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in Emerging MENA Markets
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Funding Opportunity Synopsis

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region's media and entertainment sector is undergoing a massive transition. The region's demographics and use of digital media have created a drive for growth. With its number of Internet users almost doubling in the last five years, MENA is one of the fastest growing online markets in the world. Youth under 24 years old comprise almost 50% of the region's population and are not just consumers but creators of media content via mobile, apps, and social media. On average in 2015, an individual in the region has spent 10.9 hours per day consuming media, slightly up from 10.6 hours per day in 2013. A little over 40% of this time is being spent on digital platforms, particularly mobile devices. The print sector is declining in the region as consumers are rapidly shifting their consumption to digital sources. According to the Dubai Press Club's Arab Media Outlook, there are two key platforms driving this growth – TV and digital gaming. Gaming is expected to cross \$1 billion in revenues by 2018; MENA social and casual gaming consumption is estimated at twice the global rate due to high proportions of youth and smartphone usage.

Despite the rise of digital use, TV consumption still continues to be a critical platform. According to Dubai Press Club's Arab Media Outlook, due to the region's family-oriented culture, "TV is still the king of the home, or, at least the living room maintaining a steady place." Globally, while digital video has grown significantly, TV viewing time has remained stable. Both globally and regionally, there is still a desire for TV's long-form content with more substance, depth, and context.

According to Northwestern University in Qatar's Media in the Middle East study, the region's TV market base currently stands at 50 million TV households, and is dominated by satellite television. MENA's traditional TV industry was worth more than \$3.37 billion in revenues in 2015, where more than \$2.39 billion was in free-to-air (FTA) advertising and less than \$1 billion in pay TV subscription (paid media) revenues. Further, with 43% of total net ad spend, TV in the Middle East has one of the highest shares of media ad spend in the world. According to the Dubai Press Club's Arab Media Outlook, the Pay TV industry in the region is underpenetrated at 10% in 2015 – much lower than comparable markets where it was higher than 55%. Even the affluent GCC market is expected to reach a penetration rate of 50% by 2018, which is still slightly lower than other regions. However, this is changing as premium local content is being increasingly introduced on pay platforms.

Major television networks are increasing their premium online offerings while U.S. digital services such as Netflix and Amazon are expanding into the region. The emergence of these different platforms is an important trend that will impact the type of content that gets produced and distributed in the region in the next few years. IHS Markit highlights that these operators clearly see a market potential and they predict that this market will grow from 4 million subscribers to more than 12 million by 2020. This is still less than 20% of all TV households, demonstrating strong market potential. Further, MENA is seen as an immensely diverse region in purchasing power, and with a population of 437 million – it could grow at a 35% compound annual growth rate over the next few years. These networks have witnessed an initial phase of aggressive growth, but now face challenges in scaling their business models and expanding their content into new genres.

There is great potential for the U.S. private sector to expand in this evolving and emerging market even as recent reports indicate that Netflix and Amazon have had lackluster results since launching their services in 2016 in the MENA. Pan Arab regional players have four times the share of the market compared to Netflix and Amazon. A major reason for this is because of the lack of availability of local content. However, IHS Markit reports that once “Netflix and Amazon start to invest in local content, and make carriage deals with telecoms and with broadcasters for easy access to content and talent, this will allow them to grow substantially in the next four-to-five years.”

Through this funding opportunity, NEA/AC seeks to promote U.S. economic interests by testing innovative means to engage in the emerging MENA media and entertainment market. The project(s) funded through this solicitation will encourage the U.S. private sector to invest in and facilitate production of quality local content and improve local productions and regional capacity, while promoting positive messages of interest to the U.S. government. In addition, the project(s) will harness the power of media by engaging MENA consumers on topics and themes that are NEA/AC priorities. Some themes could include but are not limited to: economic growth, participatory governance, entrepreneurship, women’s empowerment and gender issues, open governance, anti-corruption, urban/rural divide, youth apathy, and civic engagement. The project(s) will increase collaboration between U.S.-MENA, MENA-MENA, and MENA-other region media and entertainment industry entities on production deals by establishing a production fund to finance partnerships that lead to media and entertainment production deals. Final financing should include 60% of total project funding from outside resources.

The project(s) will leverage the United States’ status as the global media and entertainment leader to improve the capacity of MENA media and entertainment practitioners on storytelling, production efficiencies, and quality content. Activities will include matchmaking activities between U.S. private sector and other entities, technical assistance to aspiring MENA media/entertainment practitioners, and production of new content in the region.

The project(s) will directly address areas of interest for U.S. business while improving MENA media and entertainment industry capacity to conclude business deals with the U.S. private sector and other regions, produce innovative and creative content, and advance positive messaging. It will be measured against the number of business deals concluded as a direct and indirect result of the project, by U.S.-MENA, MENA-MENA, and MENA-other region entities; ratings and revenue changes of productions as a direct result of this project; surveys and focus groups demonstrating perception changes on given topics directly as a result of this project; and indirect indicators such as number of individuals employed as a direct result of this project, as well as broader data on media consumption/revenue/production changes in the market.

Eligible Countries and Territories:

In this announcement, we seek to support projects with activities in the broader MENA region. Locations of activities and project beneficiaries will be determined through program design and implementation. No activities may take place in UAE, Egypt, Yemen, Syria or Iraq. As a program intended to benefit MENA actors, the majority of activities should take place in the MENA region.

All applications must be submitted in English. Applicants may submit only one (1) application. Complete information on how applicants can submit proposals for this opportunity can be found in [Section VI](#) below.

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

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APPENDICES (*Posted with NOFO*)

APPENDIX 1— Budget Sample Template and Budget Narrative Guidance

APPENDIX 2— Logic Model Template

APPENDIX 3— Application Guidance

APPENDIX 4— Timeline Template

APPENDIX 5— Key Personnel Bio/Position Descriptions Template

APPENDIX 6— Security, Risk Mitigation, & Contingency Planning Summary

I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

Aligned with U.S. government's Economic Reform objective, this funding opportunity seeks to advance U.S. economic interests in the MENA region while improving MENA media and entertainment industry capacity to conclude business deals with the U.S. and other regions, produce innovative and creative content, build the capacity of MENA-based practitioners, and advance positive messaging of the U.S. It will also advance core NEA/AC focus areas by addressing some issues including but not limited to economic growth, participatory governance, entrepreneurship, women's empowerment and gender issues, open governance, anti-corruption, urban/rural divide, youth apathy, and civic engagement.

- Countering Violent Extremism as a theme/focus is explicitly excluded from the objectives of this project.
- Recognizing different levels of opportunity for advancement across the region, this project will prioritize enhancing the capacity of youth, women, and underserved communities as well as advancing the aspiring next generation of MENA media and entertainment practitioners.

A. PROBLEM STATEMENT

The MENA region's media sector is going through a massive transition and is evolving at a pivotal time. The region's demographics and use of digital media have created a drive for growth. With its number of Internet users almost doubling in the last five years, MENA is one of the fastest growing online markets in the world. Youth under 24 years old comprise almost 50% of the region's population and are not just consumers but creators of media content via mobile, apps, and social media. On average in 2015, an individual in the region has spent 10.9 hours per day consuming media, slightly up from 10.6 hours per day in 2013. This figure is comparable with that of the United States, United Kingdom, and Australia where up to 10-12 hours were spent on media. A little over 40% of this time is being spent on digital platforms, particularly on mobile devices. The print sector is declining in the region as consumers are rapidly shifting their consumption to digital sources. According to the Dubai Press Club's Arab Media Outlook, there are two key platforms driving this growth – TV and digital gaming. Gaming is expected to cross \$1 billion in revenues by 2018; MENA social and casual gaming consumption is estimated at twice the global rate due to high proportions of youth and smartphone usage.

As opposed to the print and music sectors, television has not been significantly impacted by digital growth. Due to the region's family-oriented culture, TV consumption will continue to be a critical platform. According to Dubai Press Club's Arab Media Outlook, "TV is still the king of the home, or, at least the living room maintaining a steady place." Both globally and regionally, there is still a desire for TV's long-form content with more substance, depth, and context. Users are consuming both longer and shorter types of content – they're simultaneously switching from two-minute YouTube videos to the 23-minute episode on Netflix to 'binge watching' an entire series or viewing 10-second clips on Snapchat.

The region's TV market base currently stands at 50 million households, which is dominated by

satellite television. MENA's traditional TV industry was worth more than \$3.37 billion in revenues in 2015, where more than \$2.39 billion was in free-to-air (FTA) advertising and less than \$1 billion in pay TV subscription (paid media) revenues. With 43% of total net ad spend, TV in the Middle East has one of the highest shares of media ad spend in the world (compared to 37 % in Asia-Pacific, 36 % in North America, and 29 % in Western Europe). However, the Pay TV industry in the region is underpenetrated at 10% in 2015 – much lower than markets such as Latin America and Asia Pacific – where it was higher than 55%. According to the Dubai Press Club Arab Media Outlook, the GCC market is expected to reach a penetration rate of 50% soon, but it is still lower compared to North America (80%) and Europe (70%). Obstacles have been the lack of premium local content available on FTA channels and piracy. However, this is changing due to large Pay TV operators who are upgrading their technology, adding more premium content, and engaging the governments to fight piracy.

Major television networks are increasing their premium online offerings while U.S. digital services such as Netflix and Amazon are expanding into the region. Recent investments in the region from beIN Media Group, OSN, Netflix, Amazon and Starz are set to transform the emerging digital market. The emergence of these different platforms is an important trend that will impact the type of content that gets produced and distributed in the region in the next few years. These operators clearly see market potential and according to management consultant AT Kearney, the market is predicted to see rapid growth from today's subscriber base of 4 million people to more than 12 million by 2020. This is still less than 20% of all TV households. However, financial services company IHS Markit's report suggests that the "MENA is an immensely diverse region in purchasing power, infrastructure, and tastes and with a population of 437 million – it could grow at a 35% compound annual growth rate over 2016-2021." According to Northwestern, low rates of credit card use – a requirement for digital purchases and the prevalence of free or pirated content, have hindered profits for both traditional and digital media companies but could represent a potential growth area for digital advertising spend. These networks have witnessed an initial phase of aggressive growth but now face challenges in scaling their business models and expanding their content into new genres.

There is great potential for the U.S. private sector to expand in this evolving market even as recent reports indicate that Netflix and Amazon have had lackluster results since launching their services in 2016 in the MENA. Pan Arab regional players still have four times the share of the market compared to Netflix and Amazon. A major reason for this is due to the lack of availability of local content. However, once Netflix and Amazon start to invest in local content, and make carriage deals with telecoms and with broadcasters for easy access to content and talent, this will allow them to grow substantially in the next four-to-five years," according to IHS Markit.

Through this funding opportunity, NEA/AC seeks to promote U.S. economic interests by testing innovative means to engage in the emerging MENA media and entertainment market. Projects will encourage the U.S. private sector to invest in and facilitate production of quality local content and improve local productions and regional capacity while promoting positive messages of interest of the U.S. government.

B. ACHIEVABLE OBJECTIVES

A successful project will result in:

- 1) Engaged MENA consumers/viewers on social impact productions with themes that are priorities for NEA/AC, such as economic growth, participatory governance, entrepreneurship, women's empowerment and gender issues, open governance, anti-corruption, urban/rural divide, youth apathy, and civic engagement.
- 2) Promotion of the U.S. private sector through access to an emerging media market in the MENA by increasing collaboration between U.S.-MENA, MENA-MENA, and MENA-other region media and entertainment industry entities on production deals.
- 3) Leveraging of the United States' status as the global media and entertainment leader to improve the capacity of MENA media and entertainment practitioners on such topics as storytelling, script development, production efficiencies, and quality content.

C. PROJECT DESIGN

NEA/AC seeks to support projects that will encourage the U.S. private sector to invest in and facilitate production of quality local content and improve local productions and regional capacity and establishing and managing a media/entertainment production fund that will create social impact productions in TV, and/or digital content and/or gaming and apps.

Funds are available to support projects with potential to promote this objective through activities that:

- i. Address NEA/AC priority areas of interest including but not limited to: economic growth, participatory governance, entrepreneurship, women's empowerment and gender issues, open governance, anti-corruption, urban/rural divide, youth apathy, and civic engagement
- ii. Facilitate matchmaking and other potential business partnerships between MENA media/entertainment industry entities and the U.S. market and other regions.
- iii. Provide technical assistance to local MENA entities and practitioners informally and formally, potentially including a gaps/needs review as appropriate.
- iv. Engage the U.S. private sector in continuous collaboration to identify (and potentially address) areas for improvement to make MENA media/entertainment industry more attractive for investment and partnerships.
- v. Oversee full-scale implementation of green-lit productions
- vi. Work with production partners to identify and manage technical assistance throughout the green-lit productions, mentoring local talent, and leveraging network of media/entertainment industry experts
- vii. Advise green-lit productions on content, ensuring appropriate themes

- viii. Conduct focus groups, gather data on productions, and provide technical assistance to report on the impact of the green-lit productions

Applicants must:

1. Include a MENA partner
2. Present a broadcast partner or methodology for obtaining one
3. Ensure produced content does not have anti-American or anti-U.S. government themes
4. Leverage funding from outside sources

Note: 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.

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

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

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

D. DEFINITIONS

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

Capacity Building Definition:

Media/Entertainment Capacity Building Definition: Strengthen the capacity of MENA media and entertainment entities to more readily partner with international markets. MENA media and entertainment entities include but are not limited to: MENA-based production houses, media/entertainment/gaming students, writers, producers, directors, and technical crew. Areas of capacity building may include, but are not limited to, technical expertise (e.g. media/entertainment law, production efficiencies); organizational capacity (e.g. strategic planning, financial management and accountability, public relations, revenue generation); and other media/entertainment-focused training and technical assistance.

Social Impact Entertainment/Productions:

The use and power of entertainment to inspire a positive impact and change in society and communities and using entertainment as the delivery system for that change.

II. MEASUREMENT OF RESULTS

Applicants shall provide a logic model or a theory of change to demonstrate how the proposed project (including activities, the project design, and the surrounding context) will achieve the stated objectives. The logic model or theory of change statements can be generated using the template in Appendix II.

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

III. AWARD INFORMATION

Funding Mechanism Type:	Cooperative Agreement
Estimated Number of Awards:	1-3
Estimated Total Program Funding:	\$3,000,000
Estimated Award Ceiling:	\$3,000,000
Estimated Award Floor:	\$1,000,000
Cost-Sharing or Matching:	Required
Estimated Length of Project Period:	3 years

Contingent on the availability of funds, approximately \$3,000,000 in Economic Support Funds for approximately 1-3 awards will be awarded through this announcement. If selected to receive an award, an applicant will be awarded funds for up to three (3) years, depending on the activities and countries proposed. The estimated start date for this project is October 2018. 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.**

Non-Competing Continuation

Continuation grants funded under these awards, beyond the initial budget period, will be contingent upon the availability of funds; grantee's progress in meeting grant requirements, including timely submission of required reports and compliance with all terms and conditions of the award; timely submission of a request for additional funding; and a determination that continued funding would be in the best interest of the Department of State.

Pending successful implementation of this project for the initial estimated length of time as indicated above, and pending the availability of funds in subsequent fiscal years, NEA/AC may extend this grant for additional time, not to exceed a **five (5)** year total project period. Please note that this NOFO requires that applicants submit additional budget materials to plan for potential out-years per non-competing continuation. See [Section VII](#) Application and Submission Information for more details.

IV. SUBSTANTIAL INVOLVEMENT

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

NEA/AC Responsibilities

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

- Collaboration in establishing annual program objectives and approval of an annual work plan;
- Collaboration in assessing progress and identifying issues that might affect the success of the program;
- Collaboration in determining corrective actions, when necessary;
- Collaboration in the creation of any training materials;
- Collaboration on development and production materials;
- Collaboration on proposed partners for development, production, and/or technical assistance; and
- USG will convene an editorial and advisory committee (in collaboration with grantee) to advise and approve on content, markets, platforms and other aspects of products/productions.

V. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

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

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

A. ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Eligible applicants include:

- U.S. or foreign
 - o non-profit organizations;
 - o For-profit organizations; or
 - o Small businesses with function and regional experience in the areas of media and entertainment.

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.

A.1. Prime Applicant

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

- Meet ALL of the registration requirements listed in *Section B* below.
- Meet any requirements listed as MANDATORY in *Section C, Additional Eligibility Considerations*, below.
- Demonstrate experience working in the MENA region.
- Have expertise in developing and implementing social impact productions.
- Demonstrate ability to form existing relationships/partnerships with MENA-based media/entertainment organizations and premier U.S. private sector entities (e.g. Hollywood) to ensure that all program activities can be implemented effectively and efficiently.

Additionally, applicants should:

- Demonstrate capacity to operate an assistance management program of multiple and diverse activities across the MENA region.
- Demonstrate the ability to accomplish the required activities with minimal full-time staffing and without establishing a dedicated local office in the MENA region.
- Demonstrate experience in conducting monitoring and evaluation to document and assess the short- and long-term outcomes of proposed projects.

A.2. Local Partners

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

B. REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS

To apply for NEA/AC (Federal) funding, organizations, whether based in or outside the U.S., must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number, currently referred to as a DUNS number, and an active account with the System for Award Management (SAM). This applies to BOTH prime applicants and any local partners receiving federally funded sub-awards. 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 \(SIC\)](#), 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.

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

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

Go to <http://www.sam.gov>.

Select *Create User Account*, and then select *Create an Account* on the left-hand side of the screen under *Individual Account Details*. Organizations must have a UEI number and a CAGE number (US Domestic Organizations) or a NCAGE number (Foreign Organizations), to create an account.

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

For help with SAM.gov, please visit their support page at <https://www.fsd.gov> or contact them at: 001-334-206-7828.

C. ADDITIONAL ELIGIBILITY CONSIDERATIONS

C.1. Cost-Sharing or Matching

Cost-sharing is required as a component of this NOFO. Cost-sharing is recommended to include at least 60% of the proposed federally requested funds.

Cost-sharing or matching IS an evaluation criteria of this NOFO.

All cost share or matching must be included in detail in the line item budget and noted in the budget narrative. Proposals offering potential, yet to be determined cost-share sourcing will NOT be considered to have met this requirement, and will be deemed ineligible. When cost sharing is offered, it is understood and agreed that the applicant must provide the amount of cost sharing as stipulated in its proposal and later included in an approved agreement. Cost sharing may be in the form of allowable direct or indirect costs. For accountability, recipients must maintain written records to support all costs that are claimed as their contribution, as well as costs to be paid by the Federal government. Such records are subject to audit. The basis for determining the value of cash and in-kind contributions must be in accordance with OMB 2 CFR 200.306 – Cost Sharing and Matching.

VI. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

A. APPLICATION DOCUMENTS

All applications must include the application components detailed below. **All application documents must be submitted in English. Applicants may submit only one (1) application.** 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 state. Further, applications that exceed the allowable page limits will not be reviewed by the review panel. **Applicants may not add any materials to an application once it has been submitted and the competition deadline has passed.**

A.1. Required Documents

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

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

Project Narrative:

The Project Narrative describes the efforts the applicant will undertake to address the priorities and goals of this announcement. It may **be no longer than 15 pages**. More details on preparing the Project Narrative are provided in Appendix 3. **Applicants are strongly encouraged to review Appendix 3 before preparing their Narrative.**

Program Attachments (20 pages maximum):

- **Professional bios for lead project personnel in application and partner organizations:** Summary professional information must be included within the project narrative or as a separate document included in the application. **Maximum of 5 pages.**
- **List of U.S. and International Business and Media Partners:** As an initiative designed to leverage private sector entities, provide a listing of all partners, noting what level of involvement and whether partnership is secured (i.e. letter of intent) or potential/prospective. **Maximum of 5 pages.**
- **List of Potential Advisors/Technical Assistance Providers,** including examples of previous instances of providing technical assistance in the media/entertainment industry context. **Maximum of 5 pages.**
- **Work Plans, Project Timeline, and/or Calendar of Activities:** A work plan is a detailed list of proposed activities, milestones, and approximate dates. Applicants may choose to include a work plan, project timeline, and/or calendar of proposed activities. **Maximum of 5 pages.**

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 detailed budget for three years is required as well as a notional budget for out years four and five.

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. 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 instruction, can be found in Appendix 1. **Applicants are strongly encouraged to review Appendix 1 before preparing their Narrative.**

In addition to the detailed budget for up to three (3) years, applicants shall submit a notional budget for up to two (2) out years.

Logic Model:

Applicants shall provide a logic model or theory of change to demonstrate how the proposed project (including activities, the project design, and the surrounding context) will achieve the stated objectives. The logic model or theory of change statements can be generated using the template in **Appendix 2**. **NOTE: Applicants are strongly encouraged to use the same format as found in the sample.** If the applicant does not use the template, the applicant must ensure that their submission includes all elements outlined in the sample. This section **may be no longer than 3 pages**.

Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement: **NOTE: This item is required only IF applicable.**

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

A.2. Optional Documents

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

1. **Contingency Plan:** The Contingency Plan should highlight potential challenges and limitations to project implementation in the operating environment and propose contingency plans should program activities be impacted. Plans should not focus solely on security risks, rather also include plans for logistics and other environmental hurdles that may impact programmatic results.
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.

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 A.1](#) and [A.2](#) above. **The Standard Forms 424 (SF-424, SF-424a, and SF-424b) are excluded from the page numbering.**

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

C. SUBMITTING AN APPLICATION

Applicants must submit their application electronically using either [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) OR [SAMS Domestic](https://sams.gov). Both systems require that the applying organization have an account with the system and both require a UEI number and SAM.gov account as detailed in [B.3](#) above. **It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure they have an active account and will be able to submit its application. Applicants must select one of these systems to submit their application; do not submit an application through both systems.** NEA/AC is not in a position to grant 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.

C.1. Grants.gov

Grants.gov is a single portal for applicants to find and apply to U.S. government funding opportunities. Creating an account with this system is a five-step process: 1) obtain a UEI number; 2) create an account with the System for Award Management; 3) create a profile, including username and password; 4) obtain Authorized Organization Representative (AOR) authorization; and 5) track AOR status. This process can take 10 business days or longer, even if all the steps are completed in a timely manner. **To create an account, go to www.grants.gov and click on the “Register” link, located at the top, right-hand side of the page.**

C.2. SAMS Domestic

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

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

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

D. SUBMISSION DATES AND TIMES

Applications must be time stamped before 17:00:00 eastern time (ET) on 6/19/2018. There will be no grace period, and any application not received by the application deadline will be deemed ineligible and will not advance to be reviewed. **Applicants are encouraged to submit an application far enough in advance of the deadline so it can alert NEA/AC (nea-grants@state.gov) of any technical difficulties and allow sufficient time to resolve difficulties before the deadline.** Although NEA/AC will work with applicants to resolve

technical issues, it is not in a position to grant exceptions to the submission requirements outlined in this announcement.

VII. FUNDING LIMITATIONS, RESTRICTIONS, AND OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

1. Awards to Commercial Firms or For-Profit Organizations

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

- added to the total of the amount of this award, including the 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.

2. Audit Requirements

Domestic and foreign organizations that expend \$750,000 or more in a fiscal year in federal assistance must perform an independent, recipient-contracted Single Audit or Program Specific Audit. (***Program-specific Audit*** 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 <http://gao.gov/assets/590/587281.pdf>

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

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

Payment of funds awarded under this Notice of Funding Opportunity will not be disbursed until the DOS has been assured that the Recipient's financial management system will provide effective control over and accountability for all Federal funds in accordance with [2 CFR 200](#) and

[2 CFR 600](#) as applicable. Awards issued under this NOFO are subject to the [Department of State Standard Terms and Conditions](#) and [2 CFR 200](#) and [2 CFR 600](#) as applicable.

VIII. APPLICATION REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS

A. APPLICATION EVALUATION CRITERIA

Achievable Objectives (20 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.
- Milestones: The applicant provides realistic milestones to indicate progress toward goals and objectives as described in the program announcement.
- M&E: The applicant explains how monitoring and evaluation activities will be carried out throughout the award's period of performance and who will be responsible for them.

Project Design (30 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: The applicant explains how the proposed activities respond to the objectives listed in the NOFO.
- Rationale: The applicant justifies how the proposed activities will achieve the above objectives in this context.
- Innovation: The applicant details an overall approach that is **innovative**, including interactive activities that do not duplicate or merely add to existing/recent initiatives.
- Project Management and Workplan: The applicant **explains how** activities will be implemented successfully (e.g. criteria and process for participant selection, rationale for implementation locations proposed, methodologies for partnerships and co-financing/cost-share, division of labor among partners, etc.).
- Partnerships and Buy-ins: The applicant addresses how the project will engage or obtain support from relevant stakeholders and identifies local partners. The applicant will demonstrate experience and/or strong connections in Hollywood.
- Feasibility: The applicant proposes activities that are feasible, and are also practical, and/or experiential in nature to encourage innovation.
- Marginalized Populations: The applicant identifies and addresses support for marginalized populations in all proposed activities and objectives and provides specific means for their inclusion.
- Program Logic: Is it theoretically sound? Do all elements of the logic model fit together showing plausible pathways to achieving project outcomes? Have all the key assumptions been identified and their potential influences described? Are the risks to implementation (external factors) fully accounted for and described?

Organizational Capacity (25 points)

- The applicant demonstrates extensive **MENA and media/entertainment industry experience/track record** (e.g. institutional record of successful programs in the content area proposed, rolodex of partners in the U.S. and international media/entertainment industry, operating context knowledge such as understanding of local laws and censorship guides, track record developing tailored content, demonstrated ability to obtain private sector financing for USG-backed initiatives, etc.).
- The applicant demonstrates an institutional record of successful projects in the content area proposed.
- 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.

Staff and Position Specifications (10 points)

- The applicant details **substantial staffing** with appropriate qualifications to launch the project with minimal start-up time. Applicant demonstrates the capacity to manage the proposed project.
- The applicant has pre-identified key staff members and/or partners, including volunteers, who **demonstrate experience** working in the region and industry proposed, as well as with participants from that area (e.g., language skills, cultural understanding).
- The applicant details the roles and qualifications of each key person, whether staff, partner, consultant, or volunteer, are described in a **biographical sketch**.
- The applicant has provided a job description, including **hiring criteria**, for positions that are vacant.

Cost Effectiveness (5 points)

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

Cost Sharing (10 points)

- The applicant has provided additional sources of funding (cost-share or matching) for the project, as well as an explanation of how those additional sources will be used.

Proposals with more than 60% cost share will be deemed very competitive in this sub-criterion.

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 [Part V](#) and have submitted all required documents outlined in [Part VI](#). Applications that do not meet these requirements will not advance beyond the Technical Eligibility Review stage and will be deemed ineligible for funding under this NOFO.

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

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 [Part VII, Section A](#). Panel Reviewers' ratings, and any resulting recommendations, are advisory.

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

IX. ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

A. AWARD NOTICES

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

NEA/AC expects to notify applicants who proceeded past the Technical Eligibility Review stage about the status of their application by September 28, 2018. Final awards cannot be made until funds have been appropriated by Congress, allocated and committed through internal bureau procedures. Successful applicants will receive a Federal Assistance Award (FAA) from the bureau's Grants Office. The FAA and the original proposal with subsequent modifications (if applicable) 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

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

D. APPLICANT VETTING AS A CONDITION OF AWARD

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

Applicants proposing activities in **West Bank/Gaza** 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 about their company and its principal personnel. Vetting information may also be required for all sub-award performance on assistance awards identified by DOS as presenting a risk of terrorist financing. When vetting information is requested by the Grants Officer, information may be submitted via email. Failure

to submit information when requested, or failure to pass vetting, may be grounds for rejecting an application for award.

Applicants proposing activities in **Syria** are advised that successful passing of vetting to evaluate the risk that funds may benefit terrorists or their supporters is a condition of award. The Recipient and any sub-recipient will ensure that all activities covered under this agreement conform to Executive Order 13224, the Supplemental Appropriations of 2006, and other statutory and regulatory limitations on the provision of support or assistance to prohibited entities and individuals. In particular, the Recipient will take all necessary steps, including but not limited to the vetting of sub-recipient organizations and relevant entities and individuals, to ensure compliance with all statutes and regulations.

For the lifetime of this cooperative agreement, no funds from Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTO) or other prohibited groups will be used to finance activities or organizations associated with this cooperative agreement, including but not limited to advertising, program performance/support, etc. To ensure that all individuals and entities associated with this program are eligible, the recipient must check the System for Award management (SAM) (www.SAM.gov).

The Recipient will submit the DS Form 4184 Risk Analysis Information to the Risk Analysis and Management (RAM) Office providing information on key individuals as defined by form DS-4184 and for each key staff member or program personnel in the Recipient's organization, all sub-awards identified by DOS as presenting a risk of terrorist financing as well as appropriate beneficiaries as described in the official vetting guidance provided as part of this award. All individuals meeting these specifications, whether previously vetted or not, must be submitted. When vetting information is requested by the Grants Officer RAM usually requests the vetting information, via emails to the Authorizing Official, 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 regarding the form may be emailed to RAM@state.gov. Forms must be submitted no later than five business days after RAM provides the Authorizing Official (identified by the Grants Officer) with a username and password for the secure portal.

Only individuals, sub-recipients and beneficiaries who have successfully passed vetting may receive assistance or participate in this award. Individuals refusing to provide vetting data – or who provide false data –will not be eligible to receive assistance. Individuals who do not successfully pass vetting will not be eligible to receive assistance. Vetting must be completed 10 business days prior to an activity and may not occur retroactively.

The government shall vet these personnel changes and reserves the right to terminate assistance awards for convenience based on vetting results. For activities lasting more than one year, in accordance with the vetting policy, the Recipient will resubmit the DS Form 4184.

E. BRANDING AND MARKING REQUIREMENTS FOR GRANTEES

Grantees awarded under this announcement will be required to make all materials produced under the award with the standard U.S. flag in a size and prominence equal to (or greater than) any other logo or identity. Materials are defined as but not limited to:

training materials, materials for recipients, or materials to communicate or promote with foreign audiences a program, event, project, or some other activity under this award, including but not limited to invitations to events, press materials, event backdrops, podium signs, etc. In addition, sub-recipients or sub-awardees are subject to the marking requirements and the grantee shall include a provision in the sub-recipient or sub-awardee's agreement indicating that the standard, rectangular U.S. flag is a requirement. Exceptions to this requirement can be discussed with NEA/AC when negotiating an award. **Waivers may be considered on a case by case basis depending on the circumstances, projects and activities**

F. UEI NUMBER REQUIREMENT FOR SUB AWARDEES

All sub-awardees are required to have a UEI number. For information on obtaining a UEI number, please see Part III, Section B.1. **Proposed sub-awardees are not required to have a UEI number prior to the submission of an application but must have one prior to a sub-award being issued.**

G. SUB AWARDEE REPORTING REQUIREMENT

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

X. AGENCY CONTACTS

For questions regarding this funding opportunity including: completing an application, financial and grants management issues, or technical matters, contact:
NEA/AC Media, Entrepreneurship, and Private Sector Advisor
Seema Matin
nea-grants@state.gov

All questions and a confirmation of Intent to Apply must be submitted in writing to nea-grants@state.gov by May 15, 2018 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 [SAMS Domestic](#) and Grants.gov. Questions submitted after the deadline will not be addressed.

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

The intent to apply is optional and will not be binding.

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

Grants.gov Contact Center
(800) 518-4726
support@Grants.gov

For questions regarding creating an account or using [SAMS Domestic](#) to submit an application, contact the ILMS Help Desk. The Help Desk is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, excluding Federal holidays. The ILMS Help Desk utilizes a user-facing ticketing interface that allows users to submit and monitor their SAMS Domestic tickets. The ILMS Self Service Portal can be accessed by going to <https://afsitsm.service-now.com/ilms/home>.

ILMS Help Desk

(888) 313-ILMS (4567)

[ILMS Self Service Portal](#)

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.