

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

Funding Opportunity Title: Tech Support: New Media Technical Assistance for Civil Society

Announcement Type: NEW

Funding Opportunity Number: NEAPI-10-AW-024-MENA-062210

Funding Competition ID: Tech-Support

CFDA Number: 19.500

Date Opened: June 22, 2010

Due Date for Applications: July 30, 2010

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I. Funding Opportunity Description

In her remarks in November 2009 at the Forum for the Future, Secretary Clinton announced Civil Society 2.0, an initiative which will help grassroots organizations around the world use digital technology to tell their stories, build their memberships and support bases, and connect to their community of peers around the world. With increased capacity, these organizations are better able to initiate, administer, and sustain their own programs and solutions to shared problems.

In response to the Secretary's vision, The Office of the Middle East Partnership Initiative (NEA/PI) is seeking implementing partners to offer specialized technical assistance and support to civil society organizations (CSOs) and non-government organizations (NGOs) in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. Local CSOs and NGOs will apply for this technical assistance and support through two mechanisms: directly to the implementing organization or through U.S. Embassies.

The purpose of this assistance is to increase the understanding and use of new media by target CSOs and NGOs. The main objectives of the project are to:

- 1) Increase CSO/NGO knowledge and build skills to use new, applicable media more effectively,
- 2) Improve communication between CSO/NGO leaders and their constituents and between CSO/NGOs and their community of peers around the world, to promote more informed and engaged communities in the MENA region
- 3) Improve communication between CSO/NGOs and governments in the MENA region on social and political reform issues

The project should focus specifically on building skills in information and communication technologies (ICT) which will enhance the effectiveness of civil society organizations in advocating for social and political reform and in fostering civil engagement among their

members, including women and youth.

The project should support requests for basic digital infrastructure as well as more complex economic and social factors affecting ICT in the target countries.

Technical assistance on specific ICT skills for target CSO/NGOs might address:

- Building an online community
- Text messaging campaigns
- Leveraging websites, blogs, and social networks for civic activism and engagement
- Digital film production
- Mobile generation and uploading of audio and video content

The project should also seek to increase CSO/NGO capacity, beyond skills related to new media tools, to build more pluralistic, participatory, and prosperous societies by following ICT best practices in the following areas:

- How to advocate for a specific cause
- How to promote civic engagement
- How to inform civil society using technology
- How to monitor elections

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, is a unique program designed to engage directly with and invest in the peoples of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). MEPI works to create vibrant partnerships with citizens to foster the development of pluralistic, participatory, and prosperous societies throughout the MENA region. MEPI partners with local, regional, and international non-governmental organizations, the private sector, academic institutions, and governments. More information about MEPI can be found at: www.mepi.state.gov.

Electronic Link to Full Announcement: Go to <http://www.mepi.state.gov>, click on Funding and Project Opportunities, click on “Tech Support: New Media Technical Assistance for Civil Society” link.

II. Award Information

Funding Instrument Type: Grant or Cooperative Agreement

Anticipated Total Program Funding: Up to \$2,400,000 in Economic Support Funds. These funds contain restrictions and cannot be used for programming implemented in the West Bank or Gaza.

Anticipated number of Awards: Up to 4 awards

Floor of Individual Award Amounts: \$500,000

Ceiling of Individual Award Amounts: \$2,400,000

NEA/PI reserves the right to award less than the funds described or more 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 3 years. NEA/PI will entertain applications for continuation grants funded under these awards, beyond the initial budget period, 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 Department of State.

III. Eligibility Information

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

NEA/PI encourages applications from partnerships or coalitions including local or regional organizations that would work together on specific reform issues and priorities, and would share information and expertise with one another. Assistance to civil society and women's empowerment coalitions represents an important MEPI goal. Coalitions could include NGOs, private sector, and non-profit organizations. Applications should clearly outline the roles and responsibilities of all organizations involved in the project and should reflect the input of local or in-country partners.

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, if requested, 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 other likely sources of funding and how it will be used. If cost-sharing is not proposed, applicants should explain why not.

Additional Information on Eligibility: All Federal assistance recipients must have a Dun & Bradstreet Number to register with grants.gov and prior to funds disbursement. If your organization does not already have a DUNS number, please begin this process. A DUNS number may be acquired at no cost on-line at www.dnb.com.

IV. Application Submission and Deadline

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

- 1) **Federal Assistance Application Forms (SF-424, SF-424a, SF-424b).** Guidance for completing these forms is attached with this announcement.
- 2) **MEPI Application Cover Sheet—Executive Summary.** **NOTE:** The cover sheet, which includes a maximum two-page executive summary, can be found attached with this announcement. Its format can also be found by going to www.mepi.state.gov and clicking on Funding and Project Opportunities.
- 3) **Proposal Narrative. The application narrative should:** not exceed 20 pages; be in Times New Roman font, size 12, single-line spacing typed pages. The narrative will be rated on your description of objectives, project activities, evaluation, and performance indicators.
- 4) **Budget and Budget Justification (Narrative).** The budget and justification should not exceed 10 pages, and each page should be numbered sequentially. Guidance for preparing the budget and justification can be found by going to www.mepi.state.gov and clicking on Funding and Project Opportunities.

Additional guidance on preparing your submission may be found attached to this announcement. Any application that does not have all of the components above will not be considered for funding.

To meet the announcement deadline, submissions must be made before 23:59:59 eastern standard time (EST) on July 30, 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 would have difficulty submitting their application(s) electronically must notify NEA/PI before July 15, 2010. There will be no grace period and any application not received by 23:59:59 on July 30th will not be considered for funding.

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 proposal 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. Proposals 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.

Application Evaluation Criteria:

Innovation and Approach –The applicant clearly describes how its proposal will address the requested program and articulates an innovative strategy under this announcement. Proposal suggests a creative, innovative, and actionable approach to promoting informed and engaged communities.

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 MEPI 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 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 MEPI goals in the stated program areas of competency. The organization demonstrates a high level of understanding of the current media environment in the MENA region and/or country expertise. Individual organization staffs, including volunteers, are well qualified and described. (25 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 - 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 424a). 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 and North Africa is proposed. The application documents any efforts to secure other funding sources, including cost-sharing. Full points are awarded only to proposals that propose

the preponderance of the budget be spent in the countries of the Middle East and North Africa. (15 points)

VI. Award Administration

A. Award Notices: Successful applicants will be issued 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 a warranted Department of State Grant Officer and the award package will be transmitted electronically.

B. Administration and National Policy Requirements. Those applicants selected under this RFA will receive an award 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 106-107

Public Law 111-8

Public Law 111-117

C. Project Specification and USG Substantial Involvement. Select individuals and organizations receiving technical assistance will represent the MENA region at a larger conference supported by the Civil Society 2.0 program of the U.S. Department of State.

Representatives from the U.S. Department of State will review all agendas, participant lists, and materials for all program components and participate in selected parts of the project as deemed appropriate.

D. Vetting Procedures: Award recipients are required to ensure that all award activities conform to Executive Order 13224, the Supplemental Appropriations of 2006, and other statutory and regulatory limitations on the provision of support or assistance to prohibited entities and individuals. In particular, the award recipient will be required to take all necessary steps, including but not limited to the vetting of beneficiaries, to ensure compliance with all statutes and regulations.

E. Programmatic Reporting Requirements. NEA/PI utilizes a Results-Oriented Management (ROM) approach to maximize award performance. MEPI project officers will work with award recipients to create two key ROM tools: the award Workplan and the award Results Monitoring Plan (RMP). The Workplan establishes target dates for all award activities. The RMP establishes the award's *intended outcome* (overarching goal to which the project will contribute without being solely responsible for its achievement); the award's *objectives* (specific results for which the implementer is held accountable); and *performance indicators* to measure progress towards achieving objectives. Indicators are to be direct, objective, adequate, and practical for the scope and timeframe of the award. To ensure clarity, the RMP also requires implementers to define key terms in the indicator and to specify a baseline, target, and data source for the

measure.

NEA/PI provides implementers with interactive database access to an on-line quarterly report template. Award recipients will be required to use the NEA/PI Online Performance Reporting System (DS-4127 – OMB clearance expires July 31, 2011) during the award period to report against the agreed upon workplan and performance indicators. All data collected by the award recipient, including survey responses and contact information, must be maintained for a minimum of three years, and provided to NEA/PI upon request.

Following each calendar quarter, implementers have 30 days to submit a quarterly report on-line: summarizing major achievements of the quarter; indicating the actual implementation date of all planned activities (or a request to modify the target date); and reporting data against indicators. A narrative analysis of workplan progress and results is also part of the template.

In an effort to maximize results, the grants management team will review each quarterly report and discuss progress and implementation issues with implementers. A final report covering the results achieved will be due 90 days after the end of the award performance period.

F. Financial Reporting Requirements. After each calendar quarter, implementers will have 30 days to submit a Federal Financial Report (FFR SF-425). The FFR SF-425 has 2 major components: (1) Cash Management Report and (2) Financial Status Reports. A final financial report will be due 90 days after the end of the award performance period.

G. Acknowledgement: Recipient organizations must ensure that the U.S. Department of State, through the Middle East Partnership Initiative, is acknowledged as the program sponsor in all program-related communications. All official 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 recipient should plan for Internet connectivity with the MEPI web site, where relevant. The U.S. Government retains the right to royalty-free use of all materials developed through U.S.-funded programs.

H. Participant/Alumni Requirements. NEA/PI established the MEPI Alumni Network to provide ongoing engagement, dialogue, and advancement of participants after they have completed MEPI-sponsored programs. Program participants are invited to join the alumni network, although participation is neither mandatory nor automatic. In order to be sure all alumni are given the opportunity to join the network, MEPI encourages all award recipients to direct their program participants to the MEPI Alumni Network website at <https://mepialumni.state.gov>. There participants can choose to become a part of a community of approximately 5,000 MEPI alumni who are regularly invited to conferences, workshops and other professional and civil society strengthening opportunities.