

**Special to The World Conference of Mayors, Inc., (WCM)**

**May 8, 2009**

**THE WORLD CONFERENCE OF MAYORS, INC., (WCM) REGISTERS WITH THE UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (USAID)**

## **AN OVERVIEW**

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Washington, DC, the US federal government's primary agency for US foreign assistance, has granted the World Conference of Mayors, Inc. (WCM), "the United Nations of Cities", status, recognition, and registration as a Private Voluntary Organization (PVO). This outstanding news came to the WCM headquarters in Tuskegee, Alabama in a letter from USAID dated March 29, 2009.

This article is written to the WCM family, Corporate Roundtable, affiliates and other friends, to announce the good news, give a very brief overview about how the registration was accomplished, offer comments about what it means in terms of opportunities - business and financial - and to let each member and affiliate know more about what and how each one can be involved and engaged - as the WCM moves forward.

In January of 2009, Mayor Johnny Ford, Founder and Director General of the WCM, called on a friend Jerry Henderson, internationally known and respected expert and authority in the area of democracy and good governance, to lead an effort and put together the WCM application to USAID for Private Voluntary Organization (PVO) status. The classification, PVO, was established by USAID to create expanded avenues and opportunities for participation in its programs and projects by organizations like the WCM – in additional to companies and various other types of organizations.

Henderson, who as worked in 19 countries on behalf of and with several organizations and companies engaged in the international arena, responded positively and worked with Mayor Ford, Mayor John McGowan, Union Springs, Alabama and WCM Treasurer, and Mayor Ron Davis, Prichard, Alabama and President of the Alabama Conference of Black Mayors in the process of completing the WCM application. After several visits to Union Springs, Prichard, the WCM office, and a careful review of previous records and documents, the application was completed and submitted to USAID in February 2009. Now that the WCM is recognized and registered at USAID, the next step is to develop a comprehensive strategy/strategies for operating at this new level. The WCM will identify and create opportunities for engagement, obtain commitments from the membership, affiliates, and potential partners – and file the appropriate letters of intent, concept papers, and proposals.

Working in five (5) regions of the world, utilizing various funding instruments and mechanisms, USAID provides support to and for its Missions in Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, Latin American and the Caribbean, Europe and Eurasia, and the Middle East. According to USAID, "approximately \$ 4 billion dollars each fiscal year in federal contracts and grants are awarded". The primary development categories for grants and contracts are: agriculture, democracy and governance, economic growth and trade, education and universities, the environment, global partnerships, health, humanitarian assistance, and cross-cutting programs and projects. A wide range of programs and projects are developed and implemented in these categories by USAID's 'implementing partners' (i.e., contractors, organizations, institutions, consultants, and other development partners).

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In order to carry out the mandate and legislative directives of the US Congress, USAID Washington and its country Missions worldwide utilizes the services - technical skills, expertise, commodities, and more - of some 3,500 companies. In addition, more than 600 private volunteer organizations, indigenous organizations, universities, American businesses, other US government agencies, and international agencies are utilized to implement programs and projects. Each year, USAID publishes a Directory of PVOs and it is posted on its website. The PVOs that are registered with USAID are exposed to a worldwide audience. Many of the 600 plus PVOs are engaged directly and or indirectly with USAID in various program and project activities.

There are three primary mechanisms that are used by USAID to purchase skills and commodities to implements programs and projects: *contracts, cooperative agreements, and grants*. In instances where smaller amounts are involved, a fourth mechanism, *purchase orders*, are utilized. The WCM, with its USAID registration, is now eligible to apply and compete for federal *contracts, grants, cooperative agreements, and purchase orders*, at some 26 or more agencies, departments and commissions, including: USAID, State Department, US Department of Justice, US Department of Interior, US Department of Energy, US Department of Transportation, US Department of Housing and Urban Development, US Department of Health and Human Services, US Department of Education, and Homeland Security. Generally, Requests for Proposals (RFPs) are announced and solicited by USAID and other federal agencies, departments, and commissions. The RFPs are posted on government and individual agency websites. In addition, there are times when unsolicited proposals are accepted for particular and or innovative activities that meets the desired objectives and goals of USAID and other agencies and departments. Discretionary funds are usually available for special tasks.

As members and affiliates of the WCM, you can help serve the people more; you can engage; you can become more involved; and you can benefit. Mayor Johnny Ford and Jim Montgomery, chair, WCM Corporate Roundtable, will discuss and provide specific information and instructions about the way forward during the coming days. Feel free to discuss any of these items, raise questions as well as express your concerns and interests during upcoming conference calls, meetings, and other activities.

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