

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

Funding Opportunity Title: New U.S. – North Africa Public-Private Partnership
Announcement Type: New
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Funding Competition ID: Regional Economic Opportunity Partnership
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I. Funding Opportunity Description

The Office of the Middle East Partnership Initiative (NEA/PI) announces an open competition for projects that support a new public-private partnership developed by the State Department's Bureau of Economic, Energy and Business Affairs (EEB) in cooperation with the Bureau of Oceans, Environment, and Science to foster economic opportunity in North Africa. The Administration has underscored the need to engage youth, support economic opportunities, and develop new partnerships. As President Obama stated in Cairo on June 4, 2009, "all of us must recognize that education and innovation will be the currency of the 21st century." President Obama made clear that we must broaden our engagement with Muslim-majority countries, countries with significant Muslim populations, and their people. On September 22, 2009, the President underscored the need for "...partnerships between businesses [and] entrepreneurs to advance prosperity and opportunity for people everywhere." On April 26-27, 2010 President Obama hosted the Presidential Summit on Entrepreneurship that he first announced in his Cairo speech. Consistent with this vision, NEA/PI seeks applications to support the launching of a new public-private partnership between the United States and North Africa. This new public-private partnership aims to inspire youth and aspiring entrepreneurs of all ages to play a role in job creation in the Maghreb region by becoming the next generation of entrepreneurs and regional business leaders, as well as encourage partners from business, foundations, civil society, business associations, and private entities in the Maghreb and in the United States to work more closely together to promote greater economic opportunity, a greater spirit of partnership and closer links between private sector organizations in the United States and North Africa.

Countries Covered by this Funding Opportunity: These funds are available only for activities in Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, and Libya. (NOTE: Funding for activities in or involving Mauritania can be covered under the matching funds portion of the budget or by other funding sources.)

The North Africa public private partnership will be responsible for the following duties and initiatives during the launch period (two years):

Staffing: Hiring adequate staff in the region to ensure the launch, implementation and long-term maintenance of the partnership. It will be responsible for identifying, with the help of local consultants and other human resources, at least one program manager per country to assist with local implementation. In-kind contributions of office space for program managers should be identified through local partners (e.g. a chamber of commerce or business association). The local program manager function may be occupied by local consultants during the initial launch period of six months – one year. Staffing will not take place through U.S. embassies.

Consulting: Identifying and allocating necessary financial resources for consultants with extensive local experience in the region to assist with the initial launch of the partnership and its initiatives in the region. Consultants will be responsible for assisting with scoping and business models for each of the initiatives, helping to identify and conclude memoranda of understanding and/or other partnership agreements for initiative “lead partners” and secondary partners; as well as for partnership “affiliated partners” in the region. Consultants may also play a role in identifying appropriate local candidates for the International Board of Advisors and Local Advisory Boards. Consultants will assist in identifying and hiring local program staff, help raise local corporate sponsorships, liaise with U.S. and European embassies in the region, and help to launch initial communications and public relations in the region.

Website: Creating, launching, and maintaining an independent website for the Partnership. This website will make available to the public partnership initiatives and activities, as well as members of the partnership leadership bodies (i.e., International Board of Advisors, Local Advisory Board Members, Steering Committees). It will also make available the names of all “affiliated partners” and local program staff.

Governance: Identifying and structuring an appropriate International Board of Advisors and Local Advisory Boards in each country. Members of the Boards of the partnership should maintain high ethical standards and be respected figures in the private sector that share a regional vision and/or lend credibility, leadership and financial resources to the partnership. The International Board of Advisors should include representatives of U.S. companies doing business in the region, North African companies doing business with the United States, companies that would like to expand to North Africa or the United States, business leaders, entrepreneurs, celebrities or other respected private figures with a regional vision, members of the North African Diaspora, experts/academics, retired public figures, among others. Local Advisory Boards should consist of local business leaders, experts/academics, members of the cultural and sports communities, retired public figures, and other private sector stakeholders with a regional and transatlantic vision.

Fundraising: Raising funds from corporate and other private and public sources to ensure that the partnership and its initiatives remain viable over the long-term. The U.S. Government intends to incubate the partnership for a period of up to two years. Funding beyond this two-year period is not envisioned. Therefore, continuation of the partnership beyond two years is contingent upon

successful fundraising from other sources. This partnership is designed to better link the U.S. private sector and the private sectors in the Maghreb, and designed therefore to be financially viable in the private sector. Other U.S. Government and other public programs may be included as partners in partnership initiatives.

Initiatives: The implementer will be responsible for the oversight, coordination and viability of cross-border business initiatives such as:

- North Africa Young Business Leaders and Associations Network: This initiative would facilitate increased cross-border links among young and emerging entrepreneurs and business leaders by developing a comprehensive social networking platform.
- North Africa Leadership and Training Academy: This initiative requires partners to collaborate to develop and implement an integrated menu of regional leadership, training, and education-to-employment programs and activities.
- North Africa Innovation and Technology Incubator: This initiative is designed to promote new cross-border business ventures from young and aspiring Maghreb entrepreneurs in innovative and new technology sectors.
- North Africa Creative Industries Incubator: This initiative is meant to support young artists who are entrepreneurial and have the potential to contribute to job creation and local economic development but lack the knowledge and resources to move beyond the conceptual stage of a business idea.
- North Africa Center of Excellence for Entrepreneurship: The goal of this initiative is to stimulate and encourage regional research and data collection by teams of regional experts and academics from Maghreb countries and the Maghreb Diaspora. Partners will also create a regional business school network that connects with business school partners in the United States.

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 “Regional Economic Opportunity Partnership” link.

II. Award Information

Funding Instrument Type: Cooperative Agreement

Anticipated Total Program Funding: \$300,000 Economic Support Funds in Federal Fiscal Year 2010.

Restrictions on Use of these Funds: These funds are available only for activities in Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, and Libya. None of this funding can be used to provide support to officials from the central governments of Kuwait, Qatar, Libya, Syria, or the United Arab Emirates or for programming implemented in the West Bank or Gaza or Syria.

Anticipated Number of Awards: 1 award

Cost Sharing Required: Minimum \$150,000

Floor of Individual Award Amounts: \$300,000

Ceiling of Individual Award Amounts: \$300,000

The Office of the Middle East Partnership Initiative 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 two years.

III. Eligibility Information

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

As this funding opportunity is for the creation of a public-private partnership, all applicants must indicate the commitment and source of their matching funds (minimum \$150,000).

Only proposals that specify that all of the federal share of the budget will be spent in Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, and Morocco will be considered responsive to this funding opportunity. (NOTE: Funding for activities in or involving Mauritania can be covered under the matching funds portion of the budget or by other funding sources.)

The Office of the Middle East Partnership Initiative encourages applications from partnerships or coalitions including local or regional organizations that would work together on specific issues and priorities, and would share information and expertise with one another. 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.

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.

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.

Applications may be no more than 40 pages and may include appendices. This page limitation should be considered as a maximum and not necessarily a goal, and excludes the SF 424 forms and MEPI Application cover sheet.

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 September 1, 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.

There will be no grace period and any application not received by 23:59:59 on September 1st 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 (written project narrative and a detailed budget). 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 or plan. Proposal suggests creative, innovative, and actionable approach to promoting economic opportunity through a regional public-private partnership model in North Africa.

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. 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 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 the goals of the initiative. The organization demonstrates a high level of regional and/or country expertise. (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 - 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 countries of North Africa is proposed. The application documents the commitment and source of the required \$150,000 in matching funds. (20 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. U.S. Government Substantial Involvement. 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. Project officers from MEPI 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.

The Office of the Middle East Partnership Initiative 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.