

**U.S. Embassy Baghdad  
Public Affairs Section**

**Funding Opportunity Title:** Strengthening the U.S. – Iraq Relationship through Higher Education Partnerships

Announcement Type: Grant (New)

**Funding Opportunity Number:** DOS-Baghdad-PD-2015-07

**CFDA:** 19.021 Investing in People in the Middle East and North Africa

**Opening Date:** June 17<sup>th</sup>, 2015

**Closing Date:** July 17<sup>th</sup>, 2015

**Program: Strengthening the U.S.-Iraq Relationship through Higher Education Partnerships**

**SUMMARY:** The U.S. Embassy in Baghdad invites eligible organizations to submit proposals to develop and implement a small grants program to foster partnerships between U.S. institutions of higher education (university, college or community college) and public universities operating under the authority of the Government of Iraq’s Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MoHESR) and the Kurdistan Regional Government’s Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MHE). Under the Strategic Framework Agreement (SFA) between the Governments of Iraq and United States, education, exchanges, and research collaboration are key pillars of mutual cooperation. The U.S. Mission in Iraq, including the Embassy in Baghdad and its Consulates General in Basrah and Erbil, supports the SFA through academic initiatives that promote human and technical capacity building inside Iraq, bolster long-term stability, develop the next generation of leaders, and support Iraq’s integration into the global academic community.

**GOALS:** Through this small grants program, the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad seeks to provide seed funding to a diverse range of academic partnerships between U.S. and Iraqi higher education institutions and faculty members and to promote successful models of partnership that will encourage future cooperation and engagement.

In this solicitation, U.S. Embassy Baghdad seeks proposals to develop and administer a small grants program based on the education priorities of the U.S. Mission in Iraq (summarized in the program description below). The proposals should outline how the program implementer will manage, administer, and evaluate U.S.-Iraqi university partnership projects through small grants in the \$25,000 to \$75,000 range, and also define an award selection process based on merit, geographic and thematic diversity, feasibility of proposed collaboration, impact to beneficiaries, project sustainability, and cultivation of lasting and productive relationships between U.S. and Iraqi institutions of higher education and between American and Iraqi scholars. Ideally the most

competitive proposal would dedicate the biggest portion of the budget to the small grants segment.

[Note: Throughout this solicitation, the small grants program for which proposals are requested will be referred to as “the program,” while the U.S.-Iraqi higher education partnerships that will be selected for small grants/seed money will be referred to as “projects.”]

**Eligibility:** Applicants must:

- Be a U.S. non-profit organization meeting the provisions described in Internal Revenue Code Section 26 as found in USC 501(c)(3); a U.S. based academic institution; or other institution for which profit is not a primary motive;
- Have demonstrated experience developing and administering similar programs;
- Have the capacity to operate in Iraq, currently have, or can develop active partnerships with organization(s) operating in Iraq.

All Federal assistance recipients must have a Dun & Bradstreet Number (DUNS) and a CCR (CAGE) number and an active account with the System for Award Management (SAM) prior to funds disbursement.

**Dun &Bradstreet DUNS** - 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](http://www.dnb.com). The DUNS number is a nine-digit number established and assigned by Dun and Bradstreet, Inc. (D&B) to uniquely identify business entities. All applicants must have a DUNS number. To obtain a DUNS number, please follow the steps below:

1. Go to <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform/pages/CCRSearch.jsp>.
2. Select the country where your organization is physically located. Complete and submit the form. Organizations will need to provide basic information, including physical and mailing addresses, name and title of the chief executive, primary [Standard Industrial Code \(SIC\)](#), and annual revenue. Typically, organizations can complete this process in one day and have a DUNS number emailed to them. For technical difficulties in obtaining this number, please contact D&B at: [govt@dnb.com](mailto:govt@dnb.com).

**System for Award Management (SAM)** - SAM is a U.S.-government wide registry of vendors doing business with the U.S. federal government and requires annual renewal. The system centralizes information about grant applicants/recipients, and provides a central location for grant applicants/recipients to change organizational information. More information about SAM.gov and useful guides for setting-up a new account, updating an existing account, or renewing an expired account can be found at: <http://statebuy.state.gov/fa/Pages/SAMInfo.aspx>. Foreign-based applicants are strongly encouraged to review these guides when creating an account with SAM.gov. Further, applicants must maintain an active account, with current information, while its application is under consideration for funding. To keep an active SAM.gov account, Applicants must renew it at least once each year. If an account expires, the Organization cannot submit a grant application until it is renewed. To create a new account, please follow the steps below:

1. Go to <http://www.sam.gov>.
2. Select Create User Account, and then select Create an Account on the left-hand side of the screen under Individual Account Details. Organizations must have DUNS number and a CAGE number (US Domestic Organizations) or a NCAGE number (Foreign Organizations), to create an account.
3. Complete and submit the online form. If the applying organization already has the necessary information on hand (see the [SAM User Guide](#)), the online form takes approximately one hour to complete, depending upon the size and complexity of the applying entity. Because of the different steps in the process, it can take anywhere from three to fourteen days to complete the process of creating an account with the system. For help with SAM.gov, please visit their support page at: <https://www.fsd.gov> or contact them at: (+1) 334-206-7828.

**Authority:** Overall grant-making authority for this program is contained in the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961, Public Law 87-256, as amended, also known as the Fulbright-Hays Act. The purpose of the Act is “to enable the Government of the United States to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries...; to strengthen the ties which unite us with other nations by demonstrating the educational and cultural interests, developments, and achievements of the people of the United States and other nations...and thus to assist in the development of friendly, sympathetic, and peaceful relations between the United States and other countries of the world.”

## **PROGRAM DESCRIPTION**

Applicants must have the demonstrated experience and ability to provide guidance to and monitor university partnership projects that would focus on the following U.S. Mission education priorities:

- Faculty development and exchange;
- Curriculum development;
- Collaborative research projects, particularly in STEM fields;
- Capacity building in university administration;
- Capacity building in English language teaching;
- Establishment of distance learning programs;
- Development of information systems to establish digital record keeping;
- Modernization of libraries and publication resources;
- Development of career advisory services on campuses;
- Counseling and intervention services on campuses for victims of violence and other psychological distress;
- Initiatives to promote tolerance and peaceful activities on campuses;
- Activities to build youth-based approaches to countering violent extremism.

In addition, the program implementer will:

- Foster relationships between U.S. institutions of higher learning and Iraqi universities. Preference should be given to one-on-one partnerships, with one U.S. institution working with one Iraqi institution;
- Consult with officials from MoHESR and MHE, Iraqi university leaders and education experts, U.S. Embassy public affairs section staff, and U.S. university associations and higher education institutions on best practices in grant-making;
- Develop a small grants program taking into account the priorities outlined above;
- Develop an application process; publicize it widely in U.S. and in Iraqi higher education circles; and, offer information and coaching sessions on the application process to potential applicants;
- Convene a committee that reflects the geographic diversity of the program, including Iraqi and American higher education experts, to review proposals and select projects;
- Seek U.S. Embassy concurrence on selected projects;
- Solicit applications for U.S.-Iraqi university partnerships in the \$25,000 to \$75,000 range. Lead a grant review panel to select and award participating universities based on merit, feasibility of proposed collaboration, impact to beneficiaries, and sustainability. Assist in matching U.S. and Iraqi universities and provide coaching for universities as requested. Determine the most appropriate funding mechanism for each partnership and issue grants or payment to selected universities;
- Manage small grant administration for selected projects and required reporting;
- Provide quarterly reporting with a budget update to U.S. Embassy Baghdad on program activities.
- Serve as the primary point of contact and source of information for Iraqi universities, U.S. institutions, and Embassy Baghdad;
- Manage all logistical elements of the program, including facilitating Americans' travel to Iraq and Iraqi travel to the U.S., should the proposal include such activities;
- Plan and organize a closing session in Iraq or via on-line platforms to summarize and evaluate the program and prepare participants for follow-on activities they will continue on their own.

Selected small grant projects must take place in Iraq though they may include a U.S.-based component. Proposals that include approximately 75 percent of activities in Iraq are preferred, and the use of on-line communications platforms is encouraged. Applications can be made by American or Iraqi institutions who seek partners or by American-Iraqi partnerships that are already formed. In the latter case, the program implementer will help identify a partner to work with the applicant institution.

Subject to the availability of funds, the Embassy expects to select one small grant program implementer for a grant award of up to \$1,200,000.

### **ANTICIPATED TIMELINE**

August 2015: Grant is awarded;

September - October 2015: Selected program implementer develops small grants program through consultations with Iraqi government and university officials, U.S. Embassy representatives and U.S. universities and higher education partnership experts.

November 2015: Program implementer conducts program orientation and launches small grants program in the U.S. and Iraq.

December 31, 2015: Deadline for small grant applications.

January-February: Applications reviewed; selected partnerships projects are notified. Partnership projects begin.

February 2016- February 2017: Small grant project implementation period.

February 2017: Project completion; assessment exercise and final report.

### **Organizational Capacity**

Applicant organizations must demonstrate the capacity to implement higher education programs and to work in Iraq, either directly or through a partner organization. Applicants must demonstrate the ability to work in both of Iraq's national languages, Arabic and Kurdish.

Guidelines: The award period will begin on or about August 15, 2015. The award duration will be approximately 18 months and will cover all aspects of program planning, small grant competition administration and monitoring, and program evaluation and wrap-up.

### **APPLICATION INFORMATION**

Applications must be prepared and submitted using the Public Diplomacy Grants Program Application form. Cost-sharing is strongly recommended. Cost sharing can take the form of both allowable direct and indirect costs. For accountability, the recipient must maintain records to support all costs claimed as part of the cost-share agreement. Such records are subject to audit. Please refer to 2 CFR 200.306 Cost Sharing or Matching.

All sections of the applications must be completed. In addition to information about program personnel as requested on the application form, please provide complete resumes for key personnel, such as Project Director.

The deadline for receipt of applications is July 17<sup>th</sup>, 2015. U.S. Embassy Baghdad reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposal configurations, budgets, and/or participant numbers in accordance with the needs of the program, the availability of funds, and concurrence of the applicant.

### **SELECTION CRITERIA:**

Requests for funding provided by the U.S. Embassy should not exceed \$1,200,000. In deciding which program implementer to select, the Embassy Public Diplomacy Grants committee will give consideration to the full range and diversity of American and Iraqi educational and cultural traditions and seek to target geographically and demographically diverse audiences. Projects that involve direct, in-depth academic interaction, with the potential for sustained collaboration are preferred.

The Embassy Public Diplomacy Grants Committee will use the following criteria to evaluate proposals received in response to this funding opportunity:

**General Summary:** The general summary must describe the need for the program with regards to: location, the extent and nature of the program and the population being targeted for the program. It should identify, if any, the existing resources in the location, as well as general internal and external support mechanisms.

**Program Goals and Objectives/Activities Plan:** A clear overview of the program and its background, as well as goals and objectives of the program should be indicated in the proposal. The Embassy Public Diplomacy Grants Committee will closely consider whether the overall objectives lead to the goals of the program. Applicants should describe what they propose to do and how they will do it. The proposed activities must directly relate to meeting the goals and objectives, and applicants should include information on how they will measure activities' effectiveness. The Grants Committee will evaluate the activities planned in terms of their relevance to the current situation and the program goals and objectives, the feasibility of the proposed activities and their timeline for completion, and the extent to which the impact of the program will continue beyond the conclusion of the funding period.

**Organizational Capacity:** Applications must include a clear description of the applicant's management structure, previous experience with similar programs, and organizational background in the country/region as these relate to the proposed activities. Besides information about the organization as a whole, this section must also identify the proposed management structure and staffing plan for the proposed program. Applicants must demonstrate the ability to work in English, Arabic and Kurdish. Applicants must demonstrate the ability to carry out programs in Iraq.

**Budget:** Costs should be reasonable and realistic in relation to the program activities. Applicants are encouraged to provide as much detail as possible so that the committee may determine the extent to which the request represents an efficient use of USG resources. The budget should be consistent with the narrative description of the program and should reflect the applicant's understanding of the allowable cost principles established by Title 2 CFR 200.306 (part 230) on cost principles for non-profit organizations.

**Cost Sharing:** Grantees are encouraged to consider cost-sharing possibilities in order to increase community and stakeholder engagement in the project.

**Monitoring and evaluation plan:** Proposals should have a clear monitoring and evaluation plan to ensure proper implementation of the program.

## **DISCLAIMER**

Applicants can expect to be notified of the status of their application within sixty days of the submission deadline. Issuance of this funding opportunity does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the United States Government. It does not commit the USG to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of proposals. The USG reserves the right to reject any or all proposals received. If a proposal is selected for funding, the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad has no obligation to provide any additional future funding in connection with the award.

## **CONTACT INFORMATION**

Should additional information be required, please contact the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, Iraq at [BaghdadPDgrants@state.gov](mailto:BaghdadPDgrants@state.gov).