NEA/AC Regional
Annual Program Statement

Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs,
Office of Assistance Coordination,
Department of State
Opportunity number: DFOP0018712
Application deadline: Rolling, See Section E

Contents

U.S Department of State
Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs
Annual Program Statement

A. Basic Information

1. Overview

Funding Opportunity Title	NEA/AC Regional Annual Program Statement
Funding Opportunity Number	DFOP0018712
Announcement Type	Annual Program Statement
Deadline for Applications	Rolling, See Section E.4
Assistance Listing Number	19.600
Length of performance period	12 to 36 months
Number of awards anticipated	1 - 9 awards (dependent on amounts)
Award amounts	See Section C for award amounts
Total available funding	$190M pending availability of funds
Type of Funding	Economic Support Funds and National Security Investment Program Funds under the Foreign Assistance Act
Anticipated project start date	October 1, 2026

The Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs' Office of Assistance Coordination (NEA/AC) of the U.S. Department of State announces an open competition for organizations to submit a statement of interest (SOI) for innovative foreign assistance programs benefitting partner countries that also advance U.S. commercial diplomacy and place American interests first. SOIs must demonstrate how projects will leverage foreign assistance for U.S. partners as a tool of statecraft to advance U.S. economic, security, and diplomatic objectives. Programming should promote trade over, by leveraging assistance resources to champion American enterprise and infrastructure and catalyze private capital through market principles.

SOIs may address foreign assistance programs for partner countries in sectors including: energy development and exports; trade facilitation; emerging technologies (particularly AI and telecommunications); critical infrastructure (aviation, 5G, transport, space technology); critical minerals; regional economic integration; advanced manufacturing; workforce training aligned with U.S. business needs; and economic recovery in conflict-affected areas. Projects should orient implementing partners toward the American business community and foster burden-sharing. Review country-specific guidance in the sections below and tailor your SOI to address identified priorities. NEA/AC may decide to grant multiple awards, one award, or no awards, subject to funding availability and proposal viability. The submission of the SOI is the first step in a two-step process. Applicants must first submit a concise (1-3 page) statement of interest designed to clearly communicate project ideas and objectives. This is not a full proposal and will not result in a federal assistance award at this step.

The purpose of the SOI process is to allow applicants to submit project ideas for evaluation prior to requiring the development of a full proposal application. Upon a merit review of eligible SOIs, selected applicants will be invited to expand on their project idea(s) by submitting a full proposal application. Full proposals will go through a second merit review before final funding decision(s) are made.

Funding Instrument Type: Grant, fixed amount award (FAA), or cooperative agreement. Cooperative agreements include substantial involvement of the bureau or embassy in program implementation of the project. An FAA may also include substantial involvement. Examples of substantial involvement are included in section C below.

Project Performance Period: Proposed project should be completed in 12-36 months. The Department of State may entertain applications for continuation grants funded under these awards beyond the initial budget period on a non-competitive basis subject to availability of funds, satisfactory progress of the program, and a determination that continued funding would be in the best interest of the U.S. Department of State.

Application Submission Process:
SOI are required to be submitted via the Department of State's MyGrants system. Applicants using MyGrants for the first time will need to register with MyGrants by navigating to https://MyGrants.servicenowservices.com. [Click "Create an Account" under "New User?" On the pop-up, select "Create a MyGrants Applicant/Grantee Account" and complete all required fields.] Once finished, an email will be sent to verify the account creation followed by an Okta account set-up, which will require the use of a smartphone for multi-factor authentication. If an applicant does not have accessibility to a smartphone during the time of account creation, please contact the helpdesk at +1 (888) 313-4567 (toll charges apply for international callers) or through the self-service online portal that can be accessed from **ILMS Self Service Portal**. Customer support is available 24/7.

Submission Timeline:
SOI will be accepted on a rolling basis with reviews conducted at least monthly. See Section E: Submission Requirements and Deadlines. Awards will be made on a rolling basis, subject to funding availability.

This notice is subject to availability of funding.

2. Executive Summary
The Department of State NEA/AC is pleased to announce this APS, which serves as an intake mechanism for SOI that advance U.S. policy priorities in the Near East region. This APS provides a streamlined process for NEA/AC to solicit, review, and fund proposals as funding becomes available. This APS outlines NEA/AC's funding priorities and strategic themes, and the procedures for submitting. Please carefully follow all instructions below.

B. Eligibility

1. Eligible Applicants

The following organizations are eligible to apply:

- Not-for-profit organizations, including think tanks and civil society/non-governmental organizations
- Public and private educational institutions
- For-profit organizations, such as corporations and commercial firms
- Public International Organizations and Governmental Institutions

2. Cost Sharing or Matching

Cost share or matching is favorably considered, but not required, as part of the merit review process. Opportunities for cost sharing and matching may be discussed during negotiation and/or consultative program design (aka "co-design"), if applicable. Per 2 CFR §200.306, items that are proposed for cost share must be allowable per 2 CFR §200, Subpart E—Costs Principles.

3. Other Eligibility Requirements

Organizations are not required to obtain a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) or be registered in the System for Award Management (SAM.gov) in order to submit an SOI in phase 1. However, all organizations must have a UEI issued via SAM.gov, as well as a valid registration in SAM.gov before they submit a full application in phase 2. Please see Section E for more information.

Any applicant listed on the Excluded Parties List System in SAM.gov and/or has a current debt to the U.S. government is not eligible to apply for an assistance award in accordance with the OMB guidelines at 2 CFR 180 that implement Executive Orders 12549 (3 CFR,1986 Comp., p. 189) and 12689 (3 CFR,1989 Comp., p. 235), "Debarment and Suspension."

Additionally, no entity or person listed on the Excluded Parties List System in SAM.gov can participate in any activities under an award. All applicants are strongly encouraged to review the Excluded Parties List System in SAM.gov to ensure that no ineligible entity or person is included in their application.

C. Program Description

The Middle East and North Africa region presents both strategic challenges and substantial opportunities for advancing U.S. economic and technological dominance and commercial interests. Challenges include limited market integration, underdeveloped infrastructure, constrained private sector growth, and instability from conflict and displacement. However, the region also offers significant opportunities for U.S. businesses to secure market access and establish American leadership in critical sectors where the United States has competitive advantages, including energy, aviation, emerging technologies (particularly AI and telecommunications), 5G infrastructure, critical minerals, transport logistics, space technology, and agriculture.

This APS seeks SOIs that leverage foreign assistance as a tool of statecraft to advance U.S. economic, security, and diplomatic objectives in the region. Priority will be given to projects that champion and position U.S. businesses and products as the preferred choice for regional partners, that help U.S. businesses secure foreign government contracts and tenders for key projects, and that promote the export of U.S. technology that will lock in alignment with U.S. technological standards and frameworks. Projects should promote trade, not aid, by catalyzing private capital, ensuring market principles guide development, and delivering measurable benefits to host countries while also advancing U.S. commercial interests. Successful SOIs will demonstrate how they advance America's strategic leverage by increasing U.S. exports and investment while reducing host country dependencies on adversarial powers.

Out of Scope Program Activities: Activities that are not typically funded include but are not limited to:

a. Projects focused on public diplomacy or U.S. government public messaging (separate funding may be available through the embassy);
b. Partisan political activities, agendas, or electoral campaigns;
c. U.S.-based activities, study tours, scholarships, or exchange projects;
d. Initiatives directed towards a diaspora community;
e. Projects that have a predominant academic or basic research focus;
f. Social welfare projects that purely provide service-delivery or humanitarian assistance;
g. Costs incurred to complete activities begun with other funds;
h. Medical and psychological research or clinical studies using human subjects;
i. Projects exclusively of a commercial or profit-making nature;
j. Cultural presentations, cultural research, cultural clubs, or festivals, etc.; and
k. Entertainment costs (e.g., receptions, social activities, ceremonies, alcoholic beverages, guided tours).

1. ***Goals and Objectives***

Eligible Countries:

In addition to the overarching objectives and requirements identified above, projects must meet regional or country-specific project priority areas as outlined below:

<u>Algeria:</u>
Country problem statement: Algeria is a reliable actor with the potential to project stability across the Sahel; welcome multibillion-dollar commercial deals with American companies in critical sectors such as energy and critical minerals; and partner with U.S. companies while developing their artificial intelligence infrastructure. Algeria has taken unprecedented steps to deepen its relationship with the United States to achieve these outcomes. Nonetheless, the United States must navigate Algeria's desire to remain non-aligned, and out-compete China for economic opportunities or encourage Algeria to connect with our partners over our adversaries.

Country priorities:

1. Support the development of Algeria's massive unconventional hydrocarbon and critical minerals potential, while positioning U.S. companies as preferred partners;
2. Connect Algeria's nascent artificial intelligence infrastructure to U.S. and other trusted companies, compete with Huawei and leverage Algerian desire to not depend solely on Chinese technologies.
3. Work with Algeria to export their security expertise to the Sahel and contribute to its stabilization.
4. Leverage U.S. assistance to reorient Algeria's historically non-aligned policy toward U.S. interests and policy priorities.

Geographic/Thematic focus: Port security, natural resources, A.I. technologies. and commercial investment

Estimated Award Ceiling: $20,000,000
Estimated Award Floor: $250,000

Specific eligibility requirements: n/a

<u>Bahrain:</u>
Country problem statement: Bahrain seeks to advance regional integration and U.S. partnerships in defense systems, energy and digital infrastructure, civil nuclear cooperation, and financial services – sectors directly aligned with Bahrain's strategic modernization goals and economic diversification under Vision 2030. Bahrain's over-reliance on oil revenue makes it vulnerable to fiscal pressures from regional neighbors and malign external influence heightened by the need to balance economic partnerships while deterring Iranian aggression and malign activities.

Country priorities:
1. Deepen Bahrain's economic relationship with the United States; and
2. Advance regional integration efforts envisioned in the Abraham Accords.

Geographic/Thematic focus: Economy, energy security, network security, technology/AI, supply chain, critical minerals, fintech.

Estimated Award Ceiling: $20,000,000
Estimated Award Floor: $250,000

Specific eligibility requirements: n/a

<u>Iraq:</u>
Country problem statement: Iraq seeks to maximize economic prosperity with foreign investment in gas capture, power generation, digital services, and financial compliance – sectors directly aligned with Iraq's most urgent needs. Iraq must take immediate measures to dismantle Iran-aligned terrorist militia groups (IAMGs) that have launched hundreds of attacks on U.S. interests in Iraq and across the region and undermine Iraq's sovereignty, security, and

international standing. Iraq is subject to Iran's malign influence, is unable to secure its borders or stamp out corruption, and is overly reliant on oil revenues.

Country priorities:

1. Prevent IAMGs from benefiting from government spending and remove IAMG influence from government decisions.
2. Expand trade, investment, and energy partnerships, including by attracting U.S. businesses and commercial ventures into Iraq's key growth sectors supported by transparent procurement systems, regulatory reform, and customs modernization that create a stable and competitive marketplace for American partners;
3. Modernize Iraq's financial sector to comply with international standards, counter illicit finance, and facilitate U.S. commercial engagement and;
4. Support Iraq's integration into regional economic frameworks and water-sharing agreements while addressing resource scarcity that threatens stability.

Geographic/Thematic focus: Assistance should include Federal Iraq and the Iraqi Kurdistan Region (IKR). Financial sector reform, critical infrastructure protection, water security and regional cooperation, procurement and market access reform, border security and customs modernization, healthcare and pharmaceutical standards, and education and workforce development.

Estimated Award Ceiling: $20,000,000
Estimated Award Floor: $250,000

Specific eligibility requirements: Capacity to operate in Iraq's complex security environment and obtain necessary registrations and permits. Applicants must demonstrate ability to coordinate with Iraqi federal and Kurdistan Regional Government authorities, implement projects that do not benefit IAMGs, and comply with U.S. counterterrorism requirements.

<u>Lebanon:</u>
Country problem statement: The United States is pressing Lebanon to assert its sovereignty across the country, disarm Hizballah and other malign non-state actors, and counter Iranian influence – all critical to advancing regional security. For these efforts to succeed, Lebanon must be able to present meaningful alternatives to Hizballah in terms of service provision and economic opportunities. Absent this support, Hizballah and Iran would be uncontested as they seek to re-establish their hold on state institutions throughout Lebanon. Meanwhile, U.S. adversaries are actively encroaching on Lebanon's telecommunications and data infrastructure, threatening its digital sovereignty and necessitating efforts to deny these actors strategic economic and technological leverage over Lebanon's future. Lebanon's economic crisis also presents a strategic investment opportunity for national champions to gain and expand their foothold in a pivotal trilingual society and economy sitting at the intersection of Europe, Asia, and Africa.

Country priorities:

1. Support strategic energy and telecoms infrastructure development;
2. Substitute Hizballah-provided essential services;

3. Expand opportunities for public-private engagement;
4. Create pathways for private sector and diaspora engagement, particularly involving U.S. companies.

Geographic/Thematic focus: Beirut**,** Southern Lebanon, the Bekaa Valley, and other areas critical to contest the influence and narratives of Hizballah and Iran. Tripoli and other strategic areas across the country to expand opportunities for U.S. companies.

Estimated Award Ceiling: $30,000,000
Estimated Award Floor: $250,000

Specific eligibility requirements: Implementers must ensure full compliance with U.S. laws and policies prohibiting the provision of assistance to armed groups, including Hizballah and Hamas, and must maintain strict vetting and monitoring. Implementers must also refrain from engagement with Lebanese government institutions that are controlled by Hizballah or other sanctioned actors.

<u>Libya:</u>
Country problem statement: Libya's political fragmentation and opaque revenue management present a challenge to responsible international investment and limit opportunities for U.S. commercial engagement. While Libya's recent adoption of a unified budget agreement marks a meaningful step toward fiscal reform, full implementation will take time and structural gaps remain. The absence of clear commercial law and fully functioning unified economic institutions inhibits private sector entry. Without sustained efforts to build on this budgetary process to improve economic transparency, strengthen regulatory conditions, and lay the groundwork for accountable market participation, U.S. firms will remain disadvantaged in a high-potential energy and infrastructure market where competitors are actively positioning for long-term access.

Country priorities:
1. Promote unification of political, economic, and security institutions to enable Libya; and
2. Foster economic growth, including in the energy and defense sectors, while expanding opportunities for U.S. companies.

Geographic/Thematic focus: National-level institutions; energy sector governance, commercial law and regulatory frameworks

Estimated Award Ceiling: $20,000,000
Estimated Award Floor: $250,000

Specific eligibility requirements: Implementers must ensure full compliance with U.S. laws and policies prohibiting the provision of assistance to armed groups, including the Libyan National Army (LNA), and must maintain strict vetting and monitoring to ensure assistance is directed exclusively to civilian institutions.

<u>Morocco:</u>

Country problem statement: Morocco's alignment with key U.S. priorities, political and economic stability, and long history with the United States creates a window to secure durable commercial, political, security, and technological gains. Morocco is a reliable partner with the potential to project security across the Sahel, adopt trusted technology, and welcome multibillion dollar commercial deals with American companies in critical sectors. Morocco's economic growth and World Cup 2030 infrastructure buildout create near-term opportunities for U.S. firms in energy, critical minerals, cybersecurity, technology, aviation, rail, ports, logistics, and other sectors. Youth unemployment, public service delivery challenges, regional inequality, and water stress are potential obstacles to growth and stability. Opaque procurement and decision-making processes can disadvantage U.S. companies and cause delays, while strong competition from European and Chinese companies necessitates persistent, high-level support from the U.S. government to deliver commercial wins.

Country priorities:

1. Expand trade and investment to drive growth, remove market barriers, including prioritizing U.S. companies, particularly in key sectors including tech, infrastructure, defense, energy, agriculture, and critical minerals;
2. Work with Morocco to resolve the Sahara dispute, expand the Abraham Accords, and contribute to stabilizing efforts in the Sahel and Middle East.

Geographic/Thematic focus: Commercial and economic opportunities in key sectors including tech, infrastructure, defense, energy, agriculture, and critical minerals; commercial and investment opportunities in the southern regions, including the Moroccan Sahara.

Estimated Award Ceiling: $20,000,000
Estimated Award Floor: $250,000

Specific eligibility requirements: n/a

<u>Oman:</u>
Country problem statement: Oman is a longstanding U.S. partner whose strategic location, neutral diplomatic posture, and diversification agenda create significant opportunities for U.S. commercial engagement. The U.S.-Oman Free Trade Agreement provides the United States with preferential market access and a competitive edge over regional rivals. However, Oman's fiscal constraints, limited institutional capacity in emerging sectors, and deepening economic ties with China – including Huawei's presence in sensitive infrastructure – threaten to erode U.S. influence and market position. Strict employment quotas for nationals and an opaque government tender process complicate U.S. commercial ambition. Active U.S. engagement is required to prevent competitor encroachment in critical sectors and strengthen Oman's orientation toward the United States.

Country priorities:

1. Support emerging sectors, including AI, space, and critical minerals, while also supporting market access for U.S. firms;
2. Leverage Oman's role as a neutral interlocutor with regional actors to reduce regional stability threats, limit Chinese involvement in sensitive sectors, and ensure enforcement of sanctions against Iran.

3. Leverage the U.S.-Oman Free Trade Agreement and Oman's geographic advantages outside the Strait of Hormuz to increase bilateral trade and investment.

Geographic/Thematic focus: Technology, space, critical minerals

Estimated Award Ceiling: $20,000,000
Estimated Award Floor: $250,000

Specific eligibility requirements: n/a

<u>Tunisia:</u>
Country problem statement: Despite its highly skilled and cost-competitive workforce, strategic Mediterranean location, and preferential trade agreements with EU and African markets, bureaucratic and structural barriers to investment constrain opportunities for U.S. firms in a market increasingly contested by competitors. Barriers include opaque licensing and procurement processes, currency repatriation restrictions, and customs inefficiencies. Without sustained U.S. commercial engagement, Tunisia's strategic orientation and market architecture will increasingly reflect the preferences of U.S. competitors.

Country priorities:
1. Decrease Tunisia's reliance on strategic adversaries for infrastructure, logistics, and technology while also positioning U.S. firms and standards as preferred in infrastructure, logistics, and technology.
2. Remove specific regulatory, financial, and commercial barriers that disadvantage U.S. and other foreign firms, including through support for procurement transparency, licensing reform, customs modernization, and financial sector improvements, which will facilitate U.S. commercial transactions and market entry.
3. Support the development of high-opportunity sectors where U.S. firms hold competitive advantages, including energy efficiency and grid modernization; ICT and digital economy; agribusiness and precision agriculture; port and logistics infrastructure; and financial services and fintech.

Geographic/Thematic focus: Programming should prioritize, but is not limited to, key commercial and economic hubs including Greater Tunis as Tunisia's primary commercial and regulatory center, Sfax as a key industrial and agribusiness hub; Sousse as a growing center for manufacturing and technology; and Bizerte as a strategic port and logistics node. Thematically, priority sectors include but are not limited to energy (grid modernization and energy efficiency); ICT and digital infrastructure; agribusiness and food technology; port and transport logistics; and financial services. Projects should support activities in these sectors while also increasing U.S. exports of goods and services, reducing barriers to market access for U.S. firms, and promoting the adoption of U.S.-aligned technology standards and frameworks in critical sectors.

Estimated Award Ceiling: $20,000,000
Estimated Award Floor: $250,000

Specific eligibility requirements: n/a

- Prior experience engaging the private sector, including the U.S. business community, in MENA or comparable emerging markets;
- Familiarity with Tunisian commercial, regulatory, and legal frameworks, or demonstrated capacity to rapidly develop such familiarity through local partnerships; and
- Ability to engage relevant Tunisian government counterparts across ministries and regulatory bodies responsible for trade, investment, and sector-specific licensing.

<u>West Bank:</u>
Problem statement: The West Bank is facing a worsening economic crisis~~,~~ driven by the Palestinian Authority's failure to implement key reforms, fiscal weakness, and limited integration with regional/global markets, undermining local and regional stability. Foreign assistance efforts that align with America First foreign assistance principles – particularly those connecting the West Bank with U.S. and Israeli private sectors - could-provide tangible economic benefits while advancing U.S. regional objectives and supporting implementation of the President's Peace Plan.

Country priorities:
1. Connect Palestinian businesses and talent to U.S. and Israeli technology ecosystems;
2. Strengthen economic integration between the West Bank, Israel, and regional partners through I2U2, IMEC, and other frameworks that foster trade and market access; and
3. Build private sector capacity and workforce readiness aligned with U.S. business needs to reduce conditions exploited by malign actors.

Geographic/Thematic focus:
ICT and digital infrastructure linking Palestinian talent to U.S. and Israeli technology ecosystems; precision agriculture and water management deploying U.S. technologies; trilateral tourism and heritage networks including Christian pilgrimage sites; U.S. medical technology and telemedicine deployment; and higher education and workforce development aligned with U.S. private sector demand.

Estimated Award Ceiling: $20,000,000
Estimated Award Floor: $250,000

Specific eligibility requirements: Locally registered organization with ability and track record of successful economic-focused programming in the West Bank.

Regional:

- Strengthen energy sector competitiveness through infrastructure development and technology partnerships that support regional energy integration initiatives;
- Facilitate transparent, mutually beneficial trade and investment partnerships that strengthen regional economic integration;
- Promote regional economic integration through support for overland corridors (such as the India Middle East Europe economic corridor) and initiatives such as I2U2 that enhance cross-border trade and expand market opportunities;
- Build private sector capacity to meet international standards, access new markets, and participate effectively in regional economic initiatives;
- Facilitate host country participation in regional economic frameworks and alternative trade corridors that provide economic opportunities and reduce isolation; and
- Promote cross-border economic cooperation and regional connectivity initiatives that contribute to peace, stability, and shared prosperity.

2. Substantial Involvement

Applicants submitting SOI should be aware that if their SOI results in a cooperative agreement award, NEA/AC will have substantial involvement which may include (but are not limited) to the following:

- Joint Programmatic Decisions: The Department of State and the recipient collaborate on key programmatic decisions. This can include (but is not limited to) reviewing work plans; determining when certain phases of the project can start; and final method of delivery or implementation.
- Technical Assistance and Direction: The Department of State provides ongoing technical assistance, guidance, and direction integral to the project's execution, which if not followed, would undermine the goals and objectives of the award or otherwise make the award unsuccessful.

D. Application Contents and Format

Please follow all instructions below carefully. Proposals that do not meet the requirements of this announcement or fail to comply with the stated requirements will be ineligible and will not move forward to the Merit Panel Review (MRP). Contents of the SOI must include the following required information:

Table Listing of Critical Details:

I. Proposed Project Title
II. Name of the Organization
III. Target Benefiting Country or Countries
IV. Total Federal Share Requested
V. Total Cost Share (as applicable)
VI. Project Length
"Table Listing of Critical Details" does not count toward the 3-page narrative limit.
Applicants may include this table as a cover page to their submission.

Project Design

a. **Issue/Challenge/Opportunity:** Briefly describe the problem(s), issue(s), challenge(s), or opportunity(ies) the applicant is seeking to address.

b. **Proposed Solution/Activities:** Describe the approach and core activities to address the Issue/challenge/opportunity.

- **Anticipated Outcomes and Results:** Identify the specific outcomes and results the approach/activities seeks to achieve and define "success." Outcomes and results should aim to foster self-reliance and ensure investments directly benefit American safety, strength, and prosperity. Therefore, outcomes and results should clearly demonstrate advancement towards the Department of State's America First priorities as outlined in the 2025 National Security Strategy (NSS), the Department's 2026-2030 Agency Strategic Plan (ASP), and the NEA Regional Strategic Brief (RSB) executive summary and framework (goals and objectives). The nature, scope, and sustainability of outcomes and results will be critical to assessing the costs and benefits – and determining whether the SOI will proceed to the next stage of the merit review process, expanded proposal submission.
- **Theory of Change:** Articulate what changes need to occur to go from the current state or condition to achieving your goals and objectives. Write a statement linking existing conditions with desired changes; this will typically take the form of an "If ___, then ___because ____" statement. Consider existing evidence or sources that support the theory on why the desired change will happen. Some examples of supporting evidence are research or literature reviews, previous program evaluations, and discussions with stakeholders or beneficiaries.

c. **List of Partner Roles and Responsibilities (if applicable):** Include a list of proposed applicant partners (private, public, NGO, etc.) to be considered as subrecipients (see 2 CFR 200.331 and 200.332). Identify organization name, point of contact, point of contact information (phone and email), federal share to be awarded by the pass-through entity, cost-share (if applicable), and a summary of proposed roles and responsibilities. Note: This should be a brief, preliminary characterization of roles and responsibilities that may evolve significantly during the subsequent phase.

d. **Resource Contributions and/or Cost Share from non-federal sources (if applicable):** Describe how proposed resources will contribute to the proposed activities and outcomes. This should be a preliminary description; actual resource contributions and applications may evolve significantly during the subsequent phase. Please reference 2 CFR 200.306(b) for guidance on what can be considered cost share.

The SOI is meant to convey initial ideas regarding a proposed project. As the negotiation and/or consultative program design (if applicable) process continues, the ideas and approaches may evolve as the applicant and the Department of State determine the most appropriate way to work together to address the problems, challenges, issues, and opportunities.

Required Format of SOI Submission: All documents must be written in English, and all costs must be presented in U.S. dollars. If an original document within the application is in another language, an English translation must be provided (please note the Department of State, as indicated in 2 CFR 200.111, requires that English is the official language of all award documents). If any document is provided in both English and a foreign language, the English language version is the controlling version. All pages must be numbered. Additional requirements are as follows:

- All documents must be formatted to 8 ½ x 11 paper.
- All documents must be single-spaced, written in a minimum of 12-point Times New Roman Numeral font with 1-inch margins.
  - The exception is captions and footnotes which may be 10-point Times New Roman Numeral font. Font sizes in charts and tables, including the budget, can be reformatted to fit within 1 page width.
- Submissions will only be reviewed up to the specified page limit and no further.
- Applicants may include relevant tables and charts either within the narrative or as annexes. For the purposes of this guidance, diagrams, conceptual frameworks, and other visual representations may be treated as charts and are therefore also excluded from the page limit. Given the nature of tables and charts, font sizes as small as 10-point are acceptable for these elements.
- Applicants may include annexes containing supporting tables, charts, or other visual materials. To ensure a fair and efficient review process, the Department will review up to four (4) annexes per submission, and each annex should be no more than one (1) page. Annexes should be used to supplement, not replace, the narrative. Reviewers will primarily evaluate the up to three-page narrative submission in accordance with the APS review criteria.
- Applicants are encouraged to present information clearly and concisely within the 1–3-page narrative, using annexes only where they add value or clarity. Submissions that exceed these parameters may not be fully reviewed.

E. Submission Requirements and Deadlines

1. Address to Request Application Package
Application forms and other materials necessary to apply are available in MyGrants.

2. Department of State Contacts
All questions must be submitted in writing to nea-grants@state.gov. Please reference the APS Opportunity Number (DFOP0018712) in the email subject line.

Questions and Answers or FAQ can be submitted up to the 15th of every month during the application submission period. NEA/AC will create a document of submitted questions with answers and share via the MyGrants funding opportunity within one week after the 15th deadline.

For example, questions submitted by July 15, 2026, will be addressed by NEA/AC within one week and posted via MyGrants. For any questions received after July 15, 2026, NEA/AC will address no later than one week after the next question submission deadline of August 15, 2026.

3. Unique entity identifier and System for Award Management (SAM.gov)

Required Registrations
All organizations, whether based in the United States or in another country, must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and an active registration in SAM.gov. A UEI is one of the data elements mandated by Public Law 109-282, the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA), for all Federal awards. An applicant must maintain an active registration while it has a proposal under review by the Department and must continue to keep the registration active for the entire duration of the period of performance of any Federal award that results from this NOFO.

The 2 CFR 200 requires subrecipients to obtain a UEI. Please note the UEI for subrecipients is not required at the time of application but will be required before an award is processed and/or directed to a subrecipient.

Note: The process of obtaining or renewing a SAM.gov registration may take anywhere from 4-8 weeks. <u>Please begin your registration as early as possible</u>.

- Organizations **based in the United States** or that pay employees within the United States will need an Employer Identification Number (EIN) from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and a UEI prior to registering in SAM.gov.

- Organizations **based outside of the United States** and that do not pay employees within the United States do not need an EIN from the IRS but do need a UEI prior to registering in SAM.gov.

- **<u>Organizations based outside of the United States that do not intend to apply for U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) awards are no longer required to have a NATO Commercial and Government Entity (NCAGE) code to apply for non-DoD foreign assistance funding opportunities.</u>** If an applicant organization is mid-registration and wishes to remove an NCAGE code from their SAM.gov registration, the applicant should submit a help desk ticket ("incident") with the Federal Service Desk (FSD) online at www.fsd.gov using the following language: "I do not intend to seek financial assistance from the Department of Defense. I do not wish to obtain an NCAGE code. I understand that I will need to submit my registration after this incident is resolved in order to have my registration activated."

Organizations based outside of the United States and that DO NOT plan to do business with the DoD should follow the below instructions:

Step 1: Proceed to SAM.gov to obtain a UEI and complete the SAM.gov registration process. SAM.gov registration must be renewed annually.

Organizations based outside of the United States and that DO plan to do business with the DoD in addition to Department of State should follow the below instructions:

Step 2: Apply for an NCAGE code by following the instructions on the NSPA NATO website linked below:

NCAGE Homepage:
https://eportal.nspa.nato.int/AC135Public/sc/CageList.aspx
NCAGE Code Request Tool (NCRT):
NCAGE Code Request Tool (nato.int)

Exemptions
An exemption from the UEI and sam.gov registration requirements may be permitted on a case-by-case basis. See 2 CFR 25.110 for a full list of exemptions.

Organizations requesting exemption from UEI or SAM.gov requirements must email the point of contact listed in the APS at least two weeks prior to the deadline in the APS providing a justification of their request. Approval for a SAM.gov exemption must come from the warranted Grants Officer before the application can be deemed eligible for review.

4. Submission Dates and Times

SOI will be accepted on MyGrants under the announcement title *NEA/AC Regional Annual Program Statement,* funding opportunity number DFOP0018712.

Application Submission Window: June 30, 2026 – September 30, 2026, 11:59pm ET

Applications will be reviewed no less than monthly and will include all applications submitted since the prior review. Please note that the review process may take several weeks. Individual responses will not be provided to applicants for SOI that are not recommended to proceed to Phase 2.

5. Funding Restrictions

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. NEA/AC will not consider applications that reflect any type of support for any

member, affiliate, or representative of a designated terrorist organization. Please refer to the link for Foreign Terrorist Organizations: https://www.state.gov/foreign-terrorist-organizations/. Consistent with Department guidance on State Funding and the Risks of Terrorist Financing for all State Department funded programs and requirements, Department bureaus must assess the likelihood that the funds or

Department funded activities, goods, services, training, expert advice or assistance, or other benefits to be provided, could inadvertently or incidentally benefit terrorist organizations or their members or supporters, and must put in place appropriate risk mitigation measures to mitigate such risk. In accordance with 14 FAM 247, and consistent with 2 FAM 050, Counterterrorism (CT) name-check vetting may be performed in countries and programs designated by the Department.

c. The Leahy Law prohibits Department foreign assistance funds from supporting foreign security force units if the Secretary of State has credible information that the unit has committed a gross violation of human rights. Per 22 USC §2378d(a) (2017), "No assistance shall be furnished under [the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961] or the Arms Export Control Act [22 USC 2751 et seq.] to any unit of the security forces of a foreign country if the Secretary of State has credible information that such unit has committed a gross violation of human rights." Restrictions may apply to any proposed assistance to police or other law enforcement. Among these, pursuant to section 620M of the Foreign Assistance Act of 196 (FAA), no assistance provided through this funding opportunity may be furnished to any unit of the security forces of a foreign country when there is credible information that such unit has committed a gross violation of human rights. In accordance with the requirements of section 620M of the FAA, also known as the Leahy law, project beneficiaries or participants from a foreign government's security forces may need to be vetted by the Department before the provision of any assistance. If a proposed grant or cooperative agreement will provide assistance to foreign security forces or personnel, compliance with the Leahy Law is required.

d. Funding Restrictions for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA): None of the funds awarded resulting from this Notice of Funding Opportunity may be made available for subawards, direct financial support, or otherwise used to provide any payment or transfer to UNRWA.

e. Prohibition on Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS). If your project involves the purchase or use of an UAS, see this link for requirements and information you must include in your application

f. Certification Regarding Compliance with applicable Federal anti-discrimination laws: If the place of performance or delivery of any award made under this Statement of Interest will be within the United States, applicants are advised that they will be required to certify the following at the time of award:
   - Its compliance in all respects with all applicable Federal anti-discrimination laws is material to the government's payment decisions for purposes of section 3729(b)(4) of title 31, United States Code and;
   - It does not operate any programs promoting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion that violate any applicable Federal anti-discrimination laws. A program promoting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion means a program whose purpose is to promote preferences based on race, color religion, sex, or national origins, such as in training or hiring.

g. Certification Regarding Compliance with 20 U.S.C. 1011f and any other applicable foreign funding disclosure requirements. Applicants are advised that IHEs must certify the following at the time of award, and that this certification requirement must be included in any subaward agreements to IHEs:
   - Its compliance in all respects with section 1011f of title 20, United States Code, and any other applicable foreign funding disclosure requirements is material for purposes of section 3729 of title 31, United States Code, and for receipt of appropriate Federal grant funds.

h. Certification of Trafficking in Persons Compliance and Compliance Plan: Applicants are advised that they will be required to certify the following at the time of award for awards where the estimated value of services to be performed outside the United States exceeds $500,000:
   - To the best of the Recipient's knowledge, neither the Recipient, nor any subrecipient, contractor, or subcontractor of the Recipient or any agent of the recipient or of such a subrecipient, contractor, or subcontractor, is engaged in any of the activities described in 2 CFR 175.105(a);
   - The recipient has implemented a Trafficking in Persons compliance plan to prevent activities described in 2 CFR 175(a) and is compliant with this plan; and the compliance plan must follow the minimum requirements described in 2 CFR 175(b)(5); and
   - That the Recipient has and will implement procedures to prevent activities described in 2 CFR 175.105(a) and to monitor, detect, and terminate any subrecipient, contractor, subcontractor, or employee of the recipient engaging in these activities.

   Recipients do not need to submit a copy of the plan. However, they must provide it to the Grants Officer upon request, and as appropriate, must post the useful and relevant contents of the plan or related materials on its website and at the workplace.

   Recipients must re-certify on an annual basis for the entire award period of performance.

i. Promoting Human Flourishing in Foreign Assistance (PHFFA): Applicants for foreign assistance awards should be aware of requirements in 2 CFR Part 602, 603, and 604.

   These policies are referred to collectively as the Promoting Human Flourishing in Foreign Assistance (PHFFA) Policy.

   602: The award term imposes certain abortion-related requirements on foreign nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), United States NGOs, public international organizations, foreign governments, and parastatals.

603: The award term imposes certain requirements relating to gender ideology on foreign nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), United States NGOs, international organizations, foreign governments, and parastatals.
604: The award term imposes certain requirements relating to discriminatory equity ideology on foreign nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), United States NGOs, international organizations, foreign governments, and parastatals.

The Department recognizes there are costs associated with these policies. Potential one-time and recurring costs the Department identifies for recipients and grantees are for familiarization with the policy, development and delivery of organizational training and implementation guidance, routine compliance monitoring, and recordkeeping and reporting requirements.

6. Other Submission Requirements

All application materials must be submitted electronically through MyGrants. Applicants using MyGrants for the first time will need to register as a new organization. To register with MyGrants, navigate to https://MyGrants.servicenowservices.com and click "Create an Account" under "New User?" On the pop-up, select "Create a MyGrants Applicant/Grantee Account" and complete all required fields. Once finished, an email will be sent to verify the account creation followed by an Okta Account set-up, which will require the use of a smartphone for multi-factor authentication. If an applicant does not have accessibility to a smartphone during the time of account creation, please contact the helpdesk at +1 (888) 313-4567 (toll charges apply for international callers) or through the self-service online portal that can be accessed from **ILMS Self Service Portal**. Customer support is available 24/7.

F. Application Review Information

1. Review Criteria

Each submission will be evaluated and rated based on the following evaluation criteria:

Quality of Program Idea – 50 points: The proposal is responsive to program framework. The idea is communicated well and is feasible. Proposals that promote creative approaches to address program objectives are highly encouraged. The proposed timeline is reasonable.

Organizational Capacity and Record on Previous Grants –35 points: The proposal should demonstrate the organization's expertise and previous experience in administering programs. If a local partner is identified in the proposal should briefly describe the partner's role and experience.

Program Planning/Ability to Achieve Objectives – 15 points: The proposal should clearly articulate proposed program activities and expected results towards achieving program objectives and goal(s).

2. *Indirect Costs*

If two or more applications receive equivalent scores based on the evaluation criteria outlined in this NOFO, preference will be given to the applicant with the lower indirect cost rate, as consistent with Executive Order 14332, Section 4(b)(iii). This preference will only be applied as a tie-breaking mechanism and does not supersede the primary evaluation criteria.

3. ***Review and Selection Process***

A review committee will evaluate all eligible SOI applications.

<u>Process Overview and Timing:</u>

All SOI submitted will be reviewed according to a multi-step review process, including:

- Minimum Responsiveness Review
- Merit Review Panel (MRP) Evaluation
- Internal clearance and selection decision-making

<u>Phase 1- SOI Review and Selection:</u>

All minimally responsive SOI will be reviewed against the criteria listed above by a MRP. There may be multiple MRPs to review SOI based on country, or region, as appropriate. SOI are reviewed individually against the criteria and not against competing SOI. Additionally, the MRP will evaluate whether each SOI meets the solicitation request, U.S. foreign policy goals, and NEA/AC's overall priority needs. For a fair review, all panelists will review the first page of the SOI up to the page limit and no further. The MRP may provide feedback in the form of conditions and/or recommendations on SOI to enhance proposed projects, which must be addressed by the organizations, as possible, in the full application and/or co-design process. To ensure effective use of limited NEA/AC funds, conditions and recommendations may include requests to increase, decrease, clarify, and/or justify costs and project activities.

NEA/AC reserves the right to make a final determination regarding all funding matters, pending funding availability.

The panel is responsible for reviewing each SOI and recommending one of the following actions:

1. SOI is not recommended for continued review – The concept is not responsive to the APS, or the concept does not meet overall priority needs or foreign policy.
2. SOI is recommended for continued review through consultative program design prior to recommendation for funding and submission of phase 2. The concept meets a key (or emerging) priority or foreign policy goals that would benefit from Department of State input.
3. SOI is recommended for funding and submission of phase 2 - The concept outlines a well-tested approach that is ready to move to full application. A request for full application with detail instructions will be issued to the applicant.

*Note that individual responses will not be provided to applicants for SOI that are not recommended to proceed to Phase 2.

<u>Phase 2 – Request for full applications</u>

Applicants that have moved either directly to phase 2 or subsequent to consultative program design, will be directed to an announcement available via MyGrants to submit a full application based on their approved concept. A full application typically includes but is not limited to the following:

- SF-424, SF-424A, SF-424B (if applicable)
- Cover Page/Executive Summary
- Proposal Narrative
- Budget Narrative
- Logic Model
- Results Monitoring Plan (RMP)
- Key Personnel
- Timeline
- Attachments, (if applicable)

Detailed instructions regarding the full application submission process will be provided to those applicants that move to phase 2. The timing of full application review and award issuance will depend on a range of factors, including:

- Complexity of proposed programs
- Availability of funding
- Completion of required reviews and approvals

General Guidance

The Department of State is committed to conducting a fair, transparent, and efficient review process. At the same time, applicants should anticipate that the full process (from SOI submission to potential award) may take several months. Organizations are encouraged to plan accordingly and monitor official communications for updates.

4. Risk Review

i. Risk factors – must include

Under the merit review as required by 2 CFR 200.206, prior to making a Federal Award the Department will review and consider the following risk factors:

a. Financial stability
b. Management systems and standards
c. History of performance
d. Audit reports and findings
e. Ability to effectively implement requirements
f. If there are any program specific risk factors that will be considered, describe them here.

ii. Responsibility/Qualification Information in SAM.gov

The federal awarding agency, prior to making a federal award with a total amount of federal share greater than the simplified acquisition threshold, is required to review and consider (see 41 U.S.C. 2313);

An applicant can review and comment on any information in the responsibility/qualification records available in SAM.gov.

Before making decisions in the risk review required by 2 CFR 200.206, the Department will consider any comments by the applicant, along with information available in the responsibility/qualification records in SAM.gov.

G. Post-Award Requirements and Administration

1. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Before submitting an application, applicants should review all the terms and conditions and required certifications which will apply to this award, to ensure that they will be able to comply.

These include:

In accordance with the Office of Management and Budget's guidance located at 2 CFR part 200, all applicable Federal laws, and relevant Executive guidance, the Department of State will review and consider applications for funding, as applicable to specific programs, pursuant to this notice of funding opportunity in accordance with the following: NOTE:

- Guidance for Grants and Agreements in Title 2 of the Code of Federal Regulations (2 CFR), as updated in the Federal Register's 89 FR 30046 on April 22, 2024, particularly on:
  - Selecting recipients most likely to be successful in delivering results based on the program objectives through an impartial process of evaluating Federal award applications (2 CFR part 200.205),
  - Promoting the freedom of speech and religious liberty in alignment with *Promoting Free Speech and Religious Liberty* (E.O. 13798) and *Improving Free Inquiry, Transparency, and Accountability at Colleges and Universities* (E.O. 13864) (§§ 200.300, 200.303, 200.339, and 200.341),
  - Providing a preference, to the extent permitted by law, to maximize use of goods, products, and materials produced in the United States (2 CFR part 200.322), and
  - Terminating agreements pursuant to the U.S. Department of State Standard Terms and Conditions, including, to the greatest extent authorized by law, if an award no longer effectuates the program goals or agency priorities (2 CFR part 200.340).

- 2 CFR 25 - UNIVERSAL IDENTIFIER AND SYSTEM FOR AWARD MANAGEMENT
- 2 CFR 170 - REPORTING SUBAWARD AND EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION INFORMATION
- 2 CFR 175 - AWARD TERM FOR TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS
- 2 CFR 182 - GOVERNMENTWIDE REQUIREMENTS FOR DRUG-FREE WORKPLACE (FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE)
- 2 CFR 183 - NEVER CONTRACT WITH THE ENEMY
- 2 CFR 600 – DEPARTMENT OF STATE REQUIREMENTS
- U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE STANDARD TERMS AND CONDITIONS

- Recipients must comply with Executive Orders as applicable. A searchable list can be found in the Federal Register: https://www.federalregister.gov/

2. ***Reporting***

Reporting Requirements: Reporting is critical to effective project 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 Progress Reports and a Quarterly Financial Report via MyGrants. Progress Reports will compare actual to planned performance, indicate the progress made in accomplishing each assistance award tasks/goals noted in the grant agreement, and contain analysis and summary of findings, both quantitative and qualitative, for key indicators. Financial Reports provide a means of monitoring expenditures and comparing costs incurred with progress.

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

Foreign Assistance Data Review: As required by Congress, the Department of State must make progress in its efforts to improve tracking and reporting of foreign assistance data through the Foreign Assistance Data Review (FADR). The FADR requires tracking of foreign assistance activity data from budgeting, planning, and allocation through obligation and disbursement. Successful applicants will be required to report and draw down federal funding based on the appropriate FADR Data Elements, indicated within their award documentation. In cases of more than one FADR Data Element, typically program or sector and/or regions or country, the successful applicant will be required to maintain separate accounting records.

Applicants should be aware of the post award reporting requirements reflected in 2 CFR 200 Appendix XII—Award Term and Condition for Recipient Integrity and Performance Matters.

3. ***Branding and Marking***

The Department of State, its programs, and U.S. Government funding and assistance should be easily identifiable to the Department's global audiences.

Recipients of federal assistance awards must follow the branding guidance published at Guidance for Contracts and Grants - U.S. Department of State Brand System. Branding policy exceptions are outlined in the U.S. Department of State Foreign Affairs Manual 10 FAM 416, Policy Exceptions.

For more information, visit: https://brand.america.gov/