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2018-2019 MEPI Local Grants Program

Opportunity Number: *SFOP0005770*

Key Information:

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Application Deadline:	**5/21/2019**
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Funding Opportunity Synopsis

Advancing stability and prosperity in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region is critical to the achievement of the United States' foreign policy. There are many challenges, however, which hinder efforts to improve transparent governance, provide inclusive economic opportunities, and encourage civic engagement. Two thirds of the population feel that economic hardship and corruption plague their countries, with trust in civil society decreasing since 2015.

The MEPI Local Grants Program's mission is to sustain the United States' commitment to strengthen direct partnerships with local actors to promote prosperity and participatory governance. Its objectives are to support civil society organizations in (1) developing, promoting, and implementing locally-designed solutions to self-identified environmental, economic, or social problems; (2) promoting inclusive economic growth that reaches marginalized communities, youth, and women; (3) advancing participatory governance through promoting citizens' engagement and decision-makers' willingness to work with citizen groups and civil society organizations; (4) improving civil society's representation of the needs of citizens through collective action on the local level; (5) working towards gender parity in economics and politics; (6) increasing youth engagement in meaningful economic and civic activities; and (7) fostering innovative approaches to solving social, economic, or political issues.

Eligible Countries and Territories:

In this announcement, we seek to support projects in **Algeria.** Please note: Applications that focus on activities in countries and territories other than those listed will NOT be considered.

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

Background Information about NEA/AC:

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

The mission of the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) is to foster meaningful and effective partnerships between citizens, civil society, the private sector, and governments to resolve local challenges and promote shared interests in the areas of participatory governance and economic opportunity and reform. Focusing on promoting stability and prosperity in the region, MEPI supports partnerships through projects that are responsive to emerging opportunities by being field-driven, applying evidence-based decision-making, and designing results-oriented projects. For more information about the MEPI Program visit: https://mepi.state.gov/.

Table of Contents

I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION 4

A. PROBLEM STATEMENT 4
B. ACHIEVABLE GOALS 4
C. PROJECT DESIGN 5

II. MEASUREMENT OF RESULTS 7
III. AWARD INFORMATION 7
IV. SUBSTANTIAL INVOLVEMENT 8
V. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION 8

A. ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS 8
B. REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS 9
C. ADDITIONAL ELIGIBILITY CONSIDERATIONS 10

VI. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION 11

A. APPLICATION DOCUMENTS 11
B. APPLICATION FORMATTING REQUIREMENTS 12
C. SUBMITTING AN APPLICATION 12
D. SUBMISSION DATES AND TIMES 13

VII. FUNDING LIMITATIONS, RESTRICTIONS, AND OTHER CONSIDERATIONS 13
VIII. APPLICATION REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS 14

A. APPLICATION EVALUATION CRITERIA 14
B. REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS 16

IX. ADMINSTRATION INFORMATION 17

A. AWARD NOTICES 17
B. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS 18
C. TRAVEL NOTIFICATIONS 18
D. APPLICANT VETTING AS A CONDITION OF AWARD 18
E. BRANDING AND MARKING REQUIREMENTS FOR GRANTEES 18
F. UEI NUMBER REQUIREMENT FOR SUB AWARDEES 19
G. SUB AWARDEE REPORTING REQUIREMENT 19

X. AGENCY CONTACTS 19
XI. DISCLAIMER 20

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 – MEPI Local Grants Project Narrative Application
APPENDIX 2 – MEPI Local Grants Budget Template
APPENDIX 3 – MEPI Local Grants Application Guidance

I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

The MEPI Local Grants Program seeks projects that build links between and among citizens, civil society, government, and the private sector, and are responsive to emerging opportunities at the local level in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). The program supports projects that align with U.S. foreign policy goals and promote U.S. interests in the region, enhancing stability, and increasing prosperity across MENA.

These grants are designed to support two priority areas of the MEPI Strategic Framework:

- *Participatory Governance:* Enable civil society to effectively interact with government officials to increase responsiveness to citizen needs. Enhance citizens' ability to actively participate in their governments and develop a more informed citizenry. Enable government officials' engagement with, and responsiveness to, their citizens to resolve issues of shared concern.
- *Economic Reform:* Enable citizens, policy makers, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector with the skills and resources to provide economic opportunity, foster economic growth, and promote improved business enabling environments.

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

A. PROBLEM STATEMENT

The MENA region is dynamic with various political, economic, and social challenges on the national and local levels. Nearly three-quarters of the region's population identifies worsening economic conditions as the single most important challenge facing their countries. Other major concerns include financial and administrative corruption, disenfranchised citizens and marginalized communities, large public sectors, limited opportunities for innovation, and high unemployment rates, especially among youth.

An equal percentage of the population – approximately three quarters - expressed deteriorating trust in government institutions and elected officials, and an increasing number feels that the credibility of civil society is diminishing.

Finally, gender inequalities persist despite recent gains in women's political participation and countering gender-based violence laws. While many women have surpassed men in their educational attainment around the region, their participation in the labor force remains two to four times lower than men, and their participation in political processes is among the lowest in the world.

B. ACHIEVABLE GOALS

A key objective of the Local Grants Program is developing the capacity of local civil society organizations (CSOs) to effectively and efficiently manage U.S. federal assistance. Working primarily on the local level, and using an evidence-based approach, one of the following goals MUST be achieved:

1. Develop and promote locally designed solutions to environmental, economic or social problems.
2. Foster inclusive economic growth that reaches marginalized communities, youth and women.
3. Encourage citizens' engagement in participatory governance and decision-makers' willingness to work with citizen groups and civil society organizations.
4. Increase civil society's representation of the needs of citizens through collective action on the local level.
5. Work towards gender parity in politics and/or economics.
6. Increase youth engagement in meaningful economic and civic activities.
7. Foster innovative approaches and solutions.

C. PROJECT DESIGN

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

Algeria:
Country Problem Statement: The official youth unemployment rate in Algeria exceeded 25 percent in 2018, which will only worsen absent economic reform as the number of those under 30 (who already comprise nearly 70 percent of the Algerian population) increases. Private entrepreneurs face significant challenges including currency controls, import restrictions, bureaucratic hurdles, burdensome regulations, and strict government control of key sectors. Entrepreneurs and small- and medium- enterprises (SMEs) also face challenges from a workforce skills gap such as limited managerial skills, training, and difficulties in identifying or connecting with suitable markets.

Likewise, Algerian civil society organizations (CSOs) face difficulties pooling resources or expertise to increase their effectiveness or coordination. Algerian civil society could play a crucial role in providing representation, delivering services to people in underserved areas, and mediating between the authorities and citizens. Helping to build this type of capacity will be important as Algeria moves through transitional phases and could help prevent the types of protests that occurred in 2019.

Country Priorities:
(1) *Economic Growth*: Increase youth employability through job placements and/or the creation of effective and sustainable businesses. Applicants should have established relationships with employers, demonstrated through a letter of intent or formal partnership. Sample activities under this priority could include but are not limited to:

a. Equip youth, especially in rural areas and areas with high unemployment rates, with soft and technical skills and place them in long-term employment opportunities.
b. Develop policies and procedures related to job-related training to align with identified market needs based on employer feedback and job placement outcomes.
c. Provide opportunities for targeted young entrepreneurs to start new businesses.

(2) *Support for Civil Society:* Enable CSOs to reach out to both constituents and local and national government counterparts in order to increase citizen participation in decision-making processes and governance. Sample activities under this priority could include but are not limited to:
a. Improve membership representation, outreach, and public relations for targeted CSOs.
b. Strengthen CSOs' communication and outreach strategies in interacting with government counterparts and advocating for policy goals.
c. Conduct advocacy activities to advance specific policy goals resulting in demonstrable outcomes and impacts during the project timeframe.

Geographic/Thematic Focus: Projects must target at least one of the following populations: youth or women. Priority will be given to geographic areas outside the main cities and to MEPI alumni. Applicants must demonstrate the process of assessing the implications for women, men, and other groups of any planned action at social, economic and political levels in their project narrative through implementation and evaluation.

Specific eligibility requirements:

- Eligible applicants include: Local civil society organizations, non-profit organizations, community groups, non-governmental organizations, professional associations, private sector organizations, and universities based in Algeria, which have obtained all required registrations.
- Priority will be given to applicants who have previously implemented or managed international awards in an amount of at least $50,000.

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

- Job training that does not lead to an internship or job placement opportunities;
- Scholarships and student exchange projects;
- Development of mobile applications (apps);
- Cash awards/prizes;
- Paying to complete activities begun with other funds;
- Foreign travel, unless specifically justified within the project;
- Social welfare and healthcare projects;
- Activities that appear partisan or that support individual or party electoral campaigns (e.g., specific political party activities);
- Agriculture;
- Polling/surveying;
- Handicrafts;

- Academic or analytical research (if not necessary as part of a larger project);
- One-time events, such as stand-alone conferences and one-off roundtables;
- Medical and psychological research and clinical studies;
- Projects of a commercial or profit-making nature;
- Cultural presentations, cultural clubs, festivals, etc.;
- Costs related to renovation, remodeling, or purchase or lease of real-estate beyond usual office rent;
- Purchase of office décor;
- Purchase of equipment (tangible personal property having a useful life of more than one year and is $5,000 or more per unit);
- Language training courses; and
- Entertainment costs (receptions, social activities, alcoholic beverages, cocktail parties, guided tours).

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

II. MEASUREMENT OF RESULTS

Successful applicants will work with the NEA/AC program team, and NEA/AC monitoring and evaluation (M&E) team to create a plan based on the proposal submitted to measure qualitative and quantitative indicators as part of the award negotiations process. The successful applicants 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 to assess the results of the project's success in meeting expected outputs and outcomes.

III. AWARD INFORMATION

Funding Mechanism Type:	Cooperative Agreement, Grant, or Fixed Amount Award
Estimated Number of Awards:	Ten to thirty-five (10-35)
Estimated Total Program Funding:	$6,000,000
Estimated Award Ceiling:	
Algeria:	$250,000
Estimated Award Floor:	$50,000
Cost-Sharing or Matching:	Recommended but not required
Estimated Length of Project Period:	12 – 36 months

Contingent on the availability of funds, approximately $6,000,000 in Economic Support Funds is available for approximately 35 awards through this announcement. If selected to receive an award, an applicant may be awarded funds for up to three years, depending on the activities and countries proposed. The estimated start date for this project is October 1, 2019. 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. For projects proposed in all other countries, applicants may propose projects with a total budget between $50,000 to $250,000. If recommended for funding, the final budget of awards will be determined through negotiations.

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.**

IV. SUBSTANTIAL INVOLVEMENT

NEA/AC may be involved in the program and management performance of any cooperative agreements through consultation and technical collaboration on specified project activities.

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

- Collaboration in development of training materials; and
- Participate in selection process of candidates.

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 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 local civil society organizations, non-profit organizations, community groups, non-governmental organizations, professional associations, private sector organizations, and universities based in Algeria.

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.

All applicants should meet the following eligibility requirements, in addition to specific eligibility requirements detailed per country in Section 1:

1. **Location Requirement:** Only organizations that have an established local office in the country they propose to implement their project will be eligible to apply. Awards will be issued to the local office and not any partner or affiliate office that may be located outside of the country of implementation.

2. **Formal Registration:** Only organizations that formally operate in the country for which they are applying will be eligible.

3. **Organizational Capacity:** Applicants must be able to demonstrate meeting the following criteria:
   - Established for at least one (1) year; and
   - Managed at least one (1) project/initiative with donor funding (governmental, private, etc.).

NEA/AC will consider the following special considerations when reviewing applications:

1. **Previous MEPI Connections:** We value the alumni of our many MEPI-sponsored projects and programs and would like to enhance the connection between ongoing initiatives of our implementing partners and our ever-growing base of alumni. Therefore, we will give priority to projects that include and detail MEPI alumni engagement in activities and project components. For the purposes of this evaluation criteria, MEPI alumni are considered as former participants of MEPI exchange projects; or beneficiaries in previous MEPI training projects lasting more than five weeks; or previous recipients of a MEPI Local Grant. Alumni of other USG exchanges will also be considered.

B. REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS

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

UEI Number

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

All applicants must have a UEI number. To obtain a UEI number, please follow the steps below:
Go to http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform/pages/CCRSearch.jsp.
Select the country or territory where your organization is physically located. Complete and submit the form. Organizations will need to provide basic information, including physical and

mailing addresses, name and title of the chief executive, primary Standard Industrial Code (SIC), and annual revenue.

For technical difficulties in obtaining this number, please contact D&B at: govt@dnb.com.

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

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

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

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

C. ADDITIONAL ELIGIBILITY CONSIDERATIONS

C.1. Cost-Sharing or Matching

There is no minimum or maximum percentage 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.

All cost share or matching must be included in detail in the line item budget and noted in the budget narrative. Proposals offering potential, yet to be determined cost-share sourcing will NOT be considered to have met this requirement, and will be deemed ineligible. When cost sharing is offered, it is understood and agreed that the applicant must provide the amount of cost sharing as

stipulated in its proposal and later included in an approved agreement. Cost sharing may be in the form of allowable direct or indirect costs. For accountability, recipients must maintain written records to support all costs that are claimed as their contribution, as well as costs to be paid by the Federal government. Such records are subject to audit. The basis for determining the value of cash and in-kind contributions must be in accordance with OMB 2 CFR 200.306 – Cost Sharing and Matching.

VI. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

A. APPLICATION DOCUMENTS

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

In addition to following all guidance, outlines below regarding application materials, applicants are strongly encourage to review the Application Evaluation Criteria in Section VIII of this NOFO closely as they prepare their proposal. The Evaluation Criteria section is the rubric by which each application will be scored.

NOTE: Applications that do not include all the required documentation described in Section 1 below will not advance past the Technical Eligibility Review state. 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

1. Federal Assistance Application Forms:

Applicants must complete the following three forms online to be considered for funding.

1. **SF-424**
2. **SF-424a**
3. **SF-424b** (if applicable*)

Guidance on how to complete the SF-424 and SF424a is provided in **Appendix 3.** A signature is required on the Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424).

* Note: The SF-424B is required only for those applicants who have not registered in SAM.gov or recertified their registration in SAM.gov since February 2, 2019 and completed the online representations and certifications.

2. Project Narrative Application:

The **Project Narrative Application** describes the efforts the applicant will undertake to address the objectives and goals of this announcement. A template of the application can be found in **Appendix 1.**

3. Budget & Budget Narrative Submission:
Applicants must provide the following three elements as part of their budget submission:

1. **Summary Budget**
2. **Detailed Line Item Budget**
3. **Budget Narrative**

A sample fillable budget and budget narrative template can be found in **Appendix 2.** Applicants are strongly encouraged to review Appendix 2 before preparing the Project Narrative Application. The Appendix 2 template includes three tabs:

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. The third tab is where you can fill in the template for the **Detailed Line Item Budget** as stated above. NOTE: Applicants are strongly encouraged to use the same format as provided in the template, and to submit summary and detailed line item budgets in Excel form, and the Budget Narrative as either a PDF or Word file. If the applicant does not use the template, the applicant must ensure that their submission includes all elements outlined in the sample.

4. Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement: Applicants proposing indirect costs in the Budget greater than the 10% de minimis must provide a copy of their Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) if applicable.

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 A.1 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 complete application materials electronically through Grants.gov or via email to NEA-Grants@state.gov **by 5:00PM on May 21, 2019**. It is the sole responsibility of the applicant to ensure that all material submitted in the grant application package is complete, accurate, and current. MEPI strongly encourages all applicants to submit their materials before the designated due date to ensure that the application has been received and is complete. **Applicants who do not advance to the Technical 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.

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

C.1. Grants.gov

Grants.gov is a single portal for applicants to find 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.**

D. SUBMISSION DATES AND TIMES

Applications must be time stamped before 17:00:00 Eastern Time (ET) on May 21, 2019. 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.

VII. FUNDING LIMITATIONS, RESTRICTIONS, AND OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

1. Awards to Commercial Firms or For-Profit Organizations

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

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

2. Audit Requirements

Domestic and foreign organizations that expend $750,000 or more in a fiscal year in federal assistance must perform an independent, recipient-contracted Single Audit or Program Specific Audit:

- ***Program-specific Audit*** means an audit of one Federal award program.
- ***Single Audit*** means an audit which includes both the entity's financial statements and the Federal Awards to be conducted in accordance with Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards (GAGAS).

The audits must be independently and professionally executed in accordance with GAGAS either prescribed by a government's Supreme Audit Institution with auditing standards approved by the Comptroller General of the United States, or the host country's laws or adopted by the host country's public accountants or associations of public accountants, together with generally accepted international auditing standards. However, foreign entity audits consistent with International Standards for Auditing or other auditing standards are acceptable with the Grants Officer's approval. More information can be found at 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.

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

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

VIII. APPLICATION REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS

Applications should address the evaluation criteria outlined below. Merit Review Panel will evaluate each application individually against the following criteria and not against competing applications:

A. APPLICATION EVALUATION CRITERIA

Approach and Responsiveness (25 points)

- The applicant explains how the proposed activities respond to one of the goals listed in the NOFO.
- The proposed project activities target the priority geographic regions and/or thematic focus stated in the applicable country.
- The application addresses how the project will engage or obtain buy-in and support from relevant stakeholders.

Project Design & Ability to Achieve Objectives (40 points)

- The applicant provides a clear articulation of how the proposed activities will contribute to the proposed project objective(s).

- The applicant describes realistic results to be accomplished within the timeframe of the proposed award.
- The applicant clearly identifies the anticipated beneficiaries and explains how the project's objectives will positively affect them, and explains how participants will be selected.
- The applicant proposes activities that are feasible, practical, and/or experiential in nature to encourage innovation.
- 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 articulates programming assumptions and potential challenges to project implementation and proposes contingency plans.
- If applicable, the application describes the division of labor among the applicant and any partners.

Organizational Capacity (25 points)

- A description of the roles of each person or position on the project – whether staff, partner, consultant, or volunteer – demonstrates that the project will be adequately but efficiently staffed, avoiding 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.
- The applicant proposes adequate staffing and demonstrates the capacity to manage the proposed project.
- The applicant demonstrates capacity for responsible fiscal management of donor funding (e.g., successful management of a previous sub-award or grant).
- The applicant sufficiently meets/addresses the specific eligibility requirement(s), if any, for the applicable country.

MEPI Alumni Connection (10 points if applicable)

- The applicant demonstrates one of the following:
    - That associated individuals are former participants of MEPI exchange programs; **OR**
    - That the organization or associated individuals are beneficiaries in previous MEPI training programs lasting more than five weeks; **OR**
    - That the organization is a previous recipient of a MEPI Local Grant.

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.

- Adequate travel costs are proposed.
- The budget demonstrates a reasonable cost per participant.

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 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.

A MEPI Merit Review Panel consisting of staff from the Washington, DC MEPI team, NEA/AC Regional Office (ACRO), and members of the U.S. Embassy or Consulate within each country of proposed programming will review all Local Grant Program proposals. The Merit Review Panel will rank order proposals by overall average score to be recommended for funding.

If there are proposals recommended for funding beyond funding levels available by country/territory, the top five remaining applicants from the rank-ordered recommended list for each country will proceed to a competitive review against the top rank-ordered five proposals per country/territory which were unable to be funded by the country/territory allocation levels. A secondary MEPI Merit Review Panel consisting of staff from the Washington, DC MEPI team, NEA/AC Regional Office (ACRO), and members of the U.S. Embassy or Consulate will review the proposals eligible for the region-wide competitive funding.

The applicant will be informed if their proposal will or will not be shortlisted for further consideration. Only the most competitive proposals received by the MEPI Merit Review Panel will be selected for further consideration by the ACRO, which will process and negotiate the awards. The issuance of a grant award by a NEA/AC Regional Office is contingent on the availability of funds and the negotiation and finalization of an approved budget and award package.

The MEPI Program's Regional Offices located in the Middle East and North Africa manage the Local Grants Program. The Regional Office in Morocco or Kuwait will issue and administer the federal assistance awards.

Additional information that successful applicants must submit after notification of intent to make a Federal award, but prior to issuance of a Federal award, may include:

1. Written responses and any revised application documents addressing any conditions or recommendations from the MEPI Merit Review Panel;

2. Submission of required documents to register in any applicable U.S. government grant systems, if receiving MEPI Program funding for the first time;

3. Other requested information or documents included in the notification of intent to make a Federal award or subsequent communications prior to issuance of a Federal award; and/or

4. A security and/or contingency plan as applicable if the applicant proposes working in certain countries.

All applications that proceed to the Merit Review Panel will be evaluated 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 MEPI's programmatic goals and objectives, how it supports the Department of State's overarching foreign policy priorities, and the geographic distribution of the top-ranking applications.

NOTE: Applications that meet the eligibility requirements in Part V but are unsuccessful under this funding opportunity will be referred to the Middle Eastern Regional Civic Initiative (MERCI) project, a separate MEPI initiative that seeks to work with local CSOs to identify needs, strategize and develop capacity, apply to relevant funding opportunities and successfully implement, manage, and evaluate projects in several MENA countries.

IX. 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 expects to notify applicants who proceeded past the Technical Eligibility Review stage about the status of their application by September 30, 2019. 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.

C. TRAVEL NOTIFICATIONS

Selected 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 and Yemen 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. BRANDING AND MARKING REQUIREMENTS FOR GRANTEES

Grantees awarded under this announcement will be required to make all materials produced under the award with the standard U.S. flag in a size and prominence equal to (or greater than) any other logo or identity and the MEPI logo. 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. When highlighting beneficiaries, activities, or success stories on social media or websites, grantees are required to credit MEPI in their posts by writing, "funded by #MEPI" in the first couple of sentences of all captions or paragraphs.

F. 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 Part III, Section B.1. **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.**

G. 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:
Project Manager
Jane Guydan
nea-grants@state.gov

All questions must be submitted in writing to nea-grants@state.gov by May 2, 2019 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 Grants.gov. Questions submitted after the deadline will not be addressed.

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

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.