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Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs
Office of Assistance Coordination
Assistance Listings Number: 19.500

Economic Empowerment in Dakhla and Laayoune Regions
Opportunity Number: DFOP0010739

Key Information:

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Date Opened:	March 18, 2024
Deadline for Questions:	April 1, 2024
Application Deadline:	May 17, 2024
Expected Date of Notification:	August 2, 2024
Federal Agency Contact:	NEA-Grants@state.gov

Funding Opportunity Synopsis

An undiversified economy and inequitable participation in the labor force are two economic challenges facing the Dakhla and Laayoune regions. Largely dependent on agriculture, fisheries, renewable energy, tourism, and phosphate mining for income, the region is susceptible to a disconnect between citizens and the government when the primary source of revenue is from a natural resource rather than the citizens themselves.

Overreliance on those industries also limits private sector growth and contributes to a low rate of women's participation in the labor market.

Competitive proposals will support activities targeting underserved communities, to include women, youth, and People with Disabilities (PWD). The beneficiaries should receive some combination of soft- and job-skills along with entrepreneurship training. Proposals which have an innovative approach and/or have concrete outcomes such as jobs obtained, or businesses created will be looked on favorably. Proposals can reference relevant prior experience.

This project will support civil society in the Dakhla and Laayoune regions by developing the professional skills of the participants. Incremental progress in these areas is made possible through an informed and empowered population. The project will also help create the economic conditions that, in turn, allow associations and businesses to organize and approach local officials on questions and issues important to them, whether resource allocation or gender equity.

The U.S. State Department, in particular the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs' Office of Assistance Coordination (NEA/AC), will evaluate program success by measurable concrete outcomes among beneficiaries. Examples of measurable outcomes include, but are not limited to, improvement in skills taught; number of jobs obtained; and number of small businesses created during the program period of performance.

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, NEA/AC's Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) seeks to support projects in the Dakhla and Laayoune regions. Within these regions, proposals may seek to cover a broad geographic area or to focus on either specific urban centers, smaller villages, or rural areas. Proposals should explain the choice of location(s). 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.

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APPENDIX 2— Logic Model Template

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I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

The Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs' Office of Assistance Coordination's (NEA/AC) Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) seeks proposals that support inclusive economic growth in the Dakhla and Laayoune regions. Competitive proposals will support activities targeting specific demographics: women, youth, and People with Disabilities (PWD), combined with capacity building programming to relevant local entities, enabling a more conducive environment for economic growth. The beneficiaries should receive some combination of soft- and job-skills. Proposals that have an innovative approach and/or have concrete outcomes such as jobs obtained, or businesses created will be looked on favorably. Relevant experience can also be referenced in the proposal.

This is not a follow-on to previously implemented awards, though past projects in the regions have also had an economic empowerment focus.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Development in the Dakhla and Laayoune regions is challenged by multiple factors: an over-concentrated economy consisting of fishing, tourism, renewable energy, and phosphate mining; uncertainty over the future growth of other sectors (such as the maritime industry through the development of the port in Dakhla); and a lack of skilled workers.

Of the aforementioned challenges, this program seeks to specifically address the lack of skilled workers in the regions and provide them with tools, resources, and skillsets appropriate for current and future economic opportunities. A program with training specific to one industry may not transfer well to other sectors. Therefore, a program which is more general or provides broadly useful skills is needed to address the economic challenges that are pervasive throughout the regions. In addition, this program encourages collaborating with local entities, including the private sector, to build capacity locally, to achieve the intended objectives.

ACHIEVABLE OBJECTIVES

A successful project will result in:

1. Increase in participants' knowledge of technical, or soft skills that are relevant in the workplace, as well as entrepreneurship acumen and work readiness.
2. Number and types of partnerships developed that create jobs and/or target high-growth and high-impact economic activities. Partnerships ideally would be sustainable and would be created to continue catalyzing economic growth beyond the life of the program.
3. New jobs obtained and businesses created by participants.

PROJECT DESIGN

NEA/AC seeks proposals that will strengthen the economic empowerment of beneficiaries in the target regions by training them in relevant soft- or job-skills to ultimately contribute to economic growth in the area.

Project activities should include:

- a. Completion of an assessment of employment opportunities, based on an analysis of regional industry and market needs.
- b. Soft skills training (possible examples being workplace professionalism, practice interviews, communication skills, conflict resolution, sales and marketing skills, etc.)
- c. Tailored technical training to bolster employability, entrepreneurship and economic growth in the regions, based on the market needs and industry assessments.
- d. Partnerships with local entities, including private sector partners, to identify needed skills and provide internship and job opportunities for graduates of the program, or assist participants in starting their own businesses.

- e. Strengthen sustainable partnerships that would continue beyond the completion of project activities to continue to catalyze employability, entrepreneurship, and job creation.

Project beneficiaries should include:

Participants from underserved communities, namely women, youth, and People with Disabilities (PWD). Activities should enable them to take advantage of current and future economic opportunities in the Dakhla and Laayoune regions.

The following activities and costs are **NOT ALLOWED** under this announcement:

- Exchange activities with other countries or territories;
- Social welfare 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.

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 programming should view the training video located here:

https://encompassworld.com/elearningfiles/DOS/DOS_Gender_Integration_E-Course/story_html5.html.

DEFINITIONS

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

Delivering workforce readiness activities: Create and sustain pre-employment and employability programs for male and female youth and men and women in formal and non-formal settings. These programs develop foundational (pre-requisite or threshold) skills that are adaptable and necessary for entrance into the labor force, vocational training programs, and career-oriented higher education; skills such as critical thinking, teamwork, and communication. Workforce readiness programs may target out-of-school and marginalized youth and adults, or students in general education systems. Programs include labor market and social support services, and linkages with further technical skills development and career opportunities for both young men and women.

Partnership Development: Increase participation and establish networks among public and private civil society stakeholders to identify work force needs and coordinate efforts to create and sustain equitable, effective workforce development programs, especially for youth. This will be accomplished by building collaborative dialogue and action groups among

stakeholders such as business and industry, government, public and private education providers, labor associations, youth groups, and NGOs to plan, design and implement workforce development programs.

Private sector opportunity: Improve the capacity of businesses, including the self-employed poor; micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs); and high growth potential entrepreneurs, to start or grow and integrate into domestic and international markets through increases in productivity and improvements in corporate governance and the development and application of modern technology and marketing practices. Enhance the capacity of businesses and business associations in terms of their corporate governance capabilities and their application of best practices and technologies to achieve increased production and marketing of products and services. It includes adoption of efficient production processes, improved labor productivity, environmentally-sound management of natural resources and the development of accounting and management systems that can help the company and industry group implement business, labor, product and process standards that enhance business competitiveness. Business capacity development programs may include activities that help men- and women-owned firms and associations respond to these international markets and create regional alliances.

Diversity:

The term “diversity” means the practice of including the many communities, identities, races, ethnicities, backgrounds, abilities, cultures, and beliefs of a community.

Inclusion:

The term “inclusion” means the recognition, appreciation, and use of the talents and skills of persons of all backgrounds.

Equity:

The term “equity” means the consistent and systematic fair, just, and impartial treatment of all individuals, including individuals who belong to underserved communities that have been denied such treatment, such as

ethnic minorities, and indigenous persons, members of religious minorities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) persons; persons with disabilities; persons who live in rural areas; and persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality.

Underserved communities:

The term “underserved communities” refers to populations sharing a particular characteristic, as well as geographic communities, that have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life, as exemplified by the list in the preceding definition of “equity”.

II. MEASUREMENT OF RESULTS

Applicants shall provide a logic model and a theory of change/program logic statement 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 II. Please see Section VI below for more information.

Successful applicants will work with the NEA/AC program and monitoring and evaluation (MEL) teams to create a plan based on the proposed logic model/theory of change/program logic statement 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 MEL team.

III. AWARD INFORMATION

Funding Mechanism Type:	Cooperative Agreement
Estimated Number of Awards:	1 to 2
Estimated Total Program Funding:	\$1,500,000 USD (Incremental)
Estimated Award Ceiling:	\$500,000 USD
Estimated Award Floor:	\$200,000 USD
Cost-Sharing or Matching:	Encouraged; NOT Required
Estimated Length of Project Period:	3 Years

Contingent on the availability of funds, approximately **\$1,500,000** in Economic Support Funds for approximately 1-2 awards will be awarded through this announcement. If selected to receive an award, an applicant will be awarded funds for up to three (3) years, depending on the activities proposed. The estimated start date for this project is October 1, 2024.

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.**

Incremental Funding

NEA/AC intends to provide up to \$1.5 million in total funding over a three (3) year period. Funding for this award will be provided on an incremental basis subject to the availability of funds and successful performance. NEA/AC reserves the right to change the funding amounts, period of performance, and terms of the Award as a result of U.S. Government requirements, Recipient performance, project results, and the availability of funds. The Recipient will be notified in writing should such changes occur.

The resulting award will utilize an incremental funding mechanism and will only fund the first increment in the initial award. Up to \$500,000 is available for the first increment of funding (ceiling amount). It is estimated that the first increment will provide funding for the initial 12 months of the award (anticipated: October 1, 2024 to September 30, 2025), and the second increment will provide funding for an additional 12 months (anticipated: October 1, 2025 to September 30, 2026). The third increment will provide funding for another 12 months (anticipated October 1, 2026 to September 30, 2027). The second and third increments of funding are contingent upon the availability of funds and will be awarded at NEA/AC's discretion.

Special instructions regarding incremental funding:

Please provide a complete proposal that includes total project funding. The proposal narrative and budget should clearly specify the activities, budget breakdown, and timeframes for each funding increment. Additionally, the applicant should ensure that the project is severable after the completion of the first increment. The proposal should clearly demonstrate the value delivered at the end of the first increment which could stand on its own merits should funding for a second increment be unavailable.

IV. SUBSTANTIAL INVOLVEMENT

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

- Collaboration in establishing annual program objectives and approval of an annual work plan.
- Collaboration in development of training materials.
- Participation in Selection Process of Candidates.
- Pre-approving public-facing announcements and events.

V. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

All applicants will be screened by NEA/AC 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 Section A and Section B 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 international organizations;
 - Small businesses with function and regional experience in the areas of education and human development in the MENA region.

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.

NEA/AC strongly encourages 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.

A.1. Prime Applicant

To be considered for funding under this opportunity, applicants SHALL:

- Have demonstrable previous experience working in the MENA region. This should be addressed within the project narrative section of your application.

Demonstrate the ability to advance Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) through a project team inclusive of benefiting country nationals with previous experience managing [workforce readiness] programming in the region reflected at all levels of project management.

- Meet ALL of the registration requirements listed below.
- Meet any requirements listed as MANDATORY in *Additional Eligibility Considerations*, below.

A.2. Local Partners

Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit projects that include partnerships with local organizations that would work together on specific programmatic objectives or priorities and that utilize local expertise. **In particular, NEA/AC strongly encourages applicants not based in the MENA region to partner with local organizations.**

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 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.

UEI Number

All applicants must have a Unique Entity Identification (UEI) number.

Entities must register in SAM.gov and will be assigned their Unique Entity ID (SAM) within SAM.gov. Entities will no longer obtain or use a UEI (DUNS) for entity registration or reporting.

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.

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, each applicant 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 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. **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

There is no page limit for this section of an application. 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. As defined in the Department of State Standard Terms and Conditions (for assistance awards, Key Personnel means, "...key professional and supervisory personnel; i.e., the members of the professional staff in a program supervisory position engaged for or assigned to duties under the award." 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. 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. The template, which includes more detailed instructions, can be found in Appendix 1. **Applicants are strongly encouraged to review Appendix 1 before preparing their Budget and Budget Narrative.**

Logic Model/ Program Logic statement

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.**

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.**

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.**

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**.

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 15-point, Calibri. 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) 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 MyGrants. Applications will **NOT** be accepted from grants.gov. MyGrants requires 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 and will be able to submit its application.** NEA/AC will not provide 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.

MyGrants

MyGrants 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 mygrants.service-now.com.

To create an account, go to <https://afsitsm.servicenow.com/ilms/>, 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.

MyGrants 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 time (ET) on May 17, 2024. 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 will be 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

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.

- Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning: The applicant explains how monitoring, evaluation and learning activities will be carried out throughout the award's period of performance and who will be responsible for them.
- Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning: The applicant includes a final evaluation of the project at the completion of the award.

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.
- MEL: 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.
- MEL: The applicant includes a final evaluation of the project at the completion of the award.

Project Design (40 points)

The applicant clearly describes how each proposed project activity will address each of the objectives outlined in the requested priority area above (Section I).

- Responsiveness to NOFO: Explain how the proposed activities respond to the objectives listed in the NOFO.
- Rationale: To justify how the proposed activities will achieve the above objectives in this context.

- **Project Management:** Clear description of how the project will be managed in terms of initiation, planning, implementation and closing.
- **Partnerships and Buy-ins:** The applicant addresses how the project will engage or obtain support from relevant stakeholders and identifies any local partners.
- **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.
- **Contingency Plan:** The applicant articulates programming assumptions and potential challenges to project implementation and proposes contingency plans.
- **Division of Labor:** The application describes the division of labor among the applicant and any partners.
- **Targeted Populations:** The applicant identifies and addresses support for youth, women, and people with disabilities in all proposed activities and objectives and provides specific means for their inclusion.
- **Gender Considerations:** The applicant includes gender analysis in the project narrative that identifies relevant gender gaps and ways the proposed activities will address those gaps. Proposals should demonstrate how addressing relevant gender gaps will enhance the program's goals and objectives and how the project will benefit both men and women.
- **Logic Model and Theory of Change/Program Logic Statement:** The applicant details how the proposed Logic Model and Theory of Change/Program Logic statement clearly links project activities, outputs, and outcomes to objectives. If applicable, findings from

the Gender and Inclusion Analysis are clearly addressed within the program design.

- **Results Monitoring Plan (RMP):** The applicant details how they intend to monitor project progress towards outputs, outcomes, and objectives. Indicators include relevant disaggregations to monitor program implementation for diverse populations.
- **Program Logic:** Is it theoretically sound? Do all elements of the logic model fit together showing plausible pathways to achieving project outcomes? Have all the key assumptions been identified and their potential influences described? Are the risks to implementation (external factors) fully accounted for and described?

Organizational Capacity (20 points)

- The applicant demonstrates experience (e.g., has previously worked and/or has established contacts/partners) in the proposed country/territory/region.
- The applicant demonstrates an institutional record of successful programs in the content area proposed (e.g., work skills training).
- 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 any proposed partners.

Staff and Position Specifications (10 points)

- Pre-identified key staff members, including volunteers, demonstrate experience working in the country/territory/region

proposed, in the proposed content area, and with participants from that area (e.g., language skills, cultural understanding).

- A description of the roles of each person or position on the project – whether staff, partner, consultant, or volunteer – demonstrating that the project will be sufficiently staffed but will avoid redundancy or duplication of effort.
- A job description, including hiring criteria, is provided for each open key position.
- Applicant and/or partner staff have relevant language competencies.
- The applicant convincingly details how it will incorporate Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) principles in its approach to staffing.

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.
- The budget includes costs dedicated to management, monitoring, and evaluation, and any costs needed for further gender analysis and for addressing gender gaps.
- Adequate travel costs are proposed.
- The budget demonstrates a reasonable cost per participant.
- The budget accounts for monitoring and evaluation costs.
- Additional sources (cost-share or matching) for project funding are proposed, as well as an explanation of how those additional sources will be used.

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.

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 VIII. 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 expects to notify applicants who proceeded past the Technical Eligibility Review stage about the status of their application by August 2, 2024. 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.

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 are advised that successful passing of vetting to evaluate the risk that funds may benefit terrorists or their supporters may be a condition of award. Applicants may be asked to submit Risk Analysis Information about their company and its principal personnel. Vetting information may also be required for all sub-award performance on assistance awards identified by the Grants Officer. Failure to submit information when requested, or failure to pass vetting, may be grounds for rejecting an application for award.

E. 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.

F. 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.**

G. 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**.

All questions must be submitted in writing to **nea-grants@state.gov** by **April 1, 2024** 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 MyGrants and Grants.gov. Questions submitted after the deadline will not be addressed.

For questions regarding creating an account or using MyGrants 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 MyGrants tickets. The ILMS Self Service Portal can be accessed by going to <https://afsitsm.servicenowservices.com/ilms/>.

ILMS Help Desk

(888) 313-ILMS (4567)

<https://afsitsm.servicenowservices.com/ilms/>

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.