

Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs (NEA)
Office of the Middle East Partnership Initiative (NEA/PI)

Funding Opportunity Title: Strengthening Women's Organizations and Political Representation in the Middle East and North Africa

Announcement Type: New

Funding Opportunity Number: NEAPI-09-CA-017-MENA-102809

Funding Competition Title: Women Support Programs

Funding Competition ID: WoSuppProg

CFDA Number: 19.500

Date Opened: October 28, 2009

Due Date for Applications: 11:59:59 December 3, 2009

Federal Agency Contacts: Ms. Jessica Baker

Email: nea-grants@state.gov

Telephone number: 202-776-8500

I. Funding Opportunity Description

The Office of the Partnership Initiative (NEA/PI) announces an open competition for proposals to strengthen women's participation in all aspects of society and promote women's equality in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). In Cairo, President Obama remarked that our common prosperity is advanced by ensuring all human beings – men and women – reach their potential. On International Women's Day, Secretary Clinton voiced her unwavering support for women's empowerment, stating that "...we have much less hope of addressing the complex challenges we face in this new century without the full participation of women." This funding opportunity seeks to address the Administration's commitment to supporting the women of the Middle East and North Africa in their efforts to reach their full potential.

The following MENA countries may be proposed: Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Israel, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, UAE, and Yemen.

In line with the Administration's vision, NEA/PI seeks applications to address the following two priority areas:

A) Organizational Capacity Building for Women's Organizations: This priority area aims to strengthen women-run or -focused civil society organizations in the MENA region. In February, Secretary Clinton underscored the need for a vibrant civil society "fulfilling the needs of people that cannot be met by the government or the marketplace alone." Strong, independent women's non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are critical in building effective pluralistic societies that ensure women's and children's voices are heard. Similarly, strong businesswomen's organizations advance the interests of women in the marketplace. While women's organizations have multiplied across the Middle East and North Africa in the last few years, some credible organizations face operational and managerial challenges that limit their effectiveness,

particularly those in underserved areas. With improved technical capacity, these organizations will be better positioned to manage ongoing projects, develop new and much needed programs, and successfully compete for regional and local funding.

Proposed projects are expected to work directly with local organizational staff to provide training and support based on each organization's specific requirements. Training and support should target staff at all levels within an organization, aim to enable and effect organization-wide improvements and may not be focused solely on upper management. Applicants should be prepared to address the needs of multiple organizations. Specific local organizations do not need to be identified in the proposal and may be selected later in coordination with MEPI. A focus on organizations in underserved or rural areas is encouraged. If local organizations are identified in the application, applicants should indicate how and why each organization was selected. If a selection process will take place during the proposed period of performance, applicants should provide details on the method that will be used for selection.

Based on NEA/PI experience and previous programming, approaches that combine four or more of the following areas are considered best practices: organizational strategic planning; budgeting and financial management; fundraising and business development; project management; internal governance; human resources management; database management; creative messaging and strategic public outreach; team building; coalition and network development; and gender-focused advocacy program planning. Applicants are encouraged to consider ways to link organizations into regional networks or centers, where they exist. NEA/PI seeks implementers that can demonstrate: effective training techniques and curricula; an understanding of the challenges facing NGOs in the MENA region; project multiplication and sustainability; and the likelihood of positive impact on the organizational and institutional capacity of women's groups in the region.

B) Development of Women's Caucuses and Unions: This priority area seeks to build platforms for and connect female political activists through the development of women's caucuses and unions – nationally and regionally. Caucus for the purpose of this RFA should be interpreted broadly and is not only meant to refer to formal coalitions in national parliaments and municipal councils. Secretary Clinton has reiterated the President's support for those who work to build democratic institutions wherever they live. With fewer than 10% of women council members and parliamentarians in the MENA region, it is critical to support their work, to amplify their voices, and to connect them with other women leaders in the region seeking common goals.

Caucus activities should focus on several key areas, which may include: building networks of women leaders that cut across party lines to collectively address community needs; legislation-drafting workshops; strategies for building consensus; constituent relations; developing public policy campaigns; educating women on local and national politics and processes; supporting and training female candidates as well as organizing meetings, workshops, or roundtables with other elected officials and activists to promote relevant issues. Project activities are encouraged to demonstrate strategic engagement with male peers in national parliaments, municipal councils, and leading community organizations.

Background Information about MEPI: The Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), located within the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs at the U.S. Department of State, supports efforts to expand political participation, strengthen civil society and the rule of law, empower women and youth, create educational opportunities, and foster economic reform throughout the Middle East and North Africa. In support of these goals, MEPI works with non-governmental organizations, the private sector, academic institutions, and government officials. More information about MEPI can be found at: www.mepi.state.gov. Information on MEPI's regional offices in Abu Dhabi and Tunis can be found at: www.abudhabi.mepi.state.gov and www.medregion.mepi.state.gov.

Electronic Link to Full Announcement: Go to <http://www.mepi.state.gov>, click on Funding & Project Opportunities, click on “Women Support Programs” link.

II. Award Information

Funding Instrument Type: Cooperative Agreements

Anticipated Total Program Funding: \$1,950,000

Anticipated number of Awards: Four awards: two for the Women’s Civil Society Strengthening and two for the Development of Women’s Caucuses

Ceiling of Individual Award Amounts: **\$1,000,000** for Women’s Civil Society Strengthening
\$950,000 for Development of Women’s Caucuses

NEA/PI reserves the right to award less or more than the funds described in the absence of worthy applications or under such other circumstances as NEA/PI 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 two years. At this time, NEA/PI does not anticipate continuation beyond two years for awards under this program announcement. Any supplemental requests beyond the initial budget period will be considered on a noncompetitive basis, subject to availability of funds, satisfactory progress of the applicants, and a determination that continued funding would be in the best interest of the U.S. Government.

III. Eligibility Information

Eligible applicants include any registered U.S. or foreign non-governmental organization, including universities or academic institutions, and U.S. or foreign private institutions or commercial entities.

NEA/PI strongly encourages applications from partnerships or coalitions including local or regional organizations. For the purposes of this RFA, “partnership” is defined as a negotiated arrangement among organizations that provides for a substantive, collaborative role for each of the partners in the planning and implementation of a project. Applicants intending to represent a

coalition of providers should be prepared to provide a signed partnership agreement stating:

- An intent to commit or receive resources or services from the prospective partner(s) contingent upon receipt of funds;
- How the partnership arrangement advances the objectives of the project;
- Supporting documentation identifying the resources, experience, and expertise of the partner(s);
- Evidence that each of the partner(s) has been involved in the planning of the project;
- Clarification of the role of the partner(s) in the implementation of the project, evaluation, and sustainability.

NEA/PI encourages applicants to provide maximum levels of cost-sharing from additional sources in support of this project. Applications should explain clearly how the additional resources will be used. If these resources are not proposed, applicants should explain why not.

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.

Applicants must clearly identify in Section 15 on the SF-424 and on the MEPI Cover sheet the priority area to which they are applying. Applicants may apply for one or more of the priority areas detailed in this announcement. Each application can be considered under only one priority area. Applicants who wish to apply for multiple priority areas must submit a separate application for each.

To meet the announcement deadline, submissions must be made before 23:59:59 eastern standard time (EST) on December 3, 2010. Applicants are warned that Grants.gov requires a registration period of at least 10 days. Further, applicants are encouraged to submit their proposals far enough in advance of the deadline so that they can alert NEA/PI (nea-grants@state.gov) of any technical difficulties they might encounter in submission and obtain and avail themselves of alternative submission procedures prior to the deadline.

Applicants who anticipate having difficulty submitting their application(s) via Grants.gov must notify NEA/PI before November 19, 2009. There will be no grace period and no application will be considered unless it is received electronically by the announced deadline.

Applicants should be prepared to include the following in their submission:

____ (a) Federal Assistance Application (Standard Forms 424) available at: www.grants.gov or from Ms. Jessica Baker, telephone (202) 776-8500, fax: (202) 776-8445, e-mail: nea-grants@state.gov;

____ (b) NEA/PI Cover Sheet (Executive Summary) – Format can be found attached to this announcement, or by going to www.mepi.state.gov and clicking on Funding & Project Opportunities.

____ (c) Proposal Narrative - The application narrative should not exceed 20 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.

____ (d) Budget and Budget Justification (Narrative) – The budget and justification should not exceed 10 pages, and each page should be number sequentially. NEA/PI prefers that budgets and justifications be submitted in MS-Excel or MS-Word. Guidance for responding to this can be found in Section V “Review and Selection Process.”

Please note: The limitation of 40 pages for each submission should be considered as a maximum and not necessarily a goal, and excludes the SF 424 forms and NEA/PI cover sheet.

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.

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 completeness, coherence, clarity, and attention to detail. Points are awarded only to applications that are deemed 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.

Each application can be considered under only one priority area. In order to maximize scoring, if an applicant wishes to be considered under both priority areas, a distinct application should be submitted for each.

NEA/PI Cover Sheet: Provide a summary of the project description (no more than two pages) with reference to the amount and duration of the funding request.

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 or plan in one of the priority areas under this announcement. A feasible approach to maintaining the relationships with the participants during the entire award period is proposed. Proposals outline a creative or innovative plan, and include a justification of feasibility.

An applicant is encouraged to provide information on the total range of projects it currently conducts related to the priority area. The approach will be evaluated in terms of expediency and feasibility in the regional and country context. (30 points)

Results or Benefits – Applicant clearly demonstrates how the project is likely to provide maximum impact in achieving the proposed results including a results monitoring plan that identifies key indicators and provides milestones to indicate progress toward program 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 two-year timeframe. (25 points)

Organizational Capacity – The organization has expertise in the relevant priority area and demonstrates the ability to engage and work together with local and regional networks. Each key person whether staff, consultant, or volunteer is described in a biographical sketch. Individual organization staffs, including volunteers, are well qualified and described. The organization demonstrates a high level of regional and/or country expertise.

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 goals in the stated priority area. (30 points)

Budget and Budget Justification (Additional guidance for responding to this criterion may be found attached to this announcement, or by going to www.mepi.state.gov and clicking on Funding & Project Opportunities.) 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. Adequate travel to and within the Middle East is proposed. The application documents any efforts to secure other funding sources. (15 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 grant, the effective date of the grant, 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
48 CFR – Part 31
Public Law 111-8

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.

Also, awardees may anticipate a requirement to submit reports and provide evaluation findings to NEA/PI through the NEA/PI Online Performance Reporting System (DS-4127 – OMB clearance expires July 31, 2011). All data collected, including survey responses and contact information, must be maintained for a minimum of three years, and provided to NEA/PI upon request.

NEA/PI provides interactive database access to all project implementers to facilitate work plan approvals and a Results Monitoring Plan (RMP) to track the project's progress towards defined objectives. 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.

The RMP will include the Intended Outcome(s) of the project and the supporting Objectives. Each Objective will be measured quarterly by Performance Indicators and have corresponding approved Activities. The Intended Outcome is the principal change to be achieved by completing the activities and realizing the objectives of a project. It reflects the anticipated impact of the project and defines how a situation will be different after the project is successfully completed. The Objectives are concrete accomplishments that, together, create the necessary conditions to achieve the Intended Outcome. Objectives should be "S.M.A.R.T." (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Results-oriented, and achievable within the Timeframe of the project).

Performance Indicators are proxy measurements that track the realization of the Intended Outcomes and Objectives and focus on results rather than outputs of activities. 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, reporting on the *number of service providers trained* would NOT indicate whether the program achieved the Objective of "*Improved Service Delivery*". Findings on outputs and results may both be reported, but the focus should be on results.

Substantial Involvement: Representatives from the U.S. Department of State will review all agendas and materials for all program components and participate in selected parts of the program as deemed appropriate.

All awardees are expected to provide the Project Officer and Grants Office a complete list of participants in MEPI-funded project activities and to assist MEPI with the distribution and collection of materials related to MEPI alumni activities.

Acknowledgement: Recipient organizations must ensure that the Department of State, through the Middle East Partnership Initiative, is acknowledged as the program sponsor in all program-related communications. All communications, paper or electronic, must include the full program name and the MEPI logo. NEA/PI 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 Middle East Partnership Initiative support. The U.S. Government will retain the right to royalty-free use of all materials developed through U.S.-funded programs. The recipient should plan for Internet connectivity with the MEPI web site, where relevant.