

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

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 19.500
Enhancing Public Accountability and Trust in Tunisia
Opportunity Number: SFOP0005045

Key Information:

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Deadline for Questions & Notification of Intent to Apply:	May29, 2018
Application Deadline:	June 14, 2018
Expected Date of Notification:	October 1, 2018
Federal Agency Contact:	Program Specialist Jane Guydan NEA-Grants@state.gov

Funding Opportunity Synopsis

Today, only a quarter of Tunisians believe that democracy is thriving in Tunisia and half believe that clear and responsive party platforms are crucial. Building on its previous work in political parties in the MENA region, this Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) project aims to strengthen democratic institutions and processes in Tunisia by increasing trust between political parties and citizens. This project aims to adopt an evidence-based approach that will strengthen “public accountability.” This goal will be achieved through strengthening engagement and cooperation among political parties, citizen groups, and civil society to enhance mutual trust; enabling political parties to develop responsive issue-based platforms and deliver on promises made during campaigns; allowing citizens to hold political parties accountable for performance, conduct, and use of resources; and building mutual and societal trust among all parties. Success will be measured through increased political parties’ interaction with civil society advocacy groups, the development of parties’ governance platforms, and the fostering of trust between parties, civil society advocacy groups and citizens groups.

Eligible Countries and Territories:

In this announcement, we seek to support projects in **Tunisia**. Please note: Applications that focus on activities in countries and territories other than those listed will NOT be considered.

All applications must be submitted in English. Applicants may submit only one (1) application per organization. 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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I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Before the 2011 revolution, the Constitutional Democratic Rally (RCD) dominated Tunisia's political life allowing very few parties to exist, and outlawing many opposition parties. Now, new Tunisian political parties have become complex institutions that often face internal ideological rivalries, strategic differences, and leadership divisions. The post-revolution experience has demonstrated to Tunisians that good governance stems from compromise and the adoption of internal democratic principles. Political party leadership can no longer unilaterally make decisions in consultation with just a small cadre of elites, but are now obliged to include the views of all party members and the public. Parties need a unifying vision and strategy that involves addressing the power struggle between the old guard of pre-revolution party leaders and the new change-makers arising among youth and minorities across Tunisia. Experts suggest that Tunisian parties will need to undertake several strategic reforms to be successful, including resolving the dependency on single-personality politics; developing representative party platforms; and overcoming their ideological fragmentation and resistance to a new generation of leaders.

Today, only a quarter of Tunisians believe that democracy is thriving in Tunisia and half believe that clear and responsive party platforms are crucial and often missing. Two-thirds of Tunisians do not identify with any political party, and as many as 80 percent do not trust any political party. Almost half of all Tunisians would like political party platforms to address economic issues while the other half wants to see a clear political agenda that engage citizens at the local and the national levels. The majority of Tunisians agree that politicians do not do enough to address the needs of youth.

B. ACHIEVABLE OBJECTIVES

To address these problems and build on previous work with political parties in the MENA region, NEA/AC seeks proposals that will strengthen democratic institutions and processes in Tunisia by increasing trust between political parties and citizens. This project will involve creating a "social contract" among political parties, citizen groups, and civil society to enhance mutual trust and strengthens "public accountability" (See Section I.D for the definition of public accountability and social contract).

A successful project will result in the following objectives:

1. Political parties develop **governance action plans** based on newly-created **platforms**;
2. A mechanism is developed for political parties to hold elected officials (party members or counterparts with whom parties interact) accountable to their party's platform;
3. Engagement and partnerships are deepened with civil society organizations to enable the public to assume the responsibility of holding their elected officials accountable to the promises they make; and,
4. Mutual trust is strengthened between and among parties, and with civil society, including media, and the public.

C. PROJECT DESIGN

This solicitation invites applications in support of "public accountability" in Tunisia.

Funds are available to support projects with potential to promote this objective through activities that will create a “social contract” among political parties, citizen groups, and civil society by focusing on the following areas:

1. Political Party Platforms: While many factors challenge political parties, developing responsive platforms and delivering on promises made during campaigns are likely to increase public support. Governance based on these platforms is crucial. Research suggests that parties that hold executive office after elections generally fulfill substantial percentages, sometimes very high percentages, of their election pledges.
 - a. Issues highlighted in the platforms can include: health care, women’s rights, criminal justice reform, education, environment, security, employment, taxes, trade, campaign finance reform, foreign affairs, and energy, or other topics that political parties identify.
 - b. Parties’ obligations include: disclosing information and being transparent; explaining and justifying behavior and performance (answerability); accepting the consequences of this behavior by accepting sanctioning in case of bad performance or criminal acts, rewards in case of good performance, or suggestions for change to learn and do better in the future.
 - c. Standards and mechanisms for political parties to hold elected officials (party members or counterparts) accountable on behalf of the electorate to include: assisting politicians in office to be more responsive and answerable to citizens’ needs; influencing policies by formulating programs and supervising policy implementation; providing feedback to politicians, and encouraging learning by monitoring and evaluating policies.
2. Accountability and Responsiveness: The public who votes for these parties has the responsibility and the right to hold their elected officials accountable to the promises they make. The project should develop mechanisms for citizens and selected civil society organizations to hold political parties accountable for their performance, behavior, and use of resources. Parties will increase their involvement in checks and balances, monitoring and evaluation of policies and public funds, and engagement in political and social debates with politicians. Citizens, civil society, and the media will:
 - a. Have access to and receive relevant information on, and a justification of, the behavior and performance of the political actors of the project;
 - b. Develop methods to ensure that government officials are held accountable for their performance; and
 - c. Reward good behavior or suggest changes for learning and better performance in the future.
3. Mutual and Societal Trust: The project will take steps to:
 - a. Enhance mutual trust between parties and politicians’ awareness of the value that parties add to a democratic society, by helping them develop and enhance a platform that establishes their identities as political parties.
 - b. Enhance societal trust in political parties by organizing joint projects between parties and civil society actors and increasing interfaces between politicians and citizens.

Successful applicants shall include the following components in the project design:

1. Applicant shall play the role of broker in the relationship among parties, as well as between parties and civil society, and safeguard a 'neutral playing field' where different visions, norms, and practices can meet, and trust can flourish on both sides.
2. Applicant shall propose an innovative and evidence-based approach that justifies the selection of the thematic or geographic (national, regional, or local) basis of the project.
3. Applicant shall provide concrete plans and agreement from parties involved to draft social contract. Applicants shall convince us in their feasibility assessment that they have willing partners who will cooperate in the construction of a social contract.
4. Applicant shall make every effort to ensure that the outcomes of this project benefit major and non-major parties equally, including the end use of any products or services designed.

Successful applicants should include the following components in the project design:

1. Applicant shall identify barriers to entry for **women** being more involved in political parties and the political decision-making process, and suggest ways to overcome these barriers in the program design.

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:

- One-off training or sustainment of political parties;
- Exchange activities with other countries or territories;
- Social welfare projects(i.e., paying to complete activities begun with other funds);
- Activities that appear partisan or that support individual or party electoral campaigns;
- Academic or analytical research or assessments (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 key terms** accepted under this announcement:

Public Accountability: The notion of public/political accountability carries two basic connotations: answerability, the obligation of public officials to inform about and to explain what they are doing; and enforcement, the capacity of accounting agencies to impose sanctions on

those in power who have violated their public duties, according to Andreas Schedler.¹ Because political accountability can be positive and negative, the accountability relationship must be built on trust that addresses the following three areas: *Agreed-upon standards must be established, costs, efforts and sanctions must be expended to ensure this accountability, flexibility and innovation must be taken into consideration.* Accountability usually means that voters know, or can make good inferences about, what parties have done in office and reward or punish them conditional on these actions, according to Susan Stokes.²

Social Contract: A social contract is an understanding between a political party and a civil society organization or non-governmental organization to mutually exchange services and establish plans for campaigning and governing. Civil society organizations will present the advantages that their allegiance can offer political parties, such as events, volunteers, candidates, in exchange for working together with a political party or parties while elected to office to jointly implement policies or platforms on agreed-upon areas of importance.

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. Applicants must clearly lay out the assumptions and external factors that are critical to this projects success. In addition, applicants must clearly display how the project would adapt if an assumption proves to be false, or if an external factor comes to fruition. The logic model or theory of change statements can be generated using the template in Appendix II and shall be based directly on the feasibility research performed by the applicant as described in Section A.1 Required Documents.

Successful applicants will work with the MEPI 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. 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
Estimated Total Program Funding:	\$2,000,000.00
Estimated Award Ceiling:	\$2,000,000.00

¹ Schedler, A. 1999. Conceptualizing Accountability, pp. 13–28 in *The Self-Restraining State: Power and Accountability in New Democracies*, eds. A. Schedler, L. Diamond, and M. F. Plattner. Boulder: Lynne Rienner.

² Stokes, S. C. 2005. "Perverse Accountability: A Formal Model of Machine Politics with Evidence from Argentina." *American Political Science Review*, 99: 315–25.

Estimated Award Floor:	\$1,000,000.00
Cost-Sharing or Matching:	Encouraged; NOT Required
Estimated Length of Project Period:	Up to three years

Contingent on the availability of funds, approximately \$2,000,000.00 in Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) Economic Support Funds for approximately one award will be awarded through this announcement. If selected to receive an award, an applicant will be awarded funds for up to three years, depending on the activities proposed. The estimated start date for this project is October 1, 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; achievement of results set out in this NOFO and the project design; demonstration of success in elevating the idea of the social contract among parties and groups in Tunisia; demonstration that further work is feasible and realistic; and a determination that continued funding would be in the best interest of the Department of State and in line with U.S. foreign policy goals in Tunisia.

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-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 cooperative agreements issued under this NOFO through consultation and technical collaboration on specified program activities.

NEA/AC Responsibilities

1. Collaboration in establishing annual program objectives and approval of an annual work plan.
2. Provide approval of local partner selection, including civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations, political parties, or other groups.

3. Assistance to measure and record the outcomes of the project, including collaboration in the design of the final evaluations and reports of the project.
4. Assistance to design a scientifically sound intervention and approval of project methodology

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;
 - o Private institutions of higher education;
 - o Public or state institutions of higher education;
 - o Public international organizations;

NEA/AC strongly encourages applications from organizations headquartered in the Middle East and North Africa region. International non-governmental organizations with principal bases of operations outside the Middle East and North Africa are also encouraged to apply, **but the percentage of total budget actually spent in the region through local partners will be among the elements of evaluation for this competition.**

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:

- Have demonstrable previous experience working in the MENA region. This should be addressed within the project narrative section of your application.
- 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 a current understanding of the political environment and key political and apolitical actors in Tunisia through a clear assessment of local partners.
- Establish and retain independence, credibility, and trust from and among Tunisian political organizations.

A.2. Local Partners

Applicants are REQUIRED to include partnerships with local organizations as part of their project design for this NOFO. **Applicants who do not incorporate local partners in their proposal will be deemed ineligible and will not advance past the Technical Eligibility Review stage.** Applicants should propose partners that will work with them on specific programmatic objectives or priorities and that utilize local expertise. Partnerships may, but are not required to, take the form of sub-grants. To be considered as a viable Tunisian local partner under this opportunity, applicants SHALL propose local partners that meet the following requirements:

- Are perceived as credible and independent within the political system.
- Have demonstrated and communicated a commitment to a platform or specific issues of importance.
- Have resources, including sufficient time, staff, and commitment, to pledge to the project.
- Are able to mobilize voters, citizens, or communities in support of platforms/issues of importance.

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

There is no minimum or maximum percentage required for this competition. However, NEA/AC encourages applicants to provide maximum levels of cost sharing and funding in support of its programs.

Cost-sharing or matching is NOT an evaluation criteria of this NOFO.

VI. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

A. APPLICATION DOCUMENTS

All applications must include the application components detailed below. **All application documents must be submitted in English.** Applicants may submit only 1 application. Please refer to Section B below for additional submissions guidance and requirements.

NOTE: Applications that do not include all the required documentation described in Section 1 below will not advance past the Technical Eligibility Review 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**. The applicant must also detail the chosen local partners and assess their commitment to the project in the narrative. 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:

1. Summary Budget
2. Detailed Line Item Budget
3. 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. 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 years, applicants shall submit a notional budget for up to two additional years. This may be included as additional tabs in the main budget excel workbook.

Feasibility Justification:

Prior to applying, applicants will conduct extensive research in Tunisia to ensure the feasibility of project execution to include, as applicable, identification of communities receptive to the concept of the social contract as well as relevant political party and civil society stakeholders that demonstrate the will and motivation to work together to construct the social contract. The applicant shall clearly demonstrate the feasibility of the proposed project in this section. This

section may not exceed three (3) pages. Note research or assessment activities proposed as part of the project funded under this NOFO will NOT be allowable.

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 three (3) pages.**

Project Timeline:

Applicants must provide an overall breakdown of the order and timeframe in which all project activities will take place. This item should provide a macro-level snapshot of what will take place from the beginning to the end of the project. Applicants must ensure that the timeline of activities/events corresponds with details provided in the Project Narrative and Logic Model. Applicants are strongly encouraged to use the template provided in **Appendix 4**. If the applicant does not use the template, the applicant must ensure that their submission includes all elements outlined in the sample. Please note that additional guidance on this item is also included in Appendix 4. This section **may not exceed two (2) pages.**

Job Descriptions / Biographical Information 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.

For information on both vacant positions and already hired personnel, applicants are strongly encouraged to use the template provided in **Appendix 5**. If the applicant does not use the template, the applicant must ensure that their submission includes all elements outlined in the sample. **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 five (5) 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 rate must provide a copy of their Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA). This item will not be counted toward any page limits.

Letters of Agreement or Letters of Intent:

Letters of intent are for all proposed partner subawardees as well as stakeholder organizations and/or government bodies including political parties and civil society organizations envisioned as stakeholders of this project. In addition to Letters of Intent/Agreement, applicants must justify their choice of partners and stakeholders and include an assessment of their commitment and organizational capacity in the project narrative and feasibility justification. **There is no page limit for this section, which should be submitted as a single document. Note that each letter should not exceed one page.**

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. More details about how to complete this item may be found in **Appendix 6**. Applicants are strongly encouraged to use the template provided in Appendix 6. 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 not exceed two (2) pages**.

A.2. Optional Documents

Applicants may submit additional documents for consideration with their application. These documents are not required and there is a five (5) page limit for this section of the application. Below are examples of some additional documents an applicant may wish to submit.

1. **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. **This section may not exceed one (1) page.**

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 [Sections 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://mygrants.service-now.com). 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 Daylight Time (EDT) on June 14, 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:

1. 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;
2. used to meet the Recipient's cost sharing or matching requirement; OR
3. 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 (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 of a lack of public accountability and societal trust and the applicant's activities that will contribute to enhancing trust and accountability in the Tunisian political system.
- Neutrality: The applicant designs a neutral playing field and feasible actions to establish mutual trust between citizens, civil society, and political parties.
- 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.
- M&E: The applicant explains how monitoring and evaluation activities will be carried out throughout the award's period of performance, including a final evaluation, and who will be responsible for them.

Project Design (20 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 provides a clear logic model or theory of change to justify how the proposed activities will achieve the above objectives in the current Tunisian context.
- Inclusion: The applicant designs strategies to ensure that at least half (50 percent) of activities include non-major political parties, in addition to parity and independence throughout the entirety of the project.
- Project Management: The applicant provides a clear description of how the project will be managed throughout the phases 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 local partners.
- 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.

- Division of Labor: The application describes the division of labor among the applicant and any partners, including how the applicant will assist partners and ensure partners complete activities designed in support of the project.
- Inclusive Design: The applicant identifies barriers to entry for women being more involved in political parties and the political decision-making process, and suggests ways to overcome these barriers in the program design

Feasibility and Contingency Planning (15 points)

The applicant addresses the feasibility of the project, as required in Section VI, as well as potential barriers to success and mitigation strategies to address any barriers.

- The applicant proposes activities that are feasible, practical, and/or experiential in nature to encourage innovation.
- The applicant includes research to ensure the feasibility of project execution, and includes, as applicable, identification of communities receptive to the concept of the social contract as well as relevant partners.
- The applicant articulates programming assumptions and potential challenges to project implementation and proposes contingency plans. The applicant demonstrates an understanding of the usual delays in Tunisia, in addition to the political and electoral schedule, and the ways in which they would affect the project.

Organizational Capacity (10 points)

- The applicant demonstrates experience, current knowledge, and commitment to issues of good governance and issue-driven governing in Tunisia.
- The applicant demonstrates an institutional record of successful programs in civil society strengthening, political party assessment and innovation, or public accountability.
- The applicant demonstrates capacity for responsible fiscal management of donor funding.
- The applicant demonstrates the ability to meet monitoring and evaluation requirements.
- The applicant has adequate staffing, demonstrates the capacity to manage the proposed project.
- The applicant demonstrates the ability to establish and retain independence, credibility, and trust from and among Tunisian political organizations.

Local Partner Selection and Justification (15 points)

- The applicant demonstrates that proposed local partner(s) have sufficient resources to complete the project objectives and activities.
- The applicant includes letters of intent/commitment/agreement from proposed partner(s).
- The applicant justifies the selection of proposed local partner(s) in the context of the project design and objectives.
- Applicant proposes local partner(s) that are credible, independent, and committed to the project (in addition to eligibility requirements in Section A.2.). The Applicant includes an assessment of the partner(s) viability and commitment as a partner of the project.
- The applicant and proposed local partner(s) are viewed as credible and independent in Tunisia.

Staff and Position Specifications (10 points)

- Pre-identified key staff members, including volunteers, of both the applicant and proposed local partners demonstrate experience working in the MENA region and have Arabic and/or French language skills in addition to a current cultural understanding of the Maghreb.
- Pre-identified key staff members, including volunteers, demonstrate experience and knowledge in governance, party systems, accountability, and civic engagement.
- A description of the roles of each person or position on the project, whether staff, partner, consultant, or volunteer demonstrates that the project will be adequately but efficiently staffed, avoiding redundancy or duplications of effort.
- A job description, including hiring criteria, is provided for each open key position.
- A resume or CV is provided for each key staff member.

Budget & Budget Narrative (Acceptable or Not Acceptable)

- The applicant provides a detailed budget that accounts for the entire project duration and a notional budget for up to two years of potential additional funding.
- 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 Tunisia.
- The budget includes costs dedicated to management, monitoring, and evaluation.
- Adequate travel costs are proposed.
- The budget demonstrates a reasonable cost per participant.
- The applicant proposes reasonable budgets for translation and/or interpretation as needed.

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, and how it supports the Department's overarching foreign policy priorities.

IX. ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

A. AWARD NOTICES

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

NEA/AC expects to notify applicants who proceeded past the Technical Eligibility Review stage about the status of their application by October 1, 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. 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.

E. 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.**

F. 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:

Grants Management Specialist

Katelyn Smith

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 29, 2018 at 17:00:00 Eastern Daylight Time (EDT). 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.