

Bureau for Near Eastern Affairs (NEA)

Funding Opportunity Title: Algerian University Linkage Program

Announcement Type: New

Funding Opportunity Number: NEA-10-AW-023-MENA-060310

Funding Competition ID: AULP

CFDA Number: 00.000

Date Opened: June 3, 2010

Due Date for Applications: July 6, 2010

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I. Funding Opportunity Description

The Department of State Bureau for Near Eastern Affairs and Embassy Algiers announce an open competition for proposals to expand University Linkage programming (ULP) in Algeria. The program encourages mutual understanding and educational improvements through cooperation in higher education.

The Public Affairs Section of Embassy Algiers (PAS) seeks an implementing partner to manage the University Linkages between two to three U.S. universities and two to three Algerian universities. PAS Algiers, in consultation with the Algerian Ministry of National Education, will identify two to three Algerian universities that are in areas where we would like to have more outreach. The U.S. University partners will be identified by the implementing organization to meet the needs of the Algerian universities in this ULP.

Background:

While Algeria enjoyed a long and proud tradition in higher education, war and civil unrest have weakened the educational institutions in Algeria. The Government of Algeria (GoA) recognizes that challenges remain ahead and is committed to strengthening its education system. Algerian policy-makers, administrators, faculty and students view linkages with the West, particularly the U.S., as a key way to expedite the process of strengthening the higher education system.

The ULP will directly support the Embassy's Mission Strategic Resource Plan Goals of helping strengthen local institutions and providing Algerian youth with brighter prospects for their future

to decrease the allure of terrorist organizations looking to recruit in the region.

This ULP will assist Algerians with curriculum review of certain subject matters, introduce them to the latest teaching techniques and educational technologies (including on-line courses and DVC instruction), include some highly selective faculty/student exchanges, and will maximize connections between the public, private and academic sectors in Algeria to better serve its academic and public constituencies. Part of the linkage will be helping the Algerian partners establish career centers based on an American model. Ultimately, this project will provide Algerian youth with a better education which will in turn make the lure of extremist organizations less appealing.

Through discussions with senior policy-makers at the Ministry of Higher Education and presidents of leading universities, PAS Algiers staff have identified the following five areas as most helpful for this ULP. This list is intended to guide bidding institutions in their conceptualization of their proposals:

1. English Language: Algerians see English as a tool that will help them be competitive globally and are serious about training their students and developing a cadre of teachers who can assist in making English a more commonly used language nationwide.
2. Curriculum Review: Algerian officials readily acknowledge that the teaching curriculum for virtually all academic departments needs to be reviewed and revised. In addition to revising the content of courses and updating degree requirements, the curriculum review process will also include recommendations for rebuilding library and research collections in specific academic fields.
3. Real-time Instruction via DVC: Algerian administrators, faculty and students are extremely interested in creating opportunities for Algerian and U.S. students to be connected via DVC technologies.
4. Faculty, Staff and Student Exchanges: On a highly selective basis, this cooperative agreement will support carefully defined short-term exchanges of faculty, staff and students between the Algerian and U.S. universities. The exchanges will be focused specifically on the objectives of the project and should not duplicate other exchange programs.
5. Career Development Center: There is currently a gap between the academic and private sector communities in Algiers. Algerian universities are looking to the U.S. for expertise

in creating university career development centers which can develop linkages with the private sector to help ensure a successful transition between the university and the workplace (potentially reducing unemployment) and offer soft skills workshops (i.e. on drafting a resume, preparing for a job interview, etc). The centers would also assist faculty and students seeking to develop proposals for funding and alumni who may require guidance on employment or academic programs years after they graduate.

PAS Algiers envisions that each university linkage will be designed to two to three academic disciplines per linkage. This list is not intended to limit the recommendations of bidding organizations but is intended to highlight already expressed Algerian interests:

- English
- Education
- Business Administration and Project Management
- Information Technology
- Petroleum Sciences and Engineering

Impact:

This project also will promote mutual understanding and increase cultural understanding between the U.S. and Algeria. Although Algerians believe they know the U.S. well, their understanding of complex U.S. political, social and cultural landscape is often superficial. The same may be said of the depth of understanding of Algeria and Algerians in the U.S. By promoting substantive and long-term connections between U.S. and Algerian universities, this project will inevitably build greater and deeper understanding in both communities and will benefit the strategic relationship between the two countries.

The impact of the project in Algeria will go beyond its influence on the academic community. The higher education system has the potential to be an important pillar in the process of strengthening civil society in Algeria. The higher education system can contribute to resolving the country's social and economic problems and promote respect for human rights and democratic principles.

II. Award Information

Funding Instrument Type: Cooperative Agreement

Throughout the duration of this project, PAS Algiers will consult with the implementing

organization and will assist in policy coordination with the Ministry of Higher Education and the Algerian universities. The implementing institution will be responsible for selecting the appropriate U.S. universities and awarding them a sub-grant in order to carry out the ULP. The implementing organization and its “university partners” will be expected throughout the duration of the project to accomplish the following:

1. Conducting a team visit to selected Algerian universities immediately after the award of the cooperative agreement to consult with Algerian counterparts and with PAS Algiers, assess opportunities for linkages and develop a plan of action.
2. Managing these university partnerships over the next three years to develop capacity building within Algerian universities, promote the USG Mission Strategic Resource Plan for strengthening education in Algeria and ensuring durable and independent relationships which will endure for many years.
3. Conducting regular evaluations of progress of the project and submitting them to PAS Algiers on a schedule determined in the grant. Developing a strong monitoring and evaluation plan from the onset of the program.
4. Submitting periodic financial and activity reports on a schedule determined in the cooperative agreement.

Anticipated Total Program Funding: Up to \$2 million dollars in Federal Fiscal Year 2010 (from the FY 2009 appropriation)

Anticipated number of Awards: One

U.S. Embassy Algiers reserves the right to award less or more than the funds described in the absence of worthy applications or under such other circumstances as the embassy may deem to be in the best interest of the U.S. Government.

Project and Budget Periods: Applicants may propose performance periods of up to 3 years.

III. Eligibility Information

Eligible applicants include any registered U.S. nonprofit organization with 501(c)(3) status, and any U.S. public or private institute of higher education.

Additional Information on Eligibility: All Federal assistance recipients must have a Dun & Bradstreet Number prior to funds disbursement. A DUNS number may be acquired at no cost by calling the dedicated toll-free DUNS number request line at 1-866-705-5711 or requesting on-line at www.dnb.com.

IV. Application Submission and Deadline

Application materials should be submitted online via www.grants.gov, and must include the following:

___ 1) Federal Assistance Application (Standard Forms 424, SF-424a, SF-424b) available at: www.grants.gov or from Ms. Lavinia Holland, telephone (202) 776-8682, fax: (202) 776-8869, e-mail: hollandly@state.gov;

___ 2) Proposal Narrative - The application narrative should not exceed 10 pages with no more than 10 pages of appendices attached. Each page should be numbered sequentially. Narrative submission should be in Times New Roman font, size 12, single-line spacing. The proposal narrative will be attached to the project narrative field downloaded from grants.gov.

___ 3) Budget and Budget Justification (Narrative) – The budget and justification should not exceed 5 pages. Guidance for the budget response can be found in the attachments to this RFA.

Please note: The page limitation pages for each submission should be considered as a maximum and not necessarily a goal, and excludes the SF 424 forms.

Applicants need not include their most recent annual report and Negotiated Indirect Costs Rate Agreement (NICRA), but should be prepared to provide a copy of these documents upon request.

To meet the announcement deadline, submissions must be made before 23:59:59 eastern daylight time (EDT) on July 6.

V. Review and Selection Process

Each application submitted under this announcement will be evaluated and rated on the basis of the following evaluation criteria. The criteria are designed to assess the quality of the proposed project, and to determine the likelihood of its success. 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.

Applicants must submit a full project description in accordance with the following instructions and the specified evaluation criteria. The instructions give a broad overview of what the project description should include while the evaluation criteria provide details of more program-specific information that is needed.

Narrative: Outline a plan of action which describes the scope and detail of how the proposed work will be accomplished. Account for all functions or activities identified in the application. Cite factors which might accelerate or decelerate the work and state reasons for taking the proposed approach rather than others. Describe any unusual features of the project such as design or technological innovations, reductions in cost or time, or extraordinary social and community involvement.

Provide quantitative monthly or quarterly projections of the accomplishments to be achieved for each function or activity in such terms as the number of people to be served and the number of activities accomplished. When accomplishments cannot be quantified by activity or function, list them in chronological order to show the schedule of accomplishments and their target dates. List those organizations, cooperating entities, consultants, or other key individuals who will work on the project, along with a short description of the nature of their effort or contribution.

Provide information on the applicant organization(s) and cooperating partners such as organizational charts, financial statements, documentation of professional accreditation or of experience in the program area, and other pertinent information.

Include written agreements between grantees and sub-grantees or subcontractors or other cooperating entities. These agreements must detail scope of work to be performed, work schedules, remuneration, and other terms and conditions that structure or define the relationship.

Application Evaluation Criteria:

Innovation and Approach –The applicant clearly describes how its proposal will address the requested program and articulates an innovative strategy. In developing the project description, the applicant may volunteer or be requested to provide information on the total range of projects currently being conducted and supported (or to be initiated), some of which may be outside the scope of this RFA. The approach will be evaluated in terms of expediency and feasibility in the regional and country context. (25 points)

Results or Benefits – The project is likely to provide maximum impact in achieving the proposed results and the organization must demonstrate that it is able to measure program success against key indicators and provide milestones to indicate progress toward RFA-stipulated goals. Any relevant data based on planning studies should be included or referenced in the endnotes/footnotes. The demographic data and participant/beneficiary information illustrate reasonably the impact to be achieved within a maximum three-year timeframe. (25 points)

Organizational Capacity – The organization has expertise in one or more key program areas and demonstrates the ability to engage and work together with local and regional networks. Where partners are described, the applicant details the rationale for the consortia, each partner's respective role, and how the coalition will enhance the progress towards achieving results in the stated program areas of competency. The organization demonstrates a high level of regional and/or country expertise. Individual organization staffs, including volunteers, are well qualified and described. (20 points)

Staff and Position Specifications – Each key person whether staff, consultant, or volunteer is described in a biographical sketch; a job description is provided for each open key position. A biographical sketch of required credentials describes any positions to be advertised post-award. Individual organization staffs, including volunteers, are well qualified and described. (10 points)

Budget and Budget Justification (Additional guidance for responding to this criterion may be

found attached to this announcement. The detailed budget includes a breakout of any funding sources identified in Block 15 of the SF-424. Calculations are provided with line item detail for each budget object class identified on the Budget Information form (SF 424). The budget narrative provides details of calculations including estimation methods, quantities, unit costs, and other similar quantitative detail sufficient for the calculation to be duplicated.

The budget and narrative justification are reasonable in relation to the proposed activities and anticipated results and the plan for services is realistic. The budget documents the necessity, reasonableness, and allocation of all proposed costs. The application documents any efforts to secure other funding sources, including volunteers and cost-sharing. (20 points)

VI. Award Administration

A. Award Notices: The successful applicants will be notified through the issuance of a Financial Assistance Award document, which sets forth the amount of funds granted, the terms and conditions of the cooperative agreement, the effective date of the cooperative agreement, the budget period for which initial support will be given, the non-Federal share to be provided (if applicable), and the total project period for which support is contemplated. The Financial Assistance Award will be signed by the Grants Officer and the award package will be transmitted electronically. Following the finalization of funding decisions, organizations whose applications will not be funded will be notified by electronic letter.

B. Administration and National Policy Requirements. Those applicants selected under this RFA will receive a cooperative agreement containing terms and conditions prescribed by the Department of State under U.S. law and regulation:
22 CFR –Parts 137 & 145

Reporting Requirements: Programmatic and Financial Reports will be due 30 days after each quarter. A final report covering finance and results achieved will be due 90 days after the end of the performance period.

Award recipients should anticipate using FFR SF-425 for submitting financial reports. The FFR SF-425 has 2 major components (1) Cash Management Report (former SF-272) and (2) Financial Status Reports (former SF-269).

Recipients should plan to track participants or partners and be able to respond to key evaluation questions, including satisfaction with the program, learning as a result of the program, changes in behavior as a result of the program, and effects of the program on institutions (institutions in which participants work or partner institutions). The evaluation plan should include indicators that measure gains in mutual understanding as well as substantive knowledge.

Performance Indicators will measure achievement of the Intended Outcomes and Objectives rather than quantify the outputs of activities. The Objectives are concrete accomplishments that can be explicitly and logically linked to achievement of an Intended Outcome. Objectives should be "smart" (specific, measurable, attainable, results-oriented, and achievable within the time frame of the project). Outputs are products and services delivered, often stated as an

amount. Output information is important to show the scope or size of project activities, but it cannot substitute for information about progress towards the results achieved. For example, *number of service providers trained* would NOT be a direct measure of the result *service delivery improved*. Findings on outputs and results may both be reported, but the focus should be on results.

Acknowledgement: Recipient organizations must ensure that the Department of State is acknowledged as the program sponsor in all program-related communications. All communications, paper or electronic, must include the full program name and the department logo. The Public Affairs Section at the US Embassy must approve all publicity and advertising materials before they are published.

All products and services developed or produced as a result of an approved award must clearly acknowledge the U.S. Embassy's support. The U.S. Government will retain the right to royalty-free use of all materials developed through U.S.-funded programs.

Signed:

W. William Jordan

Deputy Chief of Mission

Embassy Algiers

U.S. Department of State