

**U.S. Department of State
Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs
Office of Assistance Coordination**

Assistance Listings Number: 19.600

Supporting American-Style Higher Education in Iraq 2024

Opportunity Number: DFOP0010765

Key Information:

Announcement Type:	New
Date Opened:	March 25, 2024
Deadline for Questions:	April 14, 2024
Application Deadline:	May 19, 2024
Expected Date of Notification:	August 1, 2024
Federal Agency Contact:	NEA-Grants@state.gov

Funding Opportunity Synopsis

American-style higher education plays an important role in influencing and educating the next generation of leaders in Iraq. It offers students an alternative vision to terrorist and violent extremism ideologies, strengthens democracy, and encourages economic growth.

The Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, Office of Assistance Coordination (NEA/AC), seeks applications to support and strengthen American-style higher education programs in Iraq, including in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region (IKR). In addition to high academic standards and progressive curricula, programs will facilitate critical thinking and tolerance of different opinions and beliefs to foster community cohesion and engagement. Programs will strengthen the diversity of the student body of American-style Iraqi institutions of higher education (IHEs), support retention of students, faculty, and staff, and provide the knowledge and skills graduates require for success in governmental, non-governmental, and private sector leadership positions.

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 Iraq and the Iraqi Kurdistan Region (IKR).

Applications that focus on activities in countries 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. NEA/AC works in 19 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. NEA/AC is committed to advancing equity and support for minority and marginalized populations. All programs should consider strategies for expanding the pool of individuals/organizations/beneficiaries to afford opportunities for as diverse and inclusive a population as is feasible to bring perspectives based on religion, disability, race, ethnicity, national origin, age, and other factors to implementation of the program.

Table of Contents

I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION	6
A. PROBLEM STATEMENT.....	7
B. ACHIEVABLE OBJECTIVES	8
C. PROJECT DESIGN	9
D. SOCIAL INCLUSION INTEGRATION	12
E. DEFINITIONS	12
II. MEASUREMENT OF RESULTS	14
III. AWARD INFORMATION	15
IV. SUBSTANTIAL INVOLVEMENT	16
V. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION	16
A. ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS.....	16
B. REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS	16
C. ADDITIONAL ELIGIBILITY CONSIDERATIONS.....	17
VI. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION	18
A. APPLICATION DOCUMENTS	18
B. APPLICATION FORMATTING REQUIREMENTS.....	23
C. SUBMITTING AN APPLICATION	23
D. SUBMISSION DATES AND TIMES	24
VII. FUNDING LIMITATIONS, RESTRICTIONS, AND OTHER CONSIDERATIONS	25
A. AUDIT REQUIREMENTS	25
B. COMPLIANCE WITH APPLICABLE FEDERAL FUNDING REGULATIONS AND DOS TERMS AND CONDITIONS.....	26
VIII. APPLICATION REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS	26
A. APPLICATION EVALUATION CRITERIA	26
B. REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS.....	30
IX. ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION	31
A. AWARD NOTICES.....	31
B. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS	31
C. TRAVEL NOTIFICATIONS.....	32
D. APPLICANT VETTING AS A CONDITION OF AWARD	32
E. SPECIAL PROVISION FOR PERFORMANCE IN A DESIGNATED COMBAT AREA (SPOT) REQUIREMENTS	33
F. BRANDING AND MARKING REQUIREMENTS FOR GRANTEES.....	35
G. UEI NUMBER REQUIREMENT FOR SUB AWARDEES	35
H. SUB AWARDEE REPORTING REQUIREMENT.....	36
X. AGENCY CONTACTS	36
XI. DISCLAIMER	36

APPENDICES (Posted with NOFO)**APPENDIX 1 – Budget Sample Template and Budget Narrative Guidance****APPENDIX 2 – Logic Model Template****APPENDIX 3 – Application Guidance****APPENDIX 4 – Social Inclusion Analysis Guiding Questions****APPENDIX 5 – Results Monitoring Plan Template****APPENDIX 6 – Standard Indicators**

I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

The Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, Office of Assistance Coordination (NEA/AC), seeks applications to support and strengthen American-style IHEs in Iraq. With this announcement, NEA/AC seeks to support multiple awards with the objective of building and increasing the institutional capacity of IHEs in Iraq. Proposals shall address ways to develop new and ongoing partnerships between IHEs in Iraq and higher education institutions in the United States. Focus should be given to building the capacity of IHEs and educational systems in Iraq to approach American higher education standards found in U.S. universities, community colleges, and vocational schools. Proposals will be structured to establish sustainable partnerships and curriculum and resource advancements which in the short-term produce meaningful institutional improvements and in the long-term help achieve formal accreditation by U.S. authorities. Additionally, projects will provide financial assistance to recruit and retain students who are representative of Iraq's diverse ethnic, geographic, and religious communities who would otherwise not have the financial means to attend college. Where possible, proposals should seek to support disciplines and skills relevant for the adaptation to and mitigation of the impacts of climate change. These may include but need not be limited to programs related to civil and energy engineering, earth sciences and natural resource management, public policy and law, and public health.

Proposals should facilitate professional skills development, including improving English proficiency among students and faculty; virtual or in-person exchanges with U.S.-based IHEs or other regional American-style IHEs; capacity building for faculty and administrators in areas like research, curriculum and pedagogic development, governance, management and administration; practical training and education for specific skilled careers; and career development services for students, including career advisory, internship opportunities, and soft-skills training. Proposals should also address ways to enhance students' critical thinking and problem-solving skills; promote tolerance of different opinions and beliefs to foster community resilience and development; provide students from diverse

religious, ethnic, and geographic backgrounds with professional skills that enable them to be engaged members of their field and citizens of their state; and develop facilities and resources to support student access and performance including expanded library resources, sufficient living accommodations, updated textbooks/curriculum, web-based enrollment applications, virtual classes and exchanges, and online learning tools.

To support the U.S. Strategy on Women, Peace, and Security (WPS), proposals must address the distinct needs of women as students and faculty to increase access to higher education through targeted recruitment and assistance efforts; provide tailored assistance to ensure completion of graduation requirements; develop students' professional and leadership skills which promote economic empowerment; and may support professional advancement of women in fields of academia.

Proposals should contribute to the following objectives in Iraq: strengthening relationships across ethnic and religious divisions, promoting tolerance, opposing and reducing vulnerability to extremist ideology, and fostering economic development.

A. PROBLEM STATEMENT

American-style higher education plays an important role in influencing and educating the next generation of leaders – both women and men – in the region, offering an alternative vision to extremist ideologies, strengthening democracy, and encouraging economic growth. Support for institutions offering such an education will allow greater numbers of Iraqi students from diverse backgrounds and lower socio-economic levels to develop the necessary knowledge and skills for professional and national leadership, in an academic environment that fosters critical thinking; tolerance of different opinions; appreciation for cultural diversity; inclusion of women; and a more expansive worldview.

B. ACHIEVABLE OBJECTIVES

A successful project must include, but does not need to be limited to:

1. Improvement in institutional capacity, as evidenced by:
 - a. New or enhanced partnerships and affiliations with U.S. and/or regional American-style IHE(s) that improve student experience, enhance faculty's professional development, and guide Iraqi IHEs towards best practices in higher education;
 - b. Improved institutional policy and governance structure, including an independent governing board, broad-based strategic planning, and policy transparency;
 - c. Increased faculty and student body recruitment, retention, and diversity, consistent with Iraq's religious, ethnic, and geographic diversity, with a focus on economically disadvantaged individuals;
 - d. Improved infrastructure, facilities, and services to support student performance, experience, and post-graduation employability.
2. Enhanced quality of education and student outcomes, as evidenced by:
 - a. Updated learning material that adequately prepares students for the employment market, incorporation of experiential and scenario-based learning into curriculum, and enhanced English language instruction and performance;
 - b. Improved career development services, including internships, job fairs, career advisors, soft skills training, and alumni networks;
 - c. Improved employment rates for graduates.
3. Demonstrable progress toward programmatic or institutional accreditation by U.S. and Iraqi accrediting organizations.
4. Clear, demonstrable efforts to support and uplift women, as evidenced by:

- a. Targeted recruitment initiatives to increase the number of women enrolled in Iraqi IHEs;
- b. Development of fields of study, course offerings and/or majors related to women's issues;
- c. New or improved services to increase retention and graduation rates of female students; and/or,
- d. Enhanced career development services for women to provide opportunities for meaningful participation in the economy.

C. PROJECT DESIGN

This solicitation invites applications in support of American-style higher education in Iraq. Funds are available to support projects with potential to promote this objective through activities that improve the capacity of the institution to: provide quality degree programs for Iraqi students, incorporating high academic standards and progressive curricula; enhance critical thinking and problem solving skills; promote tolerance of different opinions and beliefs to foster community resilience and development; provide students from diverse religious, ethnic, socio-economic and geographic backgrounds with professional skills that enable them to be engaged members of their field and citizens of their state; and develop facilities to provide career development services and employment counseling to assist graduates' transitions from academic to professional roles. Proposals should address ways to enhance partnerships with U.S. and regional American-style institutions of higher education for the purposes of research, exchange, and curriculum and pedagogic development, to include faculty exchanges. Additionally, proposals must further WPS goals of promoting women's access to education and economic empowerment.

Project activities may include:

1. Activities to improve institutional capacity and financial sustainability.
2. Activities, which may include financial assistance, to recruit and retain students who are representative of Iraq's diverse ethnic, geographic, and religious communities, and that encourage/support women's enrollment, especially for students who will engage in STEM and

emerging fields such as clean energy, energy efficiency, greenhouse gas reduction, water management and conservation, wetland and marsh conservation, sustainable agriculture, and other areas of study related to climate change.

3. Activities to work toward accreditation by U.S. and Iraqi accrediting bodies, including academic and vocational/trade accrediting bodies.
4. Curricula and activities designed to expose students to a broad variety of perspectives and worldviews, as well as expansion of digital and physical library services and resources.
5. Activities to enhance partnerships and linkages with U.S. and regional IHEs, such as the development and sustainment of exchange programs, joint degree programs, faculty exchanges, consortia, and sharing of best practices.
6. Program elements that support the transition from academic or vocational student to professional roles especially in the private sector, possibly including, but not limited to, employment counseling and career development programs.
7. Renovations to existing facilities (not including new construction or structural changes to existing facilities) or improvements to university infrastructure (to include IT) that enhance the institution's ability to provide educational services, employment, and appropriate accommodations for students.
8. New or improved housing options (not including new construction or structural changes to existing facilities) for female students.
9. Third-party evaluations by credible organizations to help institutions improve the quality of curricula and programming, including to modernize areas of study to maintain currency with Western teaching methods and thinking.
10. Creation of new positions to better support recruitment and retention of female students and economically disadvantaged individuals, e.g. dedicated recruitment specialists, academic counselors, or career development officers.
11. Partnerships with the private and/or public sector to provide internships or job placement opportunities for students, especially women.

12. Strategies to recruit and retain female faculty or hire female staff at senior levels within the university administration, especially in climate- or clean energy-related fields of study.
13. New or expanded activities related to vocational and technical skills development that offer practical training and education to prepare students for skilled careers such as carpentry, masonry, agriculture, electrical and construction management, solar panel installation, smart meter installation, automotive technology cosmetology, HVAC, and computer-aided drafting, and manufacturing.

Project beneficiaries must include:

1. Students from different religious, ethnic, and geographic backgrounds, representing the diversity of Iraq's population, who would not otherwise be financially able to attend IHEs.
2. Women in Iraq (***at least 40% of budgeted project activities must directly benefit women in Iraq***).

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

1. Exchange activities, other than Faculty Exchanges with partner IHE(s), with other countries or territories;
2. Social welfare projects;
3. Paying to complete activities begun with other funds;
4. Activities that appear partisan or that support individual or party electoral campaigns;
5. Academic or analytical research (if not necessary as part of a larger project);
6. One-time events, such as stand-alone conferences and one-off round tables;
7. Medical and psychological research and clinical studies;
8. Projects of a commercial or profit-making nature;
9. Cultural presentations, cultural research, cultural clubs, or festivals, etc.;
10. Entertainment costs (e.g., receptions, social activities, ceremonies, alcoholic beverages, guided tours); and

11. New construction of any kind.

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. SOCIAL INCLUSION INTEGRATION FOR WOMEN

NEA/AC requires that all activities fully address women's inclusion, ensuring that individuals from diverse backgrounds¹ benefit from support to the extent feasible, and that inclusion awareness is a built-in component of project activities. This should be documented through social inclusion analysis in the project narrative that identifies any relevant inclusion gaps impacting women and girls, and ways the proposed activities will address those gaps. Proposals should demonstrate how addressing relevant inclusion gaps will enhance the project's goals and objectives. Applicants who are unfamiliar with these concepts in foreign assistance programing should view the training video located here:

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

E. DEFINITIONS

American-Style Institution of Higher Education: A non-profit university, college, community college, or vocational/technical institute that implements an American curriculum; instructs courses in English; hires English-speaking faculty educated in the United States; uses American textbooks and course material; and affiliates itself with American, British, Australian, and/or Canadian institutions of higher education.

Institutional Capacity: An institution or organization's overall performance and viability, including its administrative and management functions, service provision, its structure, culture, and its sustainability. Institutional capacity-

¹ Consideration of diversity of race, ethnicity, color, creed, national origin, disability, or other status.

building programs are intended to strengthen an organization's ability to provide quality and effective services, while being viable as an institution. This means supporting an organization to be programmatically sustainable (providing needed and effective services), as well as organizationally sustainable (with strong leadership and having necessary systems and procedures in place), while ensuring that it has sufficient resources (human, financial, and material).

Diversity: The practice of including the many communities, identities, races, ethnicities, backgrounds, abilities, cultures, religions, and beliefs of a community.

Inclusion: The recognition, appreciation, and use of the talents and skills of persons of all backgrounds.

Equity: 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; persons with disabilities; persons who live in rural areas; and persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality.

Accessibility: The design, construction, development, and maintenance of facilities, information and communication technology, programs, and services so that all people, including people with disabilities, can fully and independently use them.

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 statement to demonstrate how the proposed project (including activities, the project design, and the surrounding context) will achieve the stated objectives, with particular attention to how your approach will reach individuals of diverse backgrounds relevant to your specific context. The Logic Model and Theory of Change statements can be generated using the template in **Appendix 2**.

Applicants shall also provide a Results Monitoring Plan (RMP) to describe how the proposed project will quantitatively and qualitatively capture and measure data that demonstrates progress toward achieving the specific objectives of the proposed project. This includes any disaggregation of indicators relevant to the specific sub-populations you intend to serve. Please see **Appendix 5** for the RMP template. Please see Section VI below for more information.

Please see **Appendix 6** for a list of standard indicators that can be used when developing the RMP to measure the overarching NEA/AC program results for supporting institutions of higher education in Iraq. Not all of these standard indicators will be applicable to the proposed project, but applicants are encouraged to use them where relevant. It is expected that the applicant will propose a combination of the relevant standard indicators in Appendix 6 along with custom indicators suggested by the applicant for NEA/AC review.

NEA/AC's MEL team will work with the successful applicant on finalizing indicators as part of the RMP that will be utilized for the negotiated award. 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. A MEL Plan outlining the data collection plan and timeline will be required 90 days after issuance of award for review, feedback and approval.

III. AWARD INFORMATION

Funding Mechanism Type:	Grant
Estimated Number of Awards:	4
Estimated Total Program Funding:	\$10,000,000
Estimated Award Ceiling:	\$3,000,000
Estimated Award Floor:	\$1,000,000
Cost-Sharing or Matching:	Encouraged; NOT Required
Estimated Length of Project Period:	12-24 Months

Contingent on the availability of funds, approximately **\$10,000,000** in Economic Support Funds for approximately **4** awards will be awarded through this announcement. If selected to receive an award, an applicant will be awarded funds for up to **12-24 Months**, 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.**

IV. SUBSTANTIAL INVOLVEMENT

N/A

V. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

All applicants will be screened by NEA/AC to determine whether they meet all 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 must be an American-style Institution of Higher Education in Iraq, to include the Iraqi Kurdistan Region, that is non-state sponsored and offers a postsecondary level academic curriculum that leads to a vocational, associate's, bachelor's, or higher degree.

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 that 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.

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.

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 SAM account, go to <https://sam.gov/content/entity-registration>.

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).

Note: Obtaining an active SAM.gov registration may take **12 - 15 business days** to complete the process of creating an account in the system.

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 criterion 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 one (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. The pages of required documents 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 and SF-424A)

Applicants must complete each of these forms online to be considered for funding.

Guidance on how to complete the SF-424 and SF-424A 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 20 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 and Theory of Change

Applicants shall provide a Logic Model and Theory of Change/ statement to demonstrate how the proposed project (including activities, the project design, and the surrounding context) will achieve the stated objectives, with particular attention to how your approach will reach individuals of diverse backgrounds relevant to your specific context. A Theory of Change statement describes how and why a program is expected to achieve its stated outcomes using “if-then-because” language. Findings from the Inclusion Analysis should be clearly addressed in the program design and Logic Model. The Logic Model and 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.**

Social Inclusion Analysis

The social inclusion analysis for women (**not to exceed three (3) pages**, preferably as a Word Document) provides a concise analysis of relevant norms, equity and equality for underserved communities and marginalized populations, power relations, and conflict dynamics in target countries. Potential domains of analysis include institutional practices and barriers, cultural norms, male/female roles, access to, and control over assets and resources, and patterns of decision-making. Applicants should briefly explain how they have integrated findings from their analysis into project design and/or other proposal documents, including a plan for regularly reviewing and updating the social inclusion analysis with local partners/beneficiaries, and making any necessary adjustments to program implementation. A set of guiding questions can be found in **Appendix 4**.

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.

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**.

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. These settings do not apply if using provided templates.

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 and SF-424A) 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 through **MyGrants**. Applications will **NOT** be accepted through grants.gov. MyGrants requires that the applying organization have an account with the system, and requires a UEI number and an active SAM.gov account as detailed in Section V. **It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure they have an active account and able to submit its application. 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.

MyGrants

MyGrants is a comprehensive grants management system that allows applicants to apply for, manage, and report on the program and the use of U.S. government funds for multiple programs, accessed online at: <https://mygrants.servicenowservices.com/mygrants>.

To create an account, go to

<https://mygrants.servicenowservices.com/mygrants>, and click the “create an account” hyperlink, located above the username 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 resources 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 19, 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 are no exceptions to the submission requirements outlined in this announcement.

VII. FUNDING LIMITATIONS, RESTRICTIONS, AND OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

A. 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.

B. 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/2020/10/U.S.-Department-of-State-Standard-Terms-and-Conditions-10-21-2020-508.pdf>) and 2 CFR 200 and 2 CFR 600 as applicable.

VIII. APPLICATION REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS

Each application submitted under this announcement will be evaluated and rated based on the evaluation criteria outlined below. The criteria are designed to assess the quality of the application and to determine the likelihood of its success and impact. The criteria are closely related and are considered in judging the overall quality of an application. Applications will be reviewed based on their fullness, coherence, clarity, and attention to detail. Points are awarded only to applications that are responsive within the context of this program announcement.

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.
- **Final Evaluation:** The applicant includes a final evaluation plan for 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.
- Marginalized Populations: The applicant identifies and addresses support for marginalized populations in all proposed activities and objectives and provides specific means for their inclusion.
- Inclusion Considerations: The applicant incorporates inclusion analysis in the project narrative that identifies relevant inclusion gaps impacting women and girls and ways the proposed activities will address those gaps. Proposals should demonstrate how addressing relevant gaps will enhance the program's goals and objectives and how the project will benefit individuals of all diverse backgrounds representative of Iraqi society.
- Logic Model and Theory of Change: 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 Inclusion Analysis are clearly addressed within the program design.
- Results Monitoring Plan: The applicant details how they intend to monitor project progress towards outputs, outcomes, and objectives.

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., local government skills training).

- The applicant demonstrates experience working equitably with individuals of all diverse backgrounds, including women.
- 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 social inclusion analysis and for addressing male/female gaps.
- Adequate travel costs are proposed.
- Additional sources (cost-share or matching) for project funding are proposed, as well as an explanation of how those additional sources will be used.
- The budget demonstrates a reasonable cost per participant.
- The budget accounts for monitoring and evaluation costs.

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 July 1, 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 is a condition of award.

Applicants may be asked to submit information required by DS Form 4184, Risk Analysis Information about their company and its principal personnel. Vetting information is also required for all sub-award performance on assistance awards identified by the Grants Officer, information may be submitted on the secure web portal at <https://ramportal.state.gov>, via Email to RAM@state.gov, or hardcopy to the Grants Officer. Questions on the form may be emailed to RAM@state.gov. Failure to submit information when requested, or failure to pass vetting, may be grounds for rejecting an application for award.

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

Applicants proposing activities in **Iraq** are required to adhere to the following:

All recipient personnel deploying to an area of combat operations, as designated by the Secretary of Defense under federal assistance over \$150,000 or performance over 30 days must register in the Department of Defense maintained Synchronized Pre-deployment and Operational Tracker (SPOT) system. Recipients of federal assistance awards shall register in SPOT before deployment, or if already in the designated operational area, register upon becoming an employee under the assistance award and maintain current data in SPOT. Information on how to register in SPOT is available from your Grants Officer or Grants Officer Representative.

Recipients utilizing personnel who are not performing private security functions must account for personnel within the SPOT system anonymously through the use of the aggregate count functionality. This includes U.S. Citizens, Third Country Nationals (TCN), and Locally-hired Iraqi personnel except as noted in the following paragraph.

Recipients utilizing personnel who are performing a private security function; are performing duties as a translator or interpreter; require access to U.S. facilities, services, or support; or desire consideration for refugee or special immigrant status under the Refugee Crisis in Iraq Act of 2007

(subtitle C of title XII of Public Law 110–181 must be entered into SPOT individually with all required personal information. If a locally-hired Iraqi falls into one of these categories, the recipient must enter all of the required identification data into SPOT.

When the Recipient is ready to enter U.S. Citizens, Third Country Nationals (TCN), and/or locally-hired individuals using the Aggregate Count method, the Recipient will notify the Grants Officer who will contact the Department SPOT Program Manager (A/LM/AQM) to obtain the “Aggregate Count” template. The Recipient will complete the “Aggregate Count” template and return to the SPOT Program Manager who will ensure that aggregate counts are loaded into SPOT.

The Recipient’s SPOT Administrator is responsible for updating the aggregate locally hired national count on a quarterly basis by providing updated information via the “Aggregate Count” template to the GO/GOR for each award who will forward to the Department SPOT Program Manager for SPOT entry.

Recipient performance may require the use of armed private security personnel. To the extent that such private security contractors (PSCs) are required, recipients are required to ensure they adhere to Chief of Mission (COM) policies and procedures regarding the operation, oversight, and accountability of PSCs.

Recipient performance may require the use of armed private security personnel. To the extent that such private security contractors (PSCs) are required, recipients are required to ensure they adhere to Chief of Mission (COM) policies and procedures regarding the operation, oversight, and accountability of PSCs.

As specific COM policies and procedures may differ in scope and applicability, recipients of federal assistance awards are advised to review post policies and procedures carefully in this regard and direct any questions to the Embassy Regional Security Office (RSO) via the Grants Officer

Representative (GOR). Any exclusion to these policies must be granted by the COM via the RSO. COM policies and procedures may be obtained from the RSO via the GOR. Recipients of federal assistance awards are also advised that these policies and procedures may be amended from time to time at the post in response to changing circumstances.

Recipients of federal assistance awards are advised that adherence to these policies and procedures are considered to be a material requirement of their award. Recipients of federal assistance awards are reminded that only the Grants Officer has the authority to modify the Notice of Award. Recipients shall proceed with any security guidance provided by the RSO, but shall advise the Grants Officer and the GOR of the guidance received and any potential cost or schedule impact.

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 may be considered on a case-by-case basis.

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

All questions and a notification of Intent to Apply must be submitted in writing to nea-grants@state.gov by **April 14, 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 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://afsism.servicenowservices.com/ilms/>.

ILMS Help Desk

(888) 313-ILMS (4567)

<https://afsism.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.