REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS (RFA)

for Higher Education for Innovation and Growth (HEIG) Activity

Issuance Date: January 13, 2026
Closing Date: February 12, 2026
Closing Time: 16:00 (GMT+3) Amman Time
Anticipated Award Date: May 15, 2026

Subject:	Request for Applications (RFA) Number *IREX/HEIG/RFA/001/FY26)* HEIG
Reference:	Issued under International Research and Exchange Board (IREX) project and DOS Cooperative Agreement No. 72027824CA00001

This Request for Applications outlines the information required from the applicant for the development and submission of an application for consideration. The potential applicant is expected to review, understand, and conform with specifications contained in this RFA. Failure to do so will be at the applicant's own risk.

The RFA is focused on proposals to select a Cluster Lead Organization that will act as the leading arm for the implementation of cluster activity in close cooperation with the elected Cluster Chairs and HEIG team to coordinate meetings, facilitate operations, and ensure effective communication. The Cluster Lead will build upon established models, leveraging local networks and partnerships to support all cluster activities and promote sustainability within the **Agri-Food Security sector**. The Cluster Lead Organization will also handle logistics and organization while collaborating closely with cluster leadership.

Subject to the availability of funds, IREX expects to issue one award in this cycle up to a total ceiling of $150,000 (106,200 JOD). The size of individual awards will be up to $150,000 (106,200 JOD). IREX reserves the right to fund any or none of the applications submitted. All reasonable, allocable, and allowable expenses, both direct and indirect, which are related to the subaward program and are in accordance with applicable cost standards (usually 2 CFR 200 Subpart E Cost Principles), may be charged under the subaward.

For non-US organizations the 2CFR 700 and 2 CFR 200 Subpart A through E apply.

This RFA is being issued and consists of this cover letter, Schedule A, **Attachment 1:** Application Form Template, **Attachment 2:** Application Budget Template.

Issuance of this RFA does not constitute an award commitment on the part of HEIG/IREX nor does it commit HEIG/IREX to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of an application. The application is submitted at the risk of the applicant. All preparation and submission costs are at the applicant's expense.

All information shared in your application is treated as confidential according to the HEIG's Confidentiality Policy.

Thank you for your interest in HEIG/IREX activities.

Sincerely,

Dr. Abdallah Abdallah

Chief of Party, IREX

Higher Education for Innovation and Growth (HEIG) Activity

SCHEDULE A

SECTION I: FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

The HEIG Activity is a 5 year program funded by the United States Department of State (DOS) and implemented by IREX. HEIG is advancing Jordan's higher education system as a driver of innovation, employability, and economic growth. After establishing strong foundations in the Agri-Food Security Sector in Years 1 and 2, Year 3 will expand into the Medical Manufacturing and Digital Growth and Security sectors, engaging new universities and deepening collaboration between HEIs, industry, and government to drive graduate employment and research-led innovations. This work is carried out in close partnership with the Government of Jordan and with beneficiaries, emphasizing co-design and delivery of interventions that directly improve graduate employability and foster innovation, both key strategic objectives of the Ministry of Education strategic plan and Economic Modernization Vision for Jordan.

Higher Education for Innovation and Growth (HEIG) Activity has created a Catalytic Collaboration Cluster (C^3) in the **Sustainable Agri-Food Security** Sector. This cluster works as a platform that brings together HEIs, private sector, community, and government stakeholders related to this strategic sector to identify opportunities for sustainable partnerships that strengthen HEI's role in addressing Jordan's workforce and innovation needs. Through the creation of this Cluster, HEIG aims to help stakeholders work together such that Jordanian industry problems and opportunities are resolved by Jordanian HEIs.

To maintain an open innovative environment, HEIG will select a dedicated Cluster Lead Organization that will act as the leading arm for the implementation of cluster activity in close cooperation with the elected Cluster Chairs and HEIG team to coordinate meetings, facilitate operations, and ensure effective communication. The Cluster Lead will build upon established models, leveraging local networks and partnerships to support all cluster activities and promote sustainability within the Agri-Food Security sector. The Cluster Lead Organization will also handle logistics and organization while collaborating closely with cluster leadership.

This platform will align with the objectives of the Higher Education for Innovation and Growth (HEIG) Activity, fostering innovation, partnerships, and investments in the agri-food sector. The platform will highlight best practices, showcase success stories, and provide tools for collaboration, funding opportunities, and industry engagement.

Scope of Work

Through this Request for Applications (RFA), HEIG seeks to engage a qualified Cluster Lead Organization to serve as the operational backbone for the Sustainable Agri-Food Security Cluster for a two (2) year period. The selected organization will act as the Cluster Secretariat, responsible for coordinating all cluster activities, facilitating stakeholder engagement, managing communications, and ensuring the long-term sustainability of the cluster platform.

Program Objectives

The Cluster Lead Organization shall support the achievement of the following objectives:

- Operational Excellence: Establish and maintain efficient cluster operations through dedicated staffing, resource allocation, and adherence to standard operating procedures (SOPs).

- Stakeholder Engagement: Facilitate meaningful participation from Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), private sector, government, and civil society stakeholders in cluster activities and decision-making processes.

- Knowledge Sharing: Promote the exchange of best practices, research findings, and innovative solutions among cluster members.

- Digital Innovation: Support the design, development, and operationalization of a digital platform that enables collaboration, networking, and resource sharing.

- Sustainability: Develop and implement strategies to ensure the cluster's continuity beyond the HEIG project lifecycle through partnerships, resource mobilization, and institutional embedding.

Anticipated Results

The selected Cluster Lead Organization will be responsible for achieving the following results during the two-year period of performance:

Private Sector Engagement

- Identify, recruit, and maintain active engagement with a minimum of **30 private sector enterprises** in the Sustainable Agri-Food Security sector through the convening of 5-7 cluster meetings per year. Expected target attendance of 20 members per meeting.

- Ensure private sector members are actively contributing to cluster work, demonstrated by participation in at least 2 working groups or co-design activities per year, provision of technical input or data, and/or involvement in defined joint initiatives.

Active Cluster Participation

- Build and sustain a cluster network of at least **50 active organizations** (including HEIs, private sector firms, government entities, and civil society organizations) who regularly contribute to cluster initiatives within the above mentioned 5-7 cluster meetings.

- Facilitate consistent participation through meetings, working groups, events, and collaborative projects. Members should send a representative to attend 80% of meetings and participate in at least one working group, event or collaborative project.

HEI-Industry Partnerships

- Facilitate the formation of at least **4 new formal partnerships** between Higher Education Institutions and private sector or other stakeholders.

- Ensure partnerships address tangible development objectives such as curriculum co-design, applied research, experiential learning, or workforce development.

Private Investment Mobilization

- Catalyze new private sector investment directed toward partner HEIs for innovation, research, and workforce development initiatives by facilitating co-investment opportunities, structuring cost-sharing models, and brokering partnerships that unlock in-kind contributions, technical resources, and pilot funding. Catalyze an **increase in private sector investment** directed toward partner HEIs for innovation, research, and workforce development initiatives.

- Support cluster members in identifying co-investment and cost-sharing opportunities.

Operational Digital Platform Adopted by Cluster Members

- Support the design and early operationalization of a digital collaboration platform that enables industry-HEI engagement, resource sharing, and visibility of cluster initiatives. Ensure the platform is adopted by at least 50% of active cluster members and generates documented cases of matchmaking, partnership formation, or evidence-based decision-making within the first year of operation.

Partnership Sustainability

- Cluster Sustainability Modeling: Conduct financial and business modeling to determine the long-term operating costs of cluster facilitation and identify viable revenue streams, cost-sharing options, and investment pathways. Deliver a sustainability model that outlines how the cluster can remain financially viable and institutionally embedded beyond the HEIG project lifecycle.

- Contribute to the initiation of **collaborations** among cluster participants and facilitate the launch of collaboration initiatives among cluster participants and provide ongoing coaching and oversight to ensure these collaborations are sustained and continue to operate effectively **well beyond their first year**.

- Develop cluster mechanisms and support structures that enable partnerships to thrive independently.

Trust Building

- Contribute to a measurable **improvement in trust levels** between Higher Education Institutions and private sector partners using the Activity's approach and tools to capture trust improvement.

- Foster an environment of transparency, mutual respect, and shared value creation among all cluster stakeholders.

USG Regulations:

2CFR 700and 2 CFR 200 Unified Administrative Requirements Subpart A through E apply.

SECTION II: AWARD INFORMATION

Subject to the availability of funds, IREX expects to award one (1) subaward, ranging up to $150,000 USD (106,200 JOD). The total amount available is $150,000 USD (106,200 JOD). The expected duration of IREX's support or the period of performance is May 15, 2026 – May 14, 2028. HEIG/IREX reserves the right to fund any or none of the applications submitted.

SECTION III: ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

The applicant/application must meet the following requirements:

- Be officially registered and working in compliance with all applicable civil and fiscal regulations, including, but not limited to pertinent local laws and status.

- Be officially registered as a legal entity and working in compliance with all applicable local laws. An applicant can show proof of effort to secure registration.

- Proposal meets the project's objectives and principles of the expected Scope of Work with documented experience in multi-stakeholder coordination within the Agri-Food sector.

- Proposal contains expected outcomes and results consistent with and linked to the project's objectives.

- Applicant is not a debarred organization.

- Received a U.S. government Unique Entity ID (UEI) from SAM.gov.

Types of Eligible Subawardees:

- Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)
- Private Enterprises
- Civil Service Organizations (CSOs)
- Sector Specific Industry Professional Associations
- Chambers of Commerce
- Other entities with demonstrated experience in multi-stakeholder coordination within agri-food or related sectors

SECTION IV: APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

Any questions concerning this RFA should be submitted in writing not later than **February 1, 2026** to grants.heig@irex.org. Applicants should retain for their records one copy of all enclosures which accompany their application.

The application must be received at the HEIG/IREX's email indicated below no later than the closing date listed on the front page of this RFA. Pre-award costs are not allowable and will not be reimbursed. An application and modifications thereof shall be submitted in electronic format to the following address: grants.heig@irex.org

The application must be submitted in electronic form. The complete application packet must be submitted in the required format with the required attachments.

      a. Application form – Attachment I
      b. Budget Template – Attachment II
      c. UEI number (*Please see below for more information on UEI number)
      d. Letters of support from key stakeholders and partners
      e. Organizational registration documents and CVs of key personnel

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***IMPORTANT:** Any applicant selected for funding under this RFA must apply for and receive a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number prior to the signing of a Fund Agreement with HEIG. While not a requirement for submission of an application under this RFA, HEIG encourages all interested organizations to begin the UEI application as early as possible as this represents a US Government requirement for award funding. Though the registration process is free, it is important to note that it might take some time and potential applicants are invited to apply as possible.

The UEI Number process can be initiated at: https://login.gov/

HEIG may provide guidance to the applicant selected for funding in obtaining their UEI Number but is unable to directly intervene in UEI application processes.

Restrictions:

- Subaward funds provided under the terms of this RFA shall not be used to procure goods or services from suppliers that may be identified on the USG consolidated list of debarred, suspended or ineligible contractors at http://www.sam.gov/.

- Any purchases or activities deemed unnecessary to successfully complete the activity, including any subawardee headquarters' expenses that are not directly linked to the implementation of the proposed project.

- Previous obligations and/or bad debts.

- Fines and /or penalties.

- Other costs unallowable as referenced 2 CFR 200 Subpart E Cost Principles.

Funding Restrictions:

Funds provided under the terms of this RFA shall not be used to finance any of the following commodities as per ADS 312 Eligibility of Commodities:

Ineligible Commodities: Military equipment, surveillance equipment, commodities or equipment for the support of police or other law enforcement activities, abortion equipment and services, luxury goods, gambling equipment, weather modification equipment.

Restricted commodities: Agricultural commodities (including grains, seeds, crops, lumber, meats, or dairy products), motor vehicles, pharmaceuticals, contraceptives and condoms, pesticides, used equipment, fertilizer.

Others: Purchases of goods or services restricted or prohibited under the prevailing USAID source and nationality and other regulations found under ADS 310 or from countries and suppliers as may be identified by USAID's consolidated list of debarred, suspended or ineligible subcontractors at http://www.sam.gov/.

Late Applications:

Late applications are marked as "late" and are ineligible for review or award; however, IREX reserves the right to accept and include late applications in the review and award process when it is considered within the best interest of IREX to do so and if applications that were received on time have not been opened and reviewed. Applications that are submitted late or incomplete run the risk of **not** being considered for review.

SECTION V: APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

The application will be evaluated according to the evaluation criteria set out below. To the extent necessary (if an award is not made based on initial applications), negotiations may be conducted with each applicant whose application, after discussion and negotiation, has a reasonable chance of being selected for an award.

Evaluation Criteria:

a. Technical Merit (60 points)

✓ Private Sector Engagement Capacity: The applicant's existing relationships and networks with private sector enterprises in the Agri-Food Security sector, including current memberships and partnerships. The proposed strategy for recruiting and maintaining meaningful engagement with at least 30 private sector enterprises, ensuring active participation rather than superficial involvement. Applicants must provide evidence of these networks (e.g., active MOUs, letters of support, or past joint-project portfolios). The proposal must outline a strategy for recruiting and maintaining meaningful engagement with at least 30 private sector enterprises, distinguishing between passive membership and active participation.

✓ Stakeholder Mobilization and Network Building: The applicant's ability to convene diverse actors including HEIs, government agencies, civil society organizations, and private sector firms. The proposed approach for building and sustaining a network of at least 50 active organizations through meetings, working groups, events, and collaborative projects. The applicant must detail the approach for building a network of at least 50 active organizations and include quantitative evidence of past mobilization efforts (e.g., previous working group outcomes, event attendance metrics, or collaborative project reports).

- ✓ Partnership Facilitation: The applicant's methodology for facilitating formal partnerships between HEIs and private sector, understanding of partnership models such as curriculum co-design, applied research, and experiential learning.

- ✓ Sustainability and Long-Term Viability: The applicant's vision and plans for cluster sustainability beyond the period of performance, including mechanisms for partnerships to continue independently and self-sustaining operational and financial models. Institutional commitment, alignment with organizational mission, and proposed governance structures for long-term continuity.

  - ✓ Relevance to program goals

  - ✓ Anticipated impact on the beneficiaries

  - ✓ Creativity of approach

b. Past Performance / Organizational Capacity 20 points

The applicant's reputation and credibility within the Sustainable Agri-Food Security sector, recognition as a trusted convener by stakeholders, organizational structure including staffing and financial management capabilities, and track record in managing multi-stakeholder initiatives involving HEIs, private sector, and government entities. The applicant must include letters of recommendation from key stakeholders and/or contact information for professional references.

- ✓ Past performance in similar projects.

- ✓ Relevant staff skills pertaining to the proposed project. Proposed staff must demonstrate experience in coordinating events between private enterprises and academic institutions, preferably with expertise in the Agri-food sector.

- ✓ Experience in the geographical region.

- ✓ Written accounting and procurement procedures.

- ✓ Capacity to adhere to DOS financial guidelines.

c. Feasibility and Cost Effectiveness 20 points

- ✓ Are costs reasonable, allowable, and allocable.

- ✓ Is the application cost effective.

- ✓ Does the application have the required percentage of cost share/leveraging if required.

SECTION VI: AWARD AND ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

The recommendation or selection of an application in accordance with established procedures does not guarantee an award. All applicants must demonstrate that they possess, or have the ability to obtain, the necessary management competence to practice mutually agreed upon methods of accountability for funds and other assets provided.

A successful applicant can expect to receive an Award Letter, signed by the program. The award letter will be addressed to the organization's point of contact as stated in the application. Applicants that were not successful can expect a letter explaining the reason for their unsuccessful application.

Following the Award Letter, final negotiations will take place before the signing of a subaward agreement.

Reporting Procedures:

A description of reporting requirements will be included in the Subaward Agreement. The types of reporting required, along with the schedule of reporting, will depend on the subaward agreement and project duration. Reporting forms will be provided to subaward recipients. Types of reporting will include the following:

- Program report to be submitted during project implementation according to a schedule described in the subaward agreement. This report will include a description of progress made during the period, problems in project implementation; actions taken to overcome them; and activities planned for the next period.

- Final program report will describe how the project objectives and goals were reached, results of the project, and problems and solutions during implementation.

- Financial reports will be submitted according to a schedule described in the subaward agreements. The types of financial reports, as well as the schedule of reporting, will depend on the type of subaward, length of the project, and amount of funding. In addition, the subawardee is required to submit a detailed Final Financial Report.

Issuance of the final installment of subaward funds is contingent upon HEIG's receipt and acceptance of Final Financial and Final Program Reports.

SECTION VII: OTHER INFORMATION

Issuance of this RFA does not constitute an award or commitment on the part of IREX, nor does it commit HEIG/IREX to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of an application.

IREX reserves the right to fund any or none of the applications submitted. Further, IREX reserves the right to make no awards as a result of this RFA.

Annex 1: Standard Terms and Conditions

- 2 CFR 200 Uniformed Administrative Requirements Subpart A-through E ([eCFR :: 2 CFR Part 200 Subpart E -- Cost Principles](#)).

- 2 CFR 700 The Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards [eCFR :: 2 CFR Part 700 -- Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards](#) (https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/subtitle-B/chapter-VI/part-600)

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PUBLIC NOTICE

REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS (RFA)

for Higher Education for Innovation and Growth (HEIG) Activity

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Issuance Date: January 13, 2026

Closing Date: February 12, 2026

I. SUMMARY

The Activity is a 5 year program funded by the United States Department of State (DOS) and implemented by IREX. HEIG is advancing Jordan's higher education system as a driver of innovation, employability, and economic growth. After establishing strong foundations in the Agri-Food Security Sector in Years 1 and 2, HEIG Year 3 will expand into the Medical Manufacturing and Digital Growth and Security sectors, engaging new universities and deepening collaboration between HEIs, industry, and government to drive graduate employment and research-led innovations. This work is carried out in close partnership with the Government of Jordan and with beneficiaries, emphasizing co-design and delivery of interventions that directly improve graduate employability and foster innovation, both key strategic objectives of the Ministry of Education strategic plan and Economic Modernization Vision for Jordan.

Higher Education for Innovation and Growth (HEIG) Activity has created a Catalytic Collaboration Cluster (C^3) in the **Sustainable Agri-Food Security** Sector. This cluster works as a platform that brings together HEIs, private sector, community, and government stakeholders related to this strategic sector to identify opportunities for sustainable partnerships that strengthen HEI's role in addressing Jordan's workforce and innovation needs. Through the creation of this Cluster, HEIG aims to help stakeholders work together such that Jordanian industry problems and opportunities are resolved by Jordanian HEIs.

II. PURPOSE

This RFA is seeking applicants to propose effective approaches to act as a dedicated Cluster Lead organization that will act as the leading arm for the implementation of cluster activity in close cooperation with the elected Cluster Chairs and HEIG team to coordinate meetings, facilitate operations, and ensure effective communication. The Cluster Lead will build upon established models, leveraging local networks and partnerships to support all cluster activities and promote sustainability within the Agri-Food Security sector. The Cluster Lead organization will also handle logistics and organization while collaborating closely with cluster leadership.

III. LOCATION OF ACTIVITIES

The geographic focus under consideration includes the following countries for regional activities: Jordan

IV. PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

The Cluster Lead Organization shall support the achievement of the following objectives:

- Operational Excellence: Establish and maintain efficient cluster operations through dedicated staffing, resource allocation, and adherence to standard operating procedures (SOPs).

- Stakeholder Engagement: Facilitate meaningful participation from HEIs, private sector, government, and civil society stakeholders in cluster activities and decision-making processes.

- Knowledge Sharing: Promote the exchange of best practices, research findings, and innovative solutions among cluster members.

- Digital Innovation: Support the design, development, and operationalization of a digital platform that enables collaboration, networking, and resource sharing.

- Sustainability: Develop and implement strategies to ensure the cluster's continuity beyond the HEIG project lifecycle through partnerships, resource mobilization, and institutional embedding.

V. APPLICANTS ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

The applicant/application must meet the following requirements:

- Be officially registered and working in compliance with all applicable civil and fiscal regulations, including, but not limited to pertinent local laws and status.

- Be officially registered as a legal entity and working in compliance with all applicable local laws. An applicant can show proof of effort to secure registration.

- Proposal meets the project's objectives and principles of the expected Scope of Work with documented experience in multi-stakeholder coordination within the Agri-Food sector.

- Proposal contains expected outcomes and results consistent with and linked to the project's objectives.

- Applicant is not a debarred organization.

- Received a U.S. government Unique Entity ID (UEI) from SAM.gov. (not mandatory at the application submission stage).

VII. AWARD INFORMATION

Subject to the availability of funds, IREX expects to award one (1) subaward, ranging up to $150,000 USD. The total amount available is $150,000 USD (106,200 JOD). The expected duration of IREX's support or the period of performance is May 15, 2026 - May 14, 2028. HEIG/IREX reserves the right to fund any or none of the applications submitted.

IREX reserves the right to fund any or none of the Applications submitted. Further, IREX reserves the right to make no awards as a result of this RFA.

VIII. CONTACT INFORMATION

Please contact the following to receive the Request for Application and the application package:

grants.heig@irex.org