

U.S. Embassy in Tunisia
in conjunction with
U.S. Department of State
Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs
Office of Assistance Coordination (NEA/AC)

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 19.600

**Strengthening Parliament Effectiveness and Capacity in Tunisia
(SPECT)**

Opportunity Number: SFOP0005270

Key Information:

Announcement Type:	New
Date Opened:	July 16, 2018
Deadline for Questions & Notification of Intent to Apply:	July 31, 2018
Application Deadline:	August 16, 2018
Expected Date of Notification:	October 15, 2018
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Funding Opportunity Synopsis

The U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs Office of Assistance Coordination (NEA/AC), and the United States Embassy in Tunisia, Assistance Unit, are seeking proposals from eligible applicants to implement a program entitled *Strengthening Parliament Effectiveness and Capacity in Tunisia (SPECT)*.

This Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) seeks proposals to strengthen the Tunisian legislative branch through training and assistance to Members of Parliament, Parliamentary committees, and multi-party caucuses, as well as to increase citizen engagement with their representatives in the Assembly of Representatives of the People (ARP) to improve the responsiveness of the legislature and improve public opinion of MPs and their work as an important facet of democratic governance in Tunisia.

A successful applicant should clearly and succinctly outline a detailed plan for how each objective (outlined in *Section I, Part B*) will be achieved and how monitoring and data will be collected and analyzed. Applications should also demonstrate a strong capacity to establish partnerships with the ARP.

All projects supported as a result of this NOFO shall not duplicate ongoing or planned work in Tunisia, and shall demonstrate that their proposed efforts complement other donor programs working with the ARP, including those funded by the Department of State, the European Union, and the United Nations Development Program.

Eligible Countries and Territories:

In this announcement, we seek to support projects in Tunisia. Applications that focus on activities in countries and territories other than Tunisia will **NOT** be considered.

All applications **must** be submitted in English. Applicants may submit only one application. Complete information on how applicants can submit proposals for this opportunity can be found in *Section VI* below.

Background Information about NEA/AC:

The U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, Office of Assistance Coordination (NEA/AC) offers Economic Support Fund (ESF) assistance to groups and individuals striving to bring about positive change in the Middle East-North Africa region. The Assistance Coordination Office funds projects in 20 countries and territories, partnering with governments, civil society organizations (CSOs), community leaders, youth and women activists and private sector groups to advance their efforts. Competitively selected projects aim to foster participatory governance, economic reform, and educational advancement in response to local interest and needs.

Background Information about the U.S. Embassy in Tunisia:

The United States Embassy in Tunisia (Embassy Tunis) remains a committed partner to Tunisia by working with its government, private sector, and civil society as they lay the foundation for the country's future. Since 2011, The United States has supported Tunisia's democratic transition with economic, security, and governance assistance. U.S. assistance focuses on strengthening the

Tunisian business climate to support the growth of enterprises, jobs, and bilateral trade; and fostering inclusive governance and human rights protections.

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I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. PROBLEM STATEMENT

First convened in 2014, Tunisia's 217-member Assembly of People's Representatives (ARP) is invested by the country's constitution with the duties of representing citizens, holding the executive branch accountable, and making law, including budget laws. The ARP has passed key legislation, such as the Access to Information Law, the Investment Code, and legislation against Gender Based Violence.¹ However, Parliament's slow progress and difficulty in passing laws hinders the democratic transition, fuels public discontent, and causes voter confidence in the Parliament to decline.² At least 66 percent of Tunisians feel that members of Parliament do not address the needs of the general public³ and less than 20 percent trust Parliament⁴ or understand its roles and procedures.⁵ Parliament members, many of whom have limited experience and staff resources to support their work, are failing to effectively engage voters and communicate their activities on draft laws and new measures.⁶

The role of the ARP in monitoring the executive branch and scrutinizing laws is significant. Its oversight is not limited to the government but extends to the President of the Republic, through the Constitutional Court. The Constitution also gives powers of oversight to the Parliament over the five independent commissions set up under the Constitution – the Electoral Commission, Human Rights Commission, Audio-Visual Communications Commission, Commission for Sustainable Development and the Rights of Future Generations, and Commission for Good Governance and Against Corruption.

Improving the Parliament's quality of policy debate and government oversight is necessary to strengthen Tunisia's democratic processes and institutions. There is a significant gap in trust between citizens and Members of Parliament, and the Parliament as an institution. Many Tunisians believe that MPs are inactive and do not represent them, a sentiment amplified by their MPs' absence in their districts and by an increasingly entrenched belief that MPs are using their positions for their own benefits. However, Tunisians remain engaged with their political surroundings and remain connected to what the Parliament is doing through television, radio and newspapers. MPs should prioritize greater direct contact with citizens.

Progress regarding women's political participation, while slow, has gained momentum since 2011. 31 percent of seats in Parliament are held by women, the highest in the region.⁷ Women account for 8 of the 40 government cabinet positions.⁸ Yet, structural problems within the political parties hinder women's political participation. The presence of women in party local

¹ Loc.gov, 2017

² This is largely due to diversity of coalitions. Current party coalition, different party dynamics and platforms, general discontent among parties over handling of key issues.

³ International Republican Institute, 2017

⁴ Arab Barometer, 2016

⁵ National Democratic Institute, 2016

⁶ National Democratic Institute, 2017

⁷ Data.worldbank.org, 2017

⁸ IDEA, 2017

sections is limited, and parties have not adopted measures to empower female members.⁹ With only a few exceptions, women do not serve in party leadership positions.¹⁰ There are also regional barriers that affect women: Women's political participation in the coastal region is higher than the interior regions.¹¹

Because of these barriers to women's political participation, many women MPs lack skills on how to manage legislative priorities, how to utilize regional and international declarations and conventions in advocating for government priorities and how to fundraise and build support for those priorities within Parliament as a whole. Women parliamentarians' caucuses will help to consolidate women's political power by organizing women leaders as a "critical mass." These caucuses integrate women MPs into the policy development process by facilitating opportunities for them to introduce and monitor legislation that addresses priority issues for the achievement of gender equality.

B. ACHIEVABLE OBJECTIVES

To address these challenges, this NOFO solicits applications to achieve **all** of the following objectives to address the current challenges in Tunisia's legislative branch and ensure that the legislative branch functions efficiently and engages with voters to effectively meet their expectations.

1. Strengthen the Parliament's organizational capacity and improve MP's skills and efficiency.
2. Create sustainable mechanisms and initiatives to support MPs and Committees in their legislative and administrative work.
3. Increase MPs' communication and outreach with their constituents.
4. Enhance the effectiveness of the existing network of women parliamentarians and multi-party parliamentary caucuses for gender equality.
5. Increase the substantive participation of women in legislative matters and parliamentary and party organizations.

C. PROJECT DESIGN

Funds are available to provide technical and legal training to MPs, restructure the administration of Parliament to meet the needs of MPs and parliamentary Committees, caucuses, and other parliamentary groups and support the meaningful participation of women in parliamentary and political matters.

Project activities **must** include:

- Organization, Skills, and Sustainable Capacity:
 - Provide technical assistance to parliamentary committees whose legislative measures are under consideration – including the General Legislation Committee, the Rights, Liberties, and Foreign Relations Committee, the Financial, Planning, and Development Committee, and, the Administration and Organization of the Armed Forces Committee – to assist in the development of their work programs.

⁹ Amor, 2016

¹⁰ Women in political parties: Al Joumhour and Ennahdha are exceptions.

¹¹ Fdhil, 2014

- Provide organizational assistance to the Parliament's administration, MPs, and political party blocs, including organizational capacity skills to discuss technical issues and laws under consideration.
- Provide recommendations for sustainable mechanisms and creative ways to assist MPs in their daily work by providing administrative assistance as well as public relations, legal, and economic policy assistance.
- Improve the ability of specific committees – including the General Legislation Committee, and the Finance, Planning, and Development Committee – to review draft laws through technical and legal training.
- Communication and Outreach:
 - Support the creation of liaison offices for MPs to engage with constituents in their home districts in at least three governorates of the country (including the northwest, south, and middle of the country) as pilots. These offices will also be a platform for MPs to meet with citizens, receive requests, and conduct debates on issues of interest to their respective regions.
 - Improve engagement and responsiveness to their constituents with those MPs whose parliamentary blocs have met a minimum representation threshold in the Parliament.
 - Provide a platform for MPs to meet with citizens, receive requests, and conduct debates on issues of interest to their respective regions.
 - Create mechanisms to solicit input from citizens on their needs and produce responsive legislation.
- Women's Empowerment and Gender-Equality
 - Support ongoing interactions of women MPs with their constituents, their political parties, and parliamentary blocs and committees to remove barriers to women's full participation in political life.
 - Support mechanisms to advocate for women's rights and inclusion in legislation.
 - Support MPs to influence policy and legislative agenda through cross-party cooperation, facilitate dialogue within and across political parties, provide training and support to party members, and provide information and analysis to women MPs.

Project beneficiaries **should** include:

1. Members of Parliament, including women MPs and those who are newly elected.
2. The network of women parliamentarians.
3. Multi-party blocs and caucuses.
4. Constituents in the Northwest, South, and Interior of Tunisia.
5. Committees within the ARP, including the General Legislation Committee, the Finance, Planning, and Development Committee, the Rights and Liberties and Foreign Relations Committee, the Financial, Planning, and Development Committee, and, the Administration and Organization of the Armed Forces Committee.

All projects supported as a result of this NOFO **shall not** duplicate ongoing or planned work in Tunisia, and **shall** demonstrate that their proposed efforts are working complementarily with other donor programs working with the ARP, including those funded by the Department of State, the European Union, and the United Nations Development Program. A successful applicant will

demonstrate that they have built on previous efforts to strengthen the ARP and will incorporate research and lessons-learned from programs previously conducted in Tunisia, including previous Department of State-funded efforts and other programs by international donors.

II. MEASUREMENT OF RESULTS

A. LOGIC MODEL

Applicants must provide a logic model to demonstrate how the proposed project (including activities, the project design, and the surrounding context) will achieve the stated objectives. The logic model statements can be generated using the template in *Appendix 2*. The applicant must demonstrate in its proposal that the logic model proposed can be feasibly implemented in Tunisia.

The applicant's results framework must clearly demonstrate impact directly related to the achievable objectives in *Section I, Part B* and provide quantitative and/or qualitative evidence towards the following intended results described below:

1. MPs, Parliamentary Committees, and multi-party caucuses increase their skills to communicate strategically, introduce and debate legislation, and manage administrative matters.
2. Women parliamentarians' participation and leadership in the legislative process increases.
3. Platforms and mechanisms are created to spur citizen engagement with their MPs.
4. Three local liaison offices are created in the South, Northwest, and Interior of Tunisia to allow MPs and citizens to discuss issues of concern.
5. Mechanisms are created to advocate for women's rights and gender-inclusive legislation.
6. Women's participation in legislative matters and parliamentary and party organizations is increased.
7. Key laws are passed in a timely fashion.
8. Parliament's roles and procedures are clear and accessible to voters.
9. The legislative agenda is shaped according to citizens' needs.
10. Increased engagement between elected officials and voters.

B. RESULTS MONITORING PLAN

Applicants must also provide a Results Monitoring Plan (RMP). The RMP identifies project milestones and performance measures proposed by an applicant to capture and demonstrate progress toward achieving the objectives of the proposed project. The RMP may also include project-specific sub-objectives (i.e. project outcomes). More information about preparing the Plan can be found in *Appendix 3*.

The RMP should include the following elements:

- Well-defined objectives: Do the objectives provide a clear statement of what the project specifically plans to achieve?
- Realistic project objectives: What results are achievable during the period of the award?
- Qualitative and quantitative indicators: How and what will you measure to show the project's results based on outcomes (impact) as well as outputs (raw numbers)?

- Data collection and analysis: How (and how often) will you collect and present indicator data and analysis to show progress toward the project objectives?
- Monitoring and reporting: How will you identify and measure project milestones through the life of the project to ensure it is achieving the stated objectives?

III. AWARD INFORMATION

Funding Mechanism Type:	Cooperative Agreement
Estimated Number of Awards:	1 award
Estimated Initial Project Funding:	\$2,000,000
Estimated Initial Award Ceiling:	\$2,000,000
Estimated Initial Award Floor:	\$1,500,000
Cost-Sharing or Matching:	Recommended, Not required
Estimated Length of Initial Project Period:	Two years
Maximum Length of Project Period with Option Year(s):	Five years
Estimated Award Ceiling for the Option Year(s):	\$4,000,000
Estimated Award Total with the Option Year(s):	\$6,000,000

Contingent on the availability of funds, approximately \$2,000,000 in Economic Support Funds for approximately one (1) award will be awarded through this announcement. If selected to receive an award, an applicant will be awarded funds for up to two years. The estimated start date for this project is October 1, 2018. NEA/AC and Embassy Tunis reserve the right to award more or less than the estimated program funding, and to award funding under this announcement for a period of up to two years after the announcement's close date.

This request for full applications **does not** constitute an award or commitment on the part of the U.S. government to make any awards, nor does it commit the U.S. government to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of an application.

Non-Competing Continuation

Continuation grants funded under this award, beyond the initial budget period, will be contingent upon the availability of funds; grantee's progress in meeting grant requirements, including timely submission of required reports and compliance with all terms and conditions of the award; timely

submission of a request for additional funding; and a determination that future work towards these objectives is feasible and in line with U.S. foreign policy goals for Tunisia.

Pending successful implementation of this project for the initial estimated length of time as indicated in *Section III*, and pending the availability of funds in subsequent fiscal years, NEA/AC and Embassy Tunis may extend this grant for additional time, subject to availability of funds, for up to two additional years (for a total maximum four-year project period) to achieve the above-stated goals and objectives. Please note that this NOFO requires that applicants submit additional budget materials to plan for potential out years and non-competing continuation. See *Section VI* for more details.

Note that this does **NOT** constitute any commitment or guarantee of funds or extension of period of performance beyond any initial award issued. Applicants should demonstrate through their proposal how project activities planned for the estimated period of performance and estimated funding noted above will achieve corresponding project objectives within that time frame and budget in the case that additional funding does not become available.

Out-year budget materials as described in *Section VI, Part A* below should demonstrate how the applicant would intend to build on initial success, but the proposal for the estimated period of performance and estimated funding noted above should be designed to produce a complete project, given that continuation is not guaranteed.

Over the life of the project, with an estimated four million dollar additional investment, Embassy Tunis seeks to professionalize and strengthen the legislative and administrative structures within the ARP and promote political participation and civic engagement. This funding opportunity may lead to future projects that will support the project goal, and applicants should propose continuation work that supports the following objectives and/or makes recommendations for new assistance as a follow-on to the objectives previously accomplished.

1. Newly elected parliamentarians have a better understanding of the works of the Parliament, acquire the necessary tools and expertise to fulfill their mandates, and have improved skills to respond to their constituents' needs, acquire the necessary tools and expertise to fulfill their mandates, and have improved skills to respond to their constituents' needs.
2. Parliamentarians have better communication skills to speak with the public and with their constituents.
3. Parliamentarians are equipped with the required expertise to understand, negotiate, and pass the laws that respond to the needs of their regions.
4. Parliamentarians' responsiveness to the needs and requests of their constituents is improved through regular communication and multi-regional information sessions thanks to the creation of liaison offices.
5. Gender equality and women's inclusion are mainstreamed into legislative and policy processes, and within parliamentary processes. This can be achieved through sensitizing parliamentarians on the importance of including women's rights in economic and governance related laws.

IV. SUBSTANTIAL INVOLVEMENT

NEA/AC and Embassy Tunis shall be involved in the program and management performance of this cooperative agreement through consultation and technical collaboration on specified program activities.

NEA/AC and U.S. Embassy Responsibilities

- Approval of the selection of the committees receiving the technical assistance
- Approval of the regions where the liaison offices will open.
- Approval of the selection criteria for the MPs benefitting from the services that the regional liaison offices will offer, to ensure that assistance is focused on parliamentary blocs that have met a minimum representation threshold of one parliamentarian in the selected electoral districts.
- Approval of the communication and outreach plans grantee will design for MPs.

V. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

All applicants will be screened by NEA/AC and Embassy Tunis to determine whether they meet all of the program eligibility requirements detailed below.

NOTE: Applications that do not demonstrate that they meet all of the eligibility requirements in Part A and Part B below will not advance past the Technical Eligibility Review stage and may be deemed ineligible for funding under this announcement. Nothing can be added to an application once the competition deadline has passed.

A. ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Eligible Applicants include:

- U.S. or foreign
 - Non-profit organizations;
 - For-profit organizations;
 - Private institutions of higher education;
 - Public or state institutions of higher education; and/or
 - Public international or intergovernmental organizations.

NEA/AC and Embassy Tunis strongly encourage applications from organizations headquartered in the Middle East and North Africa region. International non-governmental organizations with principal bases of operations outside the Middle East and North Africa are also encouraged to apply, **but the percentage of total budget actually spent in the region through local partners will be among the elements of evaluation for this competition.**

NEA/AC and Embassy Tunis are committed to an anti-discrimination policy in all of its programs and activities. NEA/AC and Embassy Tunis welcome applications irrespective of an applicants' race, ethnicity, color, creed, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, or disability.

We encourage applications from organizations working with underserved communities, including women, people with disabilities, and youth.

A.1. Prime Applicant

To be considered for funding under this opportunity, applicants **MUST**:

- Have demonstrable previous experience working in the MENA region. This should be addressed within the project narrative section of your application.
- Meet ALL of the registration requirements listed in *Section V, Part B* below.
- Meet any requirements listed as MANDATORY in *Section V, Part C* below.
- Demonstrate the ability to form or strengthen partnerships with the ISIE and relevant CSO organizations.

A.2. Local Partners

Applicants are encouraged to include partnerships with local organizations as part of their project design for this NOFO. Applicants should propose partners that would work together on specific programmatic objectives or priorities and that utilize local expertise. Partnerships may, but are not required to, take the form of sub-grants. The applicant is required to demonstrate that any proposed partner organizations are legally registered in Tunisia and have the operational capacity to permit their proposed contribution to the program.

B. REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS

To apply for this funding opportunity, organizations, whether based in or outside the U.S., must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number, currently referred to as a DUNS number, and an active account with the System for Award Management (SAM). Applicants who do not meet all registration requirements are not eligible for funding under the opportunity.

B.1. UEI Number

The UEI number is a nine-digit number established and assigned by Dun and Bradstreet, Inc. (D&B) to uniquely identify business entities. **All applicants and sub-award partners must have a UEI number.**

To obtain a UEI number, please follow the steps below:

- Go to <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform/pages/CCRSearch.jsp>.
- Select the country or territory where your organization is physically located.
- Complete and submit the form.

Organizations will need to provide basic information, including physical and mailing addresses, name and title of the chief executive, primary [Standard Industrial Code](#) (SIC), and annual revenue.

For technical difficulties in obtaining this number, please contact D&B at: govt@dnb.com.

B.2. System for Award Management (SAM)

SAM is a U.S. government-wide registry of vendors doing business with the Federal government and requires annual renewal. The system centralizes information about grant

applicants/recipients, and provides a central location for grant applicants/recipients to change organizational information.

Further, applicants must maintain an active account with current information while its application is under consideration for funding. To keep an active SAM.gov account, applicants must renew it at least once each year. If an organizations account expires, the organization cannot submit a grant application until it is renewed.

To create a new account, please follow the steps below:

- Go to <http://www.sam.gov>.
- Select *Create User Account*, and then select *Create an Account* on the left-hand side of the screen under *Individual Account Details*.

Organizations must have a UEI number and a CAGE number (US Domestic Organizations) or a NCAGE number (Foreign Organizations), to create an account.

Complete and submit the online form. If the applying organization already has the necessary information on hand (see the [SAM User Guide](#)), the online form takes approximately one hour to complete, depending upon the size and complexity of the applying entity. Because of the different steps in the process, it often takes from **three to fourteen business days** to complete the process of creating an account with the system.

For help with SAM.gov, please visit their support page at <https://www.fsd.gov> or contact them at: +1 334-206-7828.

C. ADDITIONAL ELIGIBILITY CONSIDERATIONS

C.1. Cost-Sharing or Matching

There is no minimum or maximum percentage required for this competition. However, NEA/AC and Embassy Tunis encourage applicants to provide maximum levels of cost sharing and funding in support of its programs. Cost-sharing or matching **is not** an evaluation criteria of this NOFO.

All cost share or matching must be included in detail in the line item budget and noted in the budget narrative. When cost sharing is offered, it is understood and agreed that the applicant must provide the amount of cost sharing as stipulated in its proposal and later included in an approved agreement. Cost sharing may be in the form of allowable direct or indirect costs. For accountability, recipients must maintain written records to support all costs that are claimed as their contribution, as well as costs to be paid by the Federal government. Such records are subject to audit. The basis for determining the value of cash and in-kind contributions must be in accordance with OMB 2 CFR 200.306 – Cost Sharing and Matching.

VI. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

A. APPLICATION DOCUMENTS

All applications must include the application components detailed below. All application documents must be submitted in English. Applicants may submit only **one (1)** application to this NOFO. Please refer to *Part B* below for additional submission guidance and requirements.

NOTE: Applications that do not include **all** the required documentation described in *Part A.1.* below will not advance past the Technical Eligibility Review stage. Further, applications that exceed the allowable page limits **will not** be reviewed by the review panel. Applicants **may not** add any materials to an application once it has been submitted and the competition deadline has passed.

A.1. Required Documents

Federal Assistance Application Forms (SF-424, SF424a, and SF-424b):

Applicants must complete all three forms online to be considered for funding. Guidance on how to complete the SF-424 and SF424a is provided in *Appendix 3*. NOTE: In addition to following all guidance outlines below regarding application materials, applicants are strongly encouraged to review the [Application Evaluation Criteria section](#) of this NOFO closely as they prepare their proposal. The Evaluation Criteria section is the rubric by which each application will be scored.

Project Narrative:

The Project Narrative describes the efforts the applicant will undertake to address the priorities and goals of this announcement. More details on preparing the Project Narrative are provided in *Appendix 3*. Applicants are strongly encouraged to review *Appendix 3* before preparing their Project Narrative. This section may not exceed **ten (10) pages**.

Option Years Narrative:

The Option Years Narrative describes the efforts the applicant would propose to undertake during the option year period(s) of up to three years (for up to a total five-year project period) in order to meet the objectives, priorities, and goals outlined in the funding description section of this NOFO. This section may not exceed **three (3) pages**.

Logic Model:

Applicants shall provide a logic model to demonstrate how the proposed project (including activities, the project design, and the surrounding context) will achieve the stated objectives. The logic model can be generated using the template in *Appendix 2*. NOTE: Applicants are strongly encouraged to use the same format as found in the sample. If the applicant does not use the template, the applicant must ensure that their submission includes all elements outlined in the sample. This section may not exceed **three (3) pages**.

Results Monitoring Plan:

A Results Monitoring Plan (RMP) describes the measures proposed by an applicant to capture and demonstrate progress toward achieving the objectives of the proposed project. Please see the “Measurement of Results” section above for further guidance.

The quality and feasibility of the proposed RMP will be among the elements on which applications are evaluated (See *Section VIII, Part A* for more information). More information about preparing the Plan can be found in *Appendix 4*. NOTE: Applicants are strongly encouraged to use the same format as found in the sample. If the applicant does not use the template, the applicant must ensure that their submission includes all elements outlined in the sample. RMPs should be attached as a separate document. This section has no page limit.

Budget & Budget Narrative Submission:

Applicants must provide the following elements as part of their budget submission:

- Summary Budget
- Detailed Line Item Budget
- Budget Narrative
- A detailed budget for the initial project period is required, and
A notional budget and brief budget narrative for option year(s) funding up to two (2) additional years for up to an additional four million dollars.

This section has no page limit.

A sample fillable template can be found in *Appendix 1*. This template includes three tabs:

- The first tab includes written guidance on preparing the Budget Narrative. Applicants are strongly encouraged to create their Budget Narrative in Word and submit as either a Word Doc or PDF file. Please note that the Budget Narrative should include designations of who is considered Key Personnel for this project.
- The second tab includes a template for the Summary Budget. This tab will auto-fill as you complete the Detailed Line Item Budget, which can be found on the third tab.
- The third tab includes the template for the Detailed Line Item Budget as stated above.
- Please add additional tabs for option year(s) funding request.

NOTE: Applicants are strongly encouraged to use the same format as provided in the template, and to submit summary and detailed line item budgets in Excel form, and the Budget Narrative as either a PDF or Word file. If the applicant does not use the template, the applicant must ensure that their submission includes all elements outlined in the sample. The template, which includes more detailed instruction, can be found in *Appendix 1*. Applicants are strongly encouraged to review *Appendix 1* before preparing their Narrative.

Project Timeline:

Applicants must provide an overall breakdown of the order and timeframe in which all project activities will take place. This item should provide a macro snapshot of what will take place from the beginning to the end of the project. Applicants must ensure that the timeline of activities and events corresponds with details provided in the Project Narrative and RMP. This section may not exceed two (2) pages.

Security, Risk Mitigation, & Contingency Planning Summary:

This item should provide details regarding the applicant's intended due diligence to assess and mitigate risks, and put in place adequate security measures to ensure the safety and well-being of project staff, participants, and partners, if applicable. This should include specific actions by the

applicant to ensure risks are adequately and routinely assessed, and that security measures are commensurate with operational concerns specific to the locale. The applicant should also include a contingency plan that highlights potential challenges and limitations to project implementation in the operating environment and propose contingency plans should program activities be impacted.

Please note that this section should not be limited to physical security and risk but should cover any applicable factors relevant to the given operating environment. This section may not exceed five (5) pages.

Letters of Agreement or Letters of Intent:

Applicants proposing partner organizations and/or government bodies should include Letters of Intent or Letters of Agreement from each of their proposed partners. Local partner organizations **should** confirm that they are legally registered to operate in Tunisia. This section may not exceed ten (10) pages.

Job Descriptions / Biographical Information for Key Personnel Positions:

For each position designated as key personnel for this project, applicants **must** provide the following:

1. *If the position is already filled:* Provide brief biographical information summarizing the person's qualifications, as well as a brief description of the roles or responsibilities pertaining to this project.
- OR**
2. *If the person to fill a key position has not yet been hired:* Provide a brief summary of the job description, which should include a description of the roles and responsibilities pertaining to this project, as well as a description of qualifications of eligible candidates.

NOTE: If an applicant is proposing sub-grant partner(s) as part of their project design, Biological Information for Key Personnel Positions of the sub-grantee **must** also be included. This section may not exceed two (2) pages.

Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement:

NOTE: This item is required only IF applicable. Applicants proposing indirect costs in the Budget greater than the 10% de minimis rate must provide a copy of their Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA). This item will not be counted toward any page limits.

Sustainability Plan:

The sustainability plan outlines how the proposed project will be sustained beyond the initial award period. More information on preparing the Sustainability Plan is provided in **Appendix 3**. This section may not exceed two (2) pages.

A.2. Optional Documents

Applicants may submit additional documents for consideration with their application. These documents are **not required** and may not exceed five (5) pages total.

Below are examples of some additional documents an applicant may wish to submit.

1. **Organizational Chart:** The organizational chart outlines the clear lines of responsibility and authority in the applicant organization to include budgeted level of effort listed by each person.

NOTE: Applicants must adhere to all maximum allowed page counts. Applications that exceed any of the allowable page limits will not advance past the Technical Eligibility Review stage.

B. APPLICATION FORMATTING REQUIREMENTS

The required font is 12-point, Times New Roman. All application documents must be single spaced, with all margins (left, right, top, and bottom) of at least one inch each. Also, applicants should ensure all pages in the application package are numbered consecutively and meet the page limit requirements outlined in *Part A.1* and *Part A.2* above. The Standard Forms 424 (SF-424, SF-424a, and SF-424b) are excluded from the page numbering.

It is **strongly** recommended that applicants submit grant applications using Microsoft Office. If applicants do not have access to Microsoft Office products, Adobe PDF files may be submitted.

C. SUBMITTING AN APPLICATION

Applicants **must** submit their application electronically using either the [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) or [SAMS Domestic](https://www.sams.gov) websites. Both systems require that the applying organization have an account with the system and both require a UEI number and SAM.gov account as detailed above. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure they have an active account and will be able to submit its application. Applicants must select one of these systems to submit their application; **do not submit an application through both systems**. NEA/AC and Embassy Tunis are not in a position to grant exceptions to these requirements.

Grants.gov requires that the applying organization have an account with the system, a UEI number, and a SAM.gov account, as detailed in *Section V, Part B* above. NEA/AC and Embassy Tunis are not in a position to grant exceptions to these requirements. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure they have an active account and will be able to submit its application.

The application process is not complete until the applicant receives notification that its application has been validated and forwarded to the granting agency (NEA/AC). Please allow sufficient time for entering the application into these systems. It is the responsibility of the applicant to monitor its application and ensure that it is successfully received and validated.

C.1. Grants.gov

Grants.gov is a single portal for applicants to find and apply to U.S. government funding opportunities. Creating an account with this system is a five-step process:

1. Obtain a UEI number;
2. Create an account with the System for Award Management
3. Create a profile, including username and password;
4. Obtain Authorized Organization Representative (AOR) authorization; and
5. Track AOR status.

This process can take 10 business days or longer, even if all the steps are completed in a timely manner.

To create an account, go to www.grants.gov and click on the “Register” link, located at the top, right-hand side of the page.

C.2. SAMS Domestic

SAMS Domestic is a comprehensive grants management system that allows applicants to apply for, manage, and report on the use of U.S. government funds for multiple programs, accessed online at <http://mygrants.service-now.com>.

To create an account, go to <http://mygrants.service-now.com>, and click the “create an account” hyperlink, located above the user name prompt. Users will be directed to a page entitled “User Registration Request;” complete the online form and click the “Submit” button. Users will receive an activation email entitled “Verify Your Grants Account Registration;” click the activation link within the email to receive a username and password.

SAMS Domestic has Quick Tours available to educate users about the system. These documents can be found on the Support tab upon logging into the system.

D. SUBMISSION DATES AND TIMES

Applications must be time stamped before 17:00:00 eastern daylight time (EDT) on August 162018. There will be no grace period, and any application not received by the application deadline will be deemed ineligible and will not advance to be reviewed. Applicants are encouraged to submit an application far enough in advance of the deadline so it can alert NEA/AC (nea-grants@state.gov) of any technical difficulties and allow sufficient time to resolve difficulties before the deadline. Although NEA/AC will work with applicants to resolve technical issues, it is not in a position to grant exceptions to the submission requirements outlined in this announcement.

VII. FUNDING LIMITATIONS, RESTRICTIONS, AND OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

1. Awards to Commercial Firms or For-Profit Organizations

The Department of State prohibits profit under its assistance awards to commercial organizations. No funds will be paid as profit to any recipient that is a commercial organization. Profit is defined as any amount in excess of allowable direct and indirect costs. The allowability of costs incurred by commercial organizations is determined in accordance with the provisions of the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) at 48 CFR Part 31. Program income earned by the recipient may be:

- added to the total of the amount of this award, including the cost sharing or matching, and use it to further eligible project objectives;
- used to meet the Recipient’s cost sharing or matching requirement;

- OR deducted from the total project or program allowable cost in determining the net allowable costs on which the federal share of costs is based.

2. Audit Requirements

Domestic and foreign organizations that expend \$750,000 or more in a fiscal year in federal assistance must perform an independent, recipient-contracted Single Audit or Program Specific Audit. [*Program-specific Audit* refers to an audit of one Federal award program. *Single Audit* refers to an audit that includes both the entity's financial statements and the Federal Awards to be conducted in accordance with Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards (GAGAS)]. The audits must be independently and professionally executed in accordance with GAGAS either prescribed by a government's Supreme Audit Institution with auditing standards approved by the Comptroller General of the United States, or the host country's laws or adopted by the host country's public accountants or associations of public accountants, together with generally accepted international auditing standards. However, foreign entity audits consistent with International Standards for Auditing or other auditing standards are acceptable with the Grants Officer's approval. More information can be found at <http://gao.gov/assets/590/587281.pdf>.

For sub-non-Federal entities expending \$750,000 or more in Department of State award funding during their fiscal year, Department of State standard audit provisions require that Prime non-Federal entities certify that audits of sub-non-Federal entities are performed annually and according to the standards described above. The cost of audits required under this policy may be charged either as an allowable direct cost to the award, OR included in the organizations established indirect costs in the award's detailed budget.

3. Compliance with Applicable Federal Funding Regulations and DOS Terms and Conditions

Payment of funds awarded under this Notice of Funding Opportunity will not be disbursed until the DOS has been assured that the Recipient's financial management system will provide effective control over and accountability for all Federal funds in accordance with [2 CFR 200](#) and [2 CFR 600](#) as applicable. Awards issued under this NOFO are subject to the [Department of State Standard Terms and Conditions](#) and [2 CFR 200](#) and [2 CFR 600](#) as applicable.

VIII. APPLICATION REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS

A. APPLICATION REVIEW CRITERIA

Achievable Objectives (30 points)

- Each of the project objectives listed above (in Section I) are clearly addressed.
- Impact and Effectiveness: The applicant describes the project's potential contribution to solving the problem addressed in the problem statement and achieving results.
- Timeframe: The applicant describes realistic results to be accomplished within the timeframe of the proposed award.
- Beneficiaries: The applicant clearly identifies the anticipated beneficiaries and explains how the project's objectives will positively affect them.
- Milestones: The applicant provides realistic milestones to indicate progress toward goals and objectives as described in the program announcement.

- M&E: The applicant explains how monitoring and evaluation activities will be carried out throughout the award's period of performance and who will be responsible for them.
- The RMP indicators measure realistic/feasible project impact (outcomes) rather than just outputs.

Project Design (25 points)

- The applicant clearly describes how each proposed project activity will address each of the objectives outlined in Section I.
- Responsiveness to NOFO: The applicant explains how the proposed activities respond to the objectives listed in the NOFO.
- Rationale: The applicant justifies how the proposed activities will achieve the above objectives in this context.
- Project Management: The applicant provides a clear description of how the project will be managed in terms of initiation, planning, implementation, and closing.
- Feasibility: The applicant proposes activities that are feasible, and are also practical, and/or experiential in nature to encourage innovation.
- Beneficiaries Selection Criteria and Process: The applicant explains how participants will be selected (e.g., criteria for selection, selection process).
- Duplication: The applicant acknowledges if activities similar to those proposed are already taking or have taken place previously, and provides an explanation as to how proposed new activities will not duplicate or merely add to existing/recent activities. The applicant demonstrates that they have built on previous efforts to strengthen the ARP and incorporates research and lessons-learned from programs previously conducted in Tunisia.
- Contingency Plan: The applicant articulates programming assumptions and potential challenges to project implementation and proposes contingency plans.
- Program Logic: The program logic is theoretically sound, and all elements of the logic model fit together to show plausible pathways to achieving project outcomes. All key assumptions have been identified and their potential influences described. All risks to implementation (external factors) have been fully accounted for and described in detail. The applicant demonstrates in its proposal that the logic model proposed can be feasibly implemented in Tunisia.
- Sustainability: The applicant proposes sustainable methods to assist with the daily workloads of MPs and Committees that will be feasible to continue after the end of this project.

Partnerships and Buy-ins (10 points):

- The applicant addresses how the project will engage or obtain support from relevant stakeholders and identifies local partners.
- The applicant demonstrates the ability to form or strengthen partnerships with the ARP.
- The applicant includes letters of intent in the application from proposed local partners.
- The application describes the division of labor among the applicant and any partners.

Organizational Capacity (25 points)

- The applicant demonstrates experience (e.g., has previously worked and/or has established contacts/partners) in Tunisia.
- The applicant demonstrates an institutional record of successful programs in support to the ARP or similar organizations in the Middle East and North Africa region.
- The applicant demonstrates capacity for responsible fiscal management of donor funding (e.g., successful management of a previous sub-award or grant).
- The applicant demonstrates the ability to meet monitoring and evaluation requirements.
- The applicant has adequate staffing and demonstrates the capacity to manage the proposed project.
- The applicant includes letters of intent/commitment/agreement from proposed partners.

Staff and Position Specifications (10 points)

- Pre-identified key staff members, including volunteers, demonstrate experience working in Tunisia and with participants from that area (e.g., language skills, cultural understanding).
- Descriptions of the role of each person or position on the project (e.g. staff, partners, consultants, and volunteers) demonstrates that the project will be adequately and efficiently staffed, and avoid redundancy or duplication of effort.
- A job description, including hiring criteria, is provided for each open key position.

Budget & Budget Narrative (Acceptable or Not Acceptable)

- The costs proposed are reasonable in relation to the proposed activities and anticipated results, which are clearly explained in the budget narrative.
- The budget provides details of calculations, including estimation methods, quantities, unit costs, and other similar quantitative detail sufficient for the calculation to be duplicated.
- The preponderance of the budget is spent on supporting the project participants and activities in Tunisia.
- The budget includes costs dedicated to management, monitoring, and evaluation.
- Adequate travel costs are proposed.
- The budget demonstrates a reasonable cost per participant.
- The budget accounts for monitoring and evaluation costs.

B. APPLICATION REVIEW PROCESS

NEA/AC and Embassy Tunis are committed to ensuring a competitive and standardized process for awarding funding. Applications will be screened initially in a Technical Eligibility Review stage to determine whether applicants meet the eligibility requirements outlined in *Section V* and have submitted all required documents outlined in *Section VI*. Applications that do not meet these requirements will not advance beyond the Technical Eligibility Review stage and will be deemed ineligible for funding under this NOFO.

NEA/AC and Embassy Tunis reserve the right to have all applications deemed to be eligible undergo a Subject Matter Expert (SME) review prior to the Merit Review Panel. Applications that do not pass SME review will not proceed to the Merit Review Panel.

All applications that proceed to the Merit Review Panel will be evaluated by U.S. government and non-governmental subject matter and/or country-specific experts and will be rated on a 100-point scale. Point values for individual elements of the application are presented in *Section VII, Part A*. Panel Reviewers' ratings, and any resulting recommendations, are advisory.

Final award decisions will be influenced by whether the application meets NEA/AC's programmatic goals and objectives, how it supports the Department's overarching foreign policy priorities, and the geographic distribution of the top-ranking applications.

IX. ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

A. AWARD NOTICES

Applicants who do not advance beyond the Technical Eligibility Review stage will be notified **30 business days after the closing of the announcement**. The authorized representative and program point of contact listed on the SF-424 will receive the notification via email. If an applicant does not receive such a notification, their submission was put forward for review.

NEA/AC and Embassy Tunis expect to notify applicants who proceeded past the Technical Eligibility Review stage about the status of their application by **November 15, 2018**. Final awards cannot be made until funds have been appropriated by Congress, allocated and committed through internal bureau procedures. Successful applicants will receive a Federal Assistance Award (FAA) from the bureau's Grants Office. The FAA and the original proposal with subsequent modifications (if applicable) must be the only binding authorizing document between the recipient and the U.S. Government. The FAA will be signed by an authorized Grants Officer, and transmitted to the recipient's responsible officer identified in the application. NEA/AC and Embassy Tunis reserve the right to award funding to applicants under this announcement for a period of up to two years after the announcement's close date.

B. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Reporting is critical to effective program management and oversight. Reports are required as a means of evaluating the recipient's progress and utilization of resources. They are divided between a performance progress report and a financial status report.

Recipients will, at a minimum, be required to submit Quarterly Performance Reports (QPR) and a Quarterly Financial Report (QFR). The QPRs will compare actual to planned performance and indicates the progress made in accomplishing each assistance award tasks/goals noted in the grant agreement and will contain analysis and summary of findings, both quantitative and qualitative, for key indicators. The QFRs provide a means of monitoring expenditures and comparing costs incurred with progress.

Recipients must report **immediately** when a program faces unplanned delays in implementation, fails to meet program targets or milestones, or costs increase. Any changes or revisions to the approved budget require prior approval from the NEA/AC Grants Officer.

Recipients are required to report program and beneficiary achievements on a quarterly basis (or provide written confirmation that there is no related news for the given quarter) beginning with second quarter's program report.

C. BRANDING REQUIREMENTS

Grantees awarded under this announcement will be **required** to make all materials produced under the award with the standard U.S. flag in a size and prominence equal to (or greater than) any other logo or identity. Materials are defined as but not limited to: training materials, materials for recipients, or materials to communicate or promote with foreign audiences a program, event, project, or some other activity under this award, including but not limited to invitations to events, press materials, event backdrops, podium signs, etc. In addition, **sub-recipients or sub-awardees are subject to the marking requirements** and the grantee must include a provision in the sub-recipient or sub-awardee's agreement indicating that the standard, rectangular U.S. flag is a requirement. Exceptions to this requirement can be discussed with NEA/AC and Embassy Tunis when negotiating an award.

X. AGENCY CONTACTS

For questions regarding this funding opportunity including: completing an application, financial and grants management issues, or technical matters, contact:

Katelyn Smith

NEA/AC

NEA-Grants@state.gov

All questions and a confirmation of Intent to Apply must be submitted in writing to nea-grants@state.gov by **July 31, 2018** at 17:00:00 eastern daylight time (EDT). NEA/AC will create a document of the submitted questions along with the answers and post it on [SAMS Domestic](#) and [Grants.gov](#). Questions submitted after the deadline will not be addressed.

The intent to apply is a notification to the Bureau of Near East Affairs Office of Assistance Coordination via email expressing the intent to submit a proposal under this announcement. The notification does not require any specific format or template, and unless specifically indicated, the notification is **not mandatory**. The intent to apply is optional and will not be binding.

For questions regarding creating an account with or using grants.gov to submit an application, contact the grants.gov Contact Center. The Contact Center is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, excluding Federal holidays:

Grants.gov Contact Center

(800) 518-4726

support@Grants.gov

For questions regarding creating an account or using [SAMS Domestic](#) to submit an application, contact the ILMS Help Desk. The Help Desk is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, excluding Federal holidays. The ILMS Help Desk utilizes a user-facing ticketing interface that

allows users to submit and monitor their SAMS Domestic tickets. The ILMS Self Service Portal can be accessed by going to <https://afsitsm.service-now.com/ilms/home>.

ILMS Help Desk

(888) 313-ILMS (4567)

[ILMS Self Service Portal](https://afsitsm.service-now.com/ilms/home)

XI. DISCLAIMER

The terms and conditions published in this NOFO are binding and may not be modified by any Bureau representative. Explanatory information provided by the bureau that contradicts public language will not be binding. Issuance of the NOFO does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the U.S. government. The Bureau reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposal budgets in accordance with the needs of the program and the availability of funds. Awards made will be subject to periodic reporting and evaluation requirements listed in this NOFO.