

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

Funding Opportunity Title: Youth Entrepreneurship in the Middle East and North Africa Program Announcement

Announcement Type: Pre-applications

Funding Opportunity Number: NEAPI-09-CA-019-MENA-102909

Funding Competition Title: Youth Entrepreneurship Projects

Funding Competition ID: Youth

CFDA Number: 19.500

Date Opened: October 29, 2009

Due Date for Pre-Applications: 11:59:59 November 30, 2009

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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 youth entrepreneurship in the Middle East and North Africa. The Administration has underscored the need to engage youth, support their 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.” On September 22, 2009 the President underscored the need for “...partnerships between businesses [and] entrepreneurs to advance prosperity and opportunity for people everywhere.” Consistent with this vision, NEA/PI seeks applications for a new funding initiative that will inspire youth to become the next generation of entrepreneurs in the Middle East and North Africa.

Sustainable progress requires opening spaces for innovation and creativity. Expanding opportunities for entrepreneurs is critical to helping address unemployment, supporting economic development, and furthering civic engagement in the Middle East and North Africa. We are asking applicants to develop projects to foster a culture of entrepreneurship in youth. Illustrative, but not necessarily comprehensive, aspects might include entrepreneurial skill-building, idea generation, business incubation, competition, access to capital, access to employment, and development of entrepreneurship networks (including possibly virtual networks) to connect entrepreneurs with each other as well as with a broader range of stake-holders. NEA/PI’s desired outcomes are, *inter alia*, improved opportunities for business development, accelerated sustainable job creation, expanded economic opportunities, and entrepreneurship stakeholders connected in partnerships and networks across the region. Projects should encourage innovation and creativity – in both new and traditional sectors. Projects may also support the

development of social entrepreneurship, applying business-like efficiency, innovation, and sustainability to tackling pressing social problems.

NEA/PI seeks applications that would address the varying status of entrepreneurship in the economies of the region: those that have significant economic resources or are well developed in some respects but are still building a local culture of entrepreneurship, those without significant economic resources that must use entrepreneurship to tap into comparative advantages and create niche markets, and those that fall somewhere in between these two poles. Most responsive projects will address the needs of economies and populations that lack strong traditions of entrepreneurship and will specify how and where they will have the greatest impact, particularly with respect to youth (defined for purposes of this RFA as males and females from 16 to 35 years of age).

Applicants must demonstrate: familiarity with the economic and demographic challenges facing the region (including the increasing number of youth who will seek employment); capacity and expertise in fostering entrepreneurial development; and the ability to help translate innovation into economic activity. Applicants must also describe how they will measure positive outcomes in the areas of job creation, business startup, and income generation. Applicants should propose measurable results in the short, medium, and long-term, with the understanding that these efforts should continue beyond any funding under the program announcement.

Applicants are encouraged to explore existing efforts that support youth entrepreneurship, and how to complement ongoing efforts in the region, tying several strands together or scaling up an existing initiative. Projects may link initiatives within and across national boundaries, creating regional networks to assist entrepreneurs facing similar start-up and operational challenges. Those pre-applicants invited to submit full applications are encouraged to partner with organizations in the region to support their capacity and sustainability. Applicants may propose methods of cost-sharing to support the project's continuation once all U.S. Government funds have been expended. Applications that involve cost-sharing from sources within the MENA region are strongly encouraged.

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

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 about 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 “Youth Entrepreneurship Projects” link.

II. Award Information:

Funding Instrument Type: Grants and Cooperative Agreements

Anticipated Total Program Funding: \$2,250,000 Economic Support Funds

Anticipated number of Awards: Two awards

Ceiling on amount of individual Awards: \$1,500,000

Floor of Individual Award Amounts: \$500,000

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: These funds are intended for start-up initiatives. Proposed project periods may be up to three years. The initial budget period may be up to 24 months. Applications for continuation grants funded under these awards, beyond the initial budget period, will be considered on a noncompetitive basis, subject to availability of funds, satisfactory progress of the grantee, 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, and U.S. or foreign private institutions or commercial entities.

NEA/PI encourages pre-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. Pre-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 how the additional resources will be used. If these resources are not proposed, applicants should offer an explanation.

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. Pre-Application Submission and Deadline:

Pre-application materials should be submitted online via www.grants.gov. Selected pre-applicants will be invited to submit a full proposal in English for funding consideration.

To meet the announcement deadline, submissions must be made before 23:59:59 eastern standard time (EST) on November 30, 2009. Applicants are warned that Grants.gov requires a registration period of 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 16, 2009. There will be no grace period and no application will be considered unless it is received electronically by the announced deadline.

The application package is as follows:

____ (a) 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.

____ (b) Proposal Narrative - The pre-application narrative should not exceed 5 pages, and each page should be numbered sequentially. Narrative submission should be in Times New Roman font, size 12, single-line spacing.

____ (c) Budget and Budget Justification/Narrative (optional for Pre-Application) – The budget and justification should be an estimate of the comprehensive annual cost of tasks and activities projected in the pre-application, should not exceed 5 pages, and each page should be numbered sequentially. NEA/PI prefers that budgets and justifications be submitted in MS-Excel or MS-Word. A full budget is not required at this stage. Guidance for responding to this can be found in Section V “Review and Selection Process.”

Please note: The limitation of 10 pages for each submission should be considered as a maximum and not necessarily a goal, and excludes the MEPI cover sheet.

V. Pre-Application Review and Selection Process

Each pre-application submitted under this announcement will be evaluated and rated on the basis of the following evaluation criteria on a 90-point scale. The criteria are designed to assess the quality of the proposed project, and to determine which applicants will be invited to submit a full application for funding, which will be judged on a 100-point scale. The criteria are closely related and are considered as a whole in judging the overall quality of an application. Pre-applications will be reviewed on the basis of their coherence and clarity. Points are awarded only to applications that are deemed responsive within the context of this program announcement.

Only select high-scoring pre-applicants will be invited to submit a full project description in accordance with the provided instructions and additional 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.

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

Pre-Application Narrative: Outline a plan of action which describes the scope and detail of how the proposed work will be accomplished, 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. If possible, include planned partners, including local organizations, that will work on the project.

Pre-Application Evaluation Criteria:

Innovation and Approach –The applicant clearly describes how its proposal addresses the announcement’s priority and articulates an innovative strategy and a feasible approach. Proposal suggests creativity and innovation, with the possibility of scalability, as well as the likelihood of positive impact in entrepreneurial development. (35 points)

Results or Benefits – The applicant clearly demonstrates how the project is likely to provide efficient use of resources in achieving the proposed results and the organization demonstrates that it is able to measure program success against key indicators and provide milestones to indicate progress. Proposed outcomes are tangible and achievable within the proposed performance period. (35 points)

Organizational Capacity – The organization has relevant expertise and demonstrates the ability to engage and work together with local or regional partners. The applicant

includes information detailing relevant regional experience. The organization demonstrates a high level of sensitivity to regional or country-specific operating environments. Where partners are proposed, the pre-applicant provides rationale for the partnership achieving the proposed objectives and MEPI goals. (20 points)

Budget and Budget Justification (Full budget NOT REQUIRED for Pre-Applications and no points will be awarded for a budget submission at this stage; however, additional guidance regarding budget preparation may be found attached to this announcement, or by going to www.mepi.state.gov and clicking on Funding & Project Opportunities.) The full application budget must include an estimate of the comprehensive annual cost of tasks and activities projected based on budget object class identified on the Budget Information Form (SF 424). The budget must provide details of calculations including estimation methods, quantities, unit costs, and other similar quantitative detail sufficient for the calculation to be duplicated. (10 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.

The Office of Management and Budget has consolidated and replaced four existing financial reporting forms (SF-269, SF-269A, SF-272, and SF-272A) with a single Federal Financial Report (FFR SF-425). 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).

Applicants will be required 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, as the activities unfold and at the end of the project. 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 NEA/PI Intended Outcome(s) and the approved Activities and Objectives with Performance Indicators for each. The Intended Outcome is the principal change NEA/PI and the implementers are trying to achieve by completing the activities and realizing the objectives of a project. It reflects the anticipated impact to be achieved and defines how a situation will be different after the project is successfully completed. 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).

Performance Indicators will measure achievement of the Intended Outcomes and Objectives rather than quantify the 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, 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.

In addition, 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.

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.