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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.

In conjunction with the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), the Political Section Assistance Unit at the U.S. Embassy in Tunisia seeks applications from local civil society organizations, non-profit organizations, community groups, non-governmental organizations, professional associations, private sector organizations, and universities registered and headquartered in Tunisia that will advance the media environment in Tunisia.

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 **Tunisia**. Please note: Applications that focus on activities in countries and territories other than Tunisia will NOT be considered.

Background Information about NEA/AC and MEPI

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/>.

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.

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I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. PROBLEM STATEMENT

The media plays a central role supporting democracy and strengthening political rights and civil liberties. A thriving media ecosystem gives citizens multiple sources of information from which they can inform their opinions and play an active role in society. After years of severe limits on freedoms of opinion and expression under Ben Ali, the Tunisian media landscape has transformed since the 2011 revolution. Despite the cancelation of the 1975 Press Code and the creation of the High Independent Authority for Audiovisual Communication (HAICA), regulation of Tunisia's media sector remains inconsistent. The sector is also in need of increased professionalism, particularly among journalists working in communities outside of the capital.

Local journalism plays a key role in democratic development. While national issues often attract more attention, local issues more substantially affect people's everyday life. Local media institutions remain underdeveloped in Tunisia.

Radio associations – specialized, local, non-profit radio stations – existed prior to the revolution but have proliferated since 2011, gaining popularity as an alternative to mainstream media. Radio associations are a source of localized and specialized news, promote local and national cultural content, and amplify the voices of various social groups while maintaining financial and editorial independence. There are currently 28 radio associations in Tunisia, though only 11 are licensed.

B. ACHIEVABLE OBJECTIVES

Proposals addressing this priority would include the two objectives below:

Objective 1: To give citizens the information needed to understand and engage on local and national issues by providing operational and technical capacity to Tunisian community radio stations.

Objective 2: To address misinformation and hold institutions across the country accountable by giving Tunisian journalists and others who contribute to community radio programming the skills needed.

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.**

This NOFO intends to support community-based radio associations to highlight local issues in Tunisia and encourage informed citizen engagement.

Communities outside of the capital continue to believe they have not benefitted since the 2011 revolution, particularly as it relates to economic issues. Effective local and community-based journalists who can highlight and bring forth salient issues will inform and empower citizens to raise these issues with public officials and take other actions to advance inclusive and sustainable policies.

The Embassy seeks proposals that develop Tunisia's media landscape, either by supporting the growth of existing and new radio associations or by facilitating the professionalization and specialization of Tunisian journalists who contribute to those radio associations. Proposals should couple technical, managerial, and logistical support with plans to ensure that stations continue to broadcast various viewpoints and can maintain editorial and financial independence.

Training activities should focus on technical, financial, and journalistic management practices to equip existing and new community radio stations with the capacity to offer informed, accessible, and popular programming that encourages citizen engagement while remaining financially solvent.

Activities should include training on journalistic principles of accuracy, fairness, transparency, and service to the public. In addition to reporting, the trainees should also learn fact-checking tactics and be able to identify misinformation.

Successful projects will include clear plans to meet their objectives. Projects should account for the associations' production and business capabilities, ensuring that beneficiaries will be able to maintain financial independence

Applicants must be registered in the official Gazette of the Tunisian government and should be headquartered in Tunisia. Applicants must demonstrate experience and capacity in successfully managing projects, have established management structures, official registrations, community support, and clear organizational goals and objectives. The selection process will be based on each proposals ability to quantify and communicate the impact of the project.

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;
- 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 programming 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.

During negotiations, successful applicants will work with the NEA/AC program and Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) teams, to create or review a logic model/theory of change. A template can be found in Appendix 2. Following the creation or review of the logic model/theory of change, we will work collectively to create a Results Monitoring Plan (RMP). The RMP is based on the logic model/theory of change and is used to measure qualitative and quantitative indicators.

Successful applicants will be responsible for collecting data against these indicators, which will be monitored throughout the period of performance 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:	1-2
Estimated Total Program Funding:	\$500,000
Estimated Award Ceiling:	\$500,000
Estimated Award Floor:	\$250,000
Cost-Sharing or Matching:	Encouraged; NOT Required
Estimated Length of Project Period:	12-36 Months

Contingent on the availability of funds, approximately \$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 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.

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

- 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.

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 local civil society organizations, non-profit organizations, community groups, non-governmental organizations, professional associations, private sector organizations, and universities that must be registered in the official Gazette of the Tunisian government and should be headquartered in Tunisia.

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 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 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 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 13 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 (such as any existing community radio stations they wish to include as beneficiaries of the program) 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**.
5. **Logic Model/Theory of Change:** A logic model or theory of change demonstrates 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**. 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) 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 applications electronically using **Grants.gov**. This system 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. Applicants must select one of these systems to submit their application; do not submit an application through both systems.** 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 July 20, 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, it is not in a position to grant 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.

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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.

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:

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 October 1, 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

N/A

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 **“Tunisia Local Grants 2021” in the subject line.**

All questions must be submitted in writing to nea-grants@state.gov by **June 21, 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.