

**U.S. Department of State**  
**Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs**  
**Office of Assistance Coordination**  
Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 19.500  
**Tomorrow's Leaders College-to-Work Pipeline Pilot**

**Key Information:**

|                                                                      |                                           |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| <b>Announcement Type:</b>                                            | <b>New</b>                                |
| <b>Date Opened:</b>                                                  | <b>12/20/2019</b>                         |
| <b>Deadline for Questions &amp; Notification of Intent to Apply:</b> | <b>01/20/2020</b>                         |
| <b>Application Deadline:</b>                                         | <b>02/21/2020</b>                         |
| <b>Expected Date of Notification:</b>                                | <b>04/13/2020</b>                         |
| <b>Federal Agency Contact:</b>                                       | Kohl Taberner <b>NEA-Grants@state.gov</b> |

## Funding Opportunity Synopsis

The Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, Office of Assistance Coordination (NEA/AC) announces a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) that aims to build a cadre of civic-minded, intellectually able, and professionally-skilled professional leaders who will become the community, business, and national leaders of the future. This project will match the Middle East Partnership Initiative's (MEPI) Tomorrow's Leaders (TL) senior students (undergraduate and graduate) with meaningful employment and leadership opportunities in their areas of professional interests.

In seeking to address the high unemployment and high levels of emigration of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) youth, MEPI seeks to partner with private, public, and nongovernmental sector organizations to incentivize employers to increase employment opportunities and preparedness for youth leadership in the MENA region and to annually place 40 TL graduates in jobs.

This project fulfills MEPI strategic framework objectives to:

- 1) Provide economically disadvantaged individuals opportunities to build leadership skills and effectively engage with civil society, the private sector, and/or government actors
- 2) Increase workforce employability, and improving 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 3 in the Department's Joint Regional Strategy for the Middle East and North Africa: *Promote Inclusive Economic Growth, Socio-economic Development, Open Markets, and Increased U.S. Exports*. This project also contributes to the Department's Joint Strategic Plan Goal 2: *Renew America's Competitive Advantage for Sustained Economic Growth and Job Creation, sub-objective 2.2: Promote healthy, educated and productive populations in partner countries to drive inclusive and sustainable development, open new markets and support U.S. prosperity and security objectives*. Additionally, this project supports Pillar 1 of the White House's Women's Global Development and Prosperity Initiative: *Increase women's labor force participation and advancement in the workplace by providing women with quality education, training, and support, so they can secure and thrive in well-paying jobs in their local economies*.

## Eligible Countries and Territories:

The Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs' Office of Assistance Coordination (NEA/AC) seeks to include applicants / participants from Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia, Yemen, and citizens from Syria who have been displaced to third countries due to the ongoing conflict in their country of origin.

**Please note: Applications that focus on activities in or participants from countries and territories other than those listed will NOT be considered.**

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

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

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**APPENDICES** *(Posted with NOFO)***APPENDIX 1— Budget Sample Template and Budget Narrative Guidance****APPENDIX 2— Logic Model Template****APPENDIX 3— Application Guidance**

## **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 MENA. The MEPI TL program is an existing leadership training program that provides scholarships for capable and highly-motivated MENA high school seniors from underserved backgrounds; participants attend college at an American-accredited university in the Middle East. The TL College-to-Work Program Pilot will provide a pipeline for TL students to find meaningful employment in the region upon graduation.

### **A. PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Youth unemployment in the MENA region ranks among the highest in the world, with an average of 28.7 percent of youth under 24 years old in the Middle East and 30.6 percent in North Africa unemployed. Youth unemployment presents a critical issue, as it carries long-term effects on lifetime prosperity and regional political instability. MENA youth face a disconnect between educational attainment and income mobility, with university graduates making up nearly 30% of the region's unemployed. These problems have led many educated youth away from their desired field into the informal economy, or to emigrate abroad in search of opportunities.

Businesses in the region report a “skills gap” between skills employers need and the education university students receive. Meanwhile, university graduates see few employers willing to give inexperienced job-seekers an opportunity to learn the skills on the job, creating an impasse in countries where rewarding internships are rare. A 2018 World Bank report recommends that changing the employment imbalance in MENA requires a push for “norm entrepreneurs” who could lead a change in the social mindset around youth employment, demonstrating a shift in norms both for youth seeking jobs and within the work environment.

[The MEPI TL program](#), established in 2008, provides scholarships for select MENA youth to study at top regional universities in order to train to become the community, business, and national leaders of the future. TL program guidelines require that students serve in an internship as a requisite to graduation, but there is little guarantee that their internships will lead to achieving their professional goals. Many graduate with the skills needed for success but without a pipeline to gainful employment.

### **B. ACHIEVABLE OBJECTIVES**

The overall goals of the Tomorrow's Leaders Pipeline program are as follows:

1. Build partnerships with private, public, and non-governmental sector organizations across the MENA region to match TL students with employment opportunities related to their field of study.
2. Incentivize employers to increase employment opportunities and preparedness for youth leadership in the MENA region and to annually place 40 TL graduates in jobs (number of students placed to be revised after first year if necessary).
3. Foster entrepreneurial initiatives and provide financial and legal support to launch startups and incentivize job creation.

### C. PROJECT DESIGN

NEA/AC seeks projects that will pilot a pipeline to employment for TL students in their fields of study, prioritizing opportunities for participants to work (1) in their country first, (2) in North Africa and the Levant, and (3) in the Gulf States. Successful proposals will identify partners in the private, public, and non-profit/NGO sectors in MENA that share the common purpose of preparing future leaders beyond academics. Similar models of leadership development programs include the Boren Fellowship or the Presidential Management Fellowship program, which focus on training emerging leaders in public service. Funds are available to support a project that would:

1. Identify MENA-based partnering organizations in private, public, and non-governmental sectors connecting to the goals of TL students in various fields of study.
2. Work with TL universities to select, screen, and guide students to participate in employment opportunities that build their career path after graduation.
3. Develop opportunities with collaborating organizations to produce a shift in the workplace environment that will create space for youth leadership and incorporate their innovative contributions.
4. Engage students in multidisciplinary teams and give them direct experience that lead to job placement.
5. Create entrepreneurial opportunities for students in partnership with private investors and provide seed funding and legal and logistical services.

As many as approximately fifty-seven (57) TL undergraduate students are scheduled to graduate in Spring or Summer 2020 from these TL partner universities: American University of Beirut (AUB), American University of Cairo (AUC), and Lebanese American University (LAU).

Annual Stocktaking Session Planning and Timeline: MEPI will host yearly stocktaking sessions, typically in the spring before finals week, with TL universities as well as implementing organizations for study abroad and recruitment. There are currently three TL program universities in MENA, in Lebanon and Egypt. Stocktaking sessions will represent all aspects of the TL program and will invite staff, faculty, and leadership to attend. Applicants should budget for up to 15 participants to attend this event in a TBD city in MENA for five days.

#### Gender Integration

NEA/AC requires that all activities fully address gender considerations, ensuring that both men and women benefit from support where applicable, and that gender awareness is a built-in component of project activities. The project narrative should identify any relevant gender gaps and how proposed activities would address those gaps, if applicable. Proposals should demonstrate how addressing relevant gender gaps would enhance the project's goals and objectives. Applicants who are unfamiliar with integrating gender in foreign assistance programming should view the training video located here. [Recipient Gender Integration E-course](#).

**Note:** Applicants should read this NOFO in its entirety before writing their proposal, and should refer to the full Evaluation Criteria provided in [Section VII](#) while drafting all materials.

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

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

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

## II. MEASUREMENT OF RESULTS

Applicants shall provide a logic model to demonstrate how the proposed project (including activities, the project design, and the surrounding context) will achieve the stated objectives. The logic model or theory of change statements can be generated using the template in Appendix II. Please see [Section VI](#) below for more information.

Successful applicants will work with the NEA/AC program and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) teams to create a plan based on the proposed logic model/theory of change to measure qualitative and quantitative indicators as part of the award negotiations process. The successful applicant 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.

All projects funded as a result of this NOFO will be required to complete a final evaluation of the project at the end of the period of performance with support from the NEA/AC M&E team.

## III. AWARD INFORMATION

|                                         |                              |
|-----------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <b>Funding Mechanism Type:</b>          | <b>Cooperative Agreement</b> |
| <b>Estimated Number of Awards:</b>      | <b>ONE</b>                   |
| <b>Estimated Total Program Funding:</b> | <b>\$3,000,000</b>           |
| <b>Estimated Award Ceiling:</b>         | <b>\$3,000,000</b>           |
| <b>Estimated Award Floor:</b>           | <b>\$1,000,000</b>           |

**Cost-Sharing or Matching:**

**Required 30% minimum**

**Estimated Length of Project Period:**

**18 months**

Contingent on the availability of funds, approximately \$3,000,000 in Economic Support Funds for approximately one (1) award will initially be awarded through this announcement. If selected to receive an award, an applicant will be awarded funds for up to approximately 18 months, depending on the activities and countries proposed. The estimated start date for this project is October 1, 2020. NEA/AC reserves the right to award more or less than the estimated program funding, and reserves the right to award funding under this announcement for a period of up to two years after the announcement's close date.

This request for full applications **does not** constitute an award or commitment on the part of the U.S. government to make any awards, **nor does it commit the U.S. government to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of an application.**

### ***Incremental Funding***

NEA/AC intends to provide up to approximately \$12,000,000 in total funding over an approximately five (5) year period, for work with at least five graduating cohorts of TL students. Funding for this award will be provided on an incremental basis subject to the availability of funds and successful performance. NEA/AC reserves the right to change the funding amounts, period of performance, and terms of the award as a result of U.S. Government requirements, Recipient performance, project results, and the availability of funds. The Recipient will be notified in writing should such changes occur.

The resulting award will utilize an incremental funding mechanism and will only fund the first increment in the initial award. Up to \$3 million is available for the first increment of funding (ceiling amount). It is estimated that the first increment will provide funding for the initial 12-18 months of the award (anticipated: October 1, 2020 to September 30, 2021), and the second increment will provide funding for an additional 12 months and so on, for a total period of performance of approximately five (5) years. Funding beyond the first funding increment is contingent upon the availability of funds and will be awarded at NEA/AC's discretion.

Special instructions regarding incremental funding:

Please provide a complete proposal that includes total project funding. The proposal narrative and budget should clearly specify the activities, budget breakdown, and timeframes for each funding increment. Additionally, the applicant should ensure that the project is severable after the completion of the first increment. The proposal should clearly demonstrate the value delivered at the end of the first increment which could stand on its own merits should funding for subsequent increments be unavailable.

## **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 in establishing annual program objectives and approval of an annual work plan;
- Collaboration in assessing progress and identifying issues that might affect the success of the program;
- Collaboration in determining selection criteria for beneficiaries;
- Approval of key personnel and any subsequent changes in the positions during the life of the award;
- Collaboration in the creation of any training materials;
- Approval of annual program eligibility requirements;
- Facilitation and coordination with the U.S. Embassies as needed.

## **V. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION**

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

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

### **A. ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS**

Eligible applicants include:

- U.S. or foreign
  - Non-profit organizations;
  - For-profit organizations;
  - Private institutions of higher education;
  - Public or state institutions of higher education;
  - Public international organizations;

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

NEA/AC is committed to an anti-discrimination policy in all of its programs and activities. NEA/AC welcomes applications irrespective of an applicants' race, ethnicity, color, creed, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, or disability. We encourage applications from organizations working with underserved communities, including women, people with disabilities, and youth.

### A.1. Prime Applicant

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

- Have demonstrable previous experience working in the MENA region. This should be addressed within the project narrative section of your application.
- Meet ALL of the registration requirements listed in *Section F* below.
- Meet any requirements listed as MANDATORY in *Section G, Additional Eligibility Considerations*, below.

### A.2. Local Partners

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

## B. REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS

**To apply for NEA/AC (Federal) funding, organizations, whether based in or outside the U.S., must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number, currently referred to as a DUNS number, and an active account with the System for Award Management (SAM). This applies to BOTH prime applicants and any local partners receiving federally funded sub-awards. Applicants who do not meet all registration requirements are NOT eligible for funding under the opportunity.**

#### *UEI Number*

The UEI number is a nine-digit number established and assigned by Dun and Bradstreet, Inc. (D&B) to uniquely identify business entities.

**All applicants must have a UEI number.** To obtain a UEI number, please follow the steps below:

Go to <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform/pages/CCRSearch.jsp>.

Select the country or territory where your organization is physically located. Complete and submit the form. Organizations will need to provide basic information, including physical and mailing addresses, name and title of the chief executive, primary [Standard Industrial Code](#) (SIC), and annual revenue.

**For technical difficulties** in obtaining this number, please contact D&B at: [govt@dnb.com](mailto:govt@dnb.com).

#### *System for Award Management (SAM)*

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

**Further, 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 account**, please follow the steps below:

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

*Log In* to complete authentication and create an account. On the My SAM page, select *Entity Registrations* from the sub-navigation menu and select *Register New Entity*.

Organizations must have a UEI number and a CAGE number (US Domestic Organizations) or a NCAGE number (Foreign Organizations), to create an account.

Complete and submit the online form. If the applying organization already has the necessary information on hand (see the [SAM Quick Start Guide for Grant Registration](#)), the online form takes approximately one hour to complete, depending upon the size and complexity of the applying entity. Because of the different steps in the process, it might take anywhere from **12 - 15 business days** to complete the process of creating an account with the system.

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

## C. ADDITIONAL ELIGIBILITY CONSIDERATIONS

### C.1. Cost-Sharing or Matching

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

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

## VI. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

### A. APPLICATION DOCUMENTS

All applications must include the application components detailed below. **All application documents must be submitted in English.** Applicants may submit only 1 applications. 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**

#### **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 forms 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.**

#### **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. **Applicants are strong encouraged to review Appendix 3 before preparing their Narrative.**

#### **Budget & Budget Narrative Submission:**

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

- Summary Budget
- Detailed Line Item Budget
- 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**.

**Logic Model:**

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

**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**.

**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.

**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**.

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

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.

**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. This item will not be counted toward any page limits. Applicants not proposing any partners can upload a document stating that this is not applicable for their application.

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

This 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. **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. While optional at the application stage, please note that this may be required of successful applicants at the award negotiation stage.**

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

## B. APPLICATION FORMATTING REQUIREMENTS

The required font is 12-point, Times New Roman. All application documents must be single spaced, with all margins (left, right, top, and bottom) of at least one inch each. Also, applicants should ensure all pages in the application package are numbered consecutively and meet the page limit requirements outlined in [Section 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 [B.3](#) above. **It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure they have an active account and will be able to submit its application.** NEA/AC is not in a position to grant exceptions to these requirements.

**The application process is not complete until the applicant receives notification that its application has been validated and forwarded to the granting agency (NEA/AC). Please allow sufficient time for entering the application into these systems. It is the responsibility of the applicant to monitor its application to ensure that it is successfully received and validated.**

### **C.1. Grants.gov**

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

### **C.2. SAMS Domestic**

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

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

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

## **D. SUBMISSION DATES AND TIMES**

**Applications must be time stamped before 17:00:00 eastern time (ET) on February 21, 2020.** 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](mailto:nea-grants@state.gov)) of any technical difficulties and allow sufficient time to resolve difficulties before the deadline.** Although NEA/AC will work with applicants to resolve technical issues, it is not in a position to grant exceptions to the submission requirements outlined in this announcement.

## **VII. FUNDING LIMITATIONS, RESTRICTIONS, AND OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

### **1. Awards to Commercial Firms or For-Profit Organizations**

The Department of State prohibits profit under its assistance awards to commercial organizations. No funds will be paid as profit to any recipient that is a commercial organization.

Profit is defined as any amount in excess of allowable direct and indirect costs. The allowability of costs incurred by commercial organizations is determined in accordance with the provisions of the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) at 48 CFR Part 31. Program income earned by the recipient may be:

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

## 2. Audit Requirements

Domestic and foreign organizations that expend \$750,000 or more in a fiscal year in federal assistance must perform an independent, recipient-contracted Single Audit or Program Specific Audit. (**Program-specific Audit** means an audit of one Federal award program. **Single Audit** means an audit which includes both the entity's financial statements and the Federal Awards to be conducted in accordance with Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards (GAGAS). The audits must be independently and professionally executed in accordance with GAGAS either prescribed by a government's Supreme Audit Institution with auditing standards approved by the Comptroller General of the United States, or the host country's laws or adopted by the host country's public accountants or associations of public accountants, together with generally accepted international auditing standards. However, foreign entity audits consistent with International Standards for Auditing or other auditing standards are acceptable with the Grants Officer's approval. More information can be found at <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.

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

Payment of funds awarded under this Notice of Funding Opportunity will not be disbursed until the DOS has been assured that the Recipient's financial management system will provide effective control over and accountability for all Federal funds in accordance with [2 CFR 200](#) and [2 CFR 600](#) as applicable. Awards issued under this NOFO are subject to the [Department of State Standard Terms and Conditions](#) and [2 CFR 200](#) and [2 CFR 600](#) as applicable.

# VIII. APPLICATION REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS

## A. APPLICATION EVALUATION CRITERIA

### *Achievable Objectives (20 points)*

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

- Impact and Effectiveness: The applicant describes the project's potential contribution to solving the problem addressed in the problem statement and achieving results.
- Timeframe: The applicant describes realistic results to be accomplished within the timeframe of the proposed award.
- Beneficiaries: The applicant clearly identifies the anticipated beneficiaries and explains how the project's objectives will positively affect them.
- Milestones: The applicant provides realistic milestones to indicate progress toward goals and objectives as described in the program announcement.
- M&E: The applicant explains how monitoring and evaluation activities will be carried out throughout the award's period of performance and who will be responsible for them.
- M&E: The applicant includes a final evaluation of the project at the completion of the award.

### ***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 Planning: 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.
- Gender Considerations: The applicant includes gender analysis in the project narrative that identifies relevant gender gaps and ways the proposed activities will address those gaps. Proposals should demonstrate how addressing relevant gender gaps will enhance the program's goals and objectives and how the project will benefit both men and women.
- Program Logic: Is it theoretically sound? Do all elements of the logic model fit together showing plausible pathways to achieving project outcomes? Have all the key assumptions been identified and their potential influences described? Are the risks to implementation (external factors) fully accounted for and described?

***Organizational Capacity (25 points)***

- The applicant demonstrates 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 country/territory/region.
- 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 (15 points)***

- Pre-identified key staff members, including any volunteers, demonstrate experience working in the country/territory/region proposed, in the proposed content area, 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 – demonstrating that the project will be sufficiently staffed but will avoid redundancy or duplication of effort.
- A job description, including hiring criteria, is provided for each open key position.
- Applicant and/or partner staff have relevant language competencies.

***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/in the MENA region.
- 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.
- Additional sources (cost-share or matching) for project funding are proposed, as well as an explanation of how those additional sources will be used.
- The budget demonstrates a reasonable cost per participant.
- The budget accounts for monitoring and evaluation 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 VII, Section A](#). Panel Reviewers' ratings, and any resulting recommendations, are advisory.

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

## IX. ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

### A. AWARD NOTICES

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

**NEA/AC expects to notify applicants who proceeded past the Technical Eligibility Review stage about the status of their application by April 13, 2020.** 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.

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

## **E. SPECIAL PROVISION FOR PERFORMANCE IN A DESIGNATED COMBAT AREA (SPOT) REQUIREMENTS**

Applicants proposing activities in **Iraq** are required to adhere to the following:

All recipient personnel deploying to an area of combat operations, as designated by the Secretary of Defense under federal assistance over \$150,000 or performance over 30 days must register in the Department of Defense maintained Synchronized Pre-deployment and Operational Tracker (SPOT) system. Recipients of federal assistance awards shall register in SPOT before deployment, or if already in the designated operational area, register upon becoming an employee under the assistance award and maintain current data in SPOT. Information on how to register in SPOT is available from your Grants Officer or Grants Officer Representative. Recipients utilizing personnel who are not performing private security functions must account for personnel within the SPOT system anonymously through the use of the aggregate count functionality. This includes U.S. Citizens, Third Country Nationals (TCN), and Locally-hired Iraqi personnel except as noted in the following paragraph.

Recipients utilizing personnel who are performing a private security function; are performing duties as a translator or interpreter; require access to U.S. facilities, services, or support; or desire consideration for refugee or special immigrant status under the Refugee Crisis in Iraq Act of 2007 (subtitle C of title XII of Public Law 110–181 must be entered into SPOT individually with all required personal information. If a locally-hired Iraqi falls into one of these categories, the recipient must enter all of the required identification data into SPOT.

When the Recipient is ready to enter U.S. Citizens, Third Country Nationals (TCN), and/or locally-hired individuals using the Aggregate Count method, the Recipient will notify the Grants Officer who will contact the Department SPOT Program Manager (A/LM/AQM) to obtain the “Aggregate Count” template. The Recipient will complete the “Aggregate Count” template and return to the SPOT Program Manager who will ensure that aggregate counts are loaded into SPOT.

The Recipient’s SPOT Administrator is responsible for updating the aggregate locally hired national count on a quarterly basis by providing updated information via the “Aggregate Count” template to the GO/GOR for each award who will forward to the Department SPOT Program Manager for SPOT entry.

Recipient performance may require the use of armed private security personnel. To the extent that such private security contractors (PSCs) are required, recipients are required to ensure they adhere to Chief of Mission (COM) policies and procedures regarding the operation, oversight, and accountability of PSCs.

Recipient performance may require the use of armed private security personnel. To the extent that such private security contractors (PSCs) are required, recipients are required to ensure they adhere to Chief of Mission (COM) policies and procedures regarding the operation, oversight, and accountability of PSCs.

As specific COM policies and procedures may differ in scope and applicability, recipients of federal assistance awards are advised to review post policies and procedures carefully in this

regard and direct any questions to the Embassy Regional Security Office (RSO) via the Grants Officer Representative (GOR). Any exclusion to these policies must be granted by the COM via the RSO. COM policies and procedures may be obtained from the RSO via the GOR. Recipients of federal assistance awards are also advised that these policies and procedures may be amended from time to time at the post in response to changing circumstances.

Recipients of federal assistance awards are advised that adherence to these policies and procedures are considered to be a material requirement of their award. Recipients of federal assistance awards are reminded that only the Grants Officer has the authority to modify the Notice of Award. Recipients shall proceed with any security guidance provided by the RSO, but shall advise the Grants Officer and the GOR of the guidance received and any potential cost or schedule impact.

#### **F. BRANDING AND MARKING REQUIREMENTS FOR GRANTEES**

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

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.

#### **G. 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.**

#### **H. SUB AWARDEE REPORTING REQUIREMENT**

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

### **X. AGENCY CONTACTS**

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

Kohl Taberner [nea-grants@state.gov](mailto:nea-grants@state.gov)

All questions and a notification of Intent to Apply must be submitted in writing to [nea-grants@state.gov](mailto:nea-grants@state.gov) by January 20, 2020 at 17:00:00 eastern time (ET). NEA/AC will create a document of the submitted questions along with the answers and post it on [SAMS Domestic](#) and Grants.gov. Questions submitted after the deadline will not be addressed.

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

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

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

Grants.gov Contact Center  
(800) 518-4726  
[support@Grants.gov](mailto:support@Grants.gov)

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

**ILMS Help Desk**  
(888) 313-ILMS (4567)  
[ILMS Self Service Portal](#)

## **XI. DISCLAIMER**

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