

Tunisia:

Funding Mechanism Type:	Cooperative Agreement, Grant, or Fixed Amount Award
Estimated Number of Awards	One to two (1-2)
Estimated Total Funding	\$500,000
Estimated Award Ceiling	\$500,000
Estimated Award Floor	\$250,000
Estimated Length of Project Period	12-36 months

Country Problem Statement: Tunisia faces economic challenges. Tourism in Tunisia accounts for around 8 percent of Tunisia’s economy and employs 400,000 people, but has suffered years of turmoil following the Tunisian revolution in 2011 and two terrorist attacks in 2015. Tourism has strong growth potential in Tunisia, however, and is beginning to rebound, particularly in the rural governates of Tozeur and Kebili. The sector struggles to meet customer expectations.

The Embassy seeks proposals to assist Tunisian hospitality providers in Tozeur and Kebili improve customer service through improved employee training. Proposals should help hotels integrate all employees, from back-office to customer-facing, in a training program geared toward increasing customer satisfaction. Proposals should support businesses that implement tools to measure customer satisfactions levels, through techniques that compare customer perceptions of quality against customer expectations. For instance, five dimensions of service can be assessed:

1. Reliability: consistency in the quality and level of service;
2. Assurance: knowledgeable and courteous staff with the ability to convey trust and confidence;
3. Tangibles: the organization’s physical facilities, equipment, and appearance of staff;
4. Empathy: the degree of caring, individualized attention that the organization’s staff provide to its customers; and
5. Responsiveness: the willingness of staff to help customers and provide prompt service

Proposals should help businesses put together a plan to prevent problems from escalating, by resolving issues before the customer walks out the door — or makes an online posting and adds a negative review about the hotel or the guest house. Proposals should help businesses effectively read business review sites such as TripAdvisor, Yelp, and others and respond to guest comments both good and bad.

Country Priorities:

Priority Area – Tourism Sector Customer Service Enhancement: In conjunction with the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), the Political Section Assistance Unit at the US Embassy in Tunisia seeks applications from local civil society organizations, non-profit organizations, community groups, non-governmental organizations, professional associations, private sector organizations, and universities registered and headquartered in Tunisia that will improve the quality of services in the tourism and hospitality sector in Tozeur and Kebili.

Proposals addressing this priority would have two objectives:

1. Objective 1: Increase in customer satisfaction as hotel and guest house employees enhance their skills and performance of their duties through long-term, intensive training in areas including customer service, tourism/hospitality knowledge, computers, communications, and leadership/management skills.
2. Objective 2: Hotels develop the ability to respond effectively and in a timely manner to customer complaints through response management and online tools. Hotels implement procedures for dealing with customer complaints on social media or business review websites as well as proactive online and social media strategies.

Successful projects will strengthen customer service in the tourism and hospitality industry. They will professionalize tourism in the local community and partner with hotels and guest houses to deliver high quality accommodations and guest services that sustainably meet both local and international guests' demand.

The proposal must be able to demonstrate the success of the project through improved online reviews, increased numbers of local and international travelers, higher customer satisfaction rates, online customer service and travel bookings, or other standard indicators of the tourism industry. The proposal must also demonstrate the sustainability of the project after funding ceases, ideally through cost share or other means of demonstrating beneficiary buy in.

Geographic/Thematic Focus: While tourism and hospitality customer service enhancement is needed nationwide, this NOFO targets the governorates of Tozeur and Kebili only. Tozeur has 17 hotels and 18 guest houses. Kebili has 11 hotels.

Specific eligibility requirements: Applicants must be registered in the official Gazette of the Tunisian government and should be headquartered in Tunisia. Applicants should also have or be willing to establish a presence in Tozeur or Kebili. Applicants must demonstrate experience and capacity in successfully managing projects, have established management structures, official registrations, community support, and clear organizational goals and objectives. The selection process will be based on each proposals ability to quantify and communicate the impact of the project.