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MEPI Local Grants 2021

Opportunity Number: MEPILOCALGRANTS2021

Key Information:

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Deadline for Questions	**June 27, 2021**
Application Deadline:	**August 1, 2021**
Expected Date of Notification:	**December 31, 2021**
Federal Agency Contact:	**NEA-Grants@state.gov**

Funding Opportunity Synopsis

Advancing stability and prosperity in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region is critical to the achievement of the United States' foreign policy. There are many challenges, however, which hinder efforts to improve transparent governance, provide inclusive economic opportunities, and encourage civic engagement. Two thirds of the population feel that economic hardship and corruption plague their countries, with trust in civil society decreasing since 2015.

The MEPI Local Grants Program's mission is to sustain the United States' commitment to strengthen direct partnerships with local actors to promote prosperity and participatory governance. Its objectives are to support civil society organizations in (1) developing, promoting, and implementing locally-designed solutions to self-identified environmental, economic, or social problems through civic engagement or economic participation; (2) fostering inclusive economic growth that reaches marginalized communities, youth, and women; (3) advancing participatory governance through promoting citizens' engagement and decision-makers' willingness to work with citizen groups and civil society organizations; (4) improving civil society's representation of the needs of citizens through collective action on the local level; (5) working towards gender parity in economics and/or politics; (6) increasing youth engagement in meaningful economic and civic activities; and (7) fostering innovative approaches to solving social, economic, or political issues.

All applications must be submitted in English. Complete information on how applicants can submit proposals for this opportunity can be found in Section VI below.

Applicants should read this NOFO in its entirety before writing their proposal and should refer to the full Evaluation Criteria provided in Section VII while drafting all materials.

Eligible Countries and Territories

In this announcement, we seek to support projects in **Algeria, Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia.** Please note: Applications that focus on activities in countries and territories other than those listed will NOT be considered.

Background Information about NEA/AC

The U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, Office of Assistance Coordination (NEA/AC) offers Federal assistance to groups and individuals striving to bring about positive change in the Middle East-North Africa region. The Assistance Coordination Office works 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.

The mission of the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) is to foster meaningful and effective partnerships between citizens, civil society, the private sector, and governments to resolve local challenges and promote shared interests in the areas of participatory governance and economic opportunity and reform. Focusing on promoting stability and prosperity in the region, MEPI supports partnerships through projects that are responsive to emerging opportunities by being field-driven, applying evidence-based decision-making, and designing results-oriented projects. For more information and additional resources about the MEPI Program visit: https://mepi.state.gov/.

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I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

The MEPI Local Grants Program seeks projects that build links between and among citizens, civil society, government, and the private sector, and are responsive to emerging opportunities at the local level in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). The program supports projects that align with U.S. foreign policy goals and promote U.S. interests in the region, enhancing stability, and increasing prosperity across MENA.

These grants are designed to support two priority areas of the MEPI Strategic Framework:

- *Participatory Governance:* Enable citizens and civil society to effectively engage with government officials to increase responsiveness to citizen needs. Enhance citizens' ability to actively participate in their governments and develop a more informed citizenry. Enable government officials' engagement with, and responsiveness to, their citizens to resolve issues of shared concern.
- *Economic Reform:* Enable citizens, policy makers, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector with the skills and resources to provide economic opportunity, foster economic growth, and promote improved business enabling environments.

A. PROBLEM STATEMENT

The MENA region is dynamic with various political, economic, and social challenges on the national and local levels. Nearly three-quarters of the region's population identifies worsening economic conditions as the single most important challenge facing their countries. Other major concerns include financial and administrative corruption, disenfranchised citizens and marginalized communities, large public sectors, limited opportunities for innovation, and high unemployment rates, especially among youth.

An equal percentage of the population – approximately three quarters - expressed deteriorating trust in government institutions and elected officials, and an increasing number feels that the credibility of civil society is diminishing.

Gender inequalities persist despite recent gains in women's political participation and countering gender-based violence laws. While many women have surpassed men in their educational attainment around the region, their participation in the labor force remains two to four times lower than men, and their participation in political processes is among the lowest in the world.

While enduring, these challenges have become worse as COVID-19 rampaged across the globe over the past year, closing down countries and impacting economies and vulnerable populations. Also, as the effects of climate change become broader and more regions are impacted, greater focus is needed on helping economies and populations become resilient in order to adapt to the coming changes.

B. ACHIEVABLE OBJECTIVES

A key objective of the Local Grants Program is developing the capacity of local civil society organizations (CSOs) to effectively and efficiently manage U.S. federal assistance. Applications to this NOFO should address and clearly demonstrate how project-specific objectives and activities contribute to the local grants program objectives outlined below. Working primarily on the local level, and using an evidence-based approach, at least one of the following objectives MUST be achieved:

1. Develop and promote locally designed solutions to environmental, economic, or social problems.
2. Foster inclusive economic growth that reaches marginalized communities, youth, and women.
3. Encourage citizens' engagement in participatory governance and decision-makers' willingness to work with citizen groups and civil society organizations.
4. Increase civil society's representation of the needs of citizens through collective action on the local level.
5. Work towards gender parity in politics and/or economics.
6. Increase youth engagement in meaningful economic and civic activities.
7. Foster innovative approaches and solutions.

C. PROJECT DESIGN

Competitive applications will include clear, detailed project strategies that illustrate the logic behind each project's design. **All proposed project activities must clearly demonstrate how they will produce impact**.

In addition to the overarching MEPI objectives and requirements identified above, projects **must** meet country-specific project priority areas as outlined below:

Algeria:

Funding Mechanism Type:	Cooperative Agreement, Grant, or Fixed Amount Award
Estimated Number of Awards	Five to Ten (5-10)
Estimated Total Funding	$500,000
Estimated Award Ceiling	$100,000
Estimated Award Floor	$50,000
Estimated Length of Project Period	12-36 months

Country Problem Statement: The official youth unemployment rate in Algeria again exceeded 29 percent in 2020. Combined with the social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 crisis and ongoing political and economic transition, the situation will likely worsen absent economic reform as the number of those under 30 (who already comprise nearly 70 percent of the Algerian population) increases. Private entrepreneurs face significant challenges including currency controls, import restrictions, bureaucratic hurdles, burdensome regulations, and strict government control of key sectors. Entrepreneurs and small- and medium enterprises (SMEs) also face challenges from a workforce skills gap such as limited managerial skills, training, and difficulties in identifying or connecting with suitable markets. Further, startups rarely manage to scale up or reach a level of sustainability.

Country Priorities:

(1) Support for Civil Society: Enable CSOs to reach out to both constituents and local and national government counterparts in order to increase citizen participation in decision making processes and governance. Sample activities under this priority could include but are not limited to: a. Strengthening CSOs' administrative, financial, and programmatic capacities; b. Offering interactive spaces for citizens to identify and prioritize local needs; c. Creating communication channels to promote effective, reliable, and transparent bridges between citizens and local authorities; d. Conducting advocacy activities to advance specific policy goals resulting in demonstrable outcomes and impacts during the project timeframe.

(2) Economic Growth: Increase youth employability through job placements and/or the creation of effective and sustainable businesses. Applicants should have business sustainability plans and established relationships with employers, demonstrated through a letter of intent or formal partnership. Sample activities under this priority could include but are not limited to: a. Equipping youth, especially in rural areas and areas with high unemployment rates, with soft and technical skills and place them in long-term employment opportunities; b. Developing policies and procedures related to job-related training to align with identified market needs based on employer feedback and job placement outcomes; c. Creating mentoring opportunities and incubations mechanism to scale up nascent or small and medium sized businesses to a sustainable level

Geographic/Thematic Focus:
Projects must target at least one of the following populations: youth, women, and/or people living with disabilities. Priority will be given to geographic areas outside the main cities and to MEPI alumni. Applicants must demonstrate the process of assessing the implications for women, men, and other groups of any planned action at social, economic, and political levels in their project narrative through implementation and evaluation.

Specific eligibility requirements:

- Eligible applicants include: Local civil society organizations, non-profit organizations, community groups, non-governmental organizations, professional associations, private sector organizations, and universities based in Algeria, which have obtained all required registrations.
- Priority will be given to applicants who have previously implemented or managed international awards in an amount of at least $50,000.

Bahrain:

Funding Mechanism Type:	Cooperative Agreement, Grant, or Fixed Amount Award
Estimated Number of Awards	Two to three (2-3)
Estimated Total Funding	$200,000
Estimated Award Ceiling	$100,000
Estimated Award Floor	$50,000
Estimated Length of Project Period	12-36 months

Country Problem Statement: A country with a young National Assembly and civil society, Bahrain's CSOs are building experience and credibility, but need assistance in strengthening the role CSOs play in addressing environmental, social, and economic issues. Current economic and fiscal challenges may limit access to social programs and economic growth opportunities, particularly for youth, and could inhibit future job growth. The country also faces problems of managing environmental pollutants and ensuring sustainable development as the resident population grows. Recently, Bahrain's King Hamad acknowledged the need to address environmental concerns, and Bahrain's National Assembly has begun discussing policy options for tackling the issue. To further develop local capacity for partnerships between civil society in these areas, academic institutions, businesses, and the government, Bahrain would also benefit from developing solutions designed to create and strengthen cross-sector connections.

Bahraini youth predominantly depended on the public sector for entry-level employment opportunities. However, Bahrain's limited market size, lack of professional mentorship, and absence of robust and flexible regulatory frameworks limit advancement opportunities. The government began implementing policies aimed at enhancing competitiveness and increasing employment under the Crown Prince's Economic Vision 2030, but as many as eight thousand recent university graduates, many of them from underserved communities, have difficulties finding jobs in their chosen fields each year. Maintaining a stable economy with a business-friendly environment, developing more job opportunities, and increasing youth engagement in meaningful economic activities will strengthen economic and social inclusion and stability.

Country Priorities: As civil society matures in Bahrain, CSOs need support for new approaches and solutions to solving Bahrain's development challenges. CSOs currently operate in environmental, social, and economic fields, but could benefit from additional support. Additionally, innovation in developing relationships between government, academic institutions, businesses, and civil society will assist in expanding the role local organizations play in promoting equitable political and economic solutions. Empowering youth voices, in particular, to fuel economic development and maturation of civil society, will be important to keeping talented youth invested and participating in its development.

Geographic/Thematic Focus: Proposals are open to all population and policy areas with a special focus on underserved youth.

Specific eligibility requirements: Partnerships will be made with officially registered organizations, professional associations, private sector organizations, or academic institutions.

Jordan:

Funding Mechanism Type:	Cooperative Agreement, Grant, or Fixed Amount Award
Estimated Number of Awards	Two to five (2-5)
Estimated Total Funding	$500,000
Estimated Award Ceiling	$200,000
Estimated Award Floor	$100,000
Estimated Length of Project Period	12-36 months

Country Problem Statement: Jordan continues to face both external and internal challenges, including regional geopolitical instability, rising unemployment rates, and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, which impacted the economy through business closures and restrictions, and put pressure on the country's stressed healthcare, and educational sectors.

Jordan's economic growth slowed to 1.3 percentin the first quarter of 2020, reflecting only partially the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many Jordanians have lost their jobs and citizens do not expect the economy will recover in the short term. Citizens likewise do not think Jordanian government job-creation efforts will be effective; only 14 percent of Jordanians report satisfaction with the government's policy approach on job creation. Jordan's unemployment rate increased to almost 24 percent in the third quarter of 2020, the highest since 2005. The constrained economy and lack of opportunities for youth, who make up 70 percent of citizens under 30, remains one of the most pressing issues facing Jordan today. Women's employment in Jordan is one of the world's lowest at 15percent despite high educational attainment.

Jordan's economic prospects are also complicated by other socio-economic factors, that further constrain its fragile economy and limited job market, including a mismatch between the skills of recent graduates and the jobs available in the private sector, affecting ICT, green technology, hospitality, tourism, and other sectors. The Jordanian private sector labor market also offers limited opportunities outside the capital.

Country Priority:
Inclusive Economic Growth. This goal is in line with Post's Integrated Country Strategy (ICS) goal of increasing self-reliance through broad-based inclusive economic growth, which contributes to long-term stability. It also aligns with MEPI's goal of fostering economic growth. Jordan faced severe economic challenges even before the spread of COVID, but the pandemic worsened the situation around the country, in particular among women and youth in areas outside the capital and in marginalized communities. Accordingly, there is a need to promote inclusive economic growth and development, expand economic opportunities and participation through capacity-building programs, and strengthen linkages between universities and the private sector through academic and professional internships, apprenticeships, and placements. Such programs can also promote leadership and innovation, and help enhance the skills of women and youth outside of the capital.

Cross-Cutting: Youth. This priority is in line with Post's ICS goal of promoting stability and security through inclusive economic growth and employment. To improve economic opportunities for youth and help more women enter the workforce, there is a need to change attitudes surrounding what are and are not "acceptable" jobs, and cultivate innovative solutions for the digital age. All of this is addressed through this priority, which encourages youth to respond to new opportunities and emerging trends. For example, the digital innovation sector during the pandemic has created new opportunities for a virtual workplace and labor market, as well as home-based businesses with delivery (overcoming the barrier of overhead for expensive office space. Jordanians need encouragement to spot opportunities in private sector jobs and careers.

Geographic/Thematic Focus: Priority will be given to projects that target marginalized communities in, but not limited to: Ajloun, Aqaba, Jerash, Karak, Ma'an, and Tafileh. These areas were chosen based on the relative scarcity of resources and services available, and priorities for Post outreach.

Thematic areas include, but are not limited to:

- Improving the ease of doing business, particularly for small and medium enterprises (SMEs);
- Assisting informal businesses in overcoming barriers to joining the formal sector and gaining access to finance;
- Increasing the capacity of small and medium enterprises to export their products and fostering increased regional economic cooperation;
- Creating new opportunities in private-sector employment and skills-building suited for digital labor opportunities in the international digital economy;
- Providing demand-based vocational training that has a high likelihood of leading to either self-employment or private-sector job placement (both in the informal and formal sectors);
- Building bridges between the private sector and the educational system to ensure students are being trained for existing jobs and the private sector's talent pipeline, and building a culture and practice of internship and apprenticeship;
- Address any gaps and unmet needs within the Jordanian entrepreneurship ecosystem, particularly ideas that will help start-ups advance from the seed to growth stage.
- Advancing women's economic participation, promoting financial literacy, and access to services and training;
- Supporting the implementation of relevant commercial laws, such as the investment law, companies law, insolvency law, and/or other laws that support entrepreneurs and startups;

Specific eligibility requirements: N/A

Kuwait:

Funding Mechanism Type:	Cooperative Agreement, Grant, or Fixed Amount Award
Estimated Number of Awards	Two to three (2-3)
Estimated Total Funding	$200,000
Estimated Award Ceiling	$100,000
Estimated Award Floor	$50,000

Estimated Length of Project Period	12-36 months

Country Problem Statement:
Kuwaiti women are highly educated and enjoy many aspects of constitutional and civil rights; however, they are not widely represented in government or private sector leadership and are not treated equally under the law, such as citizenship transmission to children. Post seeks civil society organizations, interest groups, and nonprofit companies to engage the Kuwaiti government to support public campaigning, advocacy and awareness on gender equality and women's rights.

The majority of Kuwait's population is migrant workers, many of whom are subjected to labor violations or trafficking. Victims of these violations typically experience nonpayment of wages, working conditions drastically different from those indicated in the contract, limited freedom of movement, harassment, physical abuse or threats. Employees claimed that passport confiscation by employers, though illegal, remained a common practice. In other cases, workers who pay a fee to get a job in Kuwait find that there is no job waiting for them when they arrive, and must find jobs in the grey market as illegal workers with no rights. COVID-19 has only exacerbated these trends. Post would like civil society organizations to engage the Kuwaiti government to implement existing laws to protect victims and enhance legislation to provide greater rights and mobility to workers.

Finally, Kuwait's stateless Arab population (Bidoon) of approximately 100,000 is a marginalized community. The government does not uniformly grant government services and subsidies to Bidoon, including education, employment, medical care, and the issuance of civil documents, such as birth, marriage, and death certificates. There are very few civil society organizations or individuals publicly working on the Bidoon issues. Post would like to invite civil society organizations and private sector organizations to help develop a local solution to this social problem.

Country Priorities: The Embassy encourages applications that target building the CSOs capacity to effectively interact with government officials to promote the following goals:

- Kuwait citizens, and particularly Kuwaiti women, develop greater civil participation in government and increase confidence in political institutions.
- Civil society organizations and/or private sector organizations to help develop local solutions to labor rights violations and trafficking-in-persons, marginalized populations in Kuwait, and/or gender equality.

Geographic/Thematic Focus: Stateless people, domestic violence, gender parity, civil society organizations.

Specific eligibility requirements:

1. Registered nonprofit companies, registered or unregistered civil society organizations, and societies can all apply to MEPI local grants.
2. It is preferred that applicants have existing private and government sector partnerships, like MOU's or ongoing partnerships

<u>Lebanon</u>:

Funding Mechanism Type:	Cooperative Agreement, Grant, or Fixed Amount Award
Estimated Number of Awards	Two to five (2-5)
Estimated Total Funding	$500,000
Estimated Award Ceiling	$150,000 for one-year awards; $300,000 for two-year awards
Estimated Award Floor	$50,000 for one-year awards; $100,000 for two-year awards
Estimated Length of Project Period	12-24 months

<u>Country Problem Statement</u>: Enduring continued misgovernance and a severe economic crisis, the Lebanese people are disillusioned by their government's inability to respond to the multiple challenges that fuel the crisis and undermine the country's stability.

Lebanon's decades-long economic model of reliance on the financial and banking sectors collapsed in 2020, with virtually no productive economic sector on which to fall back. Lebanon's GDP contracted by 25 percent in 2020 alone, the third-worst performance worldwide, and the IMF estimated Lebanon's nominal GDP to be the lowest in the Middle East, behind even Libya and Yemen.

In 2020, unemployment was between 30-50 percent. In what would be unfathomable just years ago, nearly 60 percent of all Lebanese now live below the poverty line, with 25 percent of all Lebanese living in extreme poverty. The COVID-19 pandemic has compounded human suffering, overwhelming the health sector and further constraining economic activity.

The Government of Lebanon has not adequately responded to the economic and financial meltdown or its own paralysis on implementing badly needed reforms. Exacerbating an already dismal situation, the cataclysmic August 4, 2020 explosion at the Port of Beirut triggered the resignation of the government days later. Lebanon's political leaders had failed to form a new government by May 2021.

<u>Country Priorities</u>:

(1) <u>Foster inclusive economic growth</u>: Reduce poverty and help the private sector recover from the deteriorating financial environment to help stabilize the Lebanese economy.

(2) <u>Encourage citizens' engagement in participatory governance and decision-makers' willingness to work with citizen groups and civil society organizations to advance needed reforms</u>: A public informed about peaceful political participation and civic action is better prepared to engage with Lebanon's government and/or political parties, including new ones, and to advocate for and implement reforms that will forestall total collapse, spur recovery, and put the country on a stronger footing for the future.

Geographic/Thematic Focus: Priority will be given to proposals which include regions outside the greater Beirut area. Successful proposals should focus on one or both of the following areas of priority:

1. Foster inclusive economic growth: Examples could include, but are not limited to:
    - Business incubation centers or other direct assistance to micro and small business start-ups, and expansion of existing businesses;
    - Providing training, coaching, and mentoring to the country's youth to enable them to be economically productive and self-sustaining;
    - Fostering Lebanese exports and/or establishing new local production as substitutes for goods typically imported but increasingly unaffordable given the plunge in value of the local currency;
    - Programs that combat corruption, improve access to information, or promote a transparent public procurement process to improve Lebanon's business climate;
    - Grants that promote collaboration between the private sector and civil society in order to drive reforms and inclusive economic growth.

2. Encourage citizens' engagement in participatory governance and decision-makers' willingness to work with citizen groups and civil society organizations to advance needed reforms: Examples could include, but are not limited to:
    - Programs that identify and empower new civil society organizations or politicallyoriented groups that can compete nationally to influence electoral outcomes;
    - Educate Lebanese civil society organizations so they can build stronger coalitions to support shared causes and political goals;
    - Programs that improve the capacity of civil society organizations' ability to influence change;
    - Information campaigns on peaceful, legal, civic actions within the framework of the Lebanese Constitution.

Specific eligibility requirements: Registered civil society organizations (CSOs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community groups, professional or educational organizations, or other for-profit or non-profit groups are eligible. Priority will be given to organizations with demonstrated competence in the areas of focus of their proposed activities.

Morocco:

Funding Mechanism Type:	Cooperative Agreement, Grant, or Fixed Amount Award
Estimated Number of Awards	Three to five (3-5)
Estimated Total Funding	$500,000
Estimated Award Ceiling	$150,000
Estimated Award Floor	$50,000
Estimated Length of Project Period	12-36 months

Country Problem Statement: Historically heavily dependent on the strength of its agricultural sector and its key trading partners in Europe, Morocco is diversifying its industrial base and its export partners and working to make the country a financial hub and trade gateway to Africa for its Western trading partners. A lower middle-income country by World Bank standards, Morocco's core economic objectives are to strengthen its workforce, diversify exports, and attract investment from around the world, while recovering economically from the impact of COVID-19, which devastated key sectors of the economy and caused GDP to contract by about six percent in 2020. With a concerted government focus on improving its World Bank "Doing Business" ranking, Morocco rose seven places to 53rd worldwide for 2020, coming in 3rd among Middle Eastern countries (after UAE and Bahrain) and 2nd in Africa (after Mauritius). Among Morocco's primary challenges are its weak educational system, declining labor productivity, and mismatches between business needs and labor force skills.

In 2014, Morocco launched its Industrial Acceleration Plan, a new approach to industrial development based on establishing efficient "eco-systems" that integrate value chains and supplier relationships between large companies and small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The Industrial Acceleration Plan strategy set out to create 500,000 new jobs in manufacturing by 2020 by targeting higher levels of foreign direct investment and strengthening the linkages between the small business sector and Morocco's industrial leaders. Morocco has also focused on positioning itself as a financial hub for Africa, and offers incentives for firms that locate their regional headquarters in the Casablanca Finance City (CFC), Morocco's flagship financial and business hub. Despite the significant improvements in its business environment, Morocco continues to face challenges in skilled labor shortages, weak intellectual property rights protection, and a challenging regulatory environment.

Morocco's "advanced regionalization" initiative has devolved increasing budgetary and administrative authority to regionally and locally elected bodies, and given citizens the right to directly petition and engage those regional and municipal bodies. Those bodies, however, as well as civil society, lack the competencies and experience to fully take advantage of these reforms. Political apathy in Morocco is high, especially among youth, who lack an awareness not only of these reforms but also the knowledge and skills necessary to become more civically engaged.

Country Priorities:

(1) *Foster inclusive economic growth:* Proposals must focus on creating jobs, promoting economic advancement, and bridging the gap between the education system and the job market. Activities could include but are not limited to:
   a. Promoting the creation of small- and medium-size businesses by providing technical assistance to address challenges to private sector development, including legal procedures, and difficulties in accessing finance.
   b. Improving job seekers' skills and employability through technical and skills training that lead to placement in internships and employment opportunities.

(2) *Encourage citizens' engagement in the electoral process or participatory governance and decision-makers' willingness to work with citizen groups and civil society*

organizations: Proposals must be innovative, sustainable, and actively support increased dialogue between citizens, civil society, and local government with the goal of effectively addressing the needs of the community. Activities could include but are not limited to:

a. Expanding local civic education efforts that promote transparency, public safety, gender equality, and a deeper understanding of citizens' rights in innovative, measurable, and sustaining ways.
b. Increasing citizen awareness and participation, particularly among young women and men, of avenues of participation and communication with local government. This could include knowing who to contact for various services or educational information. Ideally, youth-led organizations would find innovative ways to engage youth on issues that matter the most to them, and provide innovative ways for youth to interact with peers and local government bodies.

<u>Geographic/Thematic Focus</u>: Projects that have a focus on cities or rural areas other than Rabat, Casablanca, Marrakech, and Beni Mellal are preferred.

<u>Specific eligibility requirements</u>: Applicant organizations must be registered with the Government of Morocco. Each proposal may not exceed the maximum of $150,000. Projects may be focused on one geographic area or several, and may include the cities of Dakhla and Laayoune and surrounding areas.

<u>Qatar</u>:

Funding Mechanism Type:	Cooperative Agreement, Grant, or Fixed Amount Award
Estimated Number of Awards	Two to three (2-3)
Estimated Total Funding	$200,000
Estimated Award Ceiling	$100,000
Estimated Award Floor	$50,000
Estimated Length of Project Period	12-36 months

<u>Country Problem Statement</u>: Although highly educated and constitutionally-vetted to enjoy almost all civil rights aspects, Qatari women are not adequately represented in government or private sector leadership. The scheduled Shura Council elections in 2021 (the first general elections for one-third of the so-far fully-appointed body), may see greater female representation in government. Elected parliaments in Kuwait have brought fewer female representatives than in the fully-appointed Shura Councils of neighboring Saudi Arabia, so prospects for more Qatari women elected into office anytime soon may remain bleak.

Despite the Qatari government's support of female entrepreneurship, there is still much to be accomplished in terms of shoring up women's participation the Qatari economy. Barriers to women's equal access to the banking and financial sectors continue. While women are generally able to start their own businesses, sustained business success remains challenging for many women entrepreneurs. One reason is that guardianship laws require single women age 25 and under to receive permission to apply for loans to support their businesses.

This year, Qatar prosecuted its first trafficking in persons (TIP) case since 2016. Better coordination among government authorities, the private sector, and the international community will be critical to ensure access to adequate protections by some of Qatar's most vulnerable populations, namely unskilled migrant workers. The same susceptibilities are shared by women and children who are vulnerable to violence. Further, Qatar needs to remain vigilant on these issues and prepare to confront the threat of TIP and abuse of women and children in the lead up to the FIFA World Cup in 2022. Qatar remains a Tier 2 country and relevant stakeholders would benefit from continuous engagement to stem TIP in the country.

Country Priorities:

Priority Area 1: Strengthening Women's Political Participation

The anticipated 2021 Shura Council elections present an unprecedented opportunity for Qatari women to become more politically engaged. Proposals should develop innovative programs to engage and strengthen the professional skills of women to participate in the decision-making process and make use of the upcoming elections as an opportunity to partake effectively in political life. Special consideration will be given to proposals that focus on electoral and campaign skills development, voter education, young female leadership development, and other approaches to strengthen women's participation in future Qatari elections and political life. Projects should support participation of women in various sectors of Qatari society.

Priority Area 2: Strengthening Women and Children's Protection Against Abuse and TIP

We welcome proposals to professionalize civil society organizations, focused on supporting victims of abuse and/or countering TIP, in order to build organizational and communication capacity to connect effectively with decision makers and citizens. Proposals should focus on providing opportunities to build leadership and managerial skills to effectively engage with civil society, the private sector, and/or government actors to increase awareness, develop robust resources, enforce Qatar's domestic worker law passed in 2018, and further develop the operations of trafficking shelters.

Priority Area 3: Strengthening Women's Economic Participation

We welcome proposals that promote female entrepreneurship. Proposals should focus on developing innovative programs to engage and strengthen the skills of women to join and sustainably succeed in the business community.

Geographic/Thematic Focus: N/A

Specific eligibility requirements: Project applications are open to all Qatari civil society, non-governmental, and private organizations. Applicants should have prior experience working in Qatar on the issues their projects address.

Saudi Arabia:

Funding Mechanism Type:	Cooperative Agreement, Grant, or Fixed Amount Award
Estimated Number of Awards	Two to three (2-3)
Estimated Total Funding	$200,000
Estimated Award Ceiling	$100,000
Estimated Award Floor	$50,000
Estimated Length of Project Period	12-36 months

Country Problem Statement: A recent roundtable discussion with several influential women entrepreneurs in Jeddah highlighted the challenges women face as they begin entrepreneurial projects, particularly the need for high-quality, basic information targeted at local conditions, and the need for ongoing mentorships with experienced entrepreneurs. Participants noted a particular desire to connect with successful American entrepreneurs as mentors, noting the leading role that the U.S. has played in entrepreneurship development.

Country Priorities: ICS Objective 2.2 aims to support Saudi efforts to diversify its economy and expand job opportunities, in line with U.S. interests in Saudi Arabia's long term economic and social stability. Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 focuses in part on developing Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), one of the most important agents of economic growth and job creation. The Vision also recognizes the importance of female participation in the growth of the economy. Over 50 percent of KSA university graduates are female. Saudi Arabia plans to continue to develop the talents of young Saudi women, invest in their productive capabilities and enable them to strengthen their future and contribute to the development of the economy.

Geographic/Thematic Focus: Saudi female university students with a demonstrated interest in entrepreneurship as well as emerging female entrepreneurs. While the majority of participants can come from the major cities, we wish to support female entrepreneurship in smaller cities and towns. Geographic representation should be a component of the project.

Specific eligibility requirements: Post would prefer proposals that include a U.S. and a local partner, include a plan to provide high quality entrepreneurship training in Arabic, attuned to local conditions, provide access to mentorships and exchanges between U.S. and Saudi participants, and have a clear vision for long-term sustainability.

For each country listed above the following activities and costs are **NOT ALLOWED** under this announcement:

- Job training that does not lead to an internship or job placement opportunities;
- Development of mobile applications (apps);
- Cash awards/prizes;
- Foreign travel, unless specifically justified within the project;
- Agriculture, unless it focuses on job creation and economic diversification to combat the effects of climate change and promote resiliency;

- Polling/surveying;
- Handicrafts;
- Costs related to renovation, remodeling, or purchase or lease of real estate beyond usual office rent;
- Purchase of office décor;
- Purchase of equipment (tangible personal property having a useful life of more than one year and is $5,000 or more per unit);
- Language training courses;
- Exchange activities with other countries or territories;
- Social welfare and healthcare projects;
- Paying to complete activities begun with other funds;
- Activities that appear partisan or that support individual or party electoral campaigns;
- Academic or analytical research (if not necessary as part of a larger project);
- One-time events, such as stand-alone conferences and one-off round tables;
- Medical and psychological research and clinical studies;
- Projects of a commercial or profit-making nature;
- Cultural presentations, cultural research, cultural clubs, or festivals, etc.; and
- Entertainment costs (e.g., receptions, social activities, ceremonies, alcoholic beverages, guided tours).

NOTE: Applications that include any of these activities or costs above may be eliminated at the Technical Eligibility Review stage and will not advance to the Merit Review Panel.

D. GENDER INTEGRATION

NEA/AC requires that all activities fully address gender considerations, ensuring that both men and women benefit from support where applicable, and that gender awareness is a built-in component of project activities. This should be documented through gender analysis in the project narrative that identifies any relevant gender gaps and ways the proposed activities will address those gaps. Proposals should demonstrate how addressing relevant gender gaps will enhance the project's goals and objectives. Applicants who are unfamiliar with integrating gender in foreign assistance programing should view the training video located here: https://encompassworld.com/elearningfiles/DOS/DOS_Gender_Integration_E-Course/story_html5.html

E. DEFINITIONS

The following are **definitions** of activities accepted under this announcement:

Capacity Building:
Strengthen the capacity of CSOs for policy analysis, advocacy, coalition-building, internal governance, membership representation and services, and engage in other activities aimed at fostering more peaceful and democratic societies. CSOs include, but are not limited to, human rights organizations, women's groups, labor unions, business and professional associations, youth movements, religious organizations, indigenous organizations, think tanks, and

organizations representing vulnerable populations. Areas of capacity building may include, but are not limited to, technical expertise (e.g. human rights, legal reform); CSO self-regulation (e.g. establishing NGO Codes of Conduct); organizational capacity (e.g. strategic planning, financial management and accountability, public relations, issue management, and outreach, revenue generation, accountable fundraising); and targeted advocacy training and technical assistance.

II. MEASUREMENT OF RESULTS

The proposal should articulate a clear, measurable, relevant, and realistic set of objectives that the project aims to achieve over the lifetime of the award. Without a well-articulated set of project objectives, it is difficult to objectively assess project success. Project objectives should be distinct from the application's proposed activities.

Successful applicants will work with the NEA/AC program and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) teams to create a plan based on the proposed logic model/theory of change to measure qualitative and quantitative indicators as part of the award negotiations process. The successful applicants will be responsible for collecting data against these indicators, which will be monitored throughout the period of performance of the award to gauge necessary modifications to the project's design, and assess the results of the project's success in meeting expected outcomes.

All projects funded as a result of this NOFO will be required to complete a final evaluation of the project at the end of the period of performance with support from the NEA/AC M&E team.

III. AWARD INFORMATION

Funding Mechanism Type:	**Cooperative Agreement, Grant, or Fixed Amount Award**
Estimated Number of Awards:	**19-37**
Estimated Total Program Funding:	**$2,800,000**
Estimated Award Ceiling:	**See country specific information above**
Estimated Award Floor:	**See country specific information above**
Cost-Sharing or Matching:	**Encouraged; NOT Required**
Estimated Length of Project Period:	**12-36 Months**

Contingent on the availability of funds, approximately $2,800,000 in Economic Support Funds for approximately 19-37 awards will be awarded through this announcement. If selected to receive an award, an applicant will be awarded funds for up to 12-36 months, depending on the activities and countries proposed. The estimated start date for this project is October 1, 2021.

NEA/AC reserves the right to award more or less than the estimated program funding, and reserves the right 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.**

IV. SUBSTANTIAL INVOLVEMENT

NEA/AC may be involved in the program and management performance of any cooperative agreements through consultation and technical collaboration on specified project activities.

<u>Examples of NEA/AC responsibilities for a cooperative agreement may include:</u>

- Collaboration in development of training materials;
- Collaboration in finalizing project work plan, including monitoring and evaluation plans;
- Collaboration in assessing progress and identifying issues that might affect the success of the project; and
- Participate in selection process of candidates.

V. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

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

<u>NOTE</u>: Applications that do not demonstrate that they meet all of the eligibility requirements in <u>Section A</u> and <u>Section B</u> 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 local civil society organizations, non-profit organizations, community groups, non-governmental organizations, professional associations, private sector organizations, and universities based in the Middle East and North Africa region, specifically **Algeria, Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia.**

NEA/AC is committed to an anti-discrimination policy in all of its programs and activities. NEA/AC welcomes 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.

All applicants should meet the following eligibility requirements, in addition to specific eligibility requirements detailed per country in Section 1:

1. **Location Requirement:** Only organizations that have an established local office in the country they propose to implement their project will be eligible to apply. Awards will be issued to the local office and not any partner or affiliate office that may be located outside of the country of implementation.

2. **Formal Registration:** Only organizations that formally operate in the country for which they are applying will be eligible.

3. **Organizational Capacity:** Applicants must be able to demonstrate meeting the following criteria:
   - Established for at least one (1) year; and
   - Managed at least one (1) project/initiative with donor funding (governmental, private, etc.).

NEA/AC will consider the following special considerations when reviewing applications:

1. **Previous MEPI Connections:** We value the alumni of our many MEPI-sponsored projects and programs and would like to enhance the connection between ongoing initiatives of our implementing partners and our ever-growing base of alumni. Therefore, we will give priority to projects that include and detail MEPI alumni engagement in activities and project components. For the purposes of this evaluation criteria, MEPI alumni are considered as former participants of MEPI exchange projects; or beneficiaries in previous MEPI training projects lasting more than five weeks; or previous recipients of a MEPI Local Grant. Alumni of other USG exchanges will also be considered.

B. REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS

To apply for NEA/AC (Federal) funding, 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 for your organization with the System for Award Management (SAM). Applicants who do not meet all registration requirements are NOT eligible for funding under the opportunity.

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 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) (https://www.osha.gov/pls/imis/sic_manual.html), and annual revenue.

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

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. See Appendix 5 for additional instructions on registering for a SAM account.

Further, each organization must maintain an active account, with current information, while its application is under consideration for funding. To keep an active SAM.gov account, an applicant must renew it at least once each year. **If an organization's 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.
Log In to complete authentication and create an account. On the My SAM page, select *Entity Registrations* from the sub-navigation menu and select *Register New Entity.*

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 Quick Start Guide for Grant Registration: https://sam.gov/SAM/transcript/Quick_Guide_for_Grants_Registrations.pdf), 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 might take anywhere from **12 - 15 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: 866-606-8220 (U.S.) or +1-334-206-7828 (international).

C. ADDITIONAL ELIGIBILITY CONSIDERATIONS

Cost-Sharing or Matching

There is no minimum or maximum percentage required for this competition. However, NEA/AC encourages 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.

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 1 application.** Please refer to Section B below for additional submissions guidance and requirements.
NOTE: Applications that do not include all the required documentation described in Section 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 each of these forms online to be considered for funding. The SF-424B is only required for those applicants who a) have not registered in SAM.gov or b) have not recertified their registration in SAM.gov since February 2, 2019.

If an organization has an active registration in SAM.gov that was either created or updated **on or after** 2/2/2019, then the applicant does ***NOT*** need to submit the SF-424B because their registration or recertification will have included the necessary information.

Guidance on how to complete the SF-424 and SF424a is provided in Appendix 3. NOTE: In addition to following all guidance outlined 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. It may **be no longer than 15 pages**. More details on preparing the Project Narrative are provided in Appendix 3. A template of the application can be found in Appendix 4. **Applicants are strongly encouraged to review Appendix 3 before preparing their Narrative.**

Budget & Budget Narrative Submission

Applicants must provide the following three elements as part of their budget submission:
- Summary Budget
- Detailed Line Item Budget

- Budget Narrative

A sample fillable budget and budget narrative template can be found in **Appendix 1.** Applicants are strongly encouraged to review Appendix 1 before preparing the Project Narrative Application. The Appendix 1 template includes three tabs:

1. 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.
2. The second tab has the 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.
3. The third tab is where you can fill in the template for the **Detailed Line Item Budget** as stated above. 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.

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 beginning to end of the project. Applicants must ensure that the timeline of activities/events corresponds with details provided in the Project Narrative and Logic Model / Theory of Change. This section **may not exceed 2 pages.**

Job Descriptions / Biographical Info 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, **Key Personnel/Positions of the sub grantee must also be included.** This section of the application **may not exceed 5 pages.**

Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement

Applicants proposing indirect costs in the Budget greater than a 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.

A.2. Optional Documents

Applicants may submit additional documents for consideration with their application. These documents are not required and there is a 10 page limit for this section of the application. Below are examples of some additional documents an applicant may wish to submit.

1. **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 their proposed partners.
2. **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.
3. **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**. Sustainability Plans may not exceed **2 pages**.
4. **Security, Risk Mitigation, & Contingency Planning Summary:** This item should provide detail 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 5 pages.**

Logic Model

Applicants shall provide a logic model or theory of change to demonstrate how the proposed project (including activities, the project design, and the surrounding context) will achieve the stated objectives. The logic model or theory of change statements 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 be no longer than 3 pages.**

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 Section VI above. **The Standard Forms 424 (SF-424, SF-424a, and SF-424b) <u>are excluded</u> 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 submitting applications that total **<u>$100,000 or less</u>** must submit their applications electronically through email to NEA-Grants@State.gov **or** Grants.gov. Applicants must submit applications **<u>over $100,000</u>** electronically using Grants.gov. Both methods require that the applying organization have an account with the system and both require a UEI number and SAM.gov account as detailed in Section V. **It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure they have an active account for your organization and will be able to submit its application. For submissions that total $100,000 or less the applicant must select one of these methods to submit their application; do not submit an application through both systems. Applicants whose submission totals over $100,000 must submit their application through Grants.gov.** There are no exceptions to these requirements.

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 to ensure that it is successfully received and validated.

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.**

D. SUBMISSION DATES AND TIMES

Applications must be time stamped before 17:00:00 eastern time (ET) on August 1, 2021 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. **Each applicant is encouraged to submit an application far enough in advance of the deadline so that the applicant 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, there are no exceptions to the submission requirements outlined in this announcement.

VII. FUNDING LIMITATIONS, RESTRICTIONS, AND OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

A. 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 required 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.

B. 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*** means an audit of one Federal award program. ***Single Audit*** means an audit which 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 https://www.gao.gov/assets/700/693136.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.

C. 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 (https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/U.S.-Department-of-State-Standard-Terms-and-Conditions-10-01-2019508.pdf) and 2 CFR 200 and 2 CFR 600 as applicable.

VIII. APPLICATION REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS

A. APPLICATION EVALUATION CRITERIA

Approach and Responsiveness (25 points)

- The applicant explains how the proposed activities respond to one of the objectives listed in the NOFO.
- The proposed project activities target the priority geographic regions and/or thematic focus stated in the applicable country.
- The application addresses how the project will engage or obtain buy-in and support from relevant stakeholders.

Project Design & Ability to Achieve Objectives (45 points)

- The applicant provides a clear articulation of how the proposed activities will contribute to the proposed project objective(s.).
- The applicant describes realistic results to be accomplished within the timeframe of the proposed award.
- The applicant clearly identifies the anticipated beneficiaries and explains how the project's objectives will positively affect them, and explains how participants will be selected.
- The applicant proposes activities that are feasible, practical, and/or experiential in nature to encourage innovation.
- 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 articulates programming assumptions and potential challenges to project implementation and proposes contingency plans.
- If applicable, the application describes the division of labor among the applicant and any partners.

Organizational Capacity (25 points)

- A description of the roles of each person or position on the project – whether staff, partner, consultant, or volunteer – demonstrates that the project will be adequately but efficiently staffed, avoiding redundancy or duplication of effort.
- A job description, including hiring criteria, is provided for each open key position.
- Pre-identified key staff members – including volunteers – demonstrate experience and knowledge in the proposed content area.
- The applicant proposes adequate staffing and demonstrates the capacity to manage the proposed project.
- The applicant demonstrates capacity for responsible fiscal management of donor funding (e.g., successful management of a previous sub-award or grant).
- The applicant sufficiently meets/addresses the specific eligibility requirement(s), if any, for the applicable country.

MEPI Alumni Connection (5 points if applicable)

- The applicant demonstrates one of the following:
  - That associated individuals are former participants of MEPI exchange programs; **OR**
  - That the organization or associated individuals are beneficiaries in previous MEPI training programs lasting more than five weeks; **OR**
  - That the organization is a previous recipient of a MEPI Local Grant.

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/activities in country. Adequate travel costs are proposed.
- The budget demonstrates a reasonable cost per participant.

B. REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS

NEA/AC is 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 reserves the right to have all applications deemed to be technically 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.

NEA/AC is 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 Part V and have submitted all required documents outlined in Part 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 reserves 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.

A MEPI Merit Review Panel consisting of staff from the Washington, DC MEPI team, NEA/AC Regional Office (ACRO), and members of the U.S. Embassy or Consulate within each country of proposed programming will review all Local Grant Program proposals. The Merit Review Panel will rank order proposals by overall average score to be recommended for funding.

Subject to the availability of funds, proposals recommended for funding beyond funding levels available by country/territory, may be eligible for a secondary, region wide competitive review panel. The panel may consist of staff from the Washington, DC MEPI team, NEA/AC Regional Office (ACRO), and other relevant stakeholders. As this panel is subject to funding and regionally competitive, it is not possible to indicate the number of potential awards that may be funded nor what country priorities they may support.

The applicant will be informed if their proposal will or will not be shortlisted for further consideration. Only the most competitive proposals received by the MEPI Merit Review Panel will be selected for further consideration by the ACRO, which will process and negotiate the awards. The issuance of a grant award by a NEA/AC Regional Office is contingent on the availability of funds and the negotiation and finalization of an approved budget and award package.

The MEPI Program's Regional Offices located in the Middle East and North Africa manage the Local Grants Program. The Regional Office in Morocco or Kuwait will issue and administer the federal assistance awards.

<u>Additional information that successful applicants must submit after notification of intent to make a Federal award, but prior to issuance of a Federal award, may include</u>:

1. Written responses and any revised application documents addressing any conditions or recommendations from the MEPI Merit Review Panel;

2. Submission of required documents to register in any applicable U.S. government grant systems, if receiving MEPI Program funding for the first time;

3. Other requested information or documents included in the notification of intent to make a Federal award or subsequent communications prior to issuance of a Federal award; and/or

4. A security and/or contingency plan as applicable if the applicant proposes working in certain countries.

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.

Final award decisions will be influenced by whether the application meets MEPI's programmatic goals and objectives, how it supports the Department of State'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 expects to notify applicants who proceeded past the Technical Eligibility Review stage about the status of their application by December 31, 2021 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) shall 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 reserves 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.

Maktabat: Recipients will be required to submit to MEPI all materials developed under awards for the training of participants. These documents (including but not limited to manuals, curriculums, videos, websites, and presentations used in workshops or distributed to participants) will be considered for inclusion in the Maktabat MEPI website: http://maktabatmepi.org. The Recipient should make every effort to submit training materials as they are developed and used rather than waiting until the end of the award. The materials can be submitted in English, French, and/or Arabic. The Recipient can submit materials to the Maktabat MEPI website: www.maktabatmepi.org. The Recipient is asked to add a link to the Maktabat website on the Recipient's website if feasible.

C. TRAVEL NOTIFICATIONS

Successful applicants will be required to provide prior notification of all international travel as a requirement of their agreement. This includes travel which is already included in the approved budget and Scope of Work. The purpose of this notification is to enable NEA/AC to inform the relevant U.S. Embassy or post of the recipient's intent to travel. The recipient must notify the Grants Officer at least three (3) business days prior to any travel. The Grants Officer reserves the right to advise against specific travel arrangements for security-related reasons.

D. APPLICANT VETTING AS A CONDITION OF AWARD

Applicants proposing activities in Lebanon are advised that successful passing of vetting to evaluate the risk that funds may benefit terrorists or their supporters is a condition of award. Applicants may be asked to submit information required by DS Form 4184, Risk Analysis Information about their company and its principal personnel. Vetting information is also required for all sub-award performance on assistance awards identified by the Grants Officer, information may be submitted on the secure web portal at https://ramportal.state.gov, via Email to RAM@state.gov, or hardcopy to the Grants Officer. Questions on the form may be emailed to RAM@state.gov. Failure to submit information when requested, or failure to pass vetting, may be grounds for rejecting an application for award.

E. SPECIAL PROVISION FOR PERFORMANCE IN A DESIGNATED COMBAT AREA (SPOT) REQUIREMENTS

N/A

F. BRANDING AND MARKING REQUIREMENTS FOR GRANTEES

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 shall 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 when negotiating an award.

Grantees awarded under this announcement will be required to follow MEPI social media guidelines for any and all online presences related to the project. Grantees will be expected to tag @USMEPI in all social media posts and utilize the official hashtag #MEPI for any social media posts in Arabic or English. Grantees will be expected to highlight MEPI online and share as many MEPI stories as possible, including demonstrating how each MEPI programs strive to achieve its assistance objectives of participatory governance and economic reform.

G. UEI NUMBER REQUIREMENT FOR SUB AWARDEES

All sub-awardees are required to have a UEI number. For information on obtaining a UEI number, please see Section V. B. **Proposed sub-awardees are not required to have a UEI number prior to the submission of an application but must have one prior to a sub-award being issued.**

H. SUB AWARDEE REPORTING REQUIREMENT

Grantees awarded under this announcement will be required to report all sub-awardees receiving funds of $25,000 or more to http://www.fsrs.gov. More information about this requirement can be found at this site.

X. AGENCY CONTACTS

For questions regarding this funding opportunity including: completing an application, financial and grants management issues, or technical matters, contact nea-grants@state.gov **and include "MEPI Local Grants 2021" in the subject line**.

All questions must be submitted in writing to nea-grants@state.gov by **June 27, 2021** at 17:00:00 eastern time (ET). NEA/AC will create a document of the submitted questions along with the answers and post it on Grants.gov. Questions submitted after the deadline will not be addressed.

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

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.