

Supporting the Syrian Political Process NOFO Questions
Opportunity Number: SFOP0009213

1. Will there be any issues, politically from a US/Turkey relationship perspective, with staff working from Turkey on this project?

ANSWER: Applicants may propose a small number of staff based in Turkey or elsewhere in the region to complement oversight from a third country. NEA/AC highly recommends a presence in Berlin, Germany for operational and donor liaison purposes.

2. Will the grantee be required to coordinate with other projects/donors working on UNCSR 2254? If so, can we receive a list of those donors and their projects?

ANSWER: The recipient may be asked by NEA to coordinate certain activities within the project scope with other projects/donors working on UNSCR 2255. No specific list of projects/donors will be provided.

3. Can we get further information on the NEA/AC project "Taziz"? Are there reports available and further information on that project such as a fact sheet?

ANSWER: NEA/AC does not publicly disseminate internal reports on the Taziz project.

4. One of the suggested activities in the NOFO is to bring PPS to the negotiations in Geneva. Will NEA/AC help in getting visas for these individuals?

ANSWER: Applicants should not assume that NEA/AC will provide assistance for beneficiaries or others involved or supported by the project activities to obtain visas. In certain cases, we may seek to provide assistance.

5. The call restricts engagement to actors and stakeholders that are non-affiliated with the regime. However, half of the civil society group of the constitutional committee is pro-regime. We would like to confirm whether those actors are considered affiliated with the regime, and thus cannot be engaged in the program? Furthermore, what is NEA's definition of "affiliation"?

ANSWER: NEA/AC does not provide assistance/support to individuals or organizations affiliated with, supporting, or representing the Syrian Regime or its affiliates.

6. Is NEA open to the inclusion of other non-regime held geographic areas in Syria beyond the defined scope, including areas in southern and northwest Syria?

ANSWER: NEA/AC works closely with assistance partners to evaluate and reevaluate opportunities for widening the geographic scope of assistance; however, based on policy priorities and scope at this time, applicants are encouraged to primarily focus on the geographic areas identified in the NOFO as priorities for this project.

7. Given that the Syrian Constitutional Committee has been indefinitely postponed since July 2022, is NEA open to engagement with alternative political process tracks regarding the transition, such as the Civil Society Support Room, Women’s Advisory Board, or new avenues of engagement?

ANSWER: NEA/AC strongly encourages proposals that can be flexible to meet the changing political landscape, which could include engagement with alternative political process tracks to advance project objectives.

8. What type of consortium configuration do you envisage as best positioned for achieving the program objectives, considering the program's aim is around strengthening dialogue across all tracks of engagement?

ANSWER: NEA/AC does not have a particular model in mind and encourages applicants to propose effective and flexible approaches that suit the unique set of partners.

9. Section I, Project Design, on pg. 7 DOS/NEA prohibits “academic or analytical research (if not necessary as part of a larger project)”. Could DOS/NEA please specify what type of justification should be provided for proposed research activities?

ANSWER: If an applicant seeks to propose academic or analytical research as a component of the proposed project design, the applicant needs to justify the need for such type of programming in support of the project objectives, to include why it is necessary.

10. Could you please clarify what is meant by social welfare projects (for example, direct cash assistance programs)?

ANSWER: Social welfare projects include financial assistance, such as direct cash payments to individuals.

11. Academic or analytical research: what is the scope of activities not allowed under this? Are we able to undertake baseline research, conflict analysis research, etc. We are assuming a conflict mapping exercise would be acceptable, but specific understanding is required.

ANSWER: If an applicant seeks to propose academic or analytical research as a component of the proposed project design, the applicant needs to justify the need for such type of programming in support of the project objectives, to include why it is necessary.

12. Could you please clarify the scope and understanding of cultural presentations or research not allowed?

ANSWER: Cultural presentations and cultural research as stand-alone activities as part of a proposed project design are not allowable. If an applicant determines that a component of their project design, for example, requires cultural research or a cultural presentation, that can be proposed. Cultural presentations and cultural research should not be the focus of the proposed project and their own activities, though instead an effort that is justified and detailed as integral to an activity which supports the achievement of the project objectives.

13. Section VI, Application Documents, pg. 14, Given the gender analysis requirement in Section I, Funding Opportunity Description, on pg. 8 could DOS/NEA extend the project narrative page limit to 15 pages?

ANSWER: It is expected that applicants will provide a detailed and concise project narrative encompassing the required components reflected in the NOFO with a limit not to exceed 12 pages.

14. Section VI, Logic Model and Theory of Change, on page 15 requests that we develop a Logic Model and Theory of Change using Appendix 2 as a template. Because Appendix 2 is 3 pages long without content, would NEA consider increasing the allowable pages for this requirement so that we can adequately show indicators and project activities?

ANSWER: The Logic Model and Theory of Change template (Appendix 2) includes the first page as a template with the second page reflecting example prompts for each component of the logic model to assist applicants in completing this required information. Therefore, the template itself is only one page long, with this document required to be no more than three pages. The Results Monitoring Plan (RMP) template (Appendix 3) – which is a separate required document for this NOFO – is intended to note illustrative project indicators that align with the Logic Model and key project activities. There is no page limit for the RMP document.

15. Section VI, Application Formatting Requirements, on page 16 states the required font is 12-point, Times New Roman. For ease of readability, please confirm that tables and figures can use a smaller font size or different font face (such as Arial), as long as content is easily readable.

ANSWER: Supporting information presented in documents through tables and figures can be presented with a different font size and type. The font size and type for the main body text of each document however remain at 12-point, Times New Roman.

16. Is NEA amenable to the use of size 10 font in graphics, text boxes, and footnotes?

ANSWER: Supporting information presented in documents through graphics, text boxes, and footnotes can be presented with a different font size and type. The font size and type for the main body text of each document however remain at 12-point, Times New Roman.

17. Section VI, Application Documents, on pg. 14 DOS/NEA asks for a “notional budget” for the option years. Could DOS/NEA clarify what this should consist of, if different from the detailed budget required in Year 1?

ANSWER: The notional budget tabs should reflect those anticipated costs based off of the envisioned project design. If there are different or additional types of specific activities for various option years, those should be reflected through the line-item budgets.

18. For the notional budget pertaining to the optional years two and three, can applicants simply provide budget estimates according to the subheadings listed in NEA’S budget template, i.e., labor, travel, supplies, etc.?

ANSWER: Yes, applicants must provide budget estimates according to the subheadings reflected in the budget template provided as part of this NOFO. The budget should be reflective of anticipated costs as much as possible and not however be an overall amount per budget category. Please review the “Budget and Budget Narrative” section in the NOFO under VIII. Application Review and Selection Process, A. Application Evaluation Criteria to ensure the budget is presented to permit appropriate assessment of proposed budget costs.

19. Can NEA please clarify whether the proposal narrative and proposed milestones should address all three years of programming in full detail or if applicants should focus on detailed year one activities, with summaries of illustrative year two and three activities?

ANSWER: Applicants should focus the project narrative and corresponding logic model and Results Monitoring Plan for one year, with illustrative summaries of activities for subsequent option years.

20. For the proposal timeline that will be submitted as an annex, should the timeline describe all three years of the proposed project or the first 12 months of performance?

ANSWER: Applicants should focus the timeline for one year, with illustrative summaries of activities for subsequent option years.

21. Can you confirm that the one to three million budget range is for a one-year project?

ANSWER: This is correct. The estimated base (initial) year of the award is anticipated to have a floor (no less than) \$1,000,000 and a ceiling of (no more than) \$3,000,000.

22. Can you confirm that our project activities, timeline and measurement tools must be developed based on a one-year project?

ANSWER: Applicants should focus the project narrative, timeline, and corresponding logic model and Results Monitoring Plan for one year, with illustrative summaries of activities for subsequent option years.

23. Can you confirm that the two additional "optional" years to be budgeted must also fit the one to three million budget range per year?

ANSWER: This is correct. Each option year is anticipated to have a floor (no less than) \$1,000,000 and a ceiling of (no more than) \$3,000,000.

24. Can NEA please confirm if the total ceiling is \$3 million for one year or \$9 million total for 3 years?

ANSWER: This is correct. The total project ceiling is anticipated to be \$3 million for one year, or \$9 million for three years.

25. On page #18 under Audit Requirements, can these costs be included as part of the cost proposal, or should they be accounted for outside of the project budget?

ANSWER: Costs to meet requirements associated with the award – to include audits – can be proposed as part of a budget.

26. On page #16 it states the following, "Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement NOTE: This item is required only IF applicable. Applicants proposing indirect costs in the budget greater than a 10% de minimis rate must provide a copy of their Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA). There is no page limit for this section of the application." If an organization does not have a NICRA can we add our indirect rate of 10% or less based on our internal accounting structures or recent audits?

ANSWER: Yes, a de minimis rate of 10% or less may be proposed in the budget as indirect if an organization does not have a NICRA.

27. Does NEA require the applicant to have a registered office in Berlin to implement this program?

ANSWER: The project should be implemented from a third country, with a strong justification for why that country was chosen. NEA/AC highly recommends a presence in Berlin, Germany for operational and donor liaison purposes. NEA/AC requires that applicants be in sound legal standing with appropriate government authorities in the country where the project will be managed at the time of application to this funding opportunity. Key overseas personnel must be co-located, while consideration should be taken for minimizing the need for expatriate and/or Third-Country National staff and operational costs. Award recipients will be required to maintain legal standing throughout the life of the award, including for any sub-grant made under its auspices.

28. Does NEA/AC envision the awardee having three offices? One in Germany, another in Syria and then their HQ.

ANSWER: NEA anticipates an office presence – with a strong recommendation of Berlin, Germany – for this project. Any additional offices proposed would need to be justified for their necessity in supporting management and implementation of the project.

29. On page #2 it states the following, "Key overseas personnel must be co-located, while consideration should be taken for minimizing the need for expatriate and/or Third-Country National staff and operational costs." What are the key personnel in this proposal for countries that currently do not have offices it will take at least six months to become registered in Germany and then be able to hire local staff as per local labor laws?

ANSWER: The applicant organization proposes key personnel for the project, and they are typically those individuals with primary responsibility for project design, management, implementation, and decision-making.

30. Would setting up an office in Gaziantep, Turkey or in Jordan be more conducive with working with SRP instead of establishing an office in Germany? Many of the PPS and organizations operating in Syria are based in Turkey and Jordan and would allow for better coordination.

ANSWER: NEA/AC highly recommends a presence in Berlin, Germany for operational and donor liaison purposes. There have been some staff on previous projects supporting the Syrian political process as well as selected other Syria assistance programming efforts that have worked from other countries. Applicants may propose a small number of staff based elsewhere in the region to complement oversight from a third country.

31. On page 13 you mentioned “C.2 Host Country Legal Compliance: NEA/AC requires that applicants be in sound legal standing with the appropriate host government authorities at the time of application to this funding opportunity” Would it be possible to provide more explanation? As NEA/AC encourages organizations with Syrian staff to apply for the grant and in some of the host countries such as Turkey, the situation is very difficult to obtain work permits for non-Turkish citizens, even with applying for their work permit through the official channels.

ANSWER: Applicants are required to have the legal standing necessary (required registrations, licensing, etc.) with the third-country host government from which the project will be managed. NEA/AC highly recommends a presence in Berlin, Germany for operational and donor liaison purposes. There have been some staff on previous projects supporting the Syrian political process as well as selected other Syria assistance programming efforts that have worked from other countries. Applicants may propose a small number of staff based elsewhere in the region to complement oversight from a third country.

32. The NOFO notes that "Key overseas personnel must be co-located, while consideration should be taken for minimizing the need for expatriate and/or Third-Country National staff and operational costs." Could NEA please define what is meant by colocation?

ANSWER: In terms of co-location, this NOFO seeks for applicants to propose any staff outside the United States who are proposed to work on the project to be located together.

33. Would it be sufficient to demonstrate in the proposal the ability of our organization and our partners to regularly travel to Berlin for advocacy and donor meetings as required, without having to set up a permanent office/base there?

ANSWER: NEA/AC will consider proposals that make a strong case for the project team’s ability to travel to Berlin as needed while basing other project activities elsewhere as well as demonstrating that such an approach is cost effective. Alternate locations to Berlin should include an operating environment that is low risk for interference by host government and local actors in project activities. NEA/AC highly recommends a presence in Berlin, Germany for operational and donor liaison purposes.

34. Defining third-country nationals: If the project were to operate out of Lebanon, would Lebanese nationals count as third country national staff?

ANSWER: Regarding the example provided, Lebanese nationals operating from a project administration location of Lebanon would not be considered third-country nationals. NEA/AC highly recommends a presence in Berlin, Germany for operational and donor liaison purposes.

35. Can you provide any more information on what the expected engagement would look like and the expected frequency? While our organization does not have any physical presence in Berlin, we have proximity with a regional office, as well as a diaspora partner organization.

ANSWER: Members of the DOS team responsible for the technical programmatic direction of the project are anticipated to interact with the selected grant recipient organization frequently, with semi-regular in-person meetings to discuss programming lines of effort, work plan, and challenges and opportunities for programming.

36. Is it possible for applicants to apply for the grant in a form or a coalition of organizations not “Prime applicant” and “local partner”?

ANSWER: Consortium applications are permitted for this opportunity. However, a prime applicant must be identified among the group of interested parties as the entity responsible for representing the consortium and implementing the award, with any partners detailed as sub-recipients. Applicants are encouraged to identify and detail the potential type and extent of engagement of any sub-recipients with which they anticipate partnering for project implementation.

37. Are consortium applications permitted for this award, and if so, are there any additional requirements or guidance?

ANSWER: Consortium applications are permitted for this opportunity. However, a prime applicant must be identified among the group of interested parties as the entity responsible for representing the consortium and implementing the award, with any partners detailed as sub-recipients. Applicants are encouraged to identify and detail the potential type and extent of engagement of any sub-recipients with which they anticipate partnering for project implementation.

38. On page #12 it states the following, "To apply for NEA/AC (Federal) funding, organizations, whether based in or outside the U.S., must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number and an active account with the System for Award Management (SAM). Applicants who do not meet all registration requirements are NOT eligible for funding under the opportunity." Will grantees be extended the recently released waiver for getting Unique Entity Identification (UEI) numbers before submission of their proposals? We understand currently the process is very delayed and a waiver has been put in place to allow for proposals or grants to be awarded while under the process of receiving a UEI.

ANSWER: In cases where exigent circumstances prevent an applicant from obtaining a Unique Entity Identification (UEI) number, the applicant will be required to provide documentation demonstrating attempts at or delays in the request being processed. The Department of State has not provided a blanket waiver. The applicant shall justify their

request for a waiver in writing, detailing its attempts for initial registration or recertification of the annual registration in SAM.gov to the awarding agency. This will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis, with applicants expected to have begun the process well ahead of the NOFO application deadline.

39. The anticipated start date of February 1, 2023 seems rather soon with proposals due November 30, 2022, furthermore, with the holiday seasons coming up it seems highly unlikely the award will be signed by February 1, 2023? Is this date realistic?

ANSWER: NEA seeks to move the award process forward within the listed timeframe in the NOFO.

40. On page #23 under vetting, will the successful awardee be required to vet all local Syrian organizations before awarding of the cooperative agreement? If these organizations were previously vetted under a USAID or US State Department project will NEA/AC allow for an expedited process of approving their vetting requirements?

ANSWER: Prime recipients will be responsible for Risk and Analysis Management (RAM) vetting of all prime and sub-recipient key personnel, as well as key individuals based in Syria, prior to initiating activities under the award. All eligible individuals shall undergo RAM vetting on an annual basis. The Grants Officer will provide the complete details and requirements prior to the issuance of the award.

41. On page #26, under Branding and Marking, will NEA/AC allow for a blanket branding and marking waiver in Syria under this award to allow for the safety and security of project beneficiaries?

ANSWER: There is no blanket branding or marking waiver for this project. The awarding agency may grant a full or partial branding waiver for sensitive, high-risk awards on a case-by-case basis.

42. We are aware that it is a “one grant” application, however, is it possible for applicant organizations to apply for certain components/aspect of the needed activities? And taking into account not applying for the whole fund ceiling.

ANSWER: The awarding agency strongly advises against applying for certain components/aspects of the requested activities within the opportunity. Applicants are encouraged to partner with another organization if the intent is for certain components or activities of the NOFO to be covered by more than one organization.

43. Can one organization apply for the grant as a “Prime applicant” in one proposal, and be part of another proposal as a “Local partner”?

ANSWER: Eligible applicants may apply for this opportunity as a “prime applicant,” while taking part as a “local partner” in another application.

44. Is a Sustainability Plan required? NOFO doesn't mention it, but APPENDIX 4 - Application Guidance does include it.

ANSWER: A sustainability plan is not required as part of this opportunity.

45. Can NEA please define ‘deploying’ as used in section, ‘E. Special Provision for Performance in a Designated Combat Area Requirements.’

ANSWER: “Deploying” generally means performing activities within a designated combat area.

46. I am a U.S citizen and I have an LLC. Can you please confirm if this is enough to apply?

ANSWER: While individuals are not eligible to apply to this NOFO, an organization would be eligible if it meets the eligibility requirements reflected in Section V of the Notice of Funding Opportunity.

47. *Demonstrated ability to deliver cash cross-border.* Can you provide any more information about this beyond what is stated in the guidelines? Does this refer to the ability of the prime applicant to transfer funding to partners inside Syria, or does it refer to cash programming assistance?

ANSWER: This refers to the ability of the prime applicant to transfer project funds to partners and staff based inside Syria.