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PRESS RELEASE

Business Angels Help Finance Domestic Companies

A new model for financing start-up companies is now available in Macedonia: USAID's Competitiveness Project Innovation Center launched the first Business Angels Network (BAN) for the Macedonian business market. The BAN is a formal network of "angel" investors - entrepreneurs and wealthy individuals willing to invest their money, knowledge, skills and social capital in new and innovative business ideas with high growth potential.

New companies generally do not have an operational history, steady cash-flow or many assets, so banks and other financial institutions are reluctant to finance them in their early stages. Even outstanding projects that have the potential to create hundreds of new jobs may not be able to get financing.

"As seen in many countries, Business Angels are a great way to finance start-up businesses, especially those that are innovation-oriented," said Robert Wuertz, USAID Mission Director. "These Angels provide funding to entrepreneurs who would not normally have access to funds. USAID is pleased to help an angel network develop in Macedonia."

This newly established BAN already has ten business angel members, and a dozen business proposals currently under review. To make this opportunity available to a broader audience, the BAN will soon announce a call for proposals from potential business clients as well as for new angel investors willing to join the network. In an effort to connect angel investors with investment opportunities in start-up businesses, an angel investor dinner will be organized.

"Business Angels are a well-known and proven concept, and some of the biggest companies - including Google, Apple, and Facebook -- were started with business angel financing," said Zarko Pop-Iliev, Manager of the Competitiveness Project's Innovation Center. "We are now working to introduce this model to Macedonia in partnership with the Slovenian Business Angels Network."

All interested in submitting proposals or joining the network by becoming angel investors, can submit inquiries at i2b@carana.com, or visit the Innovation Center web site at: www.i2b.org.mk.

NOTE TO EDITORS:

The American people, through **USAID**, have invested nearly **\$500 million** in Macedonia since 1993. USAID is implementing projects that increase investment, create jobs, reduce corruption and improve the quality of education in Macedonia. These initiatives support Macedonia's transition to a stable democracy and its successful integration into the European Union. USAID provides economic and humanitarian assistance in more than 100 countries. For more information please visit <http://macedonia.usaid.gov>.