

**U.S. Department of State
Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs**

Office of the Middle East Partnership Initiative
Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: **19.500**

Political Process Strengthening

Opportunity Number: NEAPI-10-AW-027-MENA-101810

Announcement Type: New

Key Information:

Application Deadline:	23:59:59 ET on November 17, 2010
Federal Agency Contact	Jessica Baker Nea-grants@state.gov 202-776-8524
Date Opened	October 18, 2010
Electronic Link for Full Announcement (MEPI Website):	mepi.state.gov

Funding Opportunity Synopsis:

Project Synopsis:

The Office of the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) seeks proposals in support of its goal of building participatory societies where citizens have the regular opportunity to play an active role in making decisions that affect their lives and in holding their governments accountable. Proposals should present programs that strengthen democratic practices, electoral systems, political parties, and/or transparency in government across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). Proposals should assist MEPI in fostering political processes and institutions that encourage effective participation, giving attention to:

- A. Governance, Transparency, and Accountability; or
- B. Political Process Strengthening, including Women's Political Development and Public Confidence in the Electoral Process.

The Middle East Partnership Initiative has particular interest in supporting projects that are innovative and meet needs and opportunities not already addressed by current donor funding. We support projects in Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, UAE, and Yemen. Regional and multi-country projects may include an Iraq component, but we currently do not fund Iraq-specific projects.

We currently are unable to support new programming in the West Bank and Gaza due to a Congressionally mandated funding cap. Programming is defined as the inclusion of participants from the West Bank and Gaza in regional programs, as well as activities specifically working in the West Bank or Gaza.

Applicants must submit a separate application for each priority area under which they apply and must clearly state which priority area each application addresses.

Funding Mechanism Type: Cooperative Agreement or Grant

Estimated Number of Awards: 15

Estimated Total Program Funding: \$12,000,000

Estimated Award Amount (Ceiling): \$1,000,000

Length of Project Period: Two years

Eligible Applicants: U.S. or foreign non-profit organization; non-governmental organization; private institution; institutions of higher education (non-profit or for-profit); commercial entity; or small business.

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. To do this, MEPI partners with local, regional, and international non-governmental organizations, the private sector, academic institutions, and governments.

Through its Washington headquarters and Regional Offices in Abu Dhabi and Tunis, MEPI has contributed over \$530 million to more than 600 projects in 17 countries and territories since its establishment in 2002. More information about MEPI can be found at: mepi.state.gov.

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I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

The Office of the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) seeks proposals in support of its goal of building participatory societies where citizens have the regular opportunity to play an active role in making decisions that affect their lives and in holding their governments accountable. This call is consistent with President Obama's July 2009 speech in Ghana, in which he stated, "In the 21st century, capable, reliable, and transparent institutions are the key to success -- strong parliaments; honest police forces; independent judges; an independent press; a vibrant private sector; a civil society. Those are the things that give life to democracy, because that is what matters in people's everyday lives." Secretary Clinton echoed this sentiment in February 2010, stating that the United States believes that "people can best fulfill their potential when they have a say in the decisions that shape their lives; when they are free to share and access information; speak, criticize, and debate..."

Proposals should present programs that strengthen democratic practices, electoral systems, political parties, or transparency in government across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). MEPI considers the following objectives critical to achieving this goal:

- Free, open, and fair elections reflecting the will of the electorate; and,
- Political parties serving as a vehicle for meaningful public participation.

Proposals should foster political processes and institutions that encourage effective participation, giving attention to:

- Governance, Transparency, and Accountability, or
- Political Process Strengthening, including Women's Political Development and Public Confidence in the Electoral Process.

Project proposals should specify country or countries of activity, priority area, and partner organizations and provide particular detail on how activities will contribute to building the capacity of MENA-based partners and capitalize on youth participation in political processes and institutions. All proposals should indicate explicitly how activities will achieve policy impact and how implementers plan to measure political change. Proposals should propose a realistic timeline and outline specific plans for how the activities will continue to have an impact after the award ends.

Illustrative Examples

MEPI invites creative and detailed proposals from qualified implementers. Examples of past projects in the RFA's two areas (Good Governance and Political Process Strengthening, including Women's Political Development and Public Confidence in the Electoral Process) include:

- Training or professional enrichment opportunities for young and emerging leaders;
- Public monitoring of the budgetary process in parliaments and legislatures;
- Efforts to increase transparency in government institutions and public affairs;

- Internships for youth in local and national government; and
- Local initiatives to strengthen political parties' responsiveness to constituents.

These projects are listed not to limit creative thinking with respect to project design, but rather to provide a sense of the type of activities previously considered impactful. Project proposals will be evaluated, in part, on their abilities to assist local organizations and institutions in increasing their recruitment and mobilization of constituents for collective action and/or participating together with government to shape the future. Proposals should also factor in the contributions of women and youth as change makers. In all projects, supporting local leadership of activities is essential.

Applicants must submit a separate application for each priority area under which they apply and must clearly state which priority area each application addresses.

Priority Area A: Governance, Transparency, and Accountability

Competition Title: Governance, Transparency, and Accountability

Competition ID: PPS-A

Throughout the MENA region, MEPI strives to build truly democratic institutions, improve the responsiveness of governments to their citizens, and encourage active citizen engagement with political institutions. Projects in this area should support avenues for meaningful public participation and oversight, as well as for substantive separation of powers through institutional checks and balances. Transparency and integrity are also vital to government effectiveness and political stability. Proposals submitted under this priority area should focus not on traditional good governance technical assistance but rather one or both of the following elements:

Governance and Decentralization:

- Providing assistance and training to strengthen community planning, public participation, and transparent implementation of laws, regulations, policies, and programs;
- Developing or strengthening associations of local governments and/or local government officials; and/or,
- Assisting institutions to engage the public in developing or refining policies and procedures that guide institutional operations; develop public/private partnerships; and work with citizens as shareholders in the government.

Anti-Corruption Reforms:

- Promoting citizen involvement in pressing governance institutions to adopt processes and policies that are transparent and accountable;
- Supporting non-governmental as well as governmental institutions (including enforcement and investigation entities; independent audit agencies; anti-corruption commissions; procurement agencies; political parties; judicial actors; as well as civil society organizations; academia, press and the private sector); and/or,
- Supporting civic education and advocacy for reform of laws and practices or directly improving accountability and transparency of governance processes.

Priority Area B: Political Process Strengthening, including Women's Political Development and Public Confidence in the Electoral Process

Competition Title: Political Process Strengthening

Competition ID: PPS-B

The Middle East Partnership Initiative remains committed to partnering with citizens and local civil society organizations of the region to strengthen and expand public participation in the political arena. Proposals submitted under this priority area should support peaceful political competition and resolution of disputes through democratic and representative political processes. They should also create and support vehicles for people to debate public policy priorities, air alternative solutions, win support for proposed remedies, and provide input to decisions that affect their lives. Projects may include, but are not limited to, support for transparent and open elections, voter education initiatives, support for elections observers (including civil society organizations), and training for political parties and candidates in local, provincial, national, and professional association elections.

Elections-related programming should pertain to elections anticipated in the MENA region in 2011 and 2012, including presidential elections in Egypt (2011); parliamentary elections in the United Arab Emirates (2011), Oman (2011), Syria (2011), Yemen (2011), Morocco (2012), Kuwait (2012), and Algeria (2012); and local elections in Saudi Arabia (2011), Qatar (2011), and Syria (2011). Proposals for elections-related programming should generally be country-specific. However, non elections-related proposals are not limited to these countries and may be single country, multi-country, or regional.

The Office of the Middle East Partnership Initiative sees the legislative process as a vector for citizen empowerment in political life. Political process strengthening programming could target legal or institutional frameworks; elections management; public awareness, voter education and enfranchisement; observation, monitoring, and oversight; citizen engagement and participation in elections and political processes; political parties and party organizational development; and constituent outreach. Proposals submitted under this priority area should focus on one or more of the following related elements:

Elections and Political Processes:

- Promoting legitimate contestation for political power through democratic political processes that reflect the will of the people; and/or,
- Establishing or developing competitive multiparty systems through improving the legal and regulatory framework under which political parties and political entities operate.

Women's Political Development:

- Training women on campaign management, voter outreach techniques, fundraising, constituent mobilization, and other relevant skills that will allow candidates to wage credible campaigns at the national, regional, and local levels; and/or,
- Supporting women candidates for all levels of elected office.

Public Confidence in the Electoral Process:

- Supporting wide public participation in politics and peaceful political competition, creating an environment where public debate flourishes and where citizens can engage government officials in dialogue;
- Encouraging public confidence in the electoral process through transparency measures, monitoring and accountability, public awareness and voter education, including the dissemination of information and education materials; and/or,
- Promoting public engagement in the political process, with special attention to youth and civic education.

II. AWARD INFORMATION

Funding Mechanism Type:	Cooperative Agreement or Grant
Estimated Number of Awards:	15
Estimated Total Program Funding:	\$12,000,000
Estimated Award Ceiling:	\$1,000,000
Estimated Award Floor:	\$400,000
Length of Project Period:	Up to Two years

Approximately \$12,000,000 in Economic Support Funds for approximately 15 grants will be awarded through this RFA. If selected to receive a grant, applicants will be awarded funds for up to two years. Grants funded under these awards, beyond the initial budget period, will be contingent upon the availability of funds; grantee progress in meeting grant requirements, including timely submission of required reports, and compliance with all terms and conditions of the award; timely submission of a request for additional funding; and a determination that continued funding would be in the best interest of the Department of State.

The Office of the Middle East Partnership Initiative reserves the right to award funding to applicants under this RFA for a period of up to two years after the announcement's close date.

The Middle East Partnership Initiative has particular interest in supporting projects that are innovative and meet needs and opportunities not already addressed by current donor funding. We support projects in Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, UAE, and Yemen. Regional and multi-country projects may include an Iraq component, but we currently do not fund Iraq-specific projects.

We currently are unable to support new programming in the West Bank and Gaza due to a Congressionally mandated funding cap. Programming is defined as the inclusion of participants

from the West Bank and Gaza in regional programs, as well as activities specifically working in the West Bank or Gaza.

III. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

All applications will be screened by the Office of the Middle East Partnership Initiative to determine whether each applicant meets all of the program eligibility requirements detailed below.

NOTE: Applications that do not demonstrate that they meet all of the eligibility requirements will not advance to the Technical Review stage. Nothing can be added to an application once it has been submitted.

A. ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

A.1 Grants.gov

The Office of the Middle East Partnership Initiative requires that all applications for funding be submitted through Grants.gov. In order to apply, your organization must complete the Grants.gov registration process. To register, please go to www.grants.gov and click on “Get Registered.” The registration process can take 10 business days or longer, even if all the registration steps are completed in a timely manner. Registration is a five-step process: 1) obtain a DUNS number; 2) register with Central Contracting Registration (CCR); 3) create a profile, including username and password; 4) obtain Authorized Organization Representative (AOR) authorization; and 5) track AOR status.

Attention Foreign Organizations: Additional guidance on registering with Grants.gov can be found at MEPI’s website (www.mepi.state.gov). You can also contact MEPI at nea-grants@state.gov to request this guidance.

A.2 Types of Applicants

Eligible applicants include any registered U.S. or foreign non-profit organization; non-governmental organization; private institution; institutions of higher education (non-profit or for-profit); commercial entity; or small business. The Office of the Middle East Partnership Initiative strongly encourages applications from experienced civil society organizations in the Middle East and North Africa region. International partners (non-governmental organizations with principal bases of operations outside the Middle East and North Africa) are also encouraged to apply, but the percentage of total budget actually spent in the region through local partners will be among the elements of evaluation for this competition.

A.3 Dun and Bradstreet Data Universal Number System

Obtaining a Data Universal Number System (DUNS) number is the first step required by an organization to register with the Grants.gov system. The Data Universal Number System (DUNS) is a nine-digit number established and assigned by Dun and Bradstreet, Inc. (D&B) to uniquely identify business entities.

Applicants must provide a DUNS number to apply to this funding opportunity. If your organization does not already have a DUNS number, please begin this process immediately. This process normally takes one business day. A DUNS number may be acquired at no cost on-line at fedgov.dnb.com or via telephone at: 1-866-705-5711.

A.4 Central Contractor Registration

Obtaining Central Contractor Registration (CCR) is the second step required by organizations to register with the Grants.gov system. The CCR is the Federal repository in which an applicant must provide information required for the conduct of business as an award recipient. CCR registration expires each year and must be updated annually.

Applicants must be registered with the Central Contractor Registration to apply to this funding opportunity. Further, applicants must maintain an active CCR registration, with current information, while their application is under consideration for funding. This process can take three to five business days or up to two weeks. If your organization is not already registered please begin this process immediately. Registration procedures may be found at www.ccr.gov.

B. ADDITIONAL ELIGIBILITY CONSIDERATIONS

B.1 Partners or Coalitions

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 reform issues and priorities, and would share information and expertise with one another. Assistance to civil society coalitions represents an important MEPI goal.

The following table (Table 1) contains a summary of what constitutes a partner or coalition and details what evidence applicants must provide to meet this component. Also included in the table is a “Where to Document” section to guide you on where to place the evidence in your application (e.g., as an attachment, in the Project Narrative, in the Budget Narrative).

TABLE 1: PARTNER OR COALITION

<u>Partner or Coalition</u>	<u>Where to Document</u>
<p>Definition: 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. Coalitions could include NGOs, private sector, governmental entities, academic institutions, and non-profit organizations.</p> <p>Applicants who plan to submit a proposal with partners or a coalition of partners should be prepared to clearly outline the roles and responsibilities of all organizations involved in the project and should reflect the input of local or in-country partners.</p>	<p>Evidence:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How the partnership arrangement advances the objectives of the project. 2. Clarification of the role of the partner(s) in the implementation of the project, evaluation, and sustainability 3. Supporting documentation identifying the resources, experience, and expertise of the partner(s) 4. Evidence that each of the partner(s) has been involved in the planning of the project 5. An intent to commit or receive resources or services from the prospective partner(s) contingent upon receipt of funds (e.g., letter of intent, letter of agreement, etc.) <p>Where to Document:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Partnership project objectives, role of partner, planning and expertise in the project—Proposal Narrative 2. Letter of Intent or Letter of Agreement—Attachment

B.2 Sustainability Plan

Applicants should document a sustainability plan within the proposal narrative. The main purpose of the sustainability plan is to help the project sustain the results and outcomes beyond the initial award period. Please develop the sustainability plan by addressing each of the areas listed below:

- Describe the impact of the project in creating sustainable change that is locally owned and explain how a sustainability plan will support the project’s overall strategy.
- Discuss how sustainability will be integrated into the project from the beginning.
- Identify the results and outcomes that can be realistically sustained after MEPI funding ends.
- Present a plan to secure the resources needed to sustain the aforementioned results after MEPI funding ends.
- Identify potential partners that will play a role in sustaining the project past the scheduled end date and explain the role they will play.

Applications that include a sustainability plan will receive additional points in the evaluation process.

B.3 Results-Oriented Monitoring and Assessment Plan

Each submission should contain a **Results-Oriented Monitoring and Assessment (ROMA) Plan** that will describe the system proposed by the applicant to capture and measure progress towards achieving the objectives of the grant.

The ROMA Plan should include the following elements:

- Realistic project objectives. What results are achievable during the period of the grant?
- Qualitative indicators. How and what will you measure to show the project's results based on outcomes (impact) rather than outputs (raw numbers)?
- Data collection and analysis. How will you collect and present indicator data and analysis to show progress toward the project objectives?
- Monitoring and reporting. How will you monitor and assess results during the implementation of the project to adapt to changes on the ground and to maintain forward progress?

Applications that include a ROMA plan will receive additional points in the evaluation process.

B.4 Cost-Sharing or Matching

The Office of the Middle East Partnership Initiative encourages applicants to provide cost-sharing (or matching) from additional sources in support of this project. Applications should explain clearly other likely sources of funding and how the funds will be used. If these resources are not proposed, applicants should explain why not. Applications that include cost-sharing or matching will receive additional points in the evaluation process.

IV. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

A. SUBMITTING AN APPLICATION

A.1 Download the Application Package from Grants.gov

To download the application package, applicants must go to www.grants.gov, and follow the steps below:

1. Select "Apply for Grants" under the "For Applicants" category on the left-hand side of the Grants.gov home page.
2. Select "Download a Grant Application package."
3. Complete the search engine you wish to use and click "Download Application."
4. Review the search results at the bottom of the page and click the "Download" link next to the correct program announcement or competition title.

NOTE: When downloading the Grant Application Package, applicants must be sure to select and move the following mandatory forms to the “Mandatory Documents for Submission” field displayed on Grants.gov:

- Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424)
- Budget Information for Non-Construction Programs (SF-424a)
- Project Narrative Attachment Form
- Budget Narrative Attachment Form
- Assurances for Non-Construction Programs (SF-424b)

To include the attachments outlined in Section B.2 below, applicants should select and move the optional form “Attachments” to the displayed “Optional Documents for Submission” field.

Applicants who wish to disclose any lobbying activities should select and move the optional form “Disclosure for Lobbying Activities (SF-LLL)” to the displayed “Optional Documents for Submission” field for completion.

For more information about downloading the application package, please read the instructions in the User Guide found at the Grants.gov apply site, on the Help page.

A.2 Application Documents

All applications must include the application components detailed below. Please refer to Section B.3 for additional submissions requirements (e.g., font size, page margins). Failure to submit all of the required documentation described in this RFA will result in the application not being considered for funding.

Required Documents:

1. **Federal Assistance Application Forms (SF-424, SF-424a, and SF424b)** Applicants must complete all three forms to be considered for funding. Information on how to complete the SF-424 and SF-424a can be found in Appendix 4.
2. **Project Narrative** – The Project Narrative describes the efforts the applicant will undertake to address the priorities and goals of this announcement. It may be no longer than 25 pages. More detailed instructions for preparing the Project Narrative are provided in Appendix 4.
3. **Budget Narrative** – The Budget Narrative provides narrative detail about both the Federal request and the non-Federal match. There is no page limit for this section of your application. A sample template can be found in Appendix 2. **NOTE: Applicants must use the same format as found in the sample.** Additional guidance for preparing the Budget Narrative can be found in Appendix 4.
4. **Attachment 1—MEPI Application Coversheet** The Coversheet provides summary detail about the applicant and their proposal, and must include a maximum two-page

executive summary. A sample template can be found in Appendix 1. **NOTE: Applicants must use the same format as found in the sample.**

5. **Attachment 2—Applicant Organizational Information** This document provides details about the type of organization, an organizations structure and policies, and an applicant’s ability to manage Federal funds. A sample template can be found in Appendix 3. **NOTE: Applicants must use the same format as found in the sample.**

Optional Documents:

These documents may not exceed a total of 25 pages. More detailed instructions for preparing attachments are provided in Appendix 4.

1. **Disclosure for Lobbying Activities (SF-LLL)**
2. **Attachment 3—Consultant and/or Contract Information** found in Appendices 2.1 and 2.2.
3. **Attachment 4—Organizational Chart** outlining clear lines of responsibility and authority of the applicant organization.
4. **Attachment 5—Resumes, Biographical Information, or Job Descriptions** for key personnel.
5. **Attachment 4—Letters of Agreements or Letters of Intent** from proposed partners.
6. **Attachment 6—Work Plans and/or Monitoring and Evaluation Plans.**
7. **Attachment 7—Pre-Submission Checklist** can be found in Appendix 5. This Checklist ensures that you have accurately documented the eligibility requirements and included all major components of the application.

A.3 Application Formatting Requirements

It is strongly recommended that applicants submit grant applications using Microsoft Office. If applicants do not have access to Microsoft Office products, PDF files may be submitted.

Text legibility: The required font is 12-point Times New Roman. The application must be single spaced, with all margins (left, right, top, and bottom) of at least one inch each.

Page numbering: Pages should be numbered consecutively **from beginning to end**, so that information can be located easily during review of the application (hand write page numbers if necessary). Attachments should be labeled and separated from the Project Narrative and Budget Narrative, and the pages should be numbered to continue the sequence. **Documents containing scanned images must also contain page numbers to continue the sequence.** The Standard Forms 424 (SF-424, SF-424a, and SF-424b), Attachment 1, and Attachment 2 are excluded from the page numbering requirement.

Page Limits: The limitation of pages for each submission should be considered as a maximum and not necessarily a goal, and excludes the SF 424 forms, Attachment 1, Attachment 2, and the Budget Narrative.

Adhering to the standards outlined above will help to ensure the accurate submission of your document. Failure to comply with these requirements may affect the successful transmission and consideration of an application.

A.4 Submitting an Application

Applicants must submit a separate application for each priority area under which they apply and must clearly state which priority area the application addresses.

Please allow sufficient time for entering your application into Grants.gov. The process of electronic submission through Grants.gov includes multiple e-mails from Grants.gov. When an applicant submits an application, a notice that the application is being processed will be sent and the individual whose e-mail address was entered will receive two e-mails from Grants.gov within 24-48 hours. One e-mail will confirm receipt of the application in Grants.gov, and the other will indicate that the application was either successfully validated by the system (**with a tracking number**) or rejected due to errors. It will also provide instructions that if the named individual did not receive a receipt confirmation **and** a validation confirmation or a rejection e-mail within 48 hours, he/she must contact Grants.gov directly.

It is important to understand that **the application process is not complete until an applicant has received a Grants.gov tracking number.** Receipt of the tracking number is the only indication that Grants.gov has successfully received and validated an application. If an applicant does not receive a Grants.gov tracking number, contact the Grants.gov Contact Center for assistance.

Please note that it is incumbent on applicants to monitor their applications to ensure that they are successfully received and validated by Grants.gov. **If an application is not successfully validated by Grants.gov, it will not be forwarded to MEPI as the receiving institution.**

B. SUBMISSION DATES AND TIMES

Applications are due before 23:59:59 eastern time (ET) on November 17, 2010. **There will be no grace period and any application not received by the application deadline will not be considered for review.**

Applicants are encouraged to submit their proposals far enough in advance of the deadline so they can alert MEPI (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.

Within 30 days of submission, applicants will be notified via email (from nea-grants@state.gov) that their applications have been received. This notification will include an application log number that applicants must use to track their applications.

C. FUNDING LIMITATIONS/RESTRICTIONS

C.1 Economic Support Funds Restrictions:

We currently are unable to support new programming in the West Bank and Gaza due to a Congressionally mandated funding cap. Programming is defined as the inclusion of participants from the West Bank and Gaza in regional programs, as well as activities specifically working in the West Bank or Gaza.

C.2 Awards to Commercial Firms or For-Profit Organizations:

The Department of State prohibits profit under its assistance awards to commercial organizations. No funds will be paid as profit to any recipient that is a commercial organization. Profit is defined as any amount in excess of allowable direct and indirect costs. The allowability of costs incurred by commercial organizations is determined in accordance with the provisions of the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) at 48 CFR Part 31. Program income earned by the recipient must be deducted from the total project or program allowable cost in determining the net allowable costs on which the federal share of costs is based.

V. APPLICATION REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS

A. APPLICATION EVALUATION CRITERIA

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. 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.

Innovation and Approach –The applicant clearly describes how its proposal will address the requested program area and articulates an innovative strategy or plan under this announcement. The applicant clearly describes how its proposal will allow for local ownership of the proposed activities. Proposal suggests creative, innovative, and actionable approach to strengthen political processes. The approach will be evaluated in terms of feasibility in the regional and country context, as well as by the criteria laid out in Part 1—Funding Opportunity Description. (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 toward MEPI goals. Any relevant data based on planning studies are 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. The applicant clearly defines a results monitoring and evaluation plan that focuses on the impact and outcomes of programmatic activities. Full points are awarded only to proposals that use measurable and qualitative indicators that are specific to the context and length of the project.

Projects with feasible sustainability plans will receive highest consideration and additional evaluation points – per Section III, B.2. Projects with results monitoring and evaluation plans will receive the highest consideration and additional evaluation points—per Part III, Section B.3. (25 points)

Organizational Capacity – The organization has expertise and capacity to work with and engage institutions, organizations, and leaders in the MENA region. 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 MEPI goals in the stated program areas of competency. Projects where partners are described will receive highest consideration and additional evaluation points – per Part III, Section B.1. 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 Narrative - The detailed budget includes the Budget Information—Non-Construction Programs (SF-424a) and a budget narrative (as outlined in Appendix 2). 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 costs proposed are reasonable in relation to the proposed activities and anticipated results, and the plan for services is realistic.

The budget narrative documents the necessity, reasonableness, and allocation of all proposed costs. Adequate travel to and within the Middle East and North Africa is proposed. The application documents any efforts to secure other funding sources, including volunteers and cost-sharing. Projects with cost-sharing will receive highest consideration and additional evaluation points – per Part III, Section B.4. Full points are awarded only to proposals that propose the preponderance of the budget be spent in the countries of Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Israel, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, UAE, and Yemen, per Part II--Award Information. (20 points)

B. REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS

The Office of the Middle East Partnership Initiative is committed to ensuring a competitive and standardized process for awarding Economic Support Funds grants. Applications will be screened initially by MEPI to determine whether applicants meet all eligibility requirements outlined in Part III; the required documents outlined in Part IV—Section B.2; and address the priorities outlined in Part I—Funding Opportunity Description. Applications that do not meet these requirements will not advance to the Technical Review stage.

All applications that proceed to Technical Review will be rated on a 100-point scale. Point values for individual elements of the application are presented in Part V—Section A. Technical Reviewers’ ratings, and any resulting recommendations, are advisory. All final grant award decisions will be made by the Deputy Assistant Secretary.

The primary decision criterion is the application's final review score average. However, the final award decision will also be influenced by whether the application meets MEPI's programmatic goals and objectives, how it supports the Department's overarching foreign policy priorities, and the geographic distribution of the top-ranking proposals.

VI. ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

A. AWARD NOTICES

Within 30 days of receipt of the application, MEPI will notify the authorized representative and program point of contact listed on the SF-424 through email (from nea-grants@state.gov) that the application has been received. The correspondence will include an application log number that the applicant must reference when asking questions about their submission. If an applicant submits an application on time and does not receive notification by December 17, 2010, MEPI may be contacted at nea-grants@state.gov for additional information.

By January 17, 2011, if an applicant is under consideration for funding, the authorized representative, project director, and business official will receive a pre-award letter via email (from nea-grants@state.gov), signed by the Office's Deputy Director. The pre-award letter begins the negotiation process for a Financial Assistance Award. A Financial Assistance Award document, 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.

By January 18, 2011 the authorized representative and program point of contact listed on the SF-424, for all applicants whose application is not funded, will receive a letter via email (from nea-grants@state.gov), signed by the Office's Deputy Director.

The Office of the Middle East Partnership Initiative reserves the right to award funding to applicants under this RFA for a period of up to two years after the announcement's close date.

VII. AGENCY CONTACTS

For questions regarding this funding opportunity including: completing an application, financial and grants management issues; or technical matters, contact:

Jessica Baker
(202) 776-8524
nea-grants@state.gov

For questions regarding registering with Grants.gov or using Grants.gov to submit an application, contact the Grants.gov Contact Center. The Contact Center is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, excluding Federal holidays.

Grants.gov Contact Center (800) 518-4726 support@Grants.gov