



# Local Governance Project (LGP) / NEXOS LOCALES

Contract No. AID-520-C-12-00004

Implemented by Development Alternatives, Inc.

**Youth Strategy**  
**REFERENCE WORKPLAN ACTION MEMO #011**  
**Prepared by Iris Group, Inc.**  
*PO-Quetzaltenango-008*

## **INTRODUCTION**

This document details the *Nexos Locales* strategy for integrating youth into project activities throughout the remaining Life of Project (LOP). The strategy lays out an action plan with timelines. This action plan must be viewed as illustrative at this point given that youth themselves will need to drive the agenda of activities designed for their benefit. As elements of the action plan are incorporated into annual work plans, the actions and corresponding timelines will be finalized more precisely. In the process, some actions may be added, deleted, or modified.

## **BACKGROUND AND DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGE**

Young people in Guatemala's Western Highlands face an extremely challenging path to adulthood. Poor possibilities for vocational and higher education and a lack of entry-level employment contribute to crime, early childbearing, and migration, exacerbating cycles of poverty and family disintegration. Local political systems are largely closed to their inputs, excluding youth from decision-making roles in their communities. With half of Guatemala's population under 19, such systematic barriers to the successful transition to adulthood pose a formidable challenge to the country's economic and political development.

The USAID Youth in Development Policy notes that, "Youth is a life stage, one that is not finite or linear" (USAID 2012). Moreover, young people in Guatemala, like elsewhere, are not a monolithic group. Their characteristics vary greatly by class, ethnicity, gender, and residence. Even the duration of adolescence varies, with expectations of adulthood pressing in at younger ages for poor, rural residents, particularly indigenous girls, who frequently must care for younger siblings, are married young, or face pregnancy during adolescence. For this reason, programming targeting young people must take into account the different political and economic spaces they occupy (UNDP 2012).

Youth migration out of Guatemala is a significant challenge to achieving U.S. development goals. Research indicates that most young people who migrate from Guatemala are 14-17 year olds from the western part of the country, and 80 percent of them work for their family (United Nations 2014). Common drivers for youth migration are poverty, violence, and reuniting with family members who

have already migrated. In a meeting on the issue with Ambassador Shannon, USAID partners indicated that local municipal officials see migration as an opportunity instead of a problem, as it leads to inflows of remittances into the community (Meeting Notes).

One of the primary reasons young people do not see a future other than migration is the lack of economic opportunity they face. In the rapid youth assessment discussed further below, interviewed youth express the deep sense of economic disenfranchisement they feel – with very few entry-level jobs, limited paths to escape poverty, and government policy that seems to work against them. In its very comprehensive report on youth, “Guatemala: Un País de Oportunidades para la Juventud?” the UNDP reports that 52% of Guatemalan youth live in poverty. In spite of the fact that they make up half the population, UNDP also estimates that only 6 percent of Guatemala’s budget is focused on benefiting youth, largely through the formal education system.

Despite the fact that education spending accounts for most of the government’s spending on youth, the system is woefully underfunded. Limits on education play a large role in diminishing economic opportunity, with students reaching six years of schooling on average nationwide, and rural students receiving fewer than four years of school on average. Beyond primary level, rural residents have very low access to schools because of infrastructure and staffing shortages. Indigenous children have a lower probability of attending school, and only half of those attending primary school are taught in bilingual environments (Richards 2010). For girls, the situation is worse. In Concepción Chiquirichapa, for example, only 14 percent of rural indigenous girls finish primary school, compared to 68 percent among Guatemala’s general population (Hallman 2007). There are also serious questions about teaching quality, as in 2012, only 5.9 percent of public school students passed national middle level math tests, and only 23.7 percent passed the reading comprehension test (United Nations 2014). At the same time as young people crave better education, however, youth interviewed in the rapid assessment said it often seems like education does not offer a path forward toward economic stability, because of the lack of employment opportunities.

Crime and violence are rising, undermining the economy and driving migration. Young people in Guatemala are increasingly the victims and perpetrators of violent crime (CDCS). For those under 18, the leading cause of death is gun violence (United Nations 2014). Young women in Guatemala are at high risk of gender-based violence, including *femicidio* and sexual violence. As the UNDP points out, “Violence affecting young people enormously increases the costs of health and social assistance services, reduces productivity, diminishes property values, disorganizes a variety of essential services, and, in general, undermines the structure of society” (UNDP 2012).

Political engagement of young people in Guatemala, as throughout Latin America, is low. A report prepared by FLACSO Chile, “Youth and Political Participation in Latin America: Current State and Challenges,” reports that only 10 percent of Guatemala’s 16 to 29 year olds have high confidence in Congress. While only 27 percent reported not voting in the last presidential election, their voting patterns do not translate into other kinds of political engagement, as only seven percent participate in protests or other mobilizations. While noting that not all young people have access to technology, the report sees information and communication technology as a promising tool in engaging and mobilizing youth (FLACSO 2013).

Interviews with local youth leaders and other stakeholders, conducted during a recent rapid assessment on gender and youth by USAID Nexos Locales, underscore both the keenly felt sense of exclusion among youth and their passion for driving positive change.

Interviewed youth universally mentioned that they are rarely included in municipal-level decision making. Even civil society organizations that are supposed to be representative of the community, such as the

COCODEs and COMUDEs, have failed to fully incorporate youth. Where youth do participate, they struggle to make their voices heard, reporting that adults see them as lacking the experience to give informed opinions. One youth group interviewed reported that they had repeatedly presented community improvement proposals to their local mayor, yet their efforts to engage him in dialogue were fruitless. Interviewed youth asserted that political parties corrupt democratic processes in municipalities, posing a significant barrier to youth participation. At the same time, youth representatives expressed a deep commitment to staying in Guatemala and continuing to present proposals and carry out advocacy campaigns.

The adult-youth power dynamic is shadowed by a similar dynamic based on gender within some youth organizations and networks. While youth groups that explicitly prioritize gender seem to promote young women's leadership, other groups expressed support for gender equality in theory, yet did not have young women in leadership positions represented in the interviews. One male youth representative commented that young men and women seem to take on traditional roles within youth groups -- with young women cooking or young men setting up sound equipment for events, for example. Two female youth representatives reported that male youth representatives tend to guard scarce political spaces jealously -- so that when there is an opening for youth in adult political environments, it is taken by a young man.

Interviewed youth leaders also spoke in one voice about economic opportunities in their communities. Youth lack resources to move on to higher education, or even in many cases beyond a primary school education. Several leaders asserted that scholarships are available, but only to those favored by mayors and political parties. Even if young people manage a higher education, many pointed out that employment is extremely difficult to find, as employers rarely post entry-level positions. In such a context, according to some respondents, higher education seems like a waste of time and money. Youth groups -- particularly those closer to the Mexican border -- mentioned that crime seems like the only economic activity many youth have as an option.

Youth and other stakeholders interviewed indicate that youth-serving and youth-led civil society organizations in the Western Highlands provide critical capacity development in both political and economic skills, and have made important gains. Through these institutions, thousands of the region's youth have developed advocacy, entrepreneurship, project development, and event organizing skills, among others. They have advocated successfully for municipal youth offices and launched income-generating initiatives. While there remain capacity gaps for the region's youth, these organizations provide an important foundation for scale-up of political and economic participation projects in the Western Highlands.

It is important to note, however, that these organizations have succeeded in engaging just one segment of the 15 to 24 youth population -- albeit a critical one. As one youth leader explained, there are three groups of young people in the Western Highlands. The first is a group with heightened political awareness, committed to making a better Guatemala, and generally with an above-average education. The second is a group of young people who are uninterested in any kind of politics, who are economically above survival means, and are more interested in their friends and themselves than in looking for society's improvement. The third is the group that is most at risk of migration -- living on the edge of survival, they see no options for improving their economic situation in Guatemala, and do not have the resources or the political awareness to engage in civil society groups. While the first group is the easiest to engage in development projects, the third group is most crucial to the equitable distribution of development's successes. Through this youth strategy, USAID Nexos Locales seeks to build engagement among all three groups in its activities, with a priority on the first group (the easiest to engage) and last (the most important to engage for development objectives).

The USAID Youth in Development Policy affirms two objectives: “Strengthen youth programming, participation, and partnership in support of Agency development objectives,” and “Mainstream and integrate youth issues and engage young people across Agency initiatives and operations.” The policy puts particular emphasis on consultation with youth, noting that, “youth participation not only reduces passivity and apathy among youth but also promotes a positive view of young people in the wider adult community” (USAID 2012).

In light of the Youth in Development Policy and the Rapid Youth Assessment conducted by Iris Group, Nexos Locales programming with youth:

1. Must be cognizant of time constraints on youth – work, home duties, school, culture – to ensure that they can participate and benefit fully from the project;
2. Must involve youth in design and decisions about activities so that they respond to their needs and interests;
3. Must create activities that show immediate results, incorporate social activities, and include incentives and rewards to motivate them to sustain their participation;
4. Must provide financial support to attend training (travel, accommodation, food) and to conduct projects (micro-grants) to reduce known barriers to participation.

Integration of youth into Nexos Locales programming must therefore be 100% elicitive, rather than prescriptive.

## **OBJECTIVES AND PRINCIPLES**

USAID Nexos Locales does not seek to implement projects that merely benefit young people, but rather to engage the region’s youth as protagonists of a political and economic development agenda. The USAID Nexos Locales project will spark youth leadership to address the most urgent needs of youth (ages 15-29) in the Western Highlands through the following three objectives:

- Objective 1: To increase youth (ages 15-29) participation in municipal level decision-making within 30 target municipalities
- Objective 2: To increase social and economic development projects led by and benefitting youth (15-29) within 30 target municipalities
- Objective 3: To create a cohesive youth network in the Western Highlands that is able to influence national level political and economic policies affecting youth.

Nexos Locales’ approach therefore will leverage what exists (highly motivated youth in target municipalities, many of whom have important skill sets) to reduce the barriers to youth political and economic opportunities, including lack of access to resources, lack of capacity, lack of political power, and other elements identified by the youth during the process. A hallmark of this plan will be the active involvement of youth themselves - simultaneously training them in assessing the root causes of their issues in governance, developing solutions and soliciting their ideas for development of specific activities that meet Nexos Locales objectives.

### **Principles:**

- Youth Leadership and Representation: Youth in the target municipalities will be actively engaged in and driving the design, implementation, and evaluation of this plan and its activities. The

project will provide ample opportunity for youth to provide feedback on project processes and activities.

- **Gender and Social Inclusion:** This integration plan will be implemented with close attention to how the designed activities will benefit male and female youth and indigenous/non-indigenous youth differently, and to ensure that traditionally marginalized groups have decision-making roles in the development of project activities.
- **Integration:** Nexos Locales' overall objectives are interdependent, with climate change, governance, and economic development issues deeply intertwined. While youth will naturally gravitate toward themes where they have more interest, the project will provide opportunities for them to exchange with and learn from their peers working on other themes, to enhance possibilities for cross-fertilization.

## **STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION**

To support and sustain this youth strategy throughout the life of the project, Nexos will engage in the following activities:

**Staffing** - Nexos Locales will ensure an embedded youth ambassador within the project by hiring a Youth Coordinator and/or Intern. With the help of the Technical Director, he or she will guide the project's implementation of this plan, adapting as necessary to respond to the expressed needs of youth in target areas. This person will be responsible for identifying local organizations, with a priority on youth-led and youth-serving organizations, that can provide technical assistance and training to youth groups, particularly in proposal design, advocacy skills, microenterprise, and thematic issues (violence, climate change, migration).

**Communications Strategy** – Perceptions about young people shape how adults respond to their needs and respect their rights. As part of Nexos Locales Public Relations and Outreach Strategy, the project will target adults with messages that identify the problems that come from neglecting the rights of youth (i.e. migration, unemployment, adolescent pregnancy, crime, cycles of poverty) and demonstrating the power of youth leadership. Using USAID's Social Behavior Change Communications (SBCC) approach, the project will highlight the value and potential of youth contributions to society. Nexos Locales will also use the SBCC approach to showcase successes from youth-led initiatives funded by the project, identifying and using platforms popular with youth in different areas so that message delivery is "channel agnostic."

**Youth Allies** – Youth leadership is essential for the strategy's success, but older adults also have an important interest in youth economic and political inclusion, and they should be engaged by the project as allies. Such allies could include business leaders, indigenous mayors, political leaders, and religious leaders. These allies should be recruited based on their interest in promoting youth leadership, their experience in advancing youth issues, and their commitment to support the project's youth strategy and recruit more allies. The project will launch a 10-person Youth Ally Council that will be engaged at key moments in the project, particularly in advance of the Youth Congress. Youth Allies will be required to participate in a project orientation process, which will include a gender, social inclusion, and masculinities training, so that the Allies can act and advise youth with awareness about how power structures in Guatemalan society benefit and exclude individuals differently based on gender, ethnicity, and other factors. As a result, Allies will be able to help youth transform these power structures and create more equitable relationships.

**Linkages with Other Nexos Activities and Other Projects** – As much as possible throughout the project, Nexos Locales will connect the youth leaders it engages with existing Nexos activities, such as

the creation of Local Development Plans, and with other projects and resources in the Western Highlands and nationally. In particular, Nexos will link to USG-funded projects by IFES, NDI, and IRI that engage youth in governance, as well as local Universities for Awareness projects. Such connections will foster cross-fertilization of ideas and problem-solving, as well as a joint sense of purpose.

### **Year 2 of Nexos Locales (October 1, 2015 – September 30, 2016)**

To increase economic and political participation of 15 to 29 year olds within 30 target municipalities in the Western Highlands, USAID Nexos Locales proposes to work through local partners to implement the following illustrative activities in Year 2, October 1, 2015 – September 30, 2016:

**Youth-Led Mapping and Diagnostic Surveys (November – December, 2015)** – To develop a comprehensive and contextualized understanding of youth needs and barriers/opportunities for youth participation in each of the 30 target municipalities, Nexos Locales will offer a toolkit and small grants to youth-serving and youth-led organizations to complete a local mapping and diagnostic landscape study. Nexos will encourage applications from coalitions of groups to ensure diverse representation in this phase. Nexos will develop the methodology and questionnaire in conjunction with selected coalitions/groups, which will cover the capacities and gaps for young people in each municipality; the barriers to entry/participation in political and economic activities and decision making; and the political, environmental, and economic conditions for young people (including attention to gender and ethnicity). Groups conducting these studies, including interviews or focus groups, will coordinate and share information with other diagnostics being performed for the project. Nexos anticipates that by engaging young people directly in the performance of these diagnostics, the project will not only increase youth understanding of their environment and generate youth investment in their findings, it will also build their skills in qualitative analysis and their connections to local political and civil society leaders. These studies will also add to Nexos' qualitative data for each municipality, offering an improved ability to assess results at project end.

**Mini Congresses** (February-April, 2016) – Once the interviews/focus groups are completed and analyzed, Nexos Locales will hold two mini congress meetings in each of Nexos Locales' four clusters of target municipalities. Each cluster will reach out to youth-serving and youth-led groups in the cluster and use an application process to select up to 75 youth for participation. (Illustrative selection criteria is cited at end of this document.) These two-day meetings (Friday-Saturday) will socialize findings from the diagnostic studies, begin to address the capacity gaps identified by youth, and deepen the planning process for the Youth Congress. As much as possible, these mini-congresses will emphasize participatory methods over lectures and presentations.

**First Mini Congress** (February, 2016): In addition to providing an introduction to the Nexos Locales project, the first mini congress will focus on sharing the results of the diagnostic studies conducted in Phase I. Based on the studies, youth will work in teams to create a cluster map that identifies priority actions and capacity needs for each target municipality within the cluster. This mini congress will also feature a full-day gender, new masculinities, and social inclusion training to ensure participating youth have a common foundation for understanding and addressing common gender and social exclusion dynamics within youth organizations. At the end of the pre-congress, participants will select two representatives per cluster to serve on the **Youth Congress Advisory Council**.

**Second Mini Congress** (April, 2016): The second mini congress will include five rotating skills workshops for subgroups of the 75 participants. Participants will be able to attend each of the workshops, which will present introductory level materials designed to whet participants' appetites for more in depth learning on each topic. One of the workshops will be on project

*design and proposal development.* This workshop will build on the youth priority cluster map developed during the first mini congress, allowing participants to analyze the identified priorities through problem and solution trees. It will also take them through the steps of developing their own proposals, giving them the opportunity to practice developing problem statements, objectives, and project design. Another workshop will focus on *advocacy skills*, enabling participants to hone their skills in identifying needed policy changes at the municipal level, mapping local decision makers, and developing effective strategy. The other three workshops will explore key themes for youth in the Western Highlands: violence/crime, climate change, and migration. Each of these three will include a speaker on the topic, and then offer time for discussion and participatory pedagogical activities.

**Youth Network Formation** (May-June 2016) The relationships formed among participants at the first two mini congresses will catalyze interest in the organic formation of youth networks. Network sizes and geographic representation will vary based on interest, but will be supported by opportunities to develop electronic network platforms through popular forms of social media.

**Skills Reinforcement** (May-June 2016) – Through grants to youth empowerment and civic engagement CSOs in the Altiplano, Nexos will ensure follow-on technical assistance and training in the topics presented in the second mini congress. To promote the learn-by-doing approaches essential to youth knowledge acquisition, the follow-on TA and trainings may offer micro grants to develop youth advocacy interests.

**Youth Congress** (July, 2016) – The three-day youth congress will engage diverse youth activists from 30 municipalities in an interactive series of intensive workshops, participatory roundtables, and cultural exchanges to strengthen youth leadership capacity in political participation, water management, climate change, and local economic development. The congress will also assemble youth allies, municipal decision makers, and ancestral authorities to lay critical groundwork for changing power dynamics at the municipal level that have blocked youth political participation and economic engagement, particularly for indigenous and female youth.

The exact content of the Congress will be determined by the Youth Congress Advisory Council, in collaboration with a Nexos Locales grantee host organization, but the Congress will focus on:

**Developing Capacity** – The mini congresses and follow-on TA will have raised many important concepts for young people seeking greater political and economic opportunities, and the Youth Congress will build on this by enlisting the support of technical experts to help address remaining capacity gaps. The size and length of the Congress should enable a high degree of specialization, with workshops on different technical and thematic tracks aligning to youth interests and Nexos' results, such as advocacy, economic development/income-generating activities, social research on youth needs, climate change, communications, and food security. For example, Nexos could engage representatives of technology companies, such as Tigo, Movistar, or Claro, to present a workshop or panel on using technology for social communication. The Congress will also offer the opportunity to continue capacity building on gender and social inclusion. The Youth Congress Advisory Council will work in the months leading up to the Congress to work with their peers to identify specific needs in this area that should be addressed.

**Sustaining and Building Youth Engagement** – The Youth Congress will place a high priority on generating excitement about youth involvement in Nexos Locales. As identified in the rapid youth assessment, social and cultural activities are critical to ensuring that young people want to continue to participate. Youth leadership will help ensure that Congress

activities are interesting and engaging. Potential activities to build energy at the Youth Congress include a Noche Cultural, featuring skits, musical performances, spoken word, or other contributions to showcase participants' diversity and personality. Another possibility is to have an art competition to create a poster for the Congress. The winning posters would be on Congress materials and the runners up would be displayed on site.

One segment of a plenary session will be devoted to demonstrating successes that various CSO have had in developing youth municipal advocacy agendas. The same session will introduce the successful model developed by the Barbara Ford Center for Peace for establishing youth offices inside the municipal city hall buildings, supported by the municipalities themselves.

**Expanding Political and Economic Support** – Nexos will incorporate adult Youth Allies throughout the project, but the Youth Congress will be a critical opportunity to expand the network of adults invested in project outcomes. The hosting partner will invite municipal leaders (mayors, council members, COCODE and COMUDE members, etc.), heads of local and national businesses, ancestral leaders, and other community leaders to participate in a reception during the Congress. During the reception, youth leaders may want to give out awards to recognize outstanding youth allies, which will generate increased interest among other stakeholders in attendance. Participants could also hold a “feria” to showcase their proposed projects or microenterprise ideas to attract political or economic support for these projects. Interaction with these leaders will be particularly important for those about to undertake Nexos-funded projects. Youth allies could also be asked to make specific public commitments to youth political and economic participation at the event.

**Western Highlands Youth Network** (July 2016 through end of project) – Participants in the Youth Congress will be strongly encouraged to create a Western Highlands Youth Network to bolster youth political strength in the region. The exact structure and mission of the Network should be determined by the youth themselves, with guidance from Youth Allies as needed/desired by the youth. As such a network could benefit implementation of Nexos Locales' other activities by providing a clear decision making body to represent youth interests and channel youth concerns, Nexos will offer a start-up grant for the network to overcome initial barriers to formation.

As a result of the Youth Congress, Nexos Locales anticipates that 150 young people from 30 municipalities in the Western Highlands will have developed the capacity and connections to be able to effectively advocate for their rights and implement critical projects for community development at the municipal level.

**Proposal Competition** (August – October, 2016) – Following the Youth Congress, Nexos will hold a grants competition for youth-led and youth-serving organizations. The proposal competition will have four categories:

**Political Participation** – Nexos will offer one-year grants to youth-serving and youth-led organizations to increase youth political participation in a target municipality or municipalities. Successful proposals will clearly define an obstacle to youth political participation in the target municipality, using evidence from the diagnostic surveys. Proposals will include a precise objective and an action plan that logically addresses the defined obstacle. Collaborative efforts of multiple organizations will be encouraged. Proposals will also identify any capacity gaps that will need to be addressed to successfully complete the project, so that Nexos can arrange technical assistance where appropriate. Winning proposals will include simple indicators to track youth political participation in the target municipality, and a strong gender and social inclusion plan to ensure that project benefits will accrue to those most marginalized. Projects might include opening a youth office within a municipality, securing a municipal budget line item for projects

involving and benefiting youth, implementing a social accountability scorecard on youth issues, engaging in policy dialogue on youth issues with municipal authorities, or others.

**Microenterprise/Economic Development** – Nexos will also offer one-year grants to youth-serving and youth-led organizations to address economic marginalization for youth in the Western Highlands. Grants will be awarded to organizations with proven experience in connecting young people to sustainable professional opportunities and income-generating projects. Proposals will need to clearly show a simple analysis of the value chain for the proposed economic activity, and demonstrate how income generated will benefit youth participants. Proposals will also need to identify capacity gaps that can be addressed with technical assistance.

**Climate Change Social Communications Projects** – Nexos will offer small, short-term (3-6 months) grants for climate change awareness projects conducted by youth-serving and youth-led organizations, or unaffiliated youth who can present a compelling proposal. Applicants will be able to choose from a number of communications methods, including music, art, theatre, or social media. Projects can specifically target certain audiences (certain indigenous communities, for example) or geographic regions within the target municipalities, or create communications for a broad audience across the Western Highlands. A poster campaign, for example, could feature different indigenous groups for different communities, for example. Winning messages and formats will be broadly shared among project partners, and will also be used in Nexos Locales' campaigns.

**Youth Outreach and Engagement Projects** – It is likely that due to existing structural and economic barriers to youth political and economic participation, early Nexos youth activities will only include youth participants who are already involved in local youth-serving or youth-led organizations. Yet youth who are at high risk for migration are an important target audience for Nexos Locales. To involve these youth, Nexos Locales will offer one-year grants to youth-serving and youth-led organizations to mobilize and sustain engagement of these youth. Well-designed projects will ensure that they are able to offer sufficient incentives to overcome the obstacles to marginalized youth participation, including economic and time barriers (as described in the background section). Such projects could support an organization wishing to create a subgroup of youth in a rural area, for example, or connect more marginalized youth to an existing economic development project.

Proposals will be evaluated by a committee that includes select members of Nexos staff, Youth Advisory Council, and Youth Ally Council. Criteria for awards will include: participation of youth in project design; a clear, SMART objective; a realistic action plan; the likelihood of the project to contribute toward Nexos' results; the experience of the organization/coalition; articulation of capacity gaps and Nexos' ability to respond to such gaps; and a well-defined plan to include and advance marginalized groups, including young women/girls and indigenous youth.

**Year 3 of Nexos Locales (October 1, 2016 – September 30, 2017 – subject to Option Year #01 approval and funding)**

**Third mini-congresses** (November 2016) In each cluster, a third set of mini congresses will be held to assess and share project results to date, discuss common obstacles and potential solutions, and examine the bigger picture of youth political and economic participation in the cluster. Participants will highlight important trends and promising practices to inform the next round of proposals. The mini congress will also offer the opportunity to share with other USG-funded programs working on youth and governance, including IFES, NDI, and IRI.

These mini congresses will also include award presentations for most creative campaign, best Youth Ally, best engagement of new audiences, and best social media strategy. The award winners will be selected by the Youth Advisory Council. The congresses will also offer the opportunity to elect new members to the Youth Advisory Council.

The awards from the proposal competition will be announced shortly before the third mini congresses, to enable grant winners to refine strategies and recruit potential participants in their projects at their respective mini-congress, and to allow those who are not awarded grants in this round to share and perfect their ideas with other youth leaders at the Congress.

### **Remainder of Year 3**

The exact activities for remainder of Year 3 will be determined by the youth themselves, including the Youth Council, grantee youth-led and youth-serving organizations, and the Western Highlands Youth Network (if formed). Nexos Locales' role during the year will be primarily to arrange technical assistance as needed, integrate youth leaders with other project activities, convene meetings for results sharing, and connect interested youth with potential partners. The preliminary plan for the year includes:

**Project Implementation** – Awardees will launch projects in November 2016. Cluster managers and the youth coordinator will check in with project implementers via phone monthly, and via email as necessary. The Youth Ally Council will also serve as a resource for project implementers to provide advice or open doors with influential target audiences as needed.

**Technical Assistance** – During the course of the year, Nexos staff will work with grantees to identify any capacity gaps that are impeding progress in grant implementation. Staff will connect grantees with appropriate technical experts from among local or national organizations, where possible. The implementing organization and technical experts will collaborate to define and complete a short-term technical assistance project.

**Proposal Competition (Round 2)** – In early 2nd quarter of Year 3, Nexos Locales will announce a second round of grants, under the same categories as the first round. This round will prioritize grants to new grantees, but grant recipients from the first round will have the opportunity to apply for smaller, add-on grants to build on their successes, or for grants to provide technical assistance to new grantees in areas where they've built expertise.

**Project Implementation** – Second-round awardees will launch projects in early 3rd quarter of Year 3 (March 2017). Cluster managers and the youth coordinator will check in with project implementers via phone monthly, and via email as necessary. The Youth Ally Council will continue to serve as a resource for implementing groups.

**Technical Assistance** – As in the previous year, Nexos staff will connect technical experts with grantees for short-term technical assistance projects. To increase learning among peers and build relationships among youth-serving and youth-led organizations in the region, the previous year's grantees will be eligible to provide either short-term technical assistance or longer-term mentorship to groups that are implementing a project similar to the mentor group's.

**Evaluation Surveys** – Similar to the diagnostic surveys conducted in year one, Nexos Locales will recruit teams of youth to conduct evaluation surveys and focus groups to capture changes since the launch of the Nexos youth strategy in attitudes, behaviors, and conditions related to youth political and economic participation.

**Public Events** – As part of the communications strategy, youth-led and youth-serving groups will have the opportunity to sponsor events in target municipalities at key moments during the year, such as International Day of the Girl (October 11) or International Youth Day (August 12). Such events will include branding to ensure audiences know about the larger campaign for youth participation and rights in the Western Highlands.

**Second Youth Congress** – The Youth Advisory Council and a partner organization will collaborate on a second Youth Congress in June of 2017. This Congress will offer the opportunity to share results from the evaluation surveys, analyze lessons across clusters, recognize allies, and strengthen networks. As with the first Youth Congress, the event will also feature creative competitions, a *noche cultural*, and social time.

## **EXPECTED OUTCOMES (INDICATORS)**

Activities within this strategy will support the following indicators in the Nexos Locales' Monitoring and Evaluation Plan:

Goal: A more secure Guatemala that fosters greater socio-economic development in the Western Highlands and sustainably manages its natural resources

Indicator 3: Number of youth who have participated in USG-supported activities who have assumed leadership roles in their communities

- ODI, Result 1, Indicator 6: Number of projects prioritized by municipalities in coordination with communities/civil society
- ODI, Result 2, Indicator 9: Percentage of youth and women participating in the activities of the project related with commissions of COCODEs through civil society organizations. (This indicator is currently (June 22, 2015) under revisión.)
- OD2, Result 4, Indicator 12: Number of organizations that implement capacity strengthening with USG assistance.
- OD2, Result 4, Indicator 13: Percentage of female participants in programs supported by the USG designed to increase access to productive economic resources.
- OD2, Result 4, Indicator 14: Number of policies, procedures in each of the following stages of development as a result of USG assistance.
- OD3, Result 5, Indicator 19: Number of institutions with increased capacity to adapt to impacts of climate change as a result of USG assistance.
- OD3, Result 5, Indicator 20: Number of actors with increased capacity to adapt to impacts of climate change as a result of USG assistance.
- OD3, Result 5, Indicator 20: Number of laws, policies, strategies, plans, or regulations on climate change (mitigation or adaptation) and/or conservation of biodiversity officially proposed, adopted, or implemented as a result of USG assistance.

## GEOGRAPHIC COVERAGE

30 target municipalities in Western Highlands

RC 1 Huehuetenango	RC 2 Quetzaltenango, Totonicapán Southern Quiché	RC 3 San Marcos
1. Chiantla 2. Jacaltenango 3. San Sebastián Huehuetenango 4. Todos Santos Cuchumatanes 5. Cuilco 6. Concepción Huista 7. San Antonio Huista 8. La Libertad 9. La Democracia 10. Santa Cruz Barillas  Sub/RC I North of Quiché 1. Santa María Nebaj 2. Cunen 3. San Juan Cotzal 4. Sacapulas 5. Chajul 6. Uspantán	1. San Juan Ostuncalco 2. Concepción Chiquirichapa 3. Momostenango 4. Santa Lucia La Reforma 5. Santo Tomás Chichicastenango 6. Zacualpa	1. Nuevo Progreso 2. San José El Rodeo 3. San Lorenzo 4. San Miguel Ixtahuacán 5. San Pablo 6. San Rafael Pie de la Cuesta 7. Sibinal 8. Tajumulco

## HOW DOES THE ACTIVITY SUPPORT THE WORKPLAN

The Nexos Locales workplan describes the critical importance of Western Highlands’ youth to success of the project. In particular, the workplan highlights capacity development as a crucial step, and how youth may serve as ambassador for the project in target communities:

Youth training may cover civic participation, budget review, watershed management, economic development, sustainable resource development, waste management, gender equity and climate change. These trainings will generate interest in civic participation among youth, and provide hands-on assistance at the community level in all stages of diagnosis, planning and implementation. It will also provide an excellent in-community platform for promotion, outreach, and public relations. (USAID LGP Year One Work Plan)

Moreover, as described in the GAIM matrix developed by Iris Group, every Nexos Locales result depends on integration of youth. As noted in the introduction, such integration cannot take place until the project overcomes barriers to youth engagement, and particularly the barriers facing young women and indigenous youth. This strategy creates the structures and incentives to successfully overcome these barriers.

## GENDER AND YOUTH INCLUSION PLAN

Nexos Locales has a cross-cutting commitment to gender and social inclusion within youth-focused activities, mirroring USAID’s high-level commitments on gender. As defined in USAID ADS 205, “promoting gender equality and advancing the status of all women and girls around the world is vital to achieving U.S. foreign policy and development objectives” (ADS 205 2013). The Guatemala CDCS notes,

“Barriers to participation in decision-making in the household and in the community are a fundamental aspect of gender inequality for women. Political and economic empowerment is an important path to more equitable gender relationships. In Guatemala, the gender analysis and activities that emanate from it must necessarily deal with the intersection between gender and ethno-cultural identity, and the commonality and differences among women and their relationships with men in a multi-cultural society” (CDCS).

The gender and youth rapid assessment cited above identified several ways in which gender and social exclusion intersect, such as limitations on young women’s leadership within youth-led and youth-serving organizations. To address these and barriers to full social inclusion, this strategy will incorporate training at key junctures – including during the Youth Allies orientation, mini-Congresses and Congress – to examine how gender and ethnicity affect youth political participation. The strategy also incorporates a gender and social inclusion lens in the diagnostic studies and the proposal competition. In addition, the Youth Coordinator will be tasked with the responsibility of ensuring that attention to gender and social inclusion is carried throughout the project. Because the project integrates youth leadership at all stages, it will be critical that such leadership is supported with a strong emphasis on inclusion and equality.

## **BENEFICIARIES AND SELECTION CRITERIA**

The project will identify youth to participate in the mini-Congresses and the Youth Congress through an application process. Youth will be asked to fill out an application explaining why they are interested in being a leader and participating in the program. They will need to meet the following criteria:

1. Be between the ages of 17 and 29
2. Provide a personal profile that will include their work/student status, activities, interests, etc.
3. Write a statement detailing their interest in the program, why they want to be a youth leader, and explain how it will improve their lives.
4. Be available and committed to attending all of the Congress sessions
5. Experience working with CSOs, associations, municipalities a plus

## **PROPOSED GRANTEE AND SELECTION CRITERIA**

Grantee awards will be based on the following selection criteria:

- To what extent were youth, particularly young women and indigenous youth, involved in the conceptualization and design of this project?
- Does the project have a specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-bound objective?
- Does the project have a realistic action plan?
- Does the project demonstrate attention to Nexos Locales’ desired results, and have a high likelihood of achieving those results?
- Does the organization or coalition have experience on the topic?
- Does the proposal demonstrate a clear plan to include and advance the needs of marginalized groups, including young women and indigenous youth?