

Alumni Venture Fund - FAQs

March 2019

1. When is the deadline?

The deadline to submit proposal applications will be April 27, 2019.

2. What language can I submit my application in?

You can submit your application in English or Arabic.

3. What if I need more than \$8,000 to implement my project?

The \$8,000 amount is the maximum that can be allocated to projects. However, you are welcome to apply for the next round of the Alumni Venture Fund if all your deliverables from previous awards were satisfactory meeting all requirements and submitted on time for this cycle.

4. What if my project can't be implemented in four months and I need more time?

Please note that awards will be for 4 months only and they will be for projects that will also demonstrate in their application the ability to complete the proposed work during this time frame. The end of the award does not necessarily mean the end of your project and we recognize that some projects require longer commitment. In addition to Alumni Venture Fund resources, the Department of State and the larger international donor community offer additional funding opportunities. The MEPI Alumni Connection hopes to support MEPI alumni through both targeted resources and training to apply for broader opportunities.

5. What is required for the application process?

The requirements for the application include a completed and signed application (in English or Arabic), a proposed budget, proposed project timeline, CVs of the Team, and an agenda for workshops/conferences (if applicable).

6. What if I don't have a concrete idea?

We encourage you to join the coaching sessions to be organized by MEPI Alumni Connection team between March and April 2019. We also encourage you to take advantage of opportunities to chat with other MEPI Alumni, especially former awardees, in the coaching sessions, in group discussions or via the MEPI LinkedIn Group to hone your idea. This exchange will also give you a chance to find team members.

7. What is the difference between each project category?

- A Community Service project is voluntary work for the betterment of one's community or country.
- A Private Enterprise project is a small business or entrepreneurial project privately managed by an individual or an external company.
- A Social Enterprise project is a small business or entrepreneurial project that has a goal of contributing to the welfare of others (socially, financially, or environmentally) while also making a profit.

8. Who do I contact if I have questions?

Please contact the MEPI Alumni Connection Team at: mepialumni@irex.org

9. Who can I have as team members? How many team members can I have?

You need to have at least 1 Team Member who must either be a MEPI or other Department of State (DOS) alum. Additional team members are encouraged but not required. There is no limit on how many team members you can have.

10. What if I want to work alone or with my business partner who is not an alum?

The AVF is a way to establish a stronger network of alumni; therefore, you can't work alone. If you'd like to work with a business partner who is not an alum, he/she would be another team member, in addition to your alumni partner. You would first need a partner/team member who is either a MEPI or other DOS alum.

11. What am I responsible for as the Team Lead? What are my team members responsible for?

- The Team Leader is responsible to IREX for all financial responsibilities and project deliverables including a completed Application as well as a signed Terms & Conditions of the Award (T&Cs), a Bank Wire Transfer Form Information of your individual bank account, and a Final Narrative Report as an awardee.
- Team Member 1 and any (optional) additional Team Members are responsible for following the rules and regulations of the Alumni Venture Fund and working in collaboration with the Team Lead to implement their project.

12. How do I get a mentor? Where will my Mentor be from? Do I have to work with a mentor?

Each awardee in the core team will have the opportunity to be matched with one of the seasoned alumni and/or subject-matter experts as Mentor during the implementation period. Mentors may be from any country and may advise in-person or virtually. Mentorships are encouraged but optional.

13. What am I allowed to spend my award funds on?

- Transportation for activities (e.g. to a hospital, orphanage, or historical location);
- Advertisements to recruit volunteers;
- Supplemental material (e.g. toothpaste for a dental hygiene presentation);

- Venue costs to host a workshop;
- In country travel to host project trainings in several cities; and
- Specialized equipment, if central to project completion, not easily accessible, and within reasonable costs. The applicant must demonstrate that the equipment is essential to the project goals, impact, and completion.
- Other costs may be considered as appropriate within the scope of the project proposal.

14. What am I not allowed to spend my award funds on?

- Purchase scientific equipment (e.g. microscopes, etc.);
- Purchase construction and/or building materials (i.e. lumber, hardware, flooring, siding, lighting, plumbing fixtures, etc.);
- Purchase furniture (tables, desks, chairs);
- Purchase alcohol;
- Give gifts or donations (small prizes for project activities are permissible);
- Tuition or educational expenses of the Team members;
- To supplement the Team's' income, including through honoraria, salary expenses, or consulting fees of any kind;
- To provide honorarium or salaries to Alumni of programs funded by the U.S. Department of State.

15. Can I use my award funds for travel?

Consistent with the scope of the project proposal, travel within the MENA region may be considered for funding.

16. Why can't I receive 100% of the funds at the beginning instead of 80% in the beginning and 20% after completion?

To ensure all deliverables are submitted by the end of the implementation period, all funds will not be wired to the awardee in the beginning of the project. The remainder of the award funding will be given to the grantee after project completion and when he/she submits all required deliverables.

17. What are examples of projects I can create?

- Examples of a Community Service Project:
 - A recycling campaign at the local high schools with a training workshop and incentives
 - A neighborhood clean-up drive and/or tree planting campaign
 - A textbook exchange through student organizations that allows textbooks to be donated to students in underprivileged areas
- Examples of a Private Enterprise Project:
 - Seed funding to develop a model machine to increase efficiency in production of a locally produced resource

- An employment agency business model that contributes to alleviating unemployment issues
- A company that provides trainings and resources for farmers on sustainable agriculture techniques
- Examples of a Social Enterprise Project:
 - A project that donates one item of clothing for every item sold in the store
 - A business that uses a positive youth development model to train unemployed youth in the community to work at that business
 - A mobile app that facilitates local businesses in crowd-sourcing information on gaps in local market needs

18. How can I participate in the discussion boards?

You can participate in the discussion boards by getting a login to Oba World online platform: <https://www.obaverse.net/> . Login information will be sent to you directly if you're interested in joining the discussion boards and being a part of the webinar coaching sessions; please contact us: at mepialumni@irex.org.

19. What resources do I have access to and how do I access those resources?

You have access to resources including documents and learning platforms that will help you when applying for the grant. These resources will be posted to Oba for you to access at any time. Coaching sessions recordings will be also posted on the platform.

The MEPI Maktabat library also has several resources that might be of interest to applicants: www.maktabatmepi.org

20. If my project proposal is denied this time around, will there be other opportunities to reapply?

Yes, the AVF will not be limited to one round of awards s. There will be additional rounds which you will be able to apply for.

21. Are all MEPI alumni eligible to apply?

MEPI Alumni from Algeria, Bahrain, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia and Yemen are eligible to apply. We are not able to offer MEPI Alumni Connection activities to all alumni at this time. We encourage you to look for other DOS programs that are open to your country. Materials for other opportunities may be found [here](#), and via your local U.S. embassy's website or social media platform.

22. I am an alumnus of a MEPI program, but my country is not included. Why am I not included?

We are not able to offer MEPI Alumni Connection activities to all alumni at this time.

23. I am a MEPI alum from MENA, but I am currently studying in the U.S., can I still apply for the grant?

Only MEPI alumni residing in Algeria, Bahrain, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, and Yemen are eligible to apply.

24. What if my MEPI alum team member is not a resident of the 12 countries, can I still partner with him/her?

MEPI Alum team member must also be a resident of the 12 countries.

25. When will I know if my application was approved?

Approved and rejected applications are expected to be notified in June 2019.

26. Does my country allow individuals to receive foreign funds?

Applicants are expected to check on the regulations and procedures related to receiving foreign funding and follow local laws and regulations of countries where their planned project activities will be implemented.

For more questions and information, please contact the MEPI Alumni Connection Team at: mepialumni@irex.org