’ advocacy efforts that further support the label’s mandate and goals
- Launch common actions between all labeled villages to address common issues and challenges and promote label and membership.
- Apply for and secure funds from public and donor agencies, and create streams of revenue to contribute to long term sustainability
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VII. OVERVIEW OF USAID TURIZAM’S PLANNED SUPPORT

USAID Turizam expects to provide support to the selected Champion in the following areas:

- Support to lead the efforts of rolling out, launching and managing the label.



- Provide technical support in developing a sustainable business model for the label, as part of the overall organizations' mandate.
- Support the implementation and activation of MBV model in BiH – for example covering costs of branding, website design, digital and social media marketing and sales, PR and communications, community engagement and awareness, amongst others.

The above listed activities are indicative at this stage, while the specific areas of support will be further elaborated with shortlisted candidates.

VIII. RESPONDING TO THE EOI

Interested organization who satisfy the eligibility criteria under Section V, can apply to be considered for championing the MBV/BiH label by providing the documents required below, via email to info@turizambih.ba with subject line “EOI – Most Beautiful Villages of BiH”, according to the following timeline:

July 19 (Monday):	Announcement for this EOI
July 28 (Wednesday):	Letter if interest, required documentation and questions (if any) submitted
*July 30 (Friday):	Info Session for interested organizations. Date and venue will be advised later
August 2-6:	Meetings with prospective candidates, as needed
August 11 (Wednesday):	Decision made and applicants informed

* *Attending Info Session is a prerequisite for consideration*

Required documents:

- 1- Short description (2-page max) of experiences and references relevant for this activity
- 2- Copy of the official registration (PDF version, not necessary to be notarized in the municipality)
- 3- Statute, mission statement
- 4- A brief (not to exceed a page) on projects and activities funded by donor agencies or government performed during 2019, 2020 and 2021 that are related to rural tourism development, to include:
 - a. Name of the project
 - b. Goals and objectives
 - c. Period of performance
 - d. Target groups/beneficiaries
 - e. Source of funding and budget
 - f. Key outputs and results
- 5- Overview of staff – names and short description of for each of current positions and their key experiences