

Supporting Education in Syria NOFO Questions
Opportunity Number: SFOP0008124

- 1) Will subcontracting be allowed under the Prime Agency? If so, what kinds of entities would qualify for subcontracting? E.g., only national-level NGOs, etc.

ANSWER: Yes, a recipient could be permitted to issue subawards to subrecipients. At this point, there are no parameters limiting the types of entities that would qualify as a subrecipient. The NEA program team will be substantially involved with the recipient in guiding programming efforts for targeted areas, including providing direction to work with certain entities for particular activities.

- 2) Is a consortium preferable for potential subcontractors in order to broaden the partnership base?

ANSWER: There is no preference for a consortium of potential subrecipients, though applicants are encouraged to identify and detail the potential type and extent of engagement of any subrecipients with which they anticipate partnering for project implementation.

- 3) Are DoS or NEA engaging in partnership coordination prior to or post award?

ANSWER: DOS intends to be substantially involved with the recipient in guiding programming efforts for targeted areas throughout the post award phase, including providing direction to work with certain entities for particular activities.

- 4) Is NEA interested in support for social cohesion and vocational training, etc. in Raqqa and Hassakeh. Particularly for subcontractors?

ANSWER: NEA is open to supporting social cohesion and vocational training in Raqqa and Hassakeh.

- 5) Will the project be coordinated from the US Embassy in Berlin? Or through other agency sites?

ANSWER: Award activities will be coordinated through the Syria Transition Assistance Response Team (START) – a U.S. government assistance coordination platform based in Turkey. START and NEA/AC (Washington, DC) will work closely with the recipient and provide direction regarding the design and development of programming as well as guidance on intended beneficiaries of assistance efforts; such direction will include, but not be limited to, development of program activities and the selection of subrecipient organizations.

- 6) Is it strongly recommended to coordinate from Berlin, or could it be in any other European location?

ANSWER: Yes, it is strongly recommended that the recipient coordinate from Berlin for operational and donor liaison purposes. Please review the “Eligible Countries and Territories” section of the NOFO for additional details.

- 7) Please clarify for me if I am eligible to apply to the following grant as a small U.S. independent business not affiliated with any organization.

ANSWER: Per section V. Eligibility Information, A. Eligible Applicants of the NOFO, small businesses with function and regional experience in the areas of education in conflict zones in the MENA region are one of the eligible types of applicants for this funding opportunity.

- 8) I see that the forms have not yet been posted to allow us to start the application process. Would you be able to provide me with the information on what the next steps might be for us to begin the process?

ANSWER: All materials associated with this NOFO were published on grants.gov and SAMS Domestic. Please refer to section VI. Application and Submission Information, C. Submitting an Application for details on the application process. Please also note the system requirements to apply – detailed under section V. Eligibility Information, B. Registration Requirements – as well as all timeframes for obtaining required registrations and submitting an application. NEA/AC is not in a position to grant exceptions to these requirements.

- 9) The primary geographical focus for the call is North-eastern Syria (NES). The range of interventions mentioned makes clear formal education is a priority. Does the politicized nature of the curriculum in NES does the US DoS have any ‘red lines’ or restrictions in the form of assistance that can be provided, particularly in the formal sector, such as teacher training or curriculum development and support?

ANSWER: NEA/AC seeks proposals for programming involving informal education at the remedial level and through the Self-Learning Program in formal and informal camps, teacher training (though we do not anticipate the recipient to be able to operate directly in the formal education sector), and TVET outside of the formal education sector. NEA/AC does not intend to support programming within the formal education sector of North East Syria for this project.

- 10) Given the priority given to NES would DoS consider applications that give equal weight (and budget allocation) to the needs in North-west Syria (NWS)?

ANSWER: While NEA/AC is interested in the possibility of returning to Northwest Syria, the primary focus of this NOFO is for North East Syria.

- 11) Given the priority given to structured and systematic formal education activities and the longer-term funding would DoS be open to the inclusion of non-formal, accelerated learning support particularly in the first year of implementation?

ANSWER: NEA/AC is interested in the informal sectors in and out of informal and formal camps in NES. While we work closely with the SANES education council to partner with them on opportunities to work in the formal sector, the primary focus of this NOFO is for informal educational support.

- 12) The stated timeline for beginning the project (October 2021) will be after the academic year has started. Would DoS accept to align the main implementation of formal education activities with the next beginning academic semester in January 2022?

ANSWER: While the academic year will be underway, NEA expects the recipient to commence activities from the anticipated start date of October 1, 2021. This award is a follow-on to an award currently being implemented, and the expectation is that NEA/AC and the selected recipient will work together to ensure similar activities continue without delay under the new award.

- 13) DoS has provided a list of activities, summarised below:

- Teacher training based on local needs assessments;
- Development of teaching materials especially related to remedial education and psychosocial training activities;
- Psychosocial training and support activities for students in grades 1-12, teachers, parents, and community members;
- Technical and Vocational Education Training – including market research to identify viable areas for employment, curriculum development, review of materials and employability of graduates, and linkages to apprenticeships;
- Light, non-construction school rehabilitation (e.g. replacing windows, doors and minor repairs), with a particular focus on WASH facilities to limit the spread of infectious diseases and also encourage female students to remain in school;
- Capacity building activities for local education authorities to better manage education; and,
- A rigorous results-based monitoring plan with demonstrated feedback loops to show tangible outputs and outcomes of the project.

Does DoS expect that all these activities must be included in an application as a minimum, or may the contents vary according to the applicant's needs assessments?

ANSWER: NEA has detailed these activities as mandatory for applicants. The extent of these activities can vary however, with the applicant expected to detail the distribution

of activities and budgetary requirements. As this award is a follow-on to an award currently being implemented, NEA/AC will work with the selected recipient to support informed and uninterrupted programming under the new award.

- 14) In the case of NES is the program only intended to focus on areas where IS has been removed or would areas such as Hasakeh also be prioritised?

ANSWER: Areas most recently liberated from IS have been the priority for NEA and the current focus is heavily towards Deir Ezzor. However, NEA/AC expects that programming throughout all of North East Syria would be able to be implemented by the selected recipient.

- 15) For other areas, such as NWS would they also have to be areas where IS had previous control?

ANSWER: The enduring defeat of ISIS is the main goal of our programming but there will inherently be flexibility built into the award given the fluid operating environment in Syria.

- 16) Is the focus education or preventing radicalisation as such what would the primary indicators focus on at activity, output and outcome levels?

ANSWER: The focus is on education given an educated population is likely to be less susceptible to radicalization. The logic model or a theory of change should highlight the connection between better education, the improved work opportunities that better education enables, and the longer-term reduction in radicalization due to better employment. The indicators should definitely reflect this at the activity and output levels. Outcome-level metrics are also desirable, but their scope and viability will depend on the nature and timeline of the proposed activities.

- 17) In terms of supervisory bodies does this include space for the creation of Parent-Teacher Associations and/or other bodies that bring together communities, implementers and authorities to create more community involvement and oversight of education?

ANSWER: If that is requested by the education councils, NEA/AC would be open to exploring that.

- 18) Why must the project be implemented from a third country?

ANSWER: If the selected recipient is based in Syria, there would be no need for a team in a third-country. If the selected recipient is based in any other location besides Berlin, Germany, NEA highly recommends a presence in Berlin, Germany for operational and donor liaison purposes.

19) What is a presence in Berlin recommended? Will this factor be given scoring weight in terms of assessing proposals?

ANSWER: The highly recommended presence in Berlin, Germany is for key overseas personnel. The NOFO takes into account proposed staffing as an evaluation criteria.

20) Is there space for partnerships and consortia to be developed along sectoral lines? E.g. Where one partner might address TVET and others address formal and non-formal education?

ANSWER: Applicants can propose programming and partnerships as they deem necessary to adequately address the required programming components detailed in the NOFO.

21) Can we apply directly or should apply in a consortium led by INGO?

ANSWER: Per section V. Eligibility Information, A. Eligible Applicants of the NOFO, as long as your organization falls within one of those categories and meets the requirements listed under V. Eligibility Information, A.1. Prime Applicant, an organization can apply itself. It is the decision of the interested organization in determining the manner in which they wish to apply.

22) Can we plan and design our project only in the districts which are accessible from Southern Turkey (Ras Al Ain district in Al-Hasakeh governorate and Tell Abiad district in Ar-Raqqa governorate)

ANSWER: No. Deir Ezzor is currently a priority area, and NEA/AC expects that programming throughout all of North East Syria would be able to be implemented by the selected recipient.

23) Do we plan and design our project for one or two years (narrative & budget)

ANSWER: Applicants should propose activities for one year within the narrative and budget. The detailed budget should cover at least 12 months of programming. In addition, applicants will need to submit a notional budget for two additional out (option) years, with each option period being one year. Each of the two option periods should be their own detailed tab within the budget. The NOFO has been revised to reflect three years as the estimated total length of the project period in addition to the notional budget language, updating to reflect two out (option) years of programming. Note that initial funding for year one is planned at \$6,000,000.

24) What is the maximum number of pages allowed for the supporting documents and where to be attached?

ANSWER: ANSWER: Per section VI. Application and Submission Information, A.2. Optional Documents of the NOFO, this section may be no longer than 10 pages. In SAMS Domestic, there is a section for optional documents. Note that as only one file can be uploaded to the section, it is recommended that if multiple optional documents are planned for submission, a PDF be made merging all documents into one.

25) Do we need to attach the training materials of teachers and local authorities?

ANSWER: Only those documents detailed under section VI. Application and Submission Information, A.1. Required Documents of the NOFO need to be submitted with as elements of the application.

26) Do you have standard templates for the (cost sharing – program narrative - Letters of Agreement or Letters of Intent – NICRA) to use them

ANSWER: No, we do not have these. If you have a final NICRA, your organization's cognizant agency would have provided the official letter, which would be submitted as a component of the application if such costs were being proposed.

27) Since it our first-time application, it would be highly appreciated if you can share with us your recommendations or guiding notes basing on your past experience

ANSWER: We are unable to provide such information.

28) Both regions are controlled by different administrations pertaining to the Government of Syria and different factions under KSA. Does USDOS NEA approve cooperation with any of these?

ANSWER: The U.S. does not maintain diplomatic relations with the Government of Syria and therefore we do not partner with them.

29) Are operations supposed to target beneficiaries under any type of administration, or only the administration of either the Government of Syria, or KSA?

ANSWER: The beneficiaries are Syrians living in North East Syria. Activities proposed by applicants are expected to focus on areas outside of Government of Syria control.

30) Would the project allow for funding institutional capacity development programmes for local authorities of either side?

ANSWER: The U.S. does not maintain diplomatic relations with the Government of Syria and therefore we do not partner with them.

- 31) The two administrations favour different curriculums, known as the National Syrian Curriculum, and the curriculum developed by the local NES authorities. Would USDOS NEA consider it to be an issue to fund education programmes that use any of these two curriculums?

ANSWER: NEA/AC projects utilize the Self-Learning Program currently as it prepares students for the 9th and 12th grade national exams, which is the only pathway to accreditation at the moment.

- 32) Does the project require to be managed or administered from inside Syria – for example Damascus? (This question is related to the NOFO stipulation “If the applicant is not currently based in Berlin, Germany and intends to operate from that location, they should demonstrate the ability to establish a base there in a timely manner following notification of the award”)

ANSWER: No, NEA does not require this project to be managed from within Syria by the organization’s staff team. If the selected recipient is based in North East Syria, there would be no need for a team in a third-country. If the selected recipient is based in any other location besides Berlin, Germany, NEA highly recommends a presence in Berlin, Germany for operational and donor liaison purposes. NEA anticipates that it would be difficult and risky to manage the award from Damascus.

- 33) Will sub-awardees need to compulsorily be based inside Syria as well or can they have their base elsewhere?

ANSWER: Subrecipients do not necessarily need to be based inside Syria, though there should be sufficient detail provided in the application materials demonstrating how programming will be effectively implemented, managed, and monitored from a location outside of Syria.

- 34) In Section VIII.A., Staff and Position Specifications (pages 21 and 22), NEA uses the terms “key staff members,” “key programming staff,” and “key position.” Would NEA confirm that “key programming staff” refers to a wider group of staff who will manage programming elements, and that the term is not limited to the key personnel positions defined on page 17?

ANSWER: Key staff members, key programming staff, and key position all refer to those individuals who would be defined as holding a key personnel position.

- 35) Section VI.B., Application Formatting Requirements (page 17) requires 12-point Times New Roman font. Would NEA allow fonts smaller than 12 point for tables and charts as long as they are legible?

ANSWER: Yes, fonts smaller than 12 point will be accepted for tables as charts as long as they are legible.