



Guidebook
Local Grants
Applicants

MEPI
Middle East Partnership Initiative

Local Grants

Overview

The **Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI)**, located within the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs at the U.S. Department of State, supports efforts to expand political participation, strengthen civil society and the rule of law, empower women and youth, create educational opportunities, and foster economic reform throughout the Middle East and North Africa. In support of these goals, MEPI works with non-governmental organizations, the private sector, and academic institutions, as well as governments.

The guidebook you are now reading is intended to provide you and your organization with information on: the strategic planning process, including some exercises that will help you decide whether you should consider applying for a “Local Grant;” organizational development; financial management; and funding sources and financial sustainability. This guidebook will also help you better understand MEPI, its mission, goals, and objectives, as well as what we mean by the Local Grants program. The final section will provide you with guidance on applying for a grant. (For those who have already been awarded a Local Grant, MEPI also offers its “Guidebook for MEPI Local Grants Recipients.”)

By the time you finish reading this book, you should be able to do the following:

- ◆ Write a Mission Statement for your organization pages 2-7
- ◆ Understand the importance of good Organizational Development and Financial Management pages 8-11
- ◆ Access information on Funding Sources and Financial Sustainability pages 12-13
- ◆ Understand the Goals and Objectives of MEPI and whether a MEPI Local Grant is right for you pages 14-20
- ◆ Know how to apply for a MEPI Local Grant pages 21-32

So, now that you know what we’re going to teach you, let’s get started!

Strategic Planning Process

Every organization, no matter how large or how small, has an identity and a reason for existing. This is true for government agencies, as well as non-governmental organizations (NGOs). This guidebook will focus on NGOs, as it is these organizations, or members of civil society, with which MEPI usually works.

Before we go any further, it is useful for you to understand what we mean by strategic planning.

Definition of Strategic Planning:

The strategic planning process is an organized effort to make strategic decisions about an NGO's identity and reason for existence. It is also a set of principles, steps, and tools designed to help leaders, managers, and planners think and act in a strategic fashion. This process, then, will help the NGO make effective decisions to achieve its mission and to satisfy its target audience by taking into consideration its strengths and weaknesses, as well as opportunities and threats that exist in its external environment.

In other words, **strategic planning** is a process of analysis that provides a creative, innovative, and deep look into an NGO's character and culture to assist the NGO as it searches for new ideas and builds its future. But why is this process so important?

Importance of Strategic Planning for NGOs:

EXERCISE 1: Take a few minutes to think of a few reasons why your organization might need such a process, and list them in the spaces below.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

The following are some additional reasons for you to consider:

- ◆ Strategic planning helps identify the main direction toward which an NGO should focus its efforts and activities;
- ◆ Strategic planning develops the rationale for an organization's existence, enabling an NGO to identify the major goals and objectives it wishes to achieve;
- ◆ Strategic planning improves the quality of decisions made by an NGO as it focuses attention towards the critical challenges facing the organization;
- ◆ Strategic planning helps decision makers identify the appropriate measures and actions to deal with these issues; and
- ◆ Strategic planning helps enlarge the NGO's internal and external constituencies, thereby increases its feeling of security and trust.

All of these reasons are important, because taken together they help enhance the legitimacy of the organization. This legitimacy, in turn, increases the support an NGO will receive from its partners. Additionally, it provides those in charge with a clear organizational ideology.

Everyone involved in an NGO – from its working staff members to its leaders – will be able to perform their roles more effectively if they have a common vision of the organization. This vision includes a set of strategies, ideally developed together by the members of the NGO. This common understanding allows the NGO to respond effectively and efficiently to both internal and external needs and demands.

Strategic planning also helps an NGO assess any potential risks and opportunities that may arise. This assessment involves identifying an organization's strengths and weaknesses. It then provides a systematic way for that organization to address the opportunities or threats it might face.

Finally, strategic planning helps NGOs make the best use of available resources. A successful strategic planning process is based on an accurate estimation of an NGO's capabilities, resources, and environment, helping it make the best decisions possible.

Now that you have a better idea of what the strategic planning process is, let's take a look at how it works...

The Strategic Framework

To be effective, every NGO should be able to define for itself two important aspects:

1. Mission Statement
2. Strategic Vision

So, let's take a look at each of these points in order.

What is a Mission Statement?

A **Mission Statement** provides the moral framework and set of values that distinguish one NGO from another. It clearly identifies the types of activities and programs delivered by the NGO and all the services which that organization provides. The mission statement also identifies the main targets or clients to receive these services.

Developing your own mission statement requires answering questions about your NGO.

Exercise 2: Take a moment to answer the following questions about your organization.

(1) What do we want to achieve? _____

(2) To whom should we direct our programs and services/
who are our clients? _____

(3) How are we different from other NGOs working in our field? _____

(4) Why is our work necessary? _____

Keep your answers, as you will need them to draft your mission statement.

Example of an NGO Mission Statement

Typically, you can find mission statements for organizations in their brochures or on their websites. Before writing your own mission statement, let's take a look at one that already exists.

The following is the mission statement for the Egyptian NGO Service Center (ENGOSC):

- ◆ ENGOSC is a civil organization whose mission it is to work with non-governmental organizations in Egypt to strengthen their managerial, technical, and financial capacities and to help them perform an effective role as full partners with government and the private sector in socio-economic development.
- ◆ To achieve this mission, the Center shall:
 - Enhance the capacities of civil society organizations (CSOs) to present themselves to and communicate with donor agencies and successfully access funding opportunities;
 - Mobilize new grant funding for civil society and develop effective new approaches to community resource mobilization, including human resources, and income generation by CSOs.
 - Increase civil society demand for organizational development assistance and then deliver technical assistance, training and consultative support to CSOs using both our own professional staff and our associated Training of Trainer graduates, CSO mentoring associations, and other training organization networks.
 - Stimulate civil society to greater civic action and advocacy on behalf of citizens and constituencies, and facilitate linkages with civil societies in other nations.
 - Improve civil society access to, and greater use of, information and knowledge for more effective practice of civic action and local development.

Exercise 3: Now it's your turn. On a separate piece of paper, try drafting your own mission statement using the answers to the questions on the previous page. Make sure to describe as clearly and accurately as possible what it is your organization does, to whom it will be providing these services, how your NGO is different than all others operating in the field, and why this work is so important.

What is a Strategic Vision?

As you might have guessed, strategic vision has to do with how an NGO sees itself both now and in the future. It is a framework for justifying an NGO's existence. With respect to strategic planning, vision can be defined as follows:

Strategic Vision is an overall view and perspective of the NGO's desired future. It includes the future aspirations and hopes that an NGO presently cannot achieve with its current resources, yet is possible to achieve in the long term. Vision is thus a realistic dream of how the organization will look by the end of the strategic plan.

Exercise 4: Take a few minutes to write the vision of your organization. Think about what precisely your NGO would like to accomplish if it had all the means available to do so. This is just an exercise, so don't be afraid to dream!

My NGO's vision is

Analyzing Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

Before an NGO can move forward toward realizing its strategic vision, the organization must assess its current position and consider its comparative advantage vis-à-vis others in the field. One way to achieve this is through a “**SWOT**” analysis. SWOT is a process by which an NGO analyzes its internal **Strengths** and **Weaknesses**, while identifying its external **Opportunities** and **Threats**. The elements of a SWOT analysis include the following.

Strengths:

- ◆ What an NGO does well and/or better than others
- ◆ Resources available to the organization
- ◆ Ability to take advantage of opportunities, while avoiding threats

Weaknesses:

- ◆ Areas for improvement
- ◆ Resources that are lacking
- ◆ Factors or deficiencies in the internal environment that hinder an NGO’s ability to take advantage of opportunities

Opportunities:

- ◆ Changes in the external environment that present a chance to improve and/or expand activities to better respond to community needs
- ◆ External situations or trends that might provide a positive impact on the NGO’s field of work

Threats:

- ◆ External situations, trends, or changes that cause a negative impact on the NGO’s field of work, thereby hindering its ability to make good use of resources
- ◆ Conditions that may result in a collapse of operations if not dealt with appropriately

The NGO’s **external** environment can be defined as everything that exists outside the organization which might affect its performance, such as political, legal, and socio-economic factors. The NGO’s **internal** environment can be defined as everything that exists inside the organization, including both human and financial resources. Since it is unlikely that any organization will be strong in all areas of operation, NGOs should identify their strengths and weaknesses to better position themselves to take advantage of all opportunities that may arise, while developing strategies to minimize the consequences of any external threats. To help achieve these goals, let’s now take a look at the importance of organizational development.

Organizational Development

Organizational Development plays a vital role toward ensuring the longevity, sustainability, and capability of any NGO. Yet in the face of pressing demands, organizational development is often not considered as high a priority as it should be. In the long term, however, building organizational capacity can significantly enhance an NGO's performance and sustainability.

Elements of Organizational Development for NGOs

Organizational development requires a clear understanding of an NGO's capacity, plus the following fundamental aspects of the organization:

- ◆ Whether it uses the financial and human resources available to maintain its viability;
- ◆ Whether it executes activities that match its strategic objectives and are feasible within the limits of its resources; and
- ◆ Whether its legal status corresponds to the activities it undertakes, including whether the NGO is able to receive funding from foreign donors.

The following are some of the actions an organization can take to improve its capacity and performance:

- ◆ Develop a governance structure, including a board of directors, staffing plan, and organizational policies;
- ◆ Train board and staff in management skills and leadership responsibilities;
- ◆ Establish administrative systems and controls to monitor progress, evaluate results, and track expenditures;
- ◆ Train staff in resource development and information systems, including fundraising methods, membership recruitment, database management, information sharing, networking, and grant proposal writing; and
- ◆ Conduct outreach into the community to promote volunteerism and create awareness of the NGO's assets and activities.

Two of the most important elements toward developing a stronger organizational capacity for your NGO include 1) improving financial management capabilities; and 2) establishing a plan for financial sustainability. We will now take a look at how this is done.

Financial Management

Financial Management involves elements fundamental to operating a successful organization. These include budgeting, record keeping, financial reporting, and internal control. Let's look briefly at each of these elements.

Budgeting

Financial management requires preparing accurate budgets to gauge how much money you will need to carry out your work. Establishing a budget helps ensure that your resources are allocated in line with your organization's aims and objectives. The first step in preparing a good budget is to identify exactly what you hope to achieve and how you plan to achieve these goals. List your activities, and then calculate how much they will cost.

Be sure to include costs for personnel, office supplies and other administrative costs, any travel you anticipate, plus the costs of running your activities. These are just your best estimates, and you should be prepared to amend or adjust the budget should you incur unanticipated costs or if your activities happen to change. To help you get started, we have included the outline for a budget at the end of the MEPI Local Grants application found in the Appendices.

A budget is also an important tool to help your organization control its spending. By regularly comparing budgeted costs to actual costs incurred for a project, you will be able to monitor project-related expenses and make any needed adjustments.

Record Keeping and Financial Reporting

Good financial management requires having appropriate systems in place to record and report accurately on the financial results of a project. Good financial management system should be able to do the following:

- ◆ Record and report current, accurate, and complete financial information;
- ◆ Record and identify the source and use of funds;
- ◆ Ensure effective control over and accountability of funds and other assets;
- ◆ Compare expenses with budgeted amounts for each grant;
- ◆ Maintain accounting records supported by source documentation; and
- ◆ Determine if costs are reasonable, can be properly allocated, and are allowable under the terms and conditions of the grant.

Keeping Records

The foundation of good accounting is keeping basic records that describe your income (the funds you receive from grants or donations) and expenses (the costs you incur for your activities). These records not only prove that transactions have taken place, but they enable you to determine how much funds you have available for future activities, plus assist you in the budgeting process. It is imperative, then, that you document the details of each transaction -- keeping track of how much you spent, and when and where you spent it – and that you carefully file and safely store these records. Doing so will not only improve your present financial management, but will also prepare you should your organization face an external audit.

Financial Reporting

Another element of financial management is writing and reviewing financial reports. These reports can be used both internally, to show the other members of your organization how funds are being spent, and externally, to account for the financial aspects of your activities for your donors. A financial report summarizes your organization's revenue and expenses over a certain period of time and is usually done using a system of codes to allocate transactions to different categories. For NGOs, these categories may be defined by the donor. Preparing accurate, timely financial reports is very important, because these reports will be closely examined by donors and auditors to determine how well you are managing the finances of your organization.

Internal Control

Internal controls are practices and procedures your organization should follow to ensure that funds and other assets are safeguarded and cannot be misused. For these procedures to be effective, it is essential that all employees of your organization fully understand the purpose and scope of these internal controls. While you should adapt the internal control procedures you use to meet the unique structure and needs of your organization, the following list includes some common control practices that apply to most organizations:

- ◆ Keep cash in a safe place (ideally in a bank account or, at the least, in a secure lock box);
- ◆ Make sure that every expenditure is properly authorized;
- ◆ Adhere to the budget;
- ◆ Monitor expenditures on a regular basis (typically each month);
- ◆ Employ a qualified financial staff (at the least, a well trained accountant);
- ◆ Carry out a “bank reconciliation” each month to ensure that the amount of cash you have in the bank matches the amount shown by your accounting system; and
- ◆ Conduct a professional audit on a regular basis (typically every year).

Internal controls can be built into the organization in several ways. Here are just a few examples.

Establish and follow control procedures: For example, require two signatures to approve payments, and perform regular bank reconciliations to ensure the accuracy of your accounts.

Assign responsibilities carefully: Make sure that staff duties are segmented so that no one person has complete control over any section of the information or cash flow.

Use automated/mechanical devices: Make use of things such as standard, pre-numbered forms and checks to better keep track of your financial transactions.

Hire qualified personnel: For example, bring on people you know you can trust and ensure that employees' responsibilities are consistent with their qualifications.

It is inevitable that as an NGO matures, policies will need to be reviewed, activities amended, and systems kept up-to-date. Effective organizational development requires that all systems, including those associated with financial management – such as accounting and internal controls – be examined and upgraded regularly to ensure the efficiency, reliability, and ultimate success of the organization. Now that we've considered the best ways to run your NGO financially, let's turn our attention to seeking funding sources and sustaining the life of your organization.

Funding Sources & Financial Sustainability

Funding Sources

Once you have defined your mission statement and strategic vision, analyzed your internal and external environments, and identified ways to strengthen your organizational and financial capabilities, you can begin to focus on looking for donors that match your NGO's mission and objectives. There are numerous sources of donor funding available to NGOs. Domestically, most governments provide some funding sources to support the activities of local NGOs, often for specifically designated programs. International donors include governments (e.g., most European countries, Japan, and the United States), International Organizations (e.g., United Nations agencies and the European Commission), and international NGOs.

The internet is an extremely useful source of information for potential donors. Some NGO websites carry extensive information about donors and funding opportunities. Governments and international organizations also maintain detailed websites on their activities and funding opportunities.



Website Links

Some examples of online sources to help find and apply for U.S. Government grants include www.grants.gov and www.USAID.gov, while the sites www.EC.Europa.eu and www.UNDP.org provide additional information on grants. A Moroccan NGO, Gateway, Tanmia, lists private and public sector institutions that offer funding for NGOs, and it can be accessed at www.Tanmia.ma.

While benefiting from grant funds is often a good way to help your organization get started, you should not depend solely on grants to support your operations and activities. Your goal should be to move towards independence and financial sustainability.

Financial Sustainability

Financial sustainability is a long-term, ongoing process, requiring effective strategic planning. Your organization should look for income generating activities or local funding sources for long-term financial sustainability. Strategies may include establishing an endowment, attracting multiple donors to fund different activities, and diversifying your funding base through income generation projects, fees for services, and membership dues. It is important that dependence on external donor funds be reduced if sustainability is to be assured.

Networking

Another approach to enhancing sustainability is to form a partnership or network. A network is defined as an alliance of individuals or organizations that share their resources in pursuit of common interests and goals. Networks may link together NGOs, the private sector, government departments, research institutions, the media, or other entities based on a geographic area or sector focus (such as education or women's rights). One of the many advantages of networking is that it can increase financial and programmatic resources for a project or campaign.

To learn more about strategic planning, organizational development, financial management, and financial sustainability (including funding sources), you should consult one of the many websites that offer guidance and information to NGOs.



Website Links

For example, www.egyptngosupport.org, www.Tanmia.ma, and www.gdrc.org offer useful information to NGOs, including reference materials and links to related sites.

Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI)

Good work! Now that you have a strategic vision and mission statement for your NGO, let's spend some time seeing whether your organization is a good fit for MEPI. The second part of this guidebook will provide you with information on MEPI's goals and objectives, as well as the scope and nature of the MEPI Local Grants program.

For those of you who believe that your NGO's mission matches up with MEPI's criteria for funding, you can learn how to apply for a MEPI Local Grant in the final section of this book. But first, let's see, based on the results of the strategic planning exercise you just completed, whether the goals and objectives of your organization are a good fit with MEPI's mission, goals, and objectives.

MEPI's Mission

The Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), located within the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs at the U.S. Department of State, supports efforts to expand political participation, strengthen civil society and the rule of law, empower women and youth, create educational opportunities, and foster economic reform throughout the Middle East and North Africa. In support of these goals, MEPI works with non-governmental organizations, the private sector, and academic institutions, as well as governments. Through its projects, MEPI provides technical and other assistance to advance the goals identified by partners throughout the region. Most of MEPI's programs directly support non-governmental actors who are undertaking targeted activities likely to have a short- to medium-term impact. The duration of projects is usually 12 months.

MEPI is based at the Department of State in Washington, DC, and has regional offices in Tunis, Tunisia, and Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates or UAE. See the listing below for countries included in the MEPI program, by region. In addition, there are MEPI Coordinators working at the U.S. Embassy in each of these countries.

MEPI Regional Office Tunis	MEPI Regional Office Abu Dhabi
<p style="text-align: center;"> Algeria Egypt Israel Lebanon Libya Morocco Palestinian Territories Tunisia </p>	<p style="text-align: center;"> Bahrain Jordan Kuwait Oman Qatar Saudi Arabia United Arab Emirates Yemen </p>

Now let's take a closer look at MEPI's goals and objectives...

MEPI's Goals and Objectives

In seeking to support democratic reform, MEPI projects:

- Strengthen democratic practices and electoral systems.
- Support an expanded public space where democratic voices can be heard in the political process.
- Strengthen the role of free and independent media in society.
- Promote the rule of law and accountable, effective government and judicial institutions.

To support economic growth, MEPI projects:

- Encourage mobilization of foreign direct and domestic investment and facilitate revenue and employment growth of micro-enterprises and small- and medium-sized enterprises.
- Advance private sector job creation.
- Enhance MEPI partner countries' global competitiveness.

Efforts to create educational opportunity include MEPI projects that:

- Expand access to basic and post secondary education for all people, especially girls and women.
- Improve the quality of basic and post secondary education including teacher training, curriculum content, community empowerment, and digital readiness.
- Promote the development of employable skills.

In order to empower women, MEPI projects:

- Support the elimination of arbitrary legal systems and provide women with the skills and tools required to help build strong judicial institutions.
- Increase the level of women's participation in building democratic pluralistic societies, through both political representation and civil society strengthening.
- Assist local reformers in their struggle for women's rights, facilitating their organization and expanding their impact.
- Provide access and opportunity to women in an effort to enhance their marketable skills, gain economic independence, and increase the power of the private sector in building a democratic society.



Website Link

For more information on MEPI and its work please visit the main MEPI website at : www.mepi.state.gov.

Reform vs. Development

By now you have probably noticed that we use the word “reform” quite often when referring to MEPI and its work. What does this word mean? And, more importantly, what does reform mean to MEPI?

Here is MEPI’s approach to reform:

MEPI supports activities designed to have a short- to medium-term impact on institutions and/or practices in the four goals described above. When selecting projects to support, MEPI places great emphasis on activities that demonstrate concrete steps toward such impact, or systemic change. MEPI is not a long-term development assistance program, nor does it finance ongoing social services, cultural activities, or operating costs of organizations.

Now let’s take a look at some examples of reform and development...

Development	Reform
Provide management training to a women's rights NGO.	Provide communications training to a women's rights NGO and finance an advocacy campaign by that NGO to educate the public on women's rights.
Hold a conference for businessmen about the obstacles to attracting foreign investment.	Create a network of businessmen to lobby government ministries and parliament on the legislative and regulatory changes required to attract foreign investment.
Build a youth center in a poor neighborhood.	Train youth in leadership and civic engagement. Have them develop community service projects that work to solve real problems.

MEPI Funding

Let’s examine some of the programs that MEPI has funded in the past or is presently funding. As you will see, each of these examples fits into the category of a reform program:

- ◆ Training Lebanese election observers and polling organizations;
- ◆ Training political parties in Algeria, Lebanon, Morocco, and the Palestinian Territories;
- ◆ Empowering women by providing campaign skills, training, and business internships;

- ◆ Providing more than 2 million children's books, translated into Arabic, for 4th and 5th grade students in Lebanon, Bahrain, Jordan, and other countries;
- ◆ Training journalists and new independent media outlets in the Palestinian Territories, Lebanon, Jordan, Morocco, and Tunisia; and
- ◆ Training members of parliament in Oman, Yemen, and Morocco.

The next section of this guidebook provides information on MEPI's Local Grants program, including how to apply for one of these grants. If you are interested in learning more about the other two types of grants please visit the MEPI website at www.mepi.state.gov.

Exercise 6: Before continuing, it is important to determine if a MEPI Local Grant is right for you and your organization at this time. Now that you understand the types of reform programs that MEPI supports, take a look at the mission statement you drafted in Exercise 5 and ask yourself the following questions:

1. Does your organization work on programs that promote reform?
2. Can your organization receive funds from the U.S. Government?

If you answered yes to both questions, a MEPI Local Grant may be right for you!

MEPI Local Grants Program

What is a Local Grant?

One of the funding mechanisms MEPI uses to achieve its mission is the administration of Local Grants. MEPI Local Grants directly support organizations at the "grassroots" or community level that have a demonstrated commitment to bringing about democratic change and support MEPI's goals articulated in the previous section.

Local Grants normally range from \$25,000-\$75,000, with a maximum of \$100,000, and MEPI asks potential grantees to determine the expected actual cost of their project. Local Grants applications are accepted any time of the year. Proposals should be submitted to the U.S. Embassy in your country by using the MEPI Local Grants Program application form, which we will discuss below.

What programs are funded by MEPI?

Local Grants proposals should aim at creating or extending a network of reform-minded individuals and groups. The following list provides example of some of the priority activities that MEPI will support:

- ◆ **Supporting local civil society**, including NGOs, women's groups, and professional associations at the grassroots level that are committed to building democracies and undertaking reforms that will play a role of growing importance and influence in the future.
- ◆ **Encouraging programs for youth**, ages 12-17, particularly those activities that provide youth with practical opportunities to experience democracy in action, participate in public service, or contribute to improving their local communities.
- ◆ **Fostering networks** among local NGOs, or between civil society, governments, and the business community, as an avenue to promoting democratic reforms.
- ◆ **Encouraging women's participation in public life**, either at the local, national, or regional levels.
- ◆ **Promoting good governance projects** that include anti-corruption and transparency components.
- ◆ **Promoting the rule of law and legal reforms**, including legal rights education and professional legal education.
- ◆ **Promoting public awareness**, including involvement in current political issues, such as voter education and advocacy skills for individuals and groups.

MEPI provides Local Grants for a variety of projects. It might be useful now to look at a few of these projects to get a better understanding of the type of activities MEPI has supported. Please be mindful that these are only a few examples, and that we are open to many different project ideas.

Example A: For this grant, an Algerian movie director produced and widely distributed a documentary film on the lives and struggles of four Algerian women – the president of an NGO for the disabled, a top newspaper editor, a leading newspaper publisher, and the youngest deputy in the National Assembly. The director used the film to demonstrate how these women and others have overcome challenges to affect change.

Example B: This grant helped the Journalism School of Tunisia establish the first student-run newspaper in the country. In addition to providing practical training, this project promoted analytical thinking and problem solving, while empowering students to undertake projects of their own creation. The grant funded equipment for the newspaper, plus exchanges of American and Tunisian professors and students.

Example C: This grant provided funding to the Moroccan-American Chamber of Commerce to promote a website on the developments around a Free Trade Agreement (FTA). The website provided an ever-growing network of reform-minded individuals and groups to communicate with each other and learn more about FTA-related issues in Morocco. The website also included a discussion forum and online employment service.

Example D: This grant gave Lebanese citizens a voice in the electoral process through public opinion polling, while informing reformers in government of the electorate’s demands. The project involved a series of surveys on parliamentary elections and the overall political climate in Lebanon, with the NGO disseminating information to major media outlets to improve voter education and the quality of public debate in the country.

Exercise 7: Can you identify which one or more of the MEPI goals each of these Local Grants supported? (The answers are on the next page.)

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

D. _____

Answers to Exercise 7:

- A. This grant falls under the MEPI reform priority of women's empowerment.
- B. This grant supports the education reform priority.
- C. This grant is an example of economic reform.
- D. And this grant promotes political or democratic reform.

What activities are not funded by MEPI?

Now that you know the type of projects and activities that MEPI is trying to support, it is also necessary to know what we *cannot* fund. Should you have any questions regarding what expenses are allowable or disallowable, you can always contact the U.S. Embassy in the country where you are applying (more on that later).

MEPI is unable to fund the following projects with its Local Grants program:

- ◆ Projects of social welfare
- ◆ Projects including NGO start-up costs, operating costs, or capital improvements
- ◆ Projects including costs for furniture, office decorations, or automobiles
- ◆ Projects for the sole purpose of establishing a center*
- ◆ Projects that are in fact to complete activities begun with other funds
- ◆ Projects that contain the appearance of partisanship
- ◆ Projects for the sole purpose of scholarships or academic analytical research*
- ◆ Projects for the sole purpose of international travel*
- ◆ Projects of citizen exchange programs with foreign countries
- ◆ Projects solely consisting of conferences or round tables*
- ◆ Projects of Medical and psychological research, clinical studies, or health care services
- ◆ Projects of a commercial or profit-making nature
- ◆ Projects of cultural presentations, cultural research, cultural clubs, and festivals etc.
- ◆ Projects of language training courses
- ◆ Projects consisting of entertainment events (such as receptions, social activities, ceremonies, tours)
- ◆ Projects supporting political party activities

** Exceptions may be made if the activity is part of a broader project or is justified within a given project.*

Now that you have a better understanding of the MEPI Local Grants program, let’s see how one actually applies for a grant...

How to apply for a MEPI Local Grant

To apply for a MEPI Local Grant you may complete a “MEPI Local Grants Program” application form. These forms are available in English, Arabic, or French, and you can find the application form at least three different ways:



Appendix 1

Provides a Local Grants Application in English.



Website Link

MEPI’s Regional Office – Tunis website
www.medregion.mepi.state.gov offers applications in English and Arabic.



Appendix 2

Provides contact information for U.S. Embassies, which will be pleased to provide you with an application too.

Now that you have a copy of the application form, let’s take a look at it. As you will see, the application consists of four parts:

- 1) Summary and contact information;
- 2) A narrative description of your project proposal;
- 3) A description of your organization; and
- 4) The budget for your project.

At the end of the application there also is a space for information on your organization's bank. The application provides instructions on how to complete the form, but here is some additional guidance on key aspects of the application.

Summary and Contact Information

The first part of the application provides a brief look at who you are and what you are trying to accomplish. Please fill in the title of your project, the name of your NGO, information on the primary point of contact and any partners you will be working with, the total amount you are requesting for the grant, the period it will take to complete the project, and which MEPI goal your project supports.

We also need a short summary – just 2-4 sentences – of what you plan to accomplish. You may want to refer back to your mission statement to complete this summary.

Finally, please read, sign, and date the Acknowledgement and Publicity Agreement at the very bottom of the first page.

Narrative Description of the Proposal

This section includes Questions 1-7, and it may take a little time for you to complete. Try to answer these questions to the best of your abilities in the space provided, so that we have a better understanding of your NGO and the type of work you would like for MEPI to support on the project that you are proposing.

Toward this end, three of the most important questions to answer are the following:

Intended Impact or Results

Question 4 asks you to clearly describe how you will *measure* the success of your project. Think carefully about how you will know whether you achieved what you set out to achieve. This accomplishment should go beyond simply listing the number of people who participated in your activities or the promotional materials distributed to get at the *impact* that your project had on the *target* audience. The measure of success should discuss how your activities raised awareness of and/or contributed to *reform* and how this translates into any systemic changes on the ground that will be sustained into the future. Remember, MEPI is promoting reform, so we want to know how your project contributes to our goals, as well as your own.

Publicizing the Project

Question 6 asks you to describe how you plan to publicize your activities, as well as MEPI's support for what you have achieved. Under the rules of this grant, the Recipient of a MEPI Local Grant (which is you and your NGO) must acknowledge MEPI support for any event that was held, materials that were published and mass produced, or media contacts that were made regarding a MEPI-funded project. You can do this by including the MEPI logo on your website and printed material, or by mentioning MEPI by name in any publicity

campaigns, such as interviews with the press. In completing your application, provide specific details of how you will publicize MEPI support of your program.

Schedule of Activities

Question 7 is extremely important, as the information you provide here will show us what it is that you specifically are trying to do and how long it will take you to complete these activities. You will need to produce a detailed timeline of all significant activities that will take place during the performance period of the project. You should include the month, description of the event or activity, and the person responsible for each activity. You should also provide milestones, such as activities or events that demonstrate that the project is on schedule. Your project can start and finish any time of the year, but remember that MEPI Local Grants are up to 12 months only. You do not need to list activities for an entire year, but should you need more than 12 months, you will need to apply for a second Local Grant once you have completed the first one.

Description of Your Organization

Questions 8 and 9 are fairly self-explanatory. You should feel free to use information you might already possess – for example, from your NGO’s website or brochure, as well as any resumes and curriculum vitae (CVs) of your members – when completing information on when your organization was established, the size of the membership, and other sources of funding. As for the mission of your NGO, you can use the mission statement you created in this guidebook if your organization does not already have such a statement. Also, be sure to include all local partner organizations that will be working with you on this project and let us know what, specifically, they will be doing with you.

Budget for Your Project Proposal

To be eligible for funding from MEPI, you must provide us with a complete, line-by-line budget for all your activities. You may make use of the budget format included in the application. Some people find this task difficult, so we will provide you with guidance to make it as simple as possible. Just remember that all items in the budget should be linked to the narrative description of your proposal – if you are planning an activity, then we need to see the costs associated with that activity.

If possible, the budget should be presented in U.S. dollars, rounded to the nearest dollar. The budget should include all cost-sharing and in-kind contributions. What this means is that if your organization is providing its own funding or other contributions (such as volunteer time, office space, equipment, etc.), or another organization is providing you either with funding or other contributions, you should include this in your budget. MEPI encourages applicants to seek funding from other donors and to offer some type of cost-sharing, whenever appropriate.

As you will see, the budget is divided into six different categories called “Budget Items,” as follows:

- 01 Personnel
- 02 Fringe Benefits
- 03 Travel

- 04 Equipment costing more than \$5000/unit (not allowable under local grants program)
- 05 Supplies
- 06 Contractual
- 07 Construction (not allowable under local grants program)
- 08 Other Direct Costs

Under each **Budget Item**, there are a number of rows, or what we call “Lines.” Each **Line** needs to include a description of an item. These “Line Items” might include a salary, a service performed, or a piece of equipment. When completing the **Line Items**, try to provide enough detail so that we can understand what you are asking us to fund, as well as letting us know how this amount was calculated. You should break down costs to “cost per unit” whenever possible.

It might be easier to show you some examples. Following are some examples of how to break down costs for specific line items:

Under **salaries**, include for each position title and name, the salary amount per month times the number of months, and the percentage of work time that the individual will devote to the project each month: $\$1000/\text{month} \times 12 \text{ months} \times 10\%$.

Under **supplies**, each specific line item should include an exact description of the item, and the price per item times the number of items: $\$6000/\text{unit} \times 3 \text{ units}$.

Under **travel**, specify whether it is for air or ground transportation, hotel expenses, meals, etc., including what project activity the travel is for, and the cost breakdown. For example, for an airline ticket, you should show the ticket price times the number of people traveling times the number of trips: $\$500/\text{roundtrip}/\text{traveler} \times 2 \text{ travelers} \times 1 \text{ roundtrip}$.

Again, there are certain items that MEPI may *not* fund, including the following:

- ◆ Entertainment costs (receptions, social activities, ceremonies, alcoholic beverages, cocktail parties, and guided tours).
- ◆ Food or refreshments, except for coffee breaks or working lunches for seminar/conference participants that are an integral part of the project (Which should be maintained to the strict minimum and cost shared whenever possible).
- ◆ First or Business Class airfare.
- ◆ Service or consultant fees exceeding the standard local rate or \$500 per day, whichever is lower.
- ◆ “Miscellaneous” or overhead expenses.

Do your best to provide us with as much information as possible in the budget so that we can understand your funding needs. If MEPI is interested in supporting your proposal, then someone from the U.S. Embassy in your country or the MEPI Regional Office will be glad to work with you on the budget.

MEPI's Review and Approval Process

You may submit your completed application to the U.S. Embassy in your country at any time throughout the year. (See Appendix 2 for a list of U.S. Embassies and contact information.) A MEPI Committee at each Embassy will review your proposal and may contact you for clarification or additional information. Every applicant will be informed of whether or not his or her application has been approved. Should your Local Grants application be approved, you will be given a second publication titled the “**Guidebook for MEPI Local Grants Recipients.**” This book provides detailed information on everything you will need to know as a new MEPI partner!

Final Note

We hope you have found this guidebook useful and that you now have a fuller understanding of the strategic planning process, organizational development, financial management and sustainability, MEPI's goals and objectives, as well as the procedures for applying for a MEPI Local Grant. We welcome any comments you might have. For additional information, including other programs and funding opportunities offered by MEPI, we encourage you to regularly visit one of the following websites. We also wish you the best in all of your program activities!



Website Links

www.mepi.state.gov for general information in English

www.medregion.mepi.state.gov for information specific to North Africa & Lebanon in English and Arabic,.

Appendices

Appendix 1: MEPI Local Grants Program Application

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE



MIDDLE EAST PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVE (MEPI) LOCAL GRANTS PROGRAM

Application Instructions

The Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) of the U.S. Department of State is pleased to announce funding is available through the Local Grants program. Please follow all instructions below carefully.

Purpose of Grant: Local Grants are intended for local representatives of civil society, including non-governmental organizations and universities, to undertake democracy and reform projects. Funding is available for projects that increase political openness and democratic processes, create new economic opportunities, enhance access to and quality of education systems, and/or empower women. Local Grants proposals should aim to create or extend the community of reform-minded individuals and groups and should meet one or more of the following MEPI priorities:

1. Supporting local civil society, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), women's groups, and professional associations at the grassroots level that are committed to building democracies and undertaking reform and can be expected to play a role of growing importance and influence in the future.
2. Encouraging programs for youth, ages 12-17, and particularly those that provide youth with practical opportunities to experience democracy in action, participate in public service, volunteerism and contribute to improving their local communities.
3. Fostering networks among local NGOs, civil society, governments, and the business community, as an avenue toward promoting democratic reforms.
4. Encouraging women's participation in public life at the local, regional and national levels.
5. Promoting good governance programs that include anti-corruption and transparency components.
6. Promoting the rule of law and legal reforms including legal rights education and professional legal education.
7. Promoting public awareness and involvement in current political issues, including voter education, and building advocacy skills among individuals and groups.

Size of Awards: Local Grants usually range in size from \$25,000 to \$75,000, though there is flexibility for grants outside this range.

Length of Grant: Local Grants projects generally must be completed in one year or less.

Application Process: The Embassy is currently accepting Local Grant applications.

Please submit your proposal to the U.S. Embassy in your country, using the attached application. Applications are accepted in English, French, or Arabic, but final grant agreements will be concluded in English. We look forward to receiving creative proposals to address the areas of interest outlined above. For a list of previously funded MEPI Local Grant Projects visit www.abudhabi.mepi.state.gov or www.medregion.mepi.state.gov.

Allowable Expenses:

Activities that are typically funded include, but are not limited to:

- Community service projects that practice democratic processes and encourage volunteerism;
- Public education projects/ Public meetings or seminars;
- Task forces that will subsequently recommend a specific plan of action; and,
- Workshops and meetings of a practical and professional nature, which are an integral part of a larger project and contribute to overall project goals.

Activities that may not be funded:

1. Social welfare projects;
2. Organizational start-up costs;
3. Ongoing operating costs or capital improvements;
4. Buying furniture and office decorations;
5. Buying vehicles;
6. Setting up a center unless part of a broader project;
7. Paying to complete activities begun with other funds;
8. Projects that contain the appearance of partisanship/support to individual or single party electoral campaigns;
9. Academic or analytical research (if not part of a larger project);
10. Scholarships;
11. International travel, unless specifically justified within the project.
12. Citizen exchange programs with foreign countries;
13. One-of-a kind events such as conferences and round tables (if not part of a larger project);
14. Medical and psychological research, and clinical studies;
15. Provision of health care services;
16. Projects of a commercial or profit-making nature;
17. Cultural presentations, cultural research, cultural clubs, and festivals etc.;
18. Language training courses;
19. Entertainment costs (receptions, social activities, ceremonies, alcoholic beverages, cocktail parties, guided tours); and,
20. Political party activities.

LOCAL GRANT APPLICATION

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE MIDDLE EAST PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVE (MEPI)

Title of Project:	
Applicant/Primary Implementing Organization: Address: City: _____ Zip: _____ Country: _____ Telephone(s): _____ Fax: _____ Email(s): _____	
Primary Point of Contact: Name: _____ Title: _____ Phone: _____	MEPI Program Elements Supported: (check all that apply) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constitutions, Laws, and Legal Systems ____ • Judicial Independence ____ • Justice System ____ • Human Rights ____ • Legislative Function and Processes ____ • Local Government and Decentralization ____ • Anti-Corruption Reforms ____ • Elections and Political Processes ____ • Political Parties ____ • Civic Participation ____ • Media Freedom and Freedom of Information ____ • Basic Education ____ • Higher Education ____ • Trade and Investment Enabling Environment ____ • Trade and Investment Capacity ____ • Financial Sector Enabling Environment ____ • Financial Sector Capacity ____ • Business Enabling Environment ____ • Private Sector Capacity ____ • Workforce Development ____
Local Partner Organization 1 (if any): Name: _____ Phone: _____	
Local Partner Organization 2 (if any): Name: _____ Phone: _____	
Amount of Award Requested: \$ _____ USD	
Period of Project: _____ Months Preferred start date: _____/_____/____	

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT & PUBLICITY AGREEMENT

I affirm that the information provided in this application is true and correct and that intentional misrepresentation on this form is grounds for denial of a grant. I further affirm that my organization is qualified to receive an award under applicable laws and regulations. My organization understands that submission of a Local Grant application in no way guarantees awarding of a grant, and we will accept the final decision of the U.S. Embassy Local Grants Committee & MEPI. We further understand that funds awarded under the Local Grants program are provided through MEPI by the people of the United States of America and agree to allow appropriate publicity of this fact.

Accept: Yes. A signed original must follow this electronic form if a grant is awarded.

Signature	Name & Title	Date

- 1. Brief Summary:** Please supply a clear summary (2-3 sentences) of your project.
- 2. State the problem, and describe how this project will address the problem.**
- 3. State how this project is related to the MEPI program elements listed on page one of the application instructions.**
- 4. What are the intended results/objectives of the project?** *(A good project should have 1-2 objectives. If possible, for each of the intended results/objectives, please describe how you intend to measure these results/objectives.)*
- 5. List the name of the person who will conduct the activities. Please attach a copy of its CV or resume.**
- 6. Describe how you plan to publicize the work and to incorporate MEPI into this publicity.**
- 7. Schedule of Activities.** *(For each of the intended results/objectives listed in #4, describe the major activities using the table below.)*

Objective #1:	
Activity Number	Description of the Activity
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	

Objective #2:	
Activity Number	Description of the Activity
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	

- 8. Please describe your organization. State what type of group it is, when it was established, the size of membership, the mission of the organization, and its source of funding. Describe its status under applicable law. Also include the name of any local partner organizations that will participate in this project and describe their role.**

same for each local partner organization.

9. Please list the names of the officials responsible for this project and its financial administration, and attach a CV for each person listed. Do the same for each local partner organization.

10. Should you be awarded a MEPI local grant, U.S. government regulations require a listing and description of your grant in the federal Grants Database Management System (GDMS). This grants database is publicly accessible on the Internet at <http://www.usaspending.gov>. If you do not wish your organization to be identified in this database, please explain why.

11. Has your organization received or is expected to receive financial assistance from other donors? If so please name any donors, their contact information, the amount of financial assistance received and briefly describe funded projects.

12. Please provide a complete, line-by-line budget, using the example below as a guide. Budget items should be linked to the narrative and conform to the major categories in bold below. (The details provided in italics here are only examples)

Budget Categories	Detailed Description	Amount
1. Personnel		
<i>1.1 Position, Name</i>	<i>e.g. Salary in \$ per month x number of months x % of work time to be dedicated to this project</i>	
<i>1.2 Position, Name</i>	<i>e.g. Fees in \$ per hour x number of hours per events x number of events</i>	
...	...	
2. Fringe Benefits		
<i>2.1 Position, Name</i>	<i>% of fringe benefits based on the salary above</i>	
<i>2.2 Position, Name</i>	<i>Any regular benefit expenses related to the personnel fees above</i>	
...		
3. Travel		
<i>3.1 Airfare</i>	<i>Ticket price in \$ per person per trip x number of people x number of trips</i>	
<i>3.2 Visa</i>	<i>Number of persons</i>	
...		
4. Equipment (costing more than \$5,000 per unit) (not allowable under local grants program)		
5. Supplies		
<i>5.1 Office Consumables</i>	<i>Price in \$ per unit x number of units needed per month x number of months average monthly expense</i>	
<i>5.2 Program Supplies</i>	<i>\$ per unit x number of participants</i>	
<i>5.3 Equipment</i>	<i>Specify costs (Must be less than \$5000 per unit)</i>	
6. Contractual		
<i>6.1 Sub-Award</i>	<i>Amount per sub-award in \$ x number of sub-awards</i>	
<i>6.2 Consultation</i>	<i>Fees in \$ per day x number of days</i>	

...		
7. Construction (not allowable under local grants program)		
8. Other Direct Costs		
8.1 Conference room rental	Amount in \$ per hour x number of hours per day x number of days	
8.2 Bank Fees	Amount in \$ per month x number of months	
...		
9. Total Direct Costs (lines 1-8)		
10. Indirect Costs* (reflect provisional, pre-determined rate and allocation base)	Only applicable if based on an official USG-negotiated cost rate (NICRA).	
11. Total Project Costs (lines 9-10)		
12. Cost-Sharing	Line 11 x % of contribution of the organization or other sources.	

Notes:

- **Budget should be presented in U.S. dollars, rounded to the nearest dollar.**
- Funding should not duplicate on-going activities.
- MEPI encourages applicants to seek funding from other donors and to offer some type of **cost sharing** (volunteer time, space, equipment etc.)
- MEPI funds should not be used for **food or entertainment expenses**. However, if coffee breaks or working lunches for seminar/conference participants are an **integral** part of the overall project, and funding is not available from other sources, these costs may be covered but should be limited. Cost-sharing of this type of expense is strongly encouraged. Meals may not include charges for alcoholic beverages.
- Services/Consultants – Professional services should not exceed local rates or \$500/day, whichever is lower.
- Compensation in reasonable amounts can be paid to project's key personnel for the portion of their time devoted to the work in this project. Compensation levels should be no higher than other local salaries (where appropriate), and should include all taxes.
- If requested, for purchases or contracts over \$2,500, three estimates from potential vendors should be provided. Purchases should be well justified in the appropriate section above.
- **Entertainment costs** (receptions, social activities, ceremonies, alcoholic beverages, cocktail parties, guided tours) are not allowable expenses.
- **Anticipated travel costs (local and international) should be itemized.**
- **Travel costs** should not be for First or Business Class airfare and must be in compliance with US Government Travel Regulations.
- The use of "**miscellaneous expenses**" or any similar term as a budget item is unacceptable.
- If the applicant does not have a standard U.S.G. indirect cost rate in effect, normal overhead costs such as rent, utilities, etcetera, may be included as "Other Direct Costs" with appropriate and proportionate justification.
- All contractual costs are subject to prior approval from the Grants Officer.

End of Application — Thank you.

Appendix 2: List of U.S. Embassy Addresses and Contact Information

U.S. Embassy Algiers, Algeria

04 Chemin Cheikh Bachir Ibrahimi
El-Biar 16030
Tel: (213) 021-691-255
Fax: (213) 021-693-979
Email: contactalgierspol@state.gov
Website: <http://algiers.usembassy.gov/>

U.S. Embassy Cairo, Egypt

8 Kamal El Din Salah St., Garden City
Cairo, Egypt.
Tel: (20) 2-797-3300
Email: MEPICairo@state.gov
Website: <http://egypt.usembassy.gov/>

U.S. Embassy, Tel Aviv, Israel

71 Hayarkon Street
Tel Aviv 63903 Israel
Tel: 972-3-5197575
Email: MepiTelAvivPD@state.gov
Website: <http://telaviv.usembassy.gov/>

U.S. Consulate General, Jerusalem, Israel

18 Agron Road, Jerusalem 94190
27 Nablus Road, Jerusalem 94190
Jerusalem, Israel
Tel: 972-2-6227230 / 972-2-6253288
Fax: 972-2-6259270
Email: MEPIJerusalem@state.gov
Website: <http://jerusalem.usconsulate.gov/>

U.S. Embassy, Beirut, Lebanon

Awkar facing the Municipality
P.O. Box 70-840 Antelias
Beirut, Lebanon
Tel: (961) 4 542600 - 543600
Fax: (961) 4 544136
Email: MEPIBeirut@state.gov
Website: <http://lebanon.usembassy.gov/>

U.S. Embassy, Rabat, Morocco

2 Avenue de Mohamed El Fassi

Rabat, Morocco

Tel: (212) 37-76-22-65

Fax: (212) 37-76-56-61

Email: MEPIRabat@state.gov

Website: <http://www.usembassy.ma>

U.S. Embassy, Tunis, Tunisia

Les Berges du Lac

1053 Tunis, Tunisia

Tel: (216) 71-107-000

Fax: (216) 71-107-190

Email: MEPITunis@state.gov

Website: <http://tunis.usembassy.gov/>



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