

## Frequently Asked Questions

August 18, 2011

### **ALERTS!**

#### **Message to Applicants Interested in Future Funding:**

Applicants should complete NEA's *Organizational Interest and Capacity Questionnaire* to be eligible for future NEA funding in the areas of political and economic development, democracy, human rights, freedom of expression, and much more. Information on how to complete this questionnaire and submit an application can be found at: [www.mepi.state.gov](http://www.mepi.state.gov).

#### **Message to Applicants Interested in Tunisia: Supporting a Democratic Transition Annual Program Statement:**

**MEPI will download the next round of applications to the Tunisia APS at 23:59 EST on October 3, 2011.** We will be downloading all applications (regardless of the priority area) received between July 11, 2011 and October 3, 2011. After October 3rd, applications may be submitted on a continuous basis. MEPI anticipates downloading applications again in December 2011 and March 2012.

#### **Important Message to All Applicants:**

All applicants are advised to read the program announcement in its entirety. **New eligibility requirements, submission requirements, and sample templates are now included.** The change to the format of the announcement is to assist the applicant in understanding what MEPI is looking for in an application for funding. Failure to submit all the required documentation described in the announcement will result in an application not being considered for funding.

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## **Frequently Asked Questions:**

### **Organizational Interest and Capacity Questionnaire—Statement of Interest:**

#### **1. What is a Statement of Interest (SOI) funding opportunity?**

A Statement of Interest (SOI) is a two-tiered competitive process. The first tier is an announcement which requests that applicants submit an executive summary or concept paper with broad evaluation parameters. After evaluation and review of the first tier submissions, a second tier competition is conducted where specific applicants are contacted to submit full applications that will be reviewed and evaluated under more specific evaluation criteria. The second tier is a request for applications issued only to those applicants that were selected from the first announcement.

#### **2. How long is the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs' (NEA) SOI open?**

The Bureau's SOI is open for 60 days and will close at 23:59:59 ET on September 30, 2011.

#### **3. Why should my organization apply to NEA's SOI? How is the SOI different from any other NEA program announcement?**

This announcement is a unique opportunity for organizations to tell us about the work their organization is currently doing and about their organization's capacity to partner with NEA to achieve their regional, country-specific, and programmatic priorities and objectives. If selected as one of NEA's pre-identified organizations, you will be eligible to receive invitations to submit full applications to select, future funding opportunities. These opportunities will be smaller in terms of the number of applicants, and only those applicants that were pre-identified through this SOI will be eligible to apply. For example: If your organization is one of 10 organizations invited to submit a full application, you will compete against 9 other applicants for the funding opportunity. **NEA will not be posting another opportunity like this for a minimum of four years after this one closes.**

A Statement of Interest (SOI) is a two-tiered competitive process. The first tier is an announcement which requests that applicants submit an executive summary or concept paper with broad evaluation parameters. The second tier is a request for applications issued only to those applicants that were selected from the first announcement. Request for Applications or Annual Program Statements (other types of NEA announcements) are more program or country specific. Further, when you apply to these types of announcements you submit larger, more detail applications and compete against a larger pool of applicants for funding. In addition, these types of announcements are usual one time opportunities that may not be repeated year-to-year.

#### **4. Who is eligible to apply to the SOI? Can foreign organizations apply?**

**U.S. - or foreign-based non-profit organizations, non-governmental organizations, private institutions, institutions of higher education, commercial entities, or small businesses may submit an application.** NEA 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.

**5. How do I submit an application to NEA's *Organizational Interest and Capacity Questionnaire*?**

Applicants must be complete **Federal Assistance Application Forms** (SF-424 and SF-424b) and an ***Organizational Interest and Capacity Questionnaire***. The *Questionnaire* is web-based and each applicant will go to a website to answer questions about their organization's interest and abilities related to NEA's goals and objectives. U.S.-based organizations will submit their response to the *Questionnaire* and the SF-424 forms as attachments on Grants.gov. Foreign-based organizations will submit their response to the *Questionnaire* and the SF-424 forms as attachments via email to the NEA mailbox.

**6. How do I access the online *Questionnaire*?**

Prior to accessing and completing the *Questionnaire*, applicants should review the full announcement. In the announcement you are able to review what areas are of interest to NEA; confirm your organization's eligibility; see what documents are required for this announcement; and verify how your organization must submit their application. In the announcement you will find the link to and instructions for the *Questionnaire*.

**7. Is there a way I can see all the questions before completing the *Questionnaire***

Yes. To view the questions that you will see in the *Questionnaire* please go to the MEPI website and click on the link "Organizational Interest and Capacity Questionnaire Sample Questions." **NOTE: This document is only a sample. To complete and submit responses to the *Questionnaire* applicants must go to the online link which can be found in the announcement.**

**8. How long does it take to fill out the online *Questionnaire*?**

The amount of time it will take can range from 10 hours to a couple of days, depending on your responses to the different questions. The *Questionnaire* is very comprehensive and applicants are strongly encouraged to complete it during multiple sessions. It is set-up so that you can save and resume your progress at anytime. Instructions on how to resume your progress can be found in question (#9) below.

**9. How do I save my answers and exit the *Questionnaire* without submitting an application, and resume the *Questionnaire* at a later date?**

When you are completing the *Questionnaire* it is important to make note of and save the **CODE** that is located at the top of your screen. Prior to exiting the *Questionnaire*, click **Save Progress** at the bottom of the screen. When you return to the *Questionnaire*, you will be directed to the first page. Click on the **Resume Progress** button, located at the bottom of the screen, and enter the **CODE** you saved when prompted. You will be directed to the page where you last inputted information.

**10. What happens to the information I submit into the web-based online *Questionnaire*?**

When applicants submit their responses to the *Questionnaire*, the responses are sent to a central database where your organizations information will be stored during the four-year period of eligibility. After submitting responses to the *Questionnaire*, applicants should click on the link '*Download Answers*' to download a MS-Word document of their responses.

Applicants should save the MS-Word document on their own computer system. **This document needs to be submitted to NEA with the SF-424 forms. U.S.-based applicants will attach this to their submission on Grants.gov, and foreign-based applicants will attach this to their submission to the NEA mailbox.**

**11. Is the information I provide in survey safe and is it shared with anyone else?**

When completing the *Questionnaire*, you are asked to provide your organization's name, DUNS number, and an email address. This information is used to identify your organizations information in the central database. No other personnel information is requested by the online questionnaire. All of the information gathered, through the *Questionnaire*, about your organization's capacity will be stored in a secure database and your organization's information will be shared only within the NEA Bureau for future funding.

**12. Can I submit more than one application to this announcement (e.g. if my organization has multiple offices in different countries; if my university has different faculty or departments interest in applying, etc.)?**

NEA seeks only one application per grantee organization unless the office or department has their own DUNS number. What we mean by this is, if your organization has one DUNS number that you use for all your applications, we request only one application from you.

The *Questionnaire* can be completed by multiple persons/offices. If you have multiple teams completing this questionnaire, it is important to make note of the **CODE** that is located at the top of each page of the questionnaire. The *Questionnaire* is meant to be completed in multiple sittings. The current person, who is completing the *Questionnaire*, should save that code and share it with the rest of the team. When the next person goes into the *Questionnaire* they should click on the **Resume Progress** button and enter this **CODE** when prompted. This will allow the next person to resume the questionnaire where the last person exited.

**13. Is a budget required in my submission?**

No budget information is required in your submission. NEA is looking for organizations to tell us, through the *Questionnaire*, about the work their organization is currently doing and about their organizations capacity to partner with NEA to achieve their regional, country-specific, and programmatic priorities and objectives; and is not seeking applications for specific projects that would include a budget.

**14. How do I decide which application package or CFDA number to use when I submit my application to this announcement on Grants.gov? There are four packages: one for each CFDA entity (19.600; 19.500; 19.221) and one without.**

Applicants may submit an application to any of the posted applications packages for this SOI. **If you download, complete, and submit an application to one package, do not submit an application to a second one.** All applications, regardless of the application package used, will be considered under all three CFDA numbers. We seek one application from each organization.

**15. If I am selected as a pre-identified partner, how long will I be eligible for future funding opportunities?**

Pre-identified partners will be eligible for future funding opportunities for a period of up to **four years**. **During that four-year period, there is no guarantee that organizations will receive invitations to apply for funding. Please note:** Grants funded under this mechanism will be contingent upon the availability of funds and NEA's regional, country-specific, and programmatic priorities and objectives.

**16. Will we receive periodic updates from NEA throughout the course of the 4 years?**

The responses an applicant submits to NEA through the *Questionnaire* will be captured and stored by NEA for a period of four years. Applicants will not be able to change or revise any of their responses after they submit their application. By October 31, 2011, NEA will notify the authorized representative and program point of contact listed on the SF-424 through email (from nea-grants@state.gov) if their organization is eligible or not eligible for future funding opportunities under this announcement.

**Those organizations that are eligible for future funding opportunities will be contacted, during the four-year period, only in the event that their organization is invited to submit a full application to a select funding opportunity.**

**17. Will NEA continue to post open competitions after this announcement closes? If a NEA announcements calls for applications similar to our interests identified in the SOI, can we apply without receiving an invitation?**

NEA posts funding opportunities throughout the year but cannot specify what types of announcements will be posted in the near future. Organizations that apply and are selected under this announcement are not prejudiced or prohibited from applying to future NEA program solicitations where their organization has a particular interest and relevant expertise.

**Tunisia: Supporting a Democratic Transition Annual Program Statement:**

**1. What is an Annual Program Statement (APS) funding opportunity?**

An Annual Program Statement (APS) is an annual announcement to generate competition for new awards and is open for one year. An APS encourages the submission of unique and creative methodologies while increasing the likelihood that the proposed projects are in line with annual MEPI and Department of State policy priorities. This type of announcement has broad evaluation parameters from which received applications are periodically evaluated and awarded.

**2. Can we submit more than one application during the period that this announcement is open?**

Applicants may submit more than one proposal during the period of the APS. **Note:** Applicants **must** submit a separate proposal for each priority area under which they apply and **must** clearly state which priority area each proposal addresses.

**3. Where should we include a Sustainability Plan in our application?**

Applicants may submit a Sustainability Plan within the project narrative or as a separate document included in the appendices portion of their application. The quality and feasibility of the proposed Sustainability Plan will be among the elements on which proposals are evaluated. **Note:** There are page limits to this document, the project narrative, and optional documents. If an application exceeds the page limit, the extra pages will be removed from the application package.

**4. Where should we include a Results-Oriented Monitoring and Assessment (ROMA) Plan in our application?**

Applicants may submit a ROMA plan within the project narrative or as a separate document included in the appendices portion of their application. The quality and feasibility of the proposed ROMA will be among the elements on which proposals are evaluated. **Note:** There are page limits to this document, the project narrative, and optional documents. If an application exceeds the page limit, the extra pages will be removed from the application package.

**5. Is there a limit on the number of applications an organization may submit? Can an organization submit multiple proposals for one priority area?**

Applicants may submit more than one proposal; however, each proposal should address only one of the published priority areas. Applicants must submit a separate application for each priority area under which they apply and must clearly state which priority area each application addresses.

**General Funding Opportunity Questions:**

**1. How does one learn about projects previously funded by MEPI?**

Please visit the MEPI website ([www.mepi.state.gov](http://www.mepi.state.gov)) to get a sense of the range of activities we've funded over the years.

**Technical Issues:**

**1. I cannot access the full announcement link on Grants.gov.**

All MEPI funding opportunities are posted on our website. To find the full announcement, go to [www.mepi.state.gov](http://www.mepi.state.gov), and select the "Funding Opportunities" tab. Click on the "Apply for a Grant" link, and then the "Open Opportunities" link to view our announcements. Click on the announcement title to download the full announcement.

**2. Are there MS-Word and MS-Excel versions of the Sample Template Documents? Where can I find them?**

To download the sample templates for MEPI announcements, please follow the instructions below:

- 1) Go to [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov)
- 2) Click on the "Find Grant Opportunities" link, and select "Basic search"
- 3) Enter the funding opportunity number or CFDA number, and click "Search."

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- 4) Click on the appropriate announcement link (You will be directed to the announcement's synopsis page)
- 5) At the top of the announcement's synopsis page, there will be three headers. **Click on the header entitled "Full Announcement."**
- 6) On the Full Announcement page, there will be a list of files. Select the file entitled "Other Supporting Documents—Fillable Sample Template Documents and Appendices" with the description "Zip of all attachments." By selecting this file all the sample template documents appendices will be downloaded.

### General Budget Questions for RFA's and APS':

#### **1. How should we present a two-year project within Appendix 2—Budget Narrative Template?**

Applicants may prepare and submit two separate budgets detailing Year 1 and Year 2 costs, or they may add a column to the template which outlines Year 2 costs. The budget should be submitted through the "Budget Narrative" category on Grants.gov.

### General Application and Submission Questions for RFA's and APS':

#### **1. Where should we include the Table of Contents in our application? Is it included in the page limits?**

The Table of Contents should include the page numbers for each of the major sections of the application and for each attachment. It can be attached to the project narrative or submitted as a separate attachment with the application. Also, it need not include page numbers for the SF-424 forms, MEPI Cover Sheet, and Applicant Organization Information. The Table of Contents is excluded from the page limitations outlined in the announcement.

#### **2. Should the various attachment documents be labeled with specific names?**

When enclosing the attachment documents in a submission, please label them based on their title in the announcement (e.g., MEPI Application, Applicant Organization Information, etc.)

#### **3. Can I submit Adobe PDF versions of my application documents?**

Applicants may submit Adobe PDF versions of their application documents. In particular, applicants are encouraged to submit their Budget Narrative as an Adobe PDF file. Applicants may also submit their application using Microsoft Office products. If using Microsoft Office, please make sure the files submitted are not in Open Document Text format (ODT).

#### **4. Will my application be disqualified if I don't use the samples provided for the MEPI Application Coversheet (Appendix 1), Budget Narrative (Appendix 2), and the Applicant Organization Information (Appendix 3)?**

For an application to be considered it must include the Federal Assistance Application Forms; a Project Narrative; a Budget Narrative; a Coversheet; and Applicant Organizational information. **Should an applicant decide not to use the samples provided, they should ensure that their submission includes all the elements outlined in each sample.**

**Application Evaluation Criteria for RFA's and APS':**

**1. Will my application lose points if I don't use the sample template to prepare my Budget Narrative and Result-Oriented Monitoring and Assessment Plan?**

Applicants who do not use the samples will not lose evaluation criteria points. The Budget Narrative should support the proposed project activities and include the elements outlined under the announcement's Budget Narrative criteria. Per the announcement, "projects with results monitoring and evaluation plans will receive the highest consideration and additional evaluations points."