

**U.S. Department of State  
Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs  
Office of Assistance Coordination**

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 19.500

**Regional Diagnostics**

**Opportunity Number: SFOP0006921**

**Key Information:**

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<b>Date Opened:</b>	<b>May 6, 2020</b>
<b>Deadline for Questions:</b>	<b>May 20, 2020</b>
<b>Application Deadline:</b>	<b>June 25, 2020</b>
<b>Expected Date of Notification:</b>	<b>September 30, 2020</b>
<b>Federal Agency Contact:</b>	<b>nea-grants@state.gov</b>

## **Funding Opportunity Synopsis**

Three areas of major concern for the United States in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA): a) the influence of China and Iran in the region, b) ethnic and religious minorities' rights and access to resources and opportunities, and c) citizens' and business' economic opportunities on the local and national levels. This project will provide a cross-national understanding of the impact of the Chinese and Iranian influence on social, economic, and political attitudes in the MENA region; examine attitudes at the sub-national, national, and regional levels towards emerging and existing economic challenges and opportunities; and capture religious and ethnic minorities' experiences, detecting early warning signs of threats to religious freedom in several MENA countries.

In addition to the thematic focus on the above-detailed objectives, this project aims to foster more vibrant and robust partnerships between governments, business associations, private sector stakeholders, civil society organizations, and citizens. The project will achieve this through ensuring the wide availability of information on public perceptions and rising concerns, including: data across the urban-rural divide towards access to services and opportunities, key constraints to greater economic opportunity or parity, key constraints to widening gender gaps or parity, the changing role of media in shaping the public discourse, the responsiveness of civil society organizations or business associations to constituents' needs, and methods for collaboratively identifying and addressing binding constraints to private sector job creation and growth.

This project will equip stakeholders throughout the MENA region with information to lead local problem-solving efforts for private sector-driven growth, inclusive societies, and transparent, accountable governance. The results will be shared widely with civil society organizations, businesses, governments, and media organizations to increase awareness and understanding of public needs in MENA.

Among others, activities will include: 1) applying rigorous polling methods to assess and fulfill gaps in knowledge on elements that contribute to strengthening public and private partnerships, while also leveraging data from publicly available studies; 2) providing results and tools that offer practical guidance on how to develop and diffuse knowledge across the public sector to be more responsive to citizens; and 3) providing training materials, raw data, and polling results online to the general public, academia, civil society organizations, business associations, the private sector, government entities, and media organizations.

This project aims to promote U.S. national security and advance American values and leadership while helping MENA stakeholders expand prosperity on their own. It also advances MEPI's strategic framework by bridging the ethnic and religious divide. MEPI will promote greater awareness of the conditions of minorities in the Middle East and North Africa in coordination with USAID.

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

**Applicants should read this NOFO in its entirety before writing their proposal, and should**

**refer to the full Evaluation Criteria provided in Section VII while drafting all materials.**

### **Eligible Countries and Territories**

In this announcement, we seek to support projects in the Middle East and North Africa except Oman, United Arab Emirates, and West Bank/Gaza. Please note: Applications that focus on activities in countries and territories other than those listed will NOT be considered.

### **Background Information about NEA/AC**

The U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, Office of Assistance Coordination (NEA/AC) offers 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 East Affairs, Office of Assistance Coordination (NEA/AC) announces a Notice of Funding Opportunity for projects that document public attitudes towards social, economic, and political issues facing countries in the Middle East and North Africa region through polling mechanism(s). Topics should include (1) general themes of public, public-private, or private sector discourse on governance; policy reform; media; performance of public institutions; challenges to economic growth; and major issues facing the region; and (2) state how priorities/needs or overall opinions on these issues vary according to location (on the governorate level), demographic, type of stakeholder (business association, private individual, civil society organization, etc.), and socioeconomic differences.

### **A. PROBLEM STATEMENT**

There are three areas of major concern for the United States in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA): a) the influence of China and Iran in the region, b) ethnic and religious minorities' rights and access to resources and opportunities, and c) citizens' and business' economic opportunities on the local and national levels. This project will provide a cross-national understanding of the impact of the Chinese and Iranian influence on social, economic, and political attitudes in the MENA region; examine attitudes at the sub-national, national, and regional levels towards emerging and existing economic challenges and opportunities; and captures religious and ethnic minorities' experiences, detecting early warning signs of threats to religious freedom in several MENA countries.

### **B. ACHIEVABLE OBJECTIVES**

In order to counter Chinese and Iranian influence in the MENA region; facilitate access to resources and opportunities to ethnic and religious minorities in the region; and examine attitudes at the sub-national, national, and regional levels towards emerging and existing economic challenges and opportunities, proposals submitted under the Regional Diagnostic initiative should aim to achieve the following:

- 1) Document public attitudes towards China and Iran in the region in a methodologically rigorous and innovative manner;
- 2) Provide results and tools that offer practical guidance on how to develop and diffuse knowledge across the public sector to be more responsive to citizens; and
- 3) Share information with the general public, academia, civil society organizations, government entities, and media organizations.
- 4) Identify resources and opportunities to which ethnic and religious minorities have access in the region;
- 5) Examine attitudes at the sub-national, national, and regional levels towards emerging and existing economic challenges and opportunities.

### **C. PROJECT DESIGN**

This solicitation invites applications in support of spreading a culture of evidence-based policymaking and providing the necessary information and data to feed it, promoting national and regional policy dialogue.

Project activities shall include:

**Documenting Public Attitudes:** NEA seeks projects that document public attitudes towards social, economic, and political issues facing countries in the region through polling mechanism(s). Successful applications will document detailed topics (1) under the general themes of public, public-private, or private sector discourse on governance; policy reform; media; performance of public institutions; challenges to economic growth; and major issues facing the region; and (2) stating how priorities/needs or overall opinions on these issues vary according location (to the governorate level), demographic, type of stakeholder (business association, private individual, civil society organization, etc.), and socioeconomic differences. The applicant will also demonstrate an awareness of existing efforts in the region and avoid duplication of similar activities.

NEA also requires at least two snap surveys (country-specific or thematic) to be conducted outside of the main annual survey.

**Providing Results and Tools:** NEA requires applicants to build skills for those interested in learning how to use polling results to tailor their work to be more responsive to public needs. This can include, but is not limited to media organizations, public institutions, civil society organizations, and government officials. Tools should focus on the ways in which creative and rigorous assessment methods can be used to affect social change initiatives in complex environments.

**Sharing Learning and Results:** NEA requires the wide dissemination of information collected and assessments conducted to the general public, academia, civil society organizations, businesses, government entities, and media organizations.

Project beneficiaries shall include:

- a. Civil Society Organizations
- b. Private Sector Partners
- c. Government Institutions

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.

#### **D. 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. This should be documented through gender analysis in the project narrative that identifies any relevant gender gaps and ways the proposed activities will address those gaps. Proposals should demonstrate how addressing relevant gender gaps will 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:

[https://encompassworld.com/elearningfiles/DOS/DOS\\_Gender\\_Integration\\_E-Course/story\\_html5.html](https://encompassworld.com/elearningfiles/DOS/DOS_Gender_Integration_E-Course/story_html5.html)

## **II. MEASUREMENT OF RESULTS**

Applicants shall provide a logic model or a theory of change to demonstrate how the proposed project (including activities, the project design, and the surrounding context) will achieve the stated objectives. The logic model 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>1</b>
<b>Estimated Total Program Funding:</b>	<b>\$16,000,000</b>
<b>Estimated Base Year Award Ceiling:</b>	<b>\$3,200,000</b>
<b>Estimated Base Year Award Floor:</b>	<b>\$1,200,000</b>
<b>Cost-Sharing or Matching:</b>	<b>Encouraged; NOT Required</b>
<b>Estimated Length of Project Period:</b>	<b>5.5 years</b>

Contingent on the availability of funds, approximately \$16,000,000 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 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.**

### **Non-Competing Continuation**

Continuation grants funded under these awards, 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 continued funding would be in the best interest of the Department of State.

Pending successful implementation of this project for the initial estimated length of time as indicated above, and pending the availability of funds in subsequent fiscal years, NEA/AC may extend this grant for additional time, not to exceed an eight year total project period. Please note that this NOFO requires that applicants submit additional budget materials to plan for potential out-years of non-competing continuations. See Section VI Application and Submission Information for more details.

## **IV. SUBSTANTIAL INVOLVEMENT**

*Examples of NEA/AC responsibilities for a cooperative agreement may include:*

- Collaboration in the formulation of questions for the surveys;
- Review and approval of question sets; and
- Collaboration in determining and approving dissemination plan of information collected and assessments conducted.

## **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
  - o Non-profit organizations;
  - o Private institutions of higher education; and
  - o Public or state institutions of higher education.

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.

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 through local partners may be among the elements of evaluation for this competition.

### A.1. Prime Applicant

Applicants must have the organizational capacity to implement project components in the MENA region. Applicants must also have experience in conducting risk assessments and monitoring and evaluating programs and sub-recipients in order to document and assess the short- and long-term outcomes of proposed projects. Extensive partnerships with MENA-based civil society organizations are necessary to ensure that all project activities can be implemented quickly. Additionally, applicants must:

- Demonstrate capacity to operate an assistance management program of multiple and diverse activities across the MENA region, and across communities of varied socioeconomic backgrounds.
- Demonstrate experience managing and monitoring a significant number of sub-recipients and/or direct assistance projects. Applications must clearly outline this experience, including total volume (total dollar amount, number of partners, and number of projects), size and length of sub-awards managed, and geographic and thematic focus. If the applicant has provided capacity-building support to sub-grantees, please indicate the type of support.
- Demonstrate in the program and budget narratives how the assistance mechanism will be managed, monitored, and evaluated to ensure alignment with the project objectives.
- Demonstrate the ability to involve local partners.

### A.2. Local Partners

Applicants are **REQUIRED** 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.

## **B. REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS**

**To apply for NEA/AC (Federal) funding, organizations, whether based in or outside the United States, 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). 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) ([https://www.osha.gov/pls/imis/sic\\_manual.html](https://www.osha.gov/pls/imis/sic_manual.html)), 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:

[https://sam.gov/SAM/transcript/Quick\\_Guide\\_for\\_Grants\\_Registrations.pdf](https://sam.gov/SAM/transcript/Quick_Guide_for_Grants_Registrations.pdf)), 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**

### **Cost-Sharing or Matching**

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

Cost-sharing or matching is not an evaluation criteria of this NOFO.

## **VI. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION**

### **A. APPLICATION DOCUMENTS**

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

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

#### **A.1. Required Documents**

##### **Federal Assistance Application Forms (SF-424, SF424a, and SF-424b)**

Applicants must complete each of these forms online to be considered for funding. The SF-424B is only required for those applicants who a) have not registered in SAM.gov or b) have not recertified their registration in SAM.gov since February 2, 2019.

If an organization has an active registration in SAM.gov that was either created or updated **on or after** February 2, 2019, then the applicant does **NOT** need to submit the SF-424B because their registration or recertification will have included the necessary information.

**Guidance on how to complete the SF-424 and SF424a is provided in Appendix 3.**

**NOTE: In addition to following all guidance outlined below regarding application materials, applicants are strongly encouraged to review the Application Evaluation Criteria section of this NOFO closely as they prepare their proposal. The Evaluation Criteria section is the rubric by which each application will be scored.**

#### **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 20 pages**. More details on preparing

the Project Narrative are provided in Appendix 3. Applicants are strongly 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 the 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 Microsoft 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.

**A detailed budget for 18 months is required as well as a notional budget for four option periods, with each option period being one year . Each of the four option periods should be their own detailed tab within the budget.**

**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 be **no longer than 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 may be **no longer than 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 their proposed partners. **There is no page limit for this section of the application.**

### **Security, Risk Mitigation, & Contingency Planning Summary**

This document 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 be **no longer than 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.

### **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. Some

examples of additional documents an applicant may wish to submit include but are not limited to organizational chart, etc.

**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 Section V. **It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure they have an active account and will be able to submit its application.** NEA/AC is not in a position to grant exceptions to these requirements.

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

### **SAMS Domestic**

SAMS Domestic is a comprehensive grants management system that allows applicants to apply for, manage, and report on the use of U.S. government funds for multiple programs, accessed online at [mygrants.service-now.com](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 June 25, 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) of any technical difficulties and allow sufficient time to resolve difficulties before the deadline.** Although NEA/AC will work with applicants to resolve technical issues, it is not in a position to grant exceptions to the submission requirements outlined in this announcement.

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

#### **A. AWARDS TO COMMERCIAL FIRMS OR FOR-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS**

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

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

#### **B. AUDIT REQUIREMENTS**

Domestic and foreign organizations that expend \$750,000 or more in a fiscal year in federal assistance must perform an independent, recipient-contracted Single Audit or Program Specific Audit. (*Program-specific Audit* means an audit of one Federal award program. *Single Audit* means an audit which includes both the entity's financial statements and the Federal Awards to be conducted in accordance with Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards (GAGAS). The audits must be independently and professionally executed in accordance with GAGAS either prescribed by a government's Supreme Audit Institution with auditing standards approved by the Comptroller General of the United States, or the host country's laws or adopted by the host country's public accountants or associations of public accountants, together with generally accepted international auditing standards. However, foreign entity audits consistent with International Standards for Auditing or other auditing standards are acceptable with the Grants Officer's approval. More information can be found at <https://www.gao.gov/assets/700/693136.pdf>

For sub-non-Federal entities expending \$750,000 or more in Department of State award funding during their fiscal year, Department of State standard audit provisions require that Prime non-Federal entities certify that audits of sub-non-Federal entities are performed annually and according to the standards described above. The cost of audits required under this policy may be

charged either as an allowable direct cost to the award OR included in the organizations established indirect costs in the award's detailed budget.

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

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

## **VIII. APPLICATION REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS**

Each application submitted under this announcement will be evaluated and rated on the basis of the evaluation criteria outlined below. The criteria are designed to assess the quality of the application and to determine the likelihood of its success and impact. The criteria are closely related and are considered as a whole in judging the overall quality of an application.

Applications will be reviewed on the basis of their fullness, coherence, clarity, and attention to detail. Points are awarded only to applications that are responsive within the context of this program announcement.

### **A. APPLICATION EVALUATION CRITERIA**

#### **Achievable Objectives (10 points)**

- The applicant specifically and clearly addresses the project objectives listed above (in Section I).
- 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: The applicant describes 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.
- **Partnerships and Buy-ins:** The applicant addresses how the project will engage or obtain support from relevant stakeholders and identifies any local partners.
- **Feasibility:** The applicant proposes activities that are feasible, and are also practical, and/or experiential in nature to encourage innovation.
- **Beneficiaries Selection Criteria and Process:** The applicant explains how participants will be selected (e.g., criteria for selection, selection process).
- **Duplication:** The applicant acknowledges if activities similar to those proposed are already taking, or have taken place previously, and provides an explanation as to how proposed new activities will not duplicate or merely add to existing/recent activities.
- **Contingency Plan:** The applicant articulates programming assumptions and potential challenges to project implementation and proposes contingency plans.
- **Division of Labor:** The application describes the division of labor among the applicant and any partners.
- **Project 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 (30 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.
- 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.
- The applicant includes letters of intent/commitment/agreement from any proposed partners.

#### **Staff and Position Specifications (20 points)**

- The applicant details pre-identified key staff members – including volunteers – with demonstrable 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).
- The applicant provides 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.
- The applicant provides a job description and hiring criteria for each open position detailed as key personnel.
- 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.
- The budget includes costs dedicated to management, monitoring, and evaluation, and any costs needed for further gender analysis and for addressing gender gaps.
- Adequate travel costs are proposed.
- The budget demonstrates a reasonable cost per participant.
- The budget accounts for monitoring 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 VIII. Panel Reviewers' ratings, and any resulting recommendations, are advisory.

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

## **IX. ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION**

### **A. AWARD NOTICES**

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

**NEA/AC expects to notify applicants who proceeded past the Technical Eligibility Review stage about the status of their application by September 30, 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, or hardcopy to the Grants Officer. Questions on the form may be emailed to RAM@state.gov. Failure to submit information when requested, or failure to pass vetting, may be grounds for rejecting an application for award.

#### **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.

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**

**Recipients 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:  
[nea-grants@state.gov](mailto:nea-grants@state.gov)

All questions must be submitted in writing to [nea-grants@state.gov](mailto:nea-grants@state.gov) by May 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.

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

## **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.