U.S. Embassy in Tunisia
in conjunction with
U.S. Department of State
Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs
Office of Assistance Coordination (NEA/AC)

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 19.600

Supporting Tunisia's Elections

Opportunity Number: *SFOP0005295*

Key Information:

Announcement Type:	**New**
Date Opened:	**7/20/2018**
Deadline for Questions & Notification of Intent to Apply:	**8/1/2018**
Application Deadline:	**8/21/2018**
Expected Date of Notification:	**9/30/2018**
Federal Agency Contact(s):	**Katelyn Smith** **NEA/AC** **nea-grants@state.gov**

Funding Opportunity Synopsis

The U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs Office of Assistance Coordination (NEA/AC) and the United States Embassy in Tunisia, Assistance Unit, are seeking proposals from eligible applicants to implement a program entitled *Supporting Tunisia's Elections.*

This Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) seeks proposals in support of efforts to continue the professionalization of the *Instance Superieure Independante Pour les Elections* (Independent High Authority for Elections - ISIE), the Court of Accounts (in charge of the oversight of public financing including campaign finance), and other relevant institutions; ensure the transparency and accessibility of Tunisian elections; and, engage the public in democratic processes in Tunisia. Activities will include supporting the ISIE's efforts to organize the upcoming legislative and presidential elections in 2019; fostering public awareness and promoting citizen participation in the elections; creating a robust electronic platform ensuring voter registration, candidates' nomination, campaign finance monitoring, and elections' results management; and, ensuring electoral transparency and accurate electoral reporting.

A successful applicant should clearly and succinctly outline a detailed plan for how each objective will be achieved, how monitoring will be conducted, and how data be collected and analyzed. Applications should also demonstrate a strong capacity to establish partnerships with the Tunisian election commission (ISIE), the Court of Accounts, and local Tunisian civil society organizations (CSOs) that work on issues related to election administration and voter outreach.

Any projects supported as a result of this NOFO shall not duplicate ongoing or planned work in Tunisia, and shall demonstrate that their proposed efforts are working complementarily with other Tunisian and international donor programs to support Tunisia's election commission. The U.S. Department of State has provided institution building technical assistance to the ISIE since 2012 that has greatly contributed to the ISIE's ability to organize internationally recognized free and fair elections in 2012, 2014, and 2018. A successful applicant will demonstrate how their proposed activities will build on this foundation of trust and support, and will not duplicate previous assistance provided to the ISIE.

Eligible Countries and Territories:

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

All applications **must** be submitted in English. Applicants may submit only one application. Complete information on how applicants can submit proposals for this opportunity can be found in *Section V*.

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 funds projects 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.

Background Information about the U.S. Embassy in Tunisia:

The United States Embassy in Tunisia (Embassy Tunis) is a committed partner which works with Tunisia's government, private sector, and civil society as they lay the foundation for the country's future. Since 2011, The United States has supported Tunisia's democratic transition with economic, security, and governance assistance. U.S. assistance focuses on strengthening the Tunisian business climate to support the growth of enterprises, jobs, and bilateral trade; and fostering inclusive governance and human rights protections.

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I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

A. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Following closely on the heels of Tunisia's first local elections in May 2018, presidential and Parliamentary elections are scheduled in Tunisia for 2019. Election administration and oversight is the responsibility of the *Instance Superieure Independante Pour les Elections* (Independent High Authority for Elections - ISIE). The ISIE is constitutionally mandated to manage the organization, administration, and supervision of elections and referendums in accordance with electoral legislation, but is currently facing challenges in management, capacity, and administration.

The establishment of the ISIE was challenging, as the recruitment and training of the new staff coincided with the organization of the 2014 elections. The ISIE executive body was established without setting in place a strategy for developing its capabilities and optimizing its efficiency and professionalism. During the post-election phase in 2015, the ISIE initiated the restructuring of its administrative organization, the introduction of regular staff, and the adoption of a charter of governance that specifies the attributes of the executive body and its relationship with the governing council of the ISIE. Internal conflict, individual turnover, and leadership changes resulted in the resignation of many directors in 2016 and 2017, which has reduced its overall operational capacity.

This reduction in capacity has led to a decrease in public trust in the ISIE. Municipal elections were a long-awaited and important step in Tunisia's democratic transition, but voter turnout was low at around 35% percent. This represents a reduction in voter turnout rates, from 84 percent in the 2011 National Constituent Assembly elections and 60.11 percent in the 2014 presidential elections, which reflect frustration with the pace of Tunisia's democratic transition. A return to the 2014 level of voter engagement and citizen involvement in the 2019 presidential elections will signal confidence in Tunisia's nascent democracy and its institutions.

In the lead-up to the 2019 presidential and parliamentary elections, the ISIE will look to modernize its administrative, financial, and technical management procedures. The ISIE lacks a functional and operational online platform to enable fair and transparent electoral management. The ISIE's current lack of an adequate training budget is one issue that undermines the competence and performance of the staff. Over the next two years, the ISIE could also benefit from continuing-education programs; developing an archiving system; and, strengthening their documentation, information technology, and information security systems. The ISIE needs additional technical assistance to control electoral campaigns, strengthen the capacity of its screening officers and prepare them to ensure their educational role of informing candidates of rules and regulations.

An additional challenge that the ISIE faced in the 2011 and 2014 elections was the lack of capacity of the ISIE and the Court of Accounts to monitor campaign and political party financing. A more robust oversight of campaign finances is necessary to support fair and transparent elections. The Court of Accounts has the jurisdiction to supervise the sound spending of public funds in accordance with the principles of legality, efficiency, and transparency. The

Court of Accounts evaluates the expenditure of public funds and has the ability to issue punishments or sanctions for the mismanagement of public funds.

As two of Tunisia's independent oversight bodies, the ISIE and the Court of Accounts, must have the capacity and efficiency to evaluate public spending. These bodies currently lack sufficient financial and human resources to effectively exercise control over campaign finances during the elections. Regulating the use of money in politics and promoting transparency and accountability among political actors are key milestones in Tunisia's commitment to and operationalization of the democratic process. Strengthening the relationship between the two key players in Tunisia in election administration, the ISIE and the Court of Accounts, will improve the overall control over campaign finance and will improve the efficiency of the reporting and regulating systems.

B. ACHIEVABLE OBJECTIVES

To address these challenges, this NOFO solicits applications to achieve **all** of the following objectives to address the current challenges in election administration, citizen engagement, and control of public finances in Tunisia:

1. In the short term, this project will enable the ISIE and the Court of Accounts to ensure free, fair, and transparent elections in 2019.
2. Over the long term, this project will achieve three inter-related objectives:
    - Electoral institutions' organizational capacity including the ISIE, the Court of Accounts, and other relevant government institutions strengthened.
    - Reinforce the ISIE and Court of Accounts' oversight of campaign finance.
    - Integrity of the Tunisian electoral process strengthened

C. PROJECT DESIGN

Funds are available to institutionally professionalize the ISIE and the Court of Accounts, ensure the transparency and accessibility of Tunisian elections, and to engage the public in democratic processes in Tunisia.

Over the first 18 months, leading up to presidential and parliamentary activities in 2019, project activities **should** include**:**

- Provide training and support for ISIE staff to effectively perform their management work, including ongoing training and professional development for permanent ISIE staff as well as intensive training for temporary ISIE staff that are appointed for a specific election.
- Provide technical support for the regional election branches of the ISIE in electoral campaign oversight, including IRIE members, regional directors, regional legal officers, and creating a training of trainers program on campaign finance oversight.
- Equip candidates and parties with the necessary knowledge and tools to understand and report any violations of campaign finance law.
- Foster public awareness and promoting citizen participation in the elections, and ensuring electoral transparency and accurate electoral reporting.

Over the next 2 years, to strengthen the development of the ISIE and the Court of Accounts and create resiliency in their organization and administration, project activities **should** include**:**

- Create a code of ethics for political parties to improve transparency throughout the electoral process.
- Update and strengthen the ISIE's three-year strategic plan, currently spanning 2016 – 2019.
- Update and improve the ISIE's e-learning platform to make training available to a larger audience, including election observers, civil society organizations, poll workers, and regional staff of the *Instances Régionales En Tunisie* (Regional Instances in Tunisia – IRIE) offices, at the national and regional levels.
- Develop an updated organizational chart of electoral institutions that is formally adopted by the ISIE Board of Directors.
- Support the establishment of information centers and resources within the ISIE and its regional IRIE offices to reinforce the democratic process and culture of elections through voter education, public information campaigns, or other initiatives that could target schools and universities.
- Establish a fully electronic electoral management system for the ISIE that includes voter, party, and candidate registration; voter identification; observer registration and accreditation; vote counting; results transmission; and the presentation of preliminary and final results of data and voter information.
- Develop a reserve bench of trained temporary staff who have experience working on previous elections.
- Develop an online platform that will enable the Court of Accounts to maintain all the data related to campaign finance to control candidates' lists and enable an automatic mode of calculation of the electoral lists' funding.

Project beneficiaries **should** include:

1. The Tunisian Court of Accounts (also translated as the Court of Auditors)
2. *Instance Superieure Independante Pour les Elections* (Independent High Authority for Elections - ISIE)
3. *Instances Régionales En Tunisie* (Regional Instances in Tunisia – IRIE) located in each of Tunisia's 24 governorates
4. Tunisian Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)
5. The Tunisian public

Any projects supported as a result of this NOFO **shall not** duplicate ongoing or planned work in Tunisia, and **shall** demonstrate that their proposed efforts are working complementarily with other Tunisian and international donor programs to support Tunisia's election commission. A successful applicant will demonstrate that they have built on previous efforts to strengthen the ISIE and will incorporate research and lessons-learned from programs previously conducted in Tunisia, including previous Department of State-funded efforts and other programs by international donors.

II. MEASUREMENT OF RESULTS

A. LOGIC MODEL

Applicants must 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 statements can be generated using the template in *Appendix 2*. The applicant must demonstrate in its proposal that the logic model proposed can be feasibly implemented in Tunisia.

The applicant's results framework must clearly demonstrate impact directly related to the achievable objectives in *Section I, Part B* and provide quantitative and/or qualitative evidence towards the following intended results described below:

1. The ISIE's technical and organizational capacity to administer elections and oversee campaign finance is increased.
2. The Court of Accounts' capacity to monitor the finances of political parties and campaign spending, and their ability to exercise sanctions or punishment for financial mismanagement, is increased.
3. The transparency and accessibility of Tunisia's electoral processes is increased.
4. The ISIE's provision of civic education and voter education efforts are updated and increased.
5. The technical and organizational capacity of the IRIE's and their staff is increased.
6. Utilization of tools to report mismanagement of campaign funds and to access election information is increased.
7. A code of ethics for campaign finance by political parties is created and utilized.
8. Creation of an electronic electoral management system of ISIE including voter, party, and candidate registration, voter identification, observer registration and accreditation, vote counting, results transmission and presentation of preliminary results of data and voter information.
9. Specific examples of improvement in ISIE's and IRIE's management work as a result of training and e-learning programs in areas including voter outreach and voter registration, financial and procurement management, and communication outreach.

B. RESULTS MONITORING PLAN

Applicants must also provide a Results Monitoring Plan (RMP). The RMP describes the measures proposed by an applicant to capture and demonstrate progress toward achieving the objectives of the proposed project. The RMP may also include project-specific sub-objectives (i.e. project outcomes). More information about preparing the Plan can be found in *Appendix 4*.

The RMP should include the following elements:

- Well-defined objectives: Do the objectives provide a clear statement of what the project specifically plans to achieve?
- Realistic project objectives: What results are achievable during the period of the award?
- Qualitative and quantitative indicators: How and what will you measure to show the project's results based on outcomes (impact) as well as outputs (raw numbers)?
- Data collection and analysis: How (and how often) will you collect and present indicator data and analysis to show progress toward the project objectives?
- Monitoring and reporting: How will you identify and measure project milestones throughout the life of the project to ensure it is achieving the stated objectives?

III. AWARD INFORMATION

Funding Mechanism Type:	**Grant**
Estimated Number of Awards:	**1 award**
Estimated Initial Project Funding:	**$2,000,000**
Estimated Initial Award Ceiling:	**$2,000,000**
Estimated Initial Award Floor:	**$1,500,000**
Cost-Sharing or Matching:	**Recommended, Not required**
Estimated Length of Initial Project Period:	**Two years**
Maximum Number of Option Years:	**Three years**
Estimated Award Ceiling for the Option Year(s):	**$3,000,000**
Estimated Award Total with Option Year(S):	**$6,000,000**

Contingent on the availability of funds, approximately $2,000,000 in Economic Support Funds for approximately one (1) award will be awarded through this announcement. If selected to receive an award, an applicant will be awarded funds for up to two years. The estimated start date for this project is October 15, 2018. NEA/AC and Embassy Tunis reserve the right to award more or less than the estimated program funding, and to award funding under this announcement for a period of up to two years after the announcement's close date.

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

Non-Competing Continuation:
Continuation grants funded under this award, beyond the initial budget period, will be contingent upon the availability of funds; grantee's progress in meeting grant requirements, including timely submission of required reports and compliance with all terms and conditions of the award; timely submission of a request for additional funding; and a determination that future work towards these objectives is feasible and in line with U.S. foreign policy goals for Tunisia.

Pending successful implementation of this project for the initial estimated length of time as indicated in *Section III*, and pending the availability of funds in subsequent fiscal years, NEA/AC and Embassy Tunis may extend this grant for additional time, not to exceed a five [5] year total project period to achieve the above-stated goals and objectives. Please note that this NOFO requires that applicants submit additional budget materials to plan for potential out years and non-competing continuation. See *Section VI* for more details.

Note that this does **NOT** constitute any commitment or guarantee of funds or extension of period of performance beyond any initial award issued. Applicants should demonstrate through their proposal how project activities planned for the estimated period of performance and estimated funding noted above will achieve corresponding project objectives within that time frame and budget in the case that additional funding does not become available.

Out-year budget materials as described in *Section VI, Part A* below should demonstrate how the applicant would intend to build on initial success, but the proposal for the estimated period of performance and estimated funding noted above should be designed to produce a complete project, given that continuation is not guaranteed.

An estimated additional three million ($3,000,000) dollars may be available to support expanded activities in option years. Applicants interested in accessing option years must propose additional activities beyond the period of performance to continue and enhance the work proposed in the project period that will strengthen Tunisia's independent institutions charged with election and financial oversight to improve the transparency, accessibility, and responsiveness of the government. The applicant's continuation work should build off of proposed activities, support the following objectives, and/or make recommendations for new assistance as a follow-on to the objectives previously accomplished:

1. Reinforced electoral institutions' technical & organizational capacity;
2. Improved ISIE oversight of electoral campaign finance;
3. Integrity of the Tunisian electoral process strengthened; and,
4. Credibility and transparency of electoral institutions reinforced.

IV. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

All applicants will be screened by NEA/AC and Embassy Tunis 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 Parts A and B below 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

All applicants will be screened by NEA/AC and Embassy Tunis 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 Parts A and B below 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 and Embassy Tunis strongly encourage applications from organizations headquartered in the Middle East and North Africa region. International non-governmental organizations with principal bases of operations outside the Middle East and North Africa are also encouraged to apply, but the percentage of total budget actually spent in the region through local partners will be among the elements of evaluation for this competition.

NEA/AC and Embassy Tunis are committed to an anti-discrimination policy in all of its programs and activities. NEA/AC and Embassy Tunis welcome 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 MUST:

- 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 IV, Part B.*
- Meet any requirements listed as MANDATORY in *Section IV, Part C*.
- Demonstrate the ability to form or strengthen partnerships with the ISIE, relevant CSO organizations, and the Court of Accounts.

A.2. Local Partners

Applicants are <u>encouraged</u> to include partnerships with local organizations as part of their project design for this NOFO. **Applicants who do not incorporate local partners in their proposal will be deemed ineligible and will not advance past the Technical Eligibility Review stage.** Applicants should propose partners that would work together on specific programmatic objectives or priorities and that utilize local expertise. Partnerships may, but are not required to, take the form of sub-grants. The applicant is required to demonstrate that any proposed partner organizations are legally registered in Tunisia and have the operational capacity to permit their proposed contribution to the program.

B. REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS

To apply for this funding opportunity, 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). <u>**Applicants who do not meet all registration requirements are not eligible for funding under the opportunity.**</u>

B.1. 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 and sub-award partners 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.

B.2. System for Award Management (SAM)

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

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

To create a new account, please follow the steps below:

- Go to http://www.sam.gov.
- Select *Create User Account*, and then select *Create an Account* on the left-hand side of the screen under *Individual Account Details.*

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

Complete and submit the online form. If the applying organization already has the necessary information on hand (see the SAM User Guide), the online form takes approximately one hour to complete, depending upon the size and complexity of the applying entity. Because of the different steps in the process, it often takes from **three to fourteen business days** to complete the process of creating an account with the system.

For help with SAM.gov, please visit their support page at https://www.fsd.gov or contact them at: +1 334-206-7828.

C. ADDITIONAL ELIGIBILITY CONSIDERATIONS

C.1. Cost-Sharing or Matching

There is no minimum or maximum percentage required for this competition. However, NEA/AC and Embassy Tunis encourage applicants to provide maximum levels of cost sharing and funding in support of its programs. Cost-sharing or matching **is not** an evaluation criteria of this NOFO.

All cost share or matching must be included in detail in the line item budget and noted in the budget narrative. 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.

V. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

A. APPLICATION DOCUMENTS

All applications must include the application components detailed below. All application documents must be submitted in English. Applicants may submit only **one (1)** application to this NOFO. Please refer to Part B below for additional submission guidance and requirements.

NOTE: Applications that do not include **all** the required documentation described in Part A.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 all three forms online to be considered for funding. Guidance on how to complete the SF-424 and SF424a is provided in *Appendix 3.* NOTE: In addition to following all guidance outlines below regarding application materials, applicants are strongly 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. More details on preparing the Project Narrative are provided in *Appendix 4*. Applicants are strongly encouraged to review *Appendix 3* before preparing their Project Narrative. This section may not exceed **ten (10) pages.**

Option Years Narrative:

The Option Years Narrative describes the efforts the applicant would propose to undertake during the option year period (s) of up to five years in order to meet the objectives, priorities, and goals outlined in the funding description section of this NOFO. This section may not exceed **three (3) pages**.

Logic Model:
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 can be generated using the template in *Appendix 2*. 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 not exceed 3 pages.**

Results Monitoring Plan:
A Results Monitoring Plan (RMP) describes the measures proposed by an applicant to capture and demonstrate progress toward achieving the objectives of the proposed project. Please see the "Measurement of Results" section above for further guidance.

The quality and feasibility of the proposed RMP will be among the elements on which applications are evaluated (See *Section VII, Part A for more information). More information about preparing the Plan can be found in Appendix 4*. 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. RMPs should be attached as a separate document and **has no page limit.**

Budget & Budget Narrative Submission:
Applicants must provide the following elements as part of their budget submission:
- Summary Budget
- Detailed Line Item Budget
- Budget Narrative
- A detailed budget for the initial project period is required, and
- A notional budget and brief budget narrative for up to one

There is **no page limit** for this section of an application. A sample fillable template can be found in *Appendix 1*. This template includes three tabs:
- The first tab includes written guidance on preparing the Budget Narrative. Applicants are strongly encouraged to create their Budget Narrative in Word and submit as either a Word Doc or PDF file. Please note that the Budget Narrative should include designations of who is considered Key Personnel for this project.
- The second tab includes a 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 includes the template for the Detailed Line Item Budget as stated above.

NOTE: Applicants are strongly encouraged to use the same format as provided in the template, and to submit summary and detailed line item budgets in Excel form, and the Budget Narrative as either a PDF or Word file. If the applicant does not use the template, the applicant must ensure that their submission includes all elements outlined in the sample. The template, which includes more detailed instruction, can be found in *Appendix 1*. Applicants are strongly encouraged to review *Appendix 1* before preparing their Narrative.

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 the beginning to the end of the project. Applicants must ensure that the timeline of activities and events corresponds with details provided in the Project Narrative and RMP. Applicants are strongly encouraged to use the template provided in *Appendix 3*. If the applicant does not use the template, the applicant must ensure that their submission includes all elements outlined in the sample. Please note that additional guidance on this item is also included in *Appendix 3*. This section may not exceed **two (2)** pages.

Security, Risk Mitigation, & Contingency Planning Summary:
This item should provide details 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 **five (5)** pages.

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 each of their proposed partners. **Local partner organizations should confirm that they are legally registered to operate in Tunisia.** This section may not exceed **ten (10)** pages.

Job Descriptions / Biographical Information for Key Personnel Positions:
For each position designated as key personnel for this project, applicants **must** provide the following:

1. If the position is already filled: Provide brief biographical information summarizing the person's qualifications, as well as a brief description of the roles or responsibilities pertaining to this project.
   OR
2. If the person to fill a key position has not yet been hired: Provide a brief summary of the job description, which should include a description of the roles and responsibilities pertaining to this project, as well as a description of qualifications of eligible candidates.

NOTE: If an applicant is proposing sub-grant partner(s) as part of their project design, Biological Information for Key Personnel Positions of the sub-grantee **must** also be included. This section of the application may not exceed **2** pages.

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

A.2. Optional Documents

Applicants may submit additional documents for consideration with their application. These documents are **not required** and may not exceed **five (5)** pages total. Below are examples of some additional documents an applicant may wish to submit.

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

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 *Parts A.1* and *A.2* above. **The Standard Forms 424 (SF-424, SF-424a, and SF-424b) are excluded from the page numbering.**

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

C. SUBMITTING AN APPLICATION
Applicants **must** submit their application electronically using either the Grants.gov OR SAMS Domestic websites. Both systems require that the applying organization have an account with the system and both require a UEI number and SAM.gov account as detailed above. **It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure they have an active account and will be able to submit its application. Applicants must select one of these systems to submit their application; do not submit an application through both systems.** NEA/AC and Embassy Tunis are not in a position to grant exceptions to these requirements.

Grants.gov requires that the applying organization have an account with the system, a UEI number, and a SAM.gov account, as detailed in *Section IV, Part B* above. NEA/AC and Embassy Tunis are not in a position to grant exceptions to these requirements. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure they have an active account and will be able to submit its application.

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 and ensure that it is successfully received and validated.

C.1. Grants.gov

Grants.gov is a single portal for applicants to find and apply to U.S. government funding opportunities. Creating an account with this system is a five-step process:

1. Obtain a UEI number;
2. Create an account with the System for Award Management
3. Create a profile, including username and password;
4. Obtain Authorized Organization Representative (AOR) authorization; and
5. Track AOR status.

This process can take 10 business days or longer, even if all the steps are completed in a timely manner.

To create an account, go to www.grants.gov and click on the "Register" link, located at the top, right-hand side of the page.

C.2. SAMS Domestic

SAMS Domestic is a comprehensive grants management system that allows applicants to apply for, manage, and report on the use of U.S. government funds for multiple programs, accessed online at 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 daylight time (EDT) on August 21, 2018. There will be no grace period, and any application not received by the application deadline will be deemed ineligible and will not advance to be reviewed. Applicants are encouraged to submit an application far enough in advance of the deadline so it can alert NEA/AC (nea-grants@state.gov) of any technical difficulties and allow sufficient time to resolve difficulties before the deadline. Although NEA/AC will work with applicants to resolve technical issues, it is not in a position to grant exceptions to the submission requirements outlined in this announcement.

VI. FUNDING LIMITATIONS, RESTRICTIONS, AND OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

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

B. Audit Requirements

Domestic and foreign organizations that expend $750,000 or more in a fiscal year in federal assistance must perform an independent, recipient-contracted Single Audit or Program Specific Audit. [*Program-specific Audit* refers to an audit of one Federal award program. *Single Audit* refers to an audit that includes both the entity's financial statements and the Federal Awards to be conducted in accordance with Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards (GAGAS)]. The audits must be independently and professionally executed in accordance with GAGAS either prescribed by a government's Supreme Audit Institution with auditing standards approved by the Comptroller General of the United States, or the host country's laws or adopted by the host country's public accountants or associations of public accountants, together with generally accepted international auditing standards. However, foreign entity audits consistent with International Standards for Auditing or other auditing standards are acceptable with the Grants Officer's approval. More information can be found at http://gao.gov/assets/590/587281.pdf.

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

C. Compliance with Applicable Federal Funding Regulations and DOS Terms and Conditions

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

VII. APPLICATION REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS

A. APPLICATION REVIEW CRITERIA

Achievable Objectives (30 points)

- Each of the project objectives listed above (in *Section I*) are clearly addressed.
- Impact and Effectiveness: The applicant describes the project's potential contribution to solving the problem addressed in the problem statement and achieving results.
- Timeframe: The applicant describes realistic results to be accomplished within the timeframe of the proposed award.
- 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.
- The RMP indicators measure realistic/feasible project impact (outcomes) rather than just outputs.

Project Design (25 points)

- The applicant clearly describes how each proposed project activity will address each of the objectives outlined in *Section I.*
- Responsiveness to NOFO: The applicant explains how the proposed activities respond to the objectives listed in the NOFO.
- Rationale: The applicant justifies how the proposed activities will achieve the above objectives in this context.
- Project Management: The applicant provides a clear description of how the project will be managed in terms of initiation, planning, implementation, and closing.
- 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. The applicant demonstrates that they have built on previous efforts to strengthen the ISIE and incorporates research and lessons-learned from programs previously conducted in Tunisia.
- Contingency Plan: The applicant articulates programming assumptions and potential challenges to project implementation and proposes contingency plans.
- Program Logic: The program logic is theoretically sound, and all elements of the logic model fit together to show plausible pathways to achieving project outcomes. All key assumptions have been identified and their potential influences described. All risks to implementation (external factors) have been fully accounted for and described in detail.

The applicant demonstrates in its proposal that the logic model proposed can be feasibly implemented in Tunisia.

Partnerships and Buy-Ins (10 points):

- The applicant addresses how the project will engage or obtain support from relevant stakeholders and identifies local partners that should include the ISIE and the Court of Accounts.
- The applicant demonstrates the ability to form or strengthen partnerships with the ISIE, the IRIEs, and the Court of Accounts.
- The applicant includes letters of intent in the application from proposed local partners.
- The application describes the division of labor among the applicant and any partners.

Organizational Capacity (25 points)

- The applicant demonstrates experience (e.g., has previously worked and/or has established contacts/partners) in Tunisia.
- The applicant demonstrates an institutional record of successful programs in support to the ISIE, Court of Accounts, or similar organizations in the Middle East and North Africa 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 (10 points)

- Pre-identified key staff members, including volunteers, demonstrate experience working in Tunisia and with participants from that area (e.g., language skills, cultural understanding).
- Descriptions of the role of each person or position on the project (e.g. staff, partners, consultants, and volunteers) demonstrates that the project will be adequately and efficiently staffed, and avoid redundancy or duplication of effort.
- A job description, including hiring criteria, is provided for each open key position.
- Pre-identified key staff members, including volunteers, demonstrate experience and knowledge in the proposed content area.

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 and activities in Tunisia.
- The budget includes costs dedicated to management, monitoring, and evaluation.
- Adequate travel costs are proposed.
- The budget demonstrates a reasonable cost per participant.

- The budget accounts for monitoring and evaluation costs.

B. APPLICATION REVIEW PROCESS

NEA/AC and Embassy Tunis are 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 IV* and have submitted all required documents outlined in *Section V*. 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 and Embassy Tunis reserve the right to have all applications deemed to be eligible undergo a Subject Matter Expert (SME) review prior to the Merit Review Panel. Applications that do not pass SME review will not proceed to the Merit Review Panel.

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

VIII. ADMINSTRATION 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 and Embassy Tunis expect to notify applicants who proceeded past the Technical Eligibility Review stage about the status of their application by **September 30, 2018.** Final awards cannot be made until funds have been appropriated by Congress, allocated and committed through internal bureau procedures. Successful applicants will receive a Federal Assistance Award (FAA) from the bureau's Grants Office. The FAA and the original proposal with subsequent modifications (if applicable) must 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 and Embassy Tunis reserve the right to award funding to applicants under this announcement for a period of up to two years after the announcement's close date.

B. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

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

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

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

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

C. BRANDING REQUIREMENTS
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 must 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 and Embassy Tunis when negotiating an award.

IX. AGENCY CONTACTS

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

Katelyn Smith
NEA/AC
NEA-Grants@state.gov

All questions and a confirmation of Intent to Apply must be submitted in writing to nea-grants@state.gov by **August 1, 2018** at 17:00:00 eastern daylight time (EDT). NEA/AC will create a document of the submitted questions along with the answers and post it on SAMS Domestic and Grants.gov. Questions submitted after the deadline will not be addressed.

The intent to apply is a notification to the Bureau of Near East Affairs Office of Assistance Coordination via email expressing the intent to submit a proposal under this announcement. The notification does not require any specific format or template, and unless specifically indicated, the notification is **not mandatory**. The intent to apply is optional and will not be binding.

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

Grants.gov Contact Center
(800) 518-4726
support@Grants.gov

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

ILMS Help Desk
(888) 313-ILMS (4567)
ILMS Self Service Portal

X. 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.