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Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs
Office of Assistance Coordination
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Tomorrow's Leaders Graduate (TLG) Program
Opportunity Number: SFOP0010237**

Key Information:

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Deadline for Questions & Notification of Intent to Apply:	2/21/2024
Application Deadline:	3/20/2024
Expected Date of Notification:	4/30/2024
Federal Agency Contact:	NEA-Grants@state.gov

Funding Opportunity Synopsis

The Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs Office of Assistance Coordination (NEA/AC) announces a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for the Tomorrow's Leaders Graduate (TLG) program to provide scholarship opportunities for individuals from Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) countries and territories with significant Muslim populations, to attend American, independent, not-for-profit, higher educational institutions, based in the MENA region and accredited by a U.S. Department of Education-sanctioned regional institution. **Eligible universities must have institutional accreditation and maintain this accreditation throughout the course of the project. Eligible universities must include in their annexes proof of accreditation.**

TLG is an innovative leadership training opportunity that aims to build a cadre of professional leaders who are civic minded, intellectually capable, and professionally skilled to become future leaders in their communities and respective countries. This project fulfills the Middle East Partnership

Initiative's (MEPI) strategic framework objectives to: a) provide socio-economically disadvantaged individuals with opportunities to build leadership skills, and to effectively engage with civil society, the private sector, and/or government actors, and b) increase workforce employability and improve access to higher value opportunities through demand-driven professional training and targeted, localized job placement, primarily in the private sector. This project contributes to Bureau Goal 4 in the Joint Regional Strategy for the Middle East and North Africa: Advance accountable and responsive governance through strengthening democratic principles and fundamental freedoms.

All applications must be submitted in English. Complete instructions on how applicants can submit proposals for this opportunity can be found in Section VI below.

Applicants should read this NOFO in its entirety before writing their proposal and should refer to the full Evaluation Criteria provided in Section VII while drafting all materials.

Eligible Countries and Territories

In this announcement, we seek to support participants from Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia, West Bank and Gaza, and Yemen. Please note: Applications that focus on activities in countries and territories other than those listed will NOT be considered.

Background Information about NEA/AC

The U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, Office of Assistance Coordination (NEA/AC) offers federal assistance to groups and individuals striving to bring about positive change in the MENA region. NEA/AC works in 19 countries and territories, partnering with governments, civil society organizations (CSOs), community leaders, youth and women activists, and private sector groups to advance their efforts. Competitively selected projects aim to foster participatory governance, economic reform,

and educational advancement in response to local interests and needs. NEA/AC is committed to advancing equity and support for minority and marginalized populations. All programs should consider strategies for expanding the pool of individuals, organizations, and beneficiaries to afford opportunities for as diverse and inclusive a population as is feasible to bring perspectives based on religion, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, sex characteristics, national origin, and age to implementation of the program.

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APPENDIX 1— Budget Sample Template and Budget Narrative
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APPENDIX 2— Logic Model Template

APPENDIX 3— Application Guidance

APPENDIX 4— Results Monitoring Plan (RMP)

I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

The Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, Office of Assistance Coordination (NEA/AC) announces a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) to enhance and expand leadership training opportunities for students from the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. The TLG program is a leadership development program that provides scholarships for students from MENA countries with significant Muslim populations to attend American, not-for-profit, higher educational institutions based in the MENA region and accredited by a U.S. Department of Education-sanctioned regional institution.

Through this solicitation, NEA/AC seeks to support a five-year program supporting the selection and enrollment of up to two separate student cohorts. The program will be hosted by universities prepared to provide two- to three-year graduate-level degree programs in fields that further students' competitiveness while including a civic engagement component. Successful applications should include a Gender Studies component. The program shall not provide scholarships to students for study in the fields of medicine or law.

Recruitment of students will be coordinated by a third-party implementer. Eligible students include individuals who represent the region's cultural,

religious, ethnic, and geographic diversity. Participants should come from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds and have the qualifications to gain admission to an American-accredited university in the MENA region but are otherwise unable to afford a graduate level education. The graduate program must include interactive and practical civic or public policy opportunities for each student, such as research projects, mentorship, internship/placement programs, and facilitation of higher-level public policy engagements.

Applications for this funding opportunity must include a comprehensive plan for working through selected academic units (centers, departments, offices) to carry out this project, including the names of participating academic units. Within the application, academic units should propose research plans that will serve as roadmaps for identifying challenges to economic, political, or social development and comprehensive solutions in which graduate students will engage. Projects that are results-oriented, identify an outcome at the end of the funding period, and demonstrate scientific advancement and broader impact are desired.

A. PROBLEM STATEMENT

American-style higher education plays an important role in influencing and educating the next generation of leaders in the region, offering an alternative vision to extremist ideologies, strengthening democracy, and encouraging economic growth. Support for institutions offering such an education will allow greater numbers of students from the region to develop the necessary knowledge and skills for professional and national leadership and improve their prospects for employment in an academic environment that fosters critical thinking, tolerance of different opinions, an appreciation for cultural diversity, and a more expansive worldview. There is a need to harness the potential of talented yet financially disadvantaged youth, enabling them to gain skills necessary to create positive impact in their communities and become productive members of the workforce.

B. ACHIEVABLE OBJECTIVES

A successful project will result in:

1. Socioeconomically disadvantaged and geographically diverse students completing graduate level degrees from American-style, independent, not-for-profit, higher educational institutions based in the MENA region and accredited by a U.S. Department of Education-approved/accredited regional institution.
2. Financial and reputational support for innovative academic programs that go beyond the traditional classroom to instill experiential and pragmatic applied knowledge through initiatives such as graduate research, assistantships, and internships.
3. Participants increasing their understanding of how to be effective civic and/or business leaders.
4. Graduates developing soft skills to help them compete in the workforce.
5. Students becoming engaged citizens who participate and lead civic engagement and social entrepreneurial activities.
6. Students increasing their awareness of gender issues in the MENA region.

C. PROJECT DESIGN

The TLG program builds a cadre of leaders who are civic minded, intellectually capable, and professionally skilled to become the community, business, and national leaders of the future. The program will enable students from the MENA region who are academically qualified but are unable to afford American-style graduate education to gain leadership skills and gender awareness and develop a spirit of civic engagement and volunteerism. Students must be registered on a full-time basis.

Applicants must address the following requirements in their application:

1. Eligibility, Recruitment, and Selection Processes

- The recruitment for the TLG program will be managed by an existing third-party implementer. The applicant should outline strategies for assisting and coordinating with the recruitment partner.
- The applicant should coordinate with the recruitment partner to ensure it admits students who meet the following minimum eligibility criteria:
 - Be a citizen or resident of one of the participating countries or territories.
 - Demonstrate evidence of academic English proficiency as required by the relevant graduate program.
 - Demonstrate financial need. Applicants should be underrepresented or economically deserving students and provide supporting financial documentation.
 - Meet admission requirements.
 - Ability to travel and start their graduate program.
 - Possess strong academic credentials.
 - Demonstrate maturity, adaptability, and leadership potential.
 - Participants must commit to completing their master's degree within two academic years.
- For the first cohort, NEA/AC intends to recruit residents living in the following countries/territories: Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia, West Bank and Gaza, and Yemen. Citizens or nationals who hold citizenship in participating countries and the United States are ineligible for this program. Similarly, asylum seekers in the United States and U.S. Legal Permanent Residents (green card holders) are not eligible. If there are changes to participating countries/territories for future cohorts, NEA/AC will notify the university in writing prior to the start of the following recruitment phase.
- The applicant should provide a comprehensive methodology for the selection of short-listed candidates, including addressing gender

balance and diversity needs during selection and implementation of the program. The methodology should outline how universities will work with participating departments in reviewing and ranking applicants taking into account the TLG program requirements and goals. This should include a selection rubric that explicitly notes how applications will be evaluated and ranked.

- The applicant should, in consultation with each academic unit, provide a recruitment timeline that aligns with the TL recruitment partner's established timeline.

2. Enrollment and Tuition

- The applicant must provide a list of majors that will be available to TL students as part of their application, and coordinate with the recruitment partner.
- The applicant must ensure that the university will not channel scholarships to under-populated majors or majors that the university is seeking to promote. It should also ensure that students are not asked to change majors during the selection process to meet the needs of the university.
- Universities are strongly encouraged to incorporate gender courses within the majors available for TL students and encourage students to sign up for at least one gender course. NEA/AC will consider covering tuition fees for gender classes that are not offered as part of the approved majors.
- For each cohort, the TL program offers students the opportunity to enroll in preparatory language training that covers intensive language training and/or remedial classes to improve students' academic preparation prior to enrolling in their field of study. Students who fail to successfully complete the requirements of the intensive language/remedial classes within their set duration will be dismissed from the program.

- The tuition rates for 2024–2025 will be applied to all future cohorts. Annual tuition increases are not allowable on the federal share and should count solely towards the cost-share.
- A 15% tuition reduction is strongly suggested for this project. In all cases, NEA/AC reserves the right to allocate the largest portion of funding to the applicant that proposes the lowest average cost per student. The average cost per student is determined based on the total requested Federal funds divided by the expected number of students.

3. Travel, Visa, Residency Permits, and Bank Accounts

It is the applicant's responsibility to coordinate and book airline tickets for new students arriving on campus. NEA/AC has requested assistance from the recruitment partner to facilitate airline tickets (roundtrip ticket) for Yemeni students for the first academic year. The applicant should exclude airline tickets for Yemeni students for the first year. In addition, the applicant must coordinate the visa process with the host country and assist and facilitate residency permits for students who are not nationals of the host country. The applicant should ensure that fees related to travel, visas, and residency permits are included in the budget proposal and students are receiving reimbursement in a timely manner. The applicant must assist students in obtaining local bank accounts no later than two months after matriculation, and the accounts should be compatible with withdrawing funds in U.S. Dollars. For the first semester, the applicant will ensure students are provided a settling-in allowance of \$100 USD within a week of arriving on campus. Any delays in issuance of allowances or stipends should be communicated to NEA/AC.

4. Housing

University housing must be offered to all international students and students with refugee status. On-campus housing is preferred; however, if this is not possible given the number of students, off-campus housing is an option if it is university-sponsored housing only and is subject to university

supervision, policies, and security control. Students already residing in the host country will be considered for housing on a case-by-case basis.

5. Student Benefits

The applicant will provide the following benefits to TL students and should outline in its proposal how each benefit will be addressed.

- As stated under the “enrollment and tuition section” the applicant shall cover all enrollment and tuition fees.
- Each student will receive university medical insurance.
- Each student will receive a net of \$600 USD in monthly stipends for living expenses (i.e., after subtracting bank and other fees). Stipends will be paid only during semesters when students are enrolled in classes. Applicant will ensure stipends are paid on time (first week of the month) and when delays occur in the issuance of stipends the applicant will notify the NEA/AC team. Students completing their one required internship during the summer or winter months will receive stipends while participating in the internship opportunity. Additionally, students that are required to take summer classes for their major(s) will receive stipends for the months enrolled in classes and/or enrolled in TL-related activities. Students from conflict countries that are unable to return home or visit relatives in a third country will be provided stipends during the summer and/or winter semester if they are engaged in TL-related activities during that period.
- Applicant will ensure that students receive a net of \$100 USD settling-in allowance for first time students within the first week of arriving on campus. Applicant should identify in its application how these funds will be paid out.
- The applicant should provide one laptop per student with the necessary associated software for the duration of the program.
- The applicant will provide students two annual round-trip economy air tickets from their campus to home; or housing and living stipends for students who are approved to continue program activities on campus during breaks due to being unable to return home because of

circumstances outside of their control. Universities may provide air ticket(s) for students to visit family in a third country instead of their home country in the case where students are displaced or otherwise unable to meet family at home due to circumstances outside of their control. Students are not permitted to return home if they must update their host institution country residency documentation. Return travel must be coordinated prior to the start of semester so students do not miss their courses. NEA/AC must be notified if students miss courses due to delayed travel logistics.

- The applicant will provide one-time compensation of up to \$500 USD to cover PhD applications and associated fees such as tests for graduating students with a CGPA of 3.0 and above only.
- The applicant must provide up to \$600 USD per academic year for each student to purchase academic-related books. Proof of purchase will be required and submitted to the applicant.
- Students may apply for up to \$1,000 USD in additional funds for a special opportunity (i.e., to attend a conference, pursue further research opportunities, participate in international debates, obtain seed funding for a capstone project or community service project, etc.). To apply, students, with the concurrence and guidance of the applicant, must complete the NEA/AC ad-hoc request form and submit to NEA/AC for approval. To be eligible, students must be in good program standing, meet all requirements for full participation, and provide justification for the value of the activity. Justification should include areas such as how the opportunity will build on their TLG experience, advance personal and/or TLG program objectives, help their communities moving forward, or advance a professional accreditation. The applicants are expected to review the student requests and provide a recommendation to NEA/AC. NEA/AC will review and approve such requests on a case-by-case basis.

6. Orientation and Integration

- Successful Applicants will describe how the program will integrate students into the larger campus community.

- Prior to students' arrivals, host universities must provide students the following:
 - Acceptance letters (accessible on university portal).
 - Pre-arrival information about their scholarship, visas, and important university or program dates.
 - Vaccination requirements.
 - Information regarding the TL specific orientation.
 - University general orientation.
 - Information on campus life and dorm life – Rules and Regulation.
 - Major choice counseling, academic advising, and class registration.
- The applicant will host a multi-day TL-specific orientation prior to the beginning of the academic year to supplement any university-wide orientation that is provided. The on-campus orientation should cover items such as program guidelines and requirements; culture shock; health, safety, and security; university emergency residency requirements; etc. The applicant should provide a detailed plan for achieving this goal. The applicant is encouraged to submit detailed orientation sessions/workshops as an appendix.
- The applicant will ensure each student signs the Student Agreement, authorization release form, and media release form. Any additions to this list will be communicated to the applicant in writing. The applicant should submit a detailed approach as to how they will ensure students are well integrated at the university to avoid discrimination against their socio-economic status or being negatively labeled for the duration of their studies. The applicant is expected to present tools, resources, and interventions that will help in integration, including tools to help refugees, students that come from conflict environments, and students struggling to adapt to campus life to prevent drop-outs. This detailed plan will be submitted within 30 days of award issuance.
- Incoming students must be assigned a TL peer mentor during their first semester in the program to help facilitate the transition to campus and program. The applicant should outline the structure of the mentorship program to include frequency of meetings, the process for matching students, and methodology to collect student feedback.

7. Academic Monitoring

- The TL academic director/coordinator will be responsible for closely guiding and advising students in their course schedules, grades, and overall performance including following up with students when necessary.
- The academic director/coordinator should be in regular contact with the students and advise them throughout their years of study.
- The TL administration will work closely with students in their first semester to create an academic projection plan.
- The academic director/coordinator is responsible for tracking students' performance levels throughout the academic years by implementing the following:
 - Coordinating with faculty members to report the scholars' performance through progress reports. The reports should track grades and attendance in their respective courses.
 - Scheduling biweekly advising meetings with each student. These advising meetings must be in-person. If in person meetings cannot take place due to extenuating circumstances, the applicant will track and include this information in the quarterly report.
- Students must maintain a CGPA of 3.0+ to continue receiving a TLG scholarship.
 - If the CGPA drops below 3.0 during any given semester, the applicant shall give the student one grace semester to improve and restore their academic standing.
 - If the CGPA remains below 3.0 after grace semester, the applicant will dismiss the student from the program.
- The applicant will submit at-risk student cases using the NEA/AC reporting template after each semester.

8. Student Development and Support

The applicant must present its approach to helping students become active members of their community, nurture their leadership, and improve their

interpersonal skills. The applicant must present its approach to provide the following at a minimum:

- Applicant shall create and maintain a policies and procedures manual for the program.
- Extra-curricular activities for students to participate in throughout their journey at the university.
- Proposing activities geared towards developing leadership and civic engagement skills in students.
- Community service projects in home or host countries, including project design and management workshops covering proposal writing, budgeting, and community assessment approaches. Students may apply for up to \$1,000 as seed funding through the one-time ad hoc request. For the first cohort, NEA/AC will give funding priority to projects that advance gender equality and equity, address climate challenges, and empower young women in STEM. The applicant is encouraged to provide examples of community service projects or organizations as an appendix.
- Placing and supporting students, beginning in the first academic year through graduation, to actively engage in volunteer activities with vetted humanitarian organizations and agencies serving vulnerable populations in host countries, and/or the scholars' home countries. Each student will be expected to complete at least 120 hours of service prior to graduation.
- Arranging and tracking mentoring and internship opportunities with local civil society, businesses, and non-governmental organizations. In addition to internships, MEPI welcomes new and creative approaches to developing civic-minded leaders. To be approved, new approaches must include proposed costs and programmatic and budget justifications.
- Plans to develop students' soft skills over the course of the award. Such skills may include but are not limited to interpersonal skills, emotional intelligence, personal accountability and finances, collaboration and teamwork, conflict resolution, adaptability and flexibility, and communication, both verbal and written.

9. Student Safety and Wellbeing

Within 60 days of award issuance, the applicant must develop crisis response processes in line with the TL program guidelines to address topics including, but not limited to: arrest or impending arrest; injuries that require hospitalization; death; disasters; threats to public welfare; bomb threats; protests or riots; hostage situations; individual violence; violent crimes; community health issues; infectious disease outbreaks; terrorist threats or the possibility of war in the proximity of a university; Title IX cases; cases of absconding; etc.

The applicant must ensure students have access to a 24-hour emergency hotline and are familiar with university emergency resources and emergency contact information. The applicant must notify NEA/AC immediately when incidents occur and follow up with a written incident report within no more than two business days. Sub-awardees must similarly notify the Prime Grantee immediately when incidents occur and follow up regularly with a written incident report. NEA/AC will provide the applicant with a copy of the incident report.

The applicant should have a dedicated welfare officer to assist in supporting TL students navigate any physical or psychosocial challenges. The applicant shall include policies and procedures to address the needs of students displaced by violent conflict (e.g., Syrian, Palestinian, and Yemeni students who might not be able to return to their home countries). Plans should demonstrate knowledge and capacity to collaborate with host governments where applicable and to identify and address legal and other constraints.

10. Gender Integration, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility

The applicant must provide a detailed methodology of how they will address gender, diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility matters during implementation, mainly:

- The applicant must submit its plans for integrating gender issues within the curriculum of the graduate program.

- How gender balance will be achieved, including during the selection and enrollment process for leadership and extracurricular activities.
- How gender stereotypes will be addressed during the program dissemination and orientation phases to overcome existing perceptions that certain majors are reserved for a particular sex.
- How gender stereotypes and cultural norms will be mitigated to ensure scholars select diverse majors, not limited to majors which have historically been seen as culturally acceptable, such as engineering for males or education for females.
- How messaging during the recruitment phase, both via the recruitment partner and post-enrollment support services, will mitigate gender sensitivities and help accommodate students who might face stress and disorientation due to moving to a less conservative country.
- How individuals with disabilities will be provided a fair opportunity in applying for the scholarship, as well as how this demographic will be engaged in all aspects of the TLG program, post-enrollment.
- How will the TL website, program and promotional materials be compatible with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 508-compliant.

12. Student Academic Monitoring Plans

Students must be registered on a full-time basis. Applications must describe how the applicant will monitor and measure student academic and extracurricular progress and well-being, including but not limited to each of the activities listed above. Students must maintain a 3.0 grade point average. The applicant is responsible for keeping the NEA/AC student tracker-updated, a copy of this tracker will be provided by the applicant upon issuance of an award. The applicant should submit a sample of academic tracking as an appendix.

Having timely access to information on students' demographics, academic statuses, current location, etc., is key to successfully implementing the TL program. The applicant will develop a student database containing this information within the first year of the award issuance, in close coordination

with the NEA/AC team. The applicant must demonstrate how data capture and visualization, to include infographics, can help provide a comprehensive view of student information in order to enable NEA/AC to carry out evidence-based decision-making regarding project programming. Data capture processes should include survey development, data quality control, analysis, and development of dashboards, all utilizing cutting edge technology that is cost effective. The applicant should be able to provide real-time information on students' academic statuses so that NEA/AC can adapt programming activities. The successful applicant will also be required to respond promptly and comprehensively to data calls from NEA/AC, which will be requested at least monthly.

13. Remaining Balances, Drop-outs and Replacements

The applicant must describe how remaining balances (cost-savings on both the Federal share and cost-share) will be regularly identified and communicated to NEA/AC on a periodic basis, no less than every six months as per reporting requirements.

14. Internships

The applicant will outline how they will support students to identify one internship during their time in the program, and in addition, how they will track internship requirements, vet organizations, and validate students' participation. The applicant will ensure that each student completes one internship comprising at least 120 hours of service, in advance of their approved graduation date and not in the final semester of study. Internships can be aligned with a student's area of study or more broadly focused on civic engagement. The internship should take place in the student's home country unless not feasible due to conflict, etc. Students cannot delay graduation or stay in the country of study past graduation to complete internship requirements. Students are eligible to receive the monthly stipend to complete up to one internship. The application will develop a plan to obtain student feedback.

15. Civic Engagement and Volunteering

The applicant should outline plans in how students will participate in volunteer and community service activities. Students are required to participate in civic engagement activities during their time in the TL program. The applicant will outline how they will track activities, vet organizations, and confirm students' participation. The applicant will develop a plan to obtain student feedback.

16. Career Development

The applicant should outline workshops and plans to develop employability skills and career development plans of students.

17. TLG Conference

Applicants will coordinate with other TL host universities to plan and execute an annual graduate research conference, rotating locations between universities annually. Student attendance and participation in the annual TLG conference is mandatory and they are expected to submit proposals for presenting their research projects during the conference.

18. Alumni Tracking

The applicant will coordinate closely with MEPI's Alumni Connection project implementer and provide alumni data for graduating students. In addition, the applicant should submit its approach on how to enhance and build better connections with the alumni. The applicant must demonstrate how it will leverage the alumni chapter, or other tools, to monitor the post-graduation status of all previous TL graduates across all phases and cohorts.

19. Participating Academic Units' Research Proposals

Successful applicant institutions may identify within their proposal academic units (AU) that are best suited to carry out this project. AUs may submit proposals that serve as roadmaps that identify social problems and a proposed research plan in which graduate students will engage. Proposals

must be result-oriented, identifying an outcome at the end of the funding period. Application and Submission Information can be found below.

Applications that wish to submit research proposals must include 2–3-page proposals from all participating academic units. These proposals must provide the following elements:

1. **Project Summary:** Summary of the proposed project, which consists of an overview, including a description of the activity, a statement of objectives and research methods to be employed, and a proposed timeline.
2. **Introduction:** Provides the rationale for why the project is important and answers the questions “What will we know at the end of this project that we don't currently know? What will we have that we do not have now?”
3. **Problem Statement:** Identifies a problem in the community, country, or region to address and argues why the problem is important and interesting. Why are these issues the right ones to be addressing now?
4. **Background:** Illustrates participating unit’s knowledge of the landscape and provides context and a comparison to the project. Background can include lessons from past and current research and/or an assessment of the present state of knowledge, including gaps.
5. **Significance:** Describes how this project will fill existing gaps in research and knowledge and move the field forward. What practical solutions will this project offer to address the problems? Why is it an interesting project that is neither trivial nor impossible?
6. **Project Description:** Concisely and coherently, this section completes the arguments developed earlier and presents an initial plan on how to solve the problems posed. Outlines the general plan for the project including objectives, theory, methods, activities, timeline and milestones, and expected results. Reference should be made to how the proposed work relates to the longer-term goals of the Unit’s focus and what strategy will be developed to increase graduate students’ knowledge, skills, and contributions in applied research.
7. **The advancement of scientific knowledge and broader impact:** Broader impact of the proposed activities may be accomplished

through the research itself, through the activities that are directly related to specific research projects, or through activities that are supported by, and are complementary to, the project. Academic units should demonstrate how the project will advance current knowledge in the field and benefit society and how this knowledge will be shared with the rest of the society.

8. Biographical Sketches: Provides a sketch of the credentials of the potential faculty involved including background, knowledge, interests, and skills needed to perform the proposed research.
9. Leveraging Resources: Academic units should identify existing resources within the TL program, the applicant community, community partners (public, private and nonprofit) or their professional community that can be employed to further advance this project. These resources can include current collaborations or other funds.
10. Deliverables: List of expected publications, patents, copyrights, or software systems relevant to the current proposal.
11. Professional Development and Mentoring Plan: Describes the mentoring activities to be provided to graduate students including specific activities designed to advance their careers.
12. Reference information is required. Each reference must include the names of all authors (in the same sequence in which they appear in the publication), the article and journal title, book title, volume number, page numbers, and year of publication.

Successful proposals will demonstrate how professors/academic units will be attracted to participate in this funding opportunity. Compensation may include, but is not limited to, activities such as:

- Course release on a 3/3 course load (any arrangement resulting in more than 3/3 course load disqualifies the faculty/academic unit)
- TL graduate student as a research assistant.
- Stipend to accompany students to academic conferences or seminars.

- Purchase of new equipment to needed to complete the proposed research.
- Consider additional requests from professors.

Participating academic units submit clear project descriptions that will be shared with prospective students at the time of recruitment. These descriptions should include the focus of the area of study, what is being emphasized, what eligible students must demonstrate to be considered, and what they should expect from the program.

For example, a program focusing on evidence-based economic studies might have the following specific requirements: The focus of TLG in Economics is methodological, emphasizing the application of data analytics in the field of economics. Economic transactions are increasingly becoming digital, and analytics are relied upon heavily for financial decision-making.

Candidates should demonstrate an interest in learning how to apply advanced computer techniques to the field of economics. Areas of focus include using scientific mechanisms to advance strategic response to uncertain conditions and elevated risks; incorporating technology and scientific calculation to organize and utilize big data in economic activities; applying knowledge of predictive analytics and decision science in forecasting economic outcomes; and linking factors that promote or hinder stability and prosperity using advanced technology. Candidates should expect to work on projects that use innovative approaches to harvest data and apply technology in solving local economic problems.

20. Research Projects

Applicants must work with students to develop research plans (RPs) that are approved by NEA/AC. Students are required to take a research methods course.

The applicant must provide training on one or more of the following:

- Methodological research

- Practicum
- Individual or collective research paper
- Presentation at a professional conference
- A publication (e-publications, blogs, peer-reviewed journals, book chapters, or newspaper articles are all acceptable publication formats. Collective works such as a special issue of a journal or co-authored manuscript are highly encouraged).

It is expected that participating academic units submit progress of research projects and assessment of students' training on a semester-basis. End-of-project report must demonstrate scientific advancement and broader impact.

Applied research entailing the use of scientific methods to solve real-world problems is highly encouraged. Applicants should carefully consider the practicum/internship opportunities they can arrange for students to increase their employability and preparedness to make meaningful contributions in their chosen fields.

TLG students must engage in scholarly activities (research conferences, lectures, seminars, roundtables) and/or participate in academic institutes at the host university during the course of their study. Potential research networking activities:

- Roundtable gatherings for TLG and interested TLU students, with a focus on existing knowledge in the field. This could be an opportunity to discuss recent literature in the field along with the means to connect to the local setting
- Workshop presentations and/or other means of contributing to scholarship in the field through organizing academic events and/or highlighting relevant events in the field.

21. Program Promotion and Social Media

The applicant should submit a comprehensive outreach plan within 60 days of issuance of the award to ensure that all social media activities feed content into, or tag, existing MEPI social media platforms, and plans on how

to increase public interaction with the program, collect data, analyze feedback, communicate key messages, and leverage success stories to targeted audiences. The applicant will collect success stories in accordance with the MEPI guidelines. The applicant will draft and submit for approval an annual communication and outreach plan.

Grantees, sub-awardees and sub-grantees will be required to brand and mark all materials produced under this award with the standard U.S. flag, as specified in Section VIII below.

22. Management Meeting

MEPI plans to host an annual management meeting with TL implementing institutions and recruitment. Applicants should budget for up to three participants to attend this event for three days.

23. Prohibited Activities and Costs

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 in lieu of regular academic studies.
- 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.
- Entertainment costs (e.g., receptions, social activities, ceremonies, alcoholic beverages, guided tours).

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

D. GENDER AND SOCIAL INCLUSION INTEGRATION

NEA/AC requires that all activities fully address intersectional¹ gender and inclusion considerations, ensuring that individuals of all genders and diverse backgrounds² benefit from support where applicable, and that gender and inclusion awareness is a built-in component of project activities. This should be documented through gender and social inclusion analysis in the project narrative that identifies any relevant gender and inclusion gaps and ways the proposed activities will address those gaps. Proposals should demonstrate how addressing relevant gender and inclusion gaps will enhance the project's goals and objectives. Applicants who are unfamiliar with integrating gender and inclusivity in foreign assistance programming should view the training video located here:

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

E. DEFINITIONS

Diversity:

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

Inclusion:

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

¹ Intersectionality describes the ways in which systems of inequality based on gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, class, and other forms of discrimination “intersect” to create unique dynamics and effects.

² Consideration of diversity of race, ethnicity, color, creed, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, or other status.

Equity:

The term “equity” means the consistent and systematic fair, just, and impartial treatment of all individuals, including individuals who belong to underserved communities that have been denied such treatment, such as ethnic minorities, and indigenous persons, members of religious minorities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) persons; persons with disabilities; persons who live in rural areas; and persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality.

Underserved communities:

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

II. MEASUREMENT OF RESULTS

Applicants shall provide a Logic Model and a Theory of Change to demonstrate how the proposed project (including activities, the project design, and the surrounding context) will achieve the stated objectives. The logic model and theory of change statements can be generated using the template in Appendix 2. Applicants shall also provide an illustrative Results Monitoring Plan (RMP) to describe how the proposed project will capture and measure data that demonstrates progress toward achieving the specific objectives of the proposed project. This includes any disaggregation of indicators relevant to the specific sub-populations the program intends to serve. The RMP may also include project-specific sub-objectives. The indicators proposed in the RMP should align with the logic model and include output and outcomes indicators. Please see Appendix 4 for the RMP template. Please see Section VI below for more information.

Successful applicants will work with the NEA/AC program and Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) teams to create a plan based on the

proposed logic model and 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. Additionally, applicants are expected to use their theory of change and logic models as management tools to assess successes and needed pivots in the program's performance.

III. AWARD INFORMATION

Funding Mechanism Type:	Cooperative Agreement
Estimated Number of Awards:	1-3
Estimated Total Program Funding:	\$2,600,000
Estimated Award Ceiling:	\$2,600,000
Estimated Award Floor:	\$500,000
Cost-Sharing or Matching:	Encouraged; NOT Required
Estimated Length of Project Period:	5 Years

Contingent on the availability of funds, approximately \$2,600,000 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 five years to support up to two cohorts depending on the activities and countries proposed. The estimated start

date for this project is September 1, 2024. NEA/AC reserves the right to award more or less than the estimated program funding and reserves the right to award funding under this announcement for a period of up to two years after the announcement's close date.

The 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.**

Competing Continuation

Requests for funding to extend beyond the initial budget period will be entertained on the basis of a competing continuation award. NEA/AC will review each 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; the availability of funds; and that continued funding would be in the best interest of the Department of State.

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

- Collaboration and written concurrence in establishing annual program objectives and the approval of an annual work plan.
- Collaboration in assessing progress and identifying issues that might affect the success of the program.
- Collaboration in addressing gender and incorporating gender in activities.
- Approval and written concurrence over student selections and dismissals.

- Collaboration and written concurrence in determining corrective actions, when necessary.
- Ensuring consistency in key personnel's qualifications and job description across all universities and approving universities' selection.
- Approval of key personnel and any subsequent changes in the positions during the life of the award.
- Collaboration and written concurrence in the creation of any training materials.
- Approval and written concurrence of annual program eligibility requirements.
- Approval and written concurrence of security, risk mitigation, and contingency plans. These plans should be updated and approved on an annual basis.
- Facilitation and coordination with U.S. Embassies, Consulates, and Offices, as needed.
- Collaboration and written concurrence of establishing a crisis protocol.
- Collaboration and written concurrence in determining selection criteria for beneficiaries.

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 only those organizations that received an invitation to apply to this announcement. **Any organization that did not**

receive an invitation to apply will be deemed ineligible and will not advance past the Technical Eligibility Review stage.

Eligible applicants include:

- U.S. or Foreign private institutions of higher education;
- U.S. or Foreign public or state institutions of higher education;

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.
- Have demonstrable previous experience working with inclusive and diverse populations. This should be addressed within the project narrative section of your application.
- Demonstrate the ability to advance Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) through a project team inclusive of nationals or individuals from the MENA region with previous experience managing higher education programming in the region reflected at all levels of project management.
- Meet ALL of the registration requirements listed in *Part B* below.
- **B. REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS**

To apply for NEA/AC (Federal) funding, organizations, whether based in or outside the U.S., must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number and an active account with the System for Award Management (SAM). Applicants who do not meet all registration requirements are NOT eligible for funding under the opportunity.

UEI Number

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

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

System for Award Management (SAM)

SAM is a U.S. government wide registry of vendors doing business with the Federal government and requires annual renewal. The system centralizes information about grant applicants/recipients and provides a central location for grant applicants/recipients to change organizational information.

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

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

For help with SAM.gov, please visit their support page at <https://www.fsd.gov> or contact them at: 866-606-8220 (U.S.) or +1-334-206-7828 (international).

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

C. ADDITIONAL ELIGIBILITY CONSIDERATIONS

Cost-Sharing or Matching

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

Cost-sharing or matching is not an evaluation 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 one application.** Please refer to Section B below for additional submissions guidance and requirements.

NOTE: Applications that do not include all the required documentation described in Section 1 below will not advance past the Technical Eligibility Review stage. Further, applications that exceed the allowable page limits will not be reviewed by the review panel. **Applicants may not add any materials to an application once it has been submitted and the competition deadline has passed.**

A.1 Required Documents

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

Applicants must complete each of these 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 outlined below regarding application materials, applicants are strongly encouraged to review the Application Evaluation Criteria section of this NOFO closely as they prepare their proposal. The Evaluation Criteria section is the rubric by which each application will be scored.

2. 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 25 pages**. More details on preparing the Project Narrative are provided in Appendix 3 and Section I. above. **Applicants are strongly encouraged to review Appendix 3 before preparing their Narrative.**

A successful Project Narrative should include the following:

- a) Description of how the selection of students will be done in fair and transparent manner.
- b) Description of how students will be integrated into the larger campus community.
- c) Table of contents and calendar for student orientation, proposed workshops, trainings, and co-curricular activities the applicant will make available for students. Proposed activities should include a brief description.
- d) Clear description of how students will be monitored academically and socially, describing methods, frequency, etc.
- e) How students with mental health and/or counseling needs will be supported. How will students in need of services be identified.
- f) Plan for an annual student satisfaction survey.
- g) Propose an approach for students to participate in Academic Units' Research Proposals.
- h) Creative ways to develop leadership skills, increase civic awareness, and motivate participants to become civic leaders.
- i) Description of how participants will receive mentorship from civic leaders or business leaders in their areas of interest.
- j) How applicants will design co-curricular activities to ensure participants gain soft skills necessary for professional employment, and access to internship opportunities related to their career goals.
- k) A description on how students will receive proper Gender Training. Universities shall include a gender studies component in their application and are strongly encouraged to incorporate gender/women's issues as required courses for the TLG students when possible.
- l) Description of how alumni will be tracked.
- m) A plan to increase communication and coordination with other TL host universities, and the implementing partners managing recruitment. This plan should include an annual staking session and management meeting in a TBD MENA location.

3. Budget & Budget Narrative Submission

Applicants must provide the following four elements as part of their budget submission:

- Summary Budget
- Detailed Line-Item Budget
- LOE Table
- Budget Narrative

There is no page limit for this section of an application. A sample fillable template can be found in Appendix 1. This template includes three tabs: The first tab includes written guidance on preparing the **Budget Narrative**. Applicants are strongly encouraged to create their Budget Narrative in Word and submit as either a Word Doc or PDF file. Please note that the Budget Narrative should include designations of who is considered Key Personnel for this project. As defined in the Department of State Standard Terms and Conditions (for assistance awards, Key Personnel means, “...*key professional and supervisory personnel; i.e., the members of the professional staff in a program supervisory position engaged for or assigned to duties under the award*”). The second tab has the template for the **Summary Budget**. This tab will auto-fill as you complete the Detailed Line-Item Budget, which can be found on the third tab. The third tab is where you can fill in the template for the **Detailed Line-Item Budget** as stated above. **NOTE: Applicants are strongly encouraged to use the same format as provided in the template, and to submit summary and detailed line-item budgets in Excel form, and the Budget Narrative as either a PDF or Word file.** If the applicant does not use the template, the applicant must ensure that their submission includes all elements outlined in the sample. The template, which includes more detailed instructions, can be found in Appendix 1. **Applicants are strongly encouraged to review Appendix 1 before preparing their Budget and Budget Narrative.**

4. Logic Model and Theory of Change

Applicants shall provide a logic model and theory of change to demonstrate how the proposed project (including activities, the project design, and the

surrounding context) will achieve the stated objectives with particular attention to how your approach will reach individuals of diverse backgrounds relevant to your specific context. A Theory of Change describes how and why a program is expected to achieve its stated outcomes using if-then-because language. If submitted, findings from the Gender & Inclusion Analysis (see A.2. Optional Documents) should be clearly addressed in the program design and logic model. The logic model and theory of change statements can be generated using the template in **Appendix 2. NOTE: Applicants are strongly encouraged to use the same format as found in the sample.** If the applicant does not use the template, the applicant must ensure that their submission includes all elements outlined in the sample.

5. Results Monitoring Plan (RMP)

Applicants shall provide an illustrative Results Monitoring Plan (RMP). The RMP can be generated using the template in Appendix 4. 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. The RMP shall be submitted as a separate document and has no page limit.

6. Gender and Inclusion Analysis

The gender and inclusion analysis provides a concise analysis of relevant gender norms, equity and equality for underserved communities and marginalized populations, power relations, and conflict dynamics in target countries. Potential domains of analysis include institutional practices and barriers, cultural norms, gender roles, access to and control over assets and resources, and patterns of decision-making. Applicants should briefly explain how they have integrated findings from their analysis into project design and/or other proposal documents, including a plan for regularly reviewing and updating the gender and inclusion analysis with local partners/beneficiaries, and making any necessary adjustments to program implementation. This section **may be no longer than three (3) pages, preferably as a Word Document.**

7. Project Timeline

Applicants must provide an overall breakdown of the order and timeframe in which all project activities will take place. This item should provide a macro snapshot of what will take place from beginning to end of the project. Applicants must ensure that the timeline of activities/events corresponds with details provided in the Project Narrative and Logic Model / Theory of Change. This section **may not exceed 2 pages**.

9. Job Descriptions / Biographical Info for Key Personnel Positions

For each position designated as key personnel for this project, applicants must provide the following:

1. If the position is already filled: Provide brief biographical information summarizing the person's qualifications, as well as a brief description of the roles or responsibilities pertaining to this project.

OR

2. If the person to fill a key position has not yet been hired: Provide a brief summary of the job description, which should include a description of the roles and responsibilities pertaining to this project, as well as a description of qualifications of eligible candidates.

NEA/AC intends to designate the following positions as key personnel:

- TL Executive Director at 80-100% LOE across active Tomorrow's Leaders awards.
- TLG Academic Director
- TLG Program Assistant Director/Program Manager at 100% LOE across active Tomorrow's Leaders or TLG awards.

NOTE: If an applicant is proposing sub grant partner(s) as part of their project design, **Key Personnel/Positions of the sub grantee must also be included**. This section of the application **may not exceed 5 pages**.

10. Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement:

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

A.2. Optional Documents

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

1. Letters of Agreement or Letters of Intent

Applicants proposing partner organizations and/or government bodies should include Letters of Intent or Letters of Agreement from their proposed partners.

2. Organizational Chart

The organizational chart outlines the clear lines of responsibility and authority in the applicant organization to include budgeted level of effort listed by each person.

3. Sustainability Plan

The sustainability plan outlines how the proposed project will be sustained beyond the initial award period. More information on preparing the Sustainability Plan is provided in **Appendix 3**. Sustainability Plans may not exceed **2 pages**.

4. Security, Risk Mitigation, & Contingency Planning Summary

This item should provide detail regarding the applicant's intended due diligence to assess and mitigate risks and put in place adequate security measures to ensure the safety and well-being of project staff, participants, and partners, if applicable. This should include specific actions by the applicant to ensure risks are adequately and routinely assessed, and that security measures are commensurate with operational concerns specific to the locale. The applicant should also

include a contingency plan that highlights potential challenges and limitations to project implementation in the operating environment and propose contingency plans should program activities be impacted. Please note that this section should not be limited to physical security and risk but should cover any applicable factors relevant to the given operating environment. This section **may not exceed 5 pages**.

5. Participating Academic Units' Research Proposals

Successful applicant institutions (AI) may identify within their proposal academic units (AU) that are best suited to carry out this project. AUs may submit proposals that serve as roadmaps that identify social problems and a proposed research plan in which graduate students will engage. Proposals must be result-oriented, identifying an outcome at the end of the funding period. Additional information on required documents can be found in Section I.

NOTE: Applicants must adhere to all maximum allowed page counts. Applications that exceed any of the allowable page limits will not advance past the Technical Eligibility Review stage.

B. APPLICATION FORMATTING REQUIREMENTS

The required font is 15-point, Calibri. All application documents must be single spaced, with all margins (left, right, top, and bottom) of at least one inch each. These settings do not apply if using provided templates. Also, applicants should ensure all pages in the application package are numbered consecutively and meet the page limit requirements outlined in Section VI above. **The Standard Forms 424 (SF-424, SF-424a, and SF-424b) are excluded from the page numbering.**

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

C. SUBMITTING AN APPLICATION

Applicants must submit their application electronically using SAMS Domestic. Applications will **NOT** be accepted from grants.gov. SAMS Domestic requires that the applying organization have an account with the system and both require a UEI number and SAM.gov account as detailed in Section V. **It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure they have an active account and will be able to submit its application.** NEA/AC 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.

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 <https://afsitsm.servicenowservices.com/ilms/>, and click the “create an account” hyperlink, located above the username prompt. Users will be directed to a page entitled “User Registration Request”; complete the online form and click the “Submit” button. Users will receive an activation email entitled “Verify Your Grants Account Registration”; click the activation link within the email to receive a username and password.

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 March 20, 2024. There will be no grace period, and any application not received by the application deadline will be deemed ineligible and will not advance to be reviewed. **Each applicant is encouraged to submit an application far enough in advance of the deadline so that the applicant can alert NEA/AC (nea-grants@state.gov) of any technical difficulties and allow sufficient time to resolve difficulties before the deadline.** Although NEA/AC will work with applicants to resolve technical issues, it is not in a position to grant exceptions to the submission requirements outlined in this announcement.

VII.FUNDING LIMITATIONS, RESTRICTIONS, AND OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

A. AWARDS TO COMMERCIAL FIRMS OR FOR-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

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

- added to the total of the amount of this award, including the required cost sharing or matching, and use it to further eligible project objectives.
- used to meet the Recipient's cost sharing or matching requirement.
- OR deducted from the total project or program allowable cost in determining the net allowable costs on which the federal share of costs is based.

B. AUDIT REQUIREMENTS

Domestic and foreign organizations that expend \$750,000 or more in a fiscal year in federal assistance must perform an independent, recipient-contracted Single Audit or Program Specific Audit. (***Program-specific Audit*** means an audit of one Federal award program. ***Single Audit*** means an audit

which includes both the entity's financial statements and the Federal Awards to be conducted in accordance with Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards (GAGAS). The audits must be independently and professionally executed in accordance with GAGAS either prescribed by a government's Supreme Audit Institution with auditing standards approved by the Comptroller General of the United States, or the host country's laws or adopted by the host country's public accountants or associations of public accountants, together with generally accepted international auditing standards. However, foreign entity audits consistent with International Standards for Auditing or other auditing standards are acceptable with the Grants Officer's approval. More information can be found at <https://www.gao.gov/assets/700/693136.pdf>

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

C. COMPLIANCE WITH APPLICABLE FEDERAL FUNDING REGULATIONS AND DOS TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Payment of funds awarded under this Notice of Funding Opportunity will not be disbursed until the DOS has been assured that the Recipient's financial management system will provide effective control over and accountability for all Federal funds in accordance with 2 CFR 200 and 2 CFR 600 as applicable. Awards issued under this NOFO are subject to the Department of State Standard Terms and Conditions (<https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/U.S.-Department-of-State-Standard-Terms-and-Conditions-10-01-2019508.pdf>) and 2 CFR 200 and 2 CFR 600 as applicable.

VIII. APPLICATION REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS

A. APPLICATION EVALUATION CRITERIA

Achievable Objectives (30 points)

Each of the project objectives listed above (in Section I) are clearly addressed.

- Impact and Effectiveness: The applicant describes the project's potential contribution to solving the problem addressed in the problem statement and achieving results.
- Timeframe: The applicant describes realistic results to be accomplished within the timeframe of the proposed award.
Milestones: The applicant provides realistic milestones to indicate progress toward goals and objectives as described in the program announcement.
- Beneficiaries: The applicant clearly identifies the anticipated beneficiaries and explains how the project's objectives will positively affect them.
- Milestones: The applicant provides realistic milestones to indicate progress toward goals and objectives as described in the program announcement.
- MEL: The applicant explains how monitoring and evaluation activities will be carried out throughout the award's period of performance and who will be responsible for them. Proposes a monitoring and evaluation framework and monitoring frequency, timing, and methods for all monitoring and evaluation activities including monitoring of students.

Ideally, the applicant will have an embedded team member or dedicated point of contact specialized in MEL that can offer regular program updates to NEA/AC and assist with adjusting the project in response.

Project Design (40 points)

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

- Responsiveness to NOFO: Explain how the proposed activities respond to the objectives listed in the NOFO.
- Rationale: To justify how the proposed activities will achieve the above objectives in this context.
- Project Management: Clear description of how the project will be managed in terms of initiation, planning, implementation and closing.
- Partnerships and Buy-ins: The applicant addresses how the project will engage or obtain support from relevant stakeholders and identifies any local partners.
- Feasibility: The applicant proposes activities that are feasible, and are also practical, and/or experiential in nature to encourage innovation.
- Beneficiaries Selection Criteria and Process: The applicant explains how participants will be selected (e.g., criteria for selection, selection process).
- Duplication: The applicant acknowledges if activities similar to those proposed are already taking, or have taken place previously, and provides an explanation as to how proposed new activities will not duplicate or merely add to existing/recent activities.
- Contingency Plan: The applicant articulates programming assumptions and potential challenges to project implementation and proposes contingency plans.
- Division of Labor: The application describes the division of labor among the applicant and any partners.
- Marginalized Populations: The applicant identifies and addresses support for marginalized populations in all proposed activities and objectives and provides specific means for their inclusion.
- Gender and Inclusion Considerations: The applicant includes gender and inclusion analysis in the project narrative that identifies relevant gender and inclusion gaps and ways the proposed activities will address those gaps. Proposals should demonstrate how addressing

relevant gender and inclusion gaps will enhance the program's goals and objectives and how the project will benefit individuals of all genders and diverse backgrounds.

- **Logic Model and Theory of Change:** The applicant details how the proposed Logic Model and Theory of Change clearly links project activities, outputs, and outcomes to objectives. If applicable, findings from the Gender and Inclusion Analysis are clearly addressed within the program design.
- **Results Monitoring Plan:** The applicant details how they intend to monitor project progress towards outputs, outcomes, and objectives. Indicators include relevant disaggregation to monitor program implementation for diverse populations.
- **Program Logic:** Is it theoretically sound? Do all elements of the logic model fit together showing plausible pathways to achieving project outcomes? Have all the key assumptions been identified and their potential influences described? Are the risks to implementation (external factors) fully accounted for and described?

Organizational Capacity (20 points)

- The applicant demonstrates experience (e.g., has previously worked and/or has established contacts/partners) in the proposed country/territory/region.
- The applicant demonstrates an institutional record of successful programs in the content area proposed (e.g., study abroad oversight, monitoring, support).
- The applicant demonstrates experience working equitably with individuals of all genders and diverse backgrounds.
- 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)

- Pre-identified key staff members, including volunteers, demonstrate experience working in the country/territory/region proposed and with participants from that area (e.g., language skills, cultural understanding).
- A description of the roles of each person or position on the project, whether staff, partner, consultant, or volunteer demonstrates that the project will be adequately but efficiently staffed, avoiding redundancy or duplication of effort.
- A job description, including hiring criteria, is provided for each open key position.
- Pre-identified key staff members, including volunteers, demonstrate experience and knowledge in the proposed content area.
- Applicant and/or partner staff have relevant language competencies.
- The applicant convincingly details how it will incorporate Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) principles in its approach to staffing.
- Applicants identify qualified staff member(s) who will support the Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning aspects of the project including data collection, management, and reporting responsibilities.

Budget & Budget Narrative (Acceptable or Not Acceptable)

- The costs proposed are reasonable in relation to the proposed activities and anticipated results, which are clearly explained in the budget narrative.
- The budget provides details of calculations, including estimation methods, quantities, unit costs, and other similar quantitative detail sufficient for the calculation to be duplicated.
- The preponderance of the budget is spent on supporting the project participants/activities in country.
- The budget includes costs dedicated to management, monitoring, and evaluation, and any costs needed for further gender analysis and for addressing gender gaps.
- Adequate travel costs are proposed.

- The budget demonstrates a reasonable cost per participant.
- The budget accounts for monitoring, evaluation, and learning costs.

B. REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS

NEA/AC is committed to ensuring a competitive and standardized process for awarding funding. Applications will be screened initially in a Technical Eligibility Review stage to determine whether applicants meet the eligibility requirements outlined in Section V and have submitted all required documents outlined in Section VI. Applications that do not meet these requirements will not advance beyond the Technical Eligibility Review stage and will be deemed ineligible for funding under this NOFO.

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

All applications that proceed to the Merit Review Panel will be evaluated by U.S. government and non-governmental subject matter and/or country-specific experts and will be rated on a 100-point scale. Point values for individual elements of the application are presented in Section VIII. Panel Reviewers' ratings, and any resulting recommendations, are advisory.

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

IX. ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

A. AWARD NOTICES

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

NEA/AC expects to notify applicants who proceeded past the Technical Eligibility Review stage about the status of their application by April 30, 2024. Final awards cannot be made until funds have been appropriated by Congress, allocated and committed through internal bureau procedures. Successful applicants will receive a Federal Assistance Award (FAA) from the bureau's Grants Office. The FAA and the original proposal with subsequent modifications (if applicable) shall be the only binding authorizing document between the recipient and the U.S. Government. The FAA will be signed by an authorized Grants Officer and transmitted to the recipient's responsible officer identified in the application. NEA/AC reserves the right to award funding to applicants under this announcement for a period of up to two years after the announcement's close date.

B. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Reporting is critical to effective program management and oversight. Reports are required as a means of evaluating the recipient's progress and utilization of resources. They are divided between a performance progress report and a financial status report.

Recipients will, at a minimum, be required to submit Quarterly Performance Reports (QPR) and a Quarterly Financial Report (QFR). The QPRs will compare actual to planned performance and indicates the progress made in accomplishing each assistance award tasks/goals noted in the grant agreement and will contain analysis and summary of findings, both quantitative and qualitative, for key indicators. The QFRs provide a means of monitoring expenditures and comparing costs incurred with progress.

Recipients must report ***immediately*** when a program faces unplanned delays in implementation, fails to meet program targets or milestones, or costs increase. Any changes or revisions to the approved budget require prior approval from the NEA/AC Grants Officer.

Recipients are required to report program and beneficiary achievements on a quarterly basis (or provide written confirmation that there is no related news for the given quarter) beginning with second quarter's program report.

Success Story Reporting: 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. A template will be provided by NEA/AC for this purpose. Success stories must be emailed to MEPI@state.gov.

Most Significant Change (MSC): Recipients are required to report the total number of significant change stories collected from project stakeholders that tell the story of significant changes and outcomes that are directly or indirectly linked with the project. Data collection activities with stakeholders will begin approximately six months after the start of their participation/involvement in the project and continue when appropriate within the project until the conclusion of the award. The data collection process and reporting templates will be shared by the NEA MEL POC. During the project lifecycle at minimum one significant change story with a maximum of four will be submitted each project year.

Tomorrow's Leaders program implementers are required to submit to NEA/AC their plans and procedures for student safety, including plans/procedures for safety for study and homestays in the United States if applicable.

Detailed Work Plan: Approval of a detailed work plan, to be submitted at least annually and updated more frequently as needed. The work plan will be in a format agreed with NEA/AC and may be an online shared document.

Coordination of Recruitment: Successful applicants will be required to promptly share information and otherwise closely coordinate Tomorrow's Leaders recruitment programming with NEA/AC's implementing partner.

Prior to commencing any activities, the Recipient must first submit to NEA/AC a risk mitigation and security plan that details the applicant's strategy for ensuring the safety of staff, any sub-recipients, and beneficiaries. The Recipient shall include information on any related insurance that may be needed. The plan should also cover student safety, security, and wellness. The plan must outline applicable policies,

procedures, and mitigation strategy and also include statistical and anecdotal reporting on related issues. This may be required for other countries prior to commencing activities as well, depending on the countries included in the applicant's proposal.

The Recipient must submit a branding and marking plan as well as a monitoring and evaluation plan to NEA/AC for approval within 60 days of award, using an agreed upon template.

The Recipient will report within 48 hours to NEA/AC when student emergencies are brought to their attention. This includes, but is not limited to, student death, missing student/s, serious illness or injury (e.g., brain injury, severe burn, major surgery, communicable disease, serious mental health incidents, self-harm, any other condition requiring hospitalization, etc.), litigation (related to a sponsor's visitor program, in which sponsor or an exchange visitor may be a named party), lost or stolen immigration documents (i.e., passport and visa), incident involving the criminal justice system (e.g., arrest, charges, law enforcement, etc.), theft of intellectual property or violations of export controls, sexually-related incidents or abuse (incident or allegation involving sexual exploitation, harassment or abuse), negative press involving a sponsor's scholarship program, violation of university and program policies, foreign government involvement (including embassy officials), and any other situation impacting the students safety (e.g., natural disasters, civil unrest, outbreaks of violence, etc.). An initial report may be made by phone if email is not possible in the short-term. However, this report must be followed up to in writing within one week, using the incident reporting template provided by NEA/AC. For ongoing incidents, an update of this report will be sent to NEA/AC as necessary, preferably as the information becomes available, but in any case the recipient will at least provide monthly updates on the status of all incidents, until they have notified NEA/AC that the incident is resolved. Additionally, the recipient will update the incident report tab listed in the student tracker spreadsheet. The information in the student tracker should be limited in nature, following the guidelines set by NEA/AC.

Per federal regulations, Recipients are required to report Significant Developments that will materially impair the ability to meet the objective of the Federal award. Significant Developments include, but are not limited to, allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA). Award recipients are reminded of the requirements in 2 CFR 200.112 and 200.318(c)(i) to maintain written standards of conduct covering conflicts of interest, which in some cases may relate to SEA.

Maktabat: Recipients will be required to submit to MEPI all materials developed under awards for the training of participants. These documents (including but not limited to manuals, curriculums, videos, websites, and presentations used in workshops or distributed to participants) will be considered for inclusion in the Maktabat MEPI website:

<http://maktabatmepi.org>. The Recipient should make every effort to submit training materials as they are developed and used rather than waiting until the end of the award. The materials can be submitted in English, French, and/or Arabic. The Recipient can submit materials to the Maktabat MEPI website: www.maktabatmepi.org. The Recipient is asked to add a link to the Maktabat website on the Recipient's website if feasible.

C. TRAVEL NOTIFICATIONS

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

D. APPLICANT VETTING AS A CONDITION OF AWARD

Applicants are advised that successful passing of vetting to evaluate the risk that funds may benefit terrorists or their supporters is a condition of award. Applicants may be asked to submit information required by DS Form 4184, Risk Analysis Information about their company and its principal personnel. Only those individuals for whom vetting is required, as identified by the

grants officer, and have been determined to be eligible to participate in the program may receive assistance or participate in this award. 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 or with individuals from 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 or with individuals from 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 mark all materials produced under the award with the standard U.S. flag and MEPI logo. The U.S. flag must be in a size and prominence equal to (or greater

than) any other logo or identity. Materials are defined as but not limited to: training materials, materials for recipients, or materials to communicate or promote with foreign audiences a program, event, project, or some other activity under this award, including but not limited to invitations to events, press materials, event backdrops, podium signs, etc. In addition, sub-recipients or sub-awardees are subject to the marking requirements and the grantee shall include a provision in the sub-recipient or sub-awardee's agreement indicating that the standard, rectangular U.S. flag is a requirement. Exceptions to this requirement can be discussed with NEA/AC when negotiating an award.

Grantees awarded under this announcement will be required to follow MEPI social media guidelines for any and all online presences related to the project. Grantees will be expected to tag @USMEPI in all social media posts and utilize the official hashtag #MEPI for any social media posts in Arabic or English. Grantees will be expected to highlight MEPI online and share as many MEPI stories as possible, including demonstrating how each MEPI programs strive to achieve its assistance objectives of participatory governance and economic reform.

F. UEI NUMBER REQUIREMENT FOR SUB AWARDEES

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

G. SUB AWARDEE REPORTING REQUIREMENT

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

X. AGENCY CONTACTS

For questions regarding this funding opportunity including: completing an application, financial and grants management issues, or technical matters, contact:

nea-grants@state.gov

All questions and a notification of Intent to Apply must be submitted in writing to nea-grants@state.gov by **February 21, 2024**, at 17:00:00 eastern time (ET), noting **Opportunity Number SFOP0010237** in the subject line. 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.

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

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://afsism.servicenowservices.com/ilms/>.

ILMS Help Desk

(888) 313-ILMS (4567)

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

XI. DISCLAIMER

The terms and conditions published in this NOFO are binding and may not be modified by any Bureau representative. Explanatory information provided by the bureau that contradicts public language will not be binding. Issuance of the NOFO does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the U.S. government. The Bureau reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposal budgets in accordance with the needs of the program and

the availability of funds. Awards made will be subject to periodic reporting and evaluation requirements listed in this NOFO.