



REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS (RFA)

for the Higher Education for Innovation and Growth Activity

Issuance Date: May 19, 2026

Closing Date: June 23, 2026 (35 days after issuance date)

Closing Time: 17:00 Amman, Jordan Time

Subject: Request for Applications (RFA), Number *IREX/HEIG/RFA/007/2026*
Higher Education for Innovation and Growth (HEIG) - **Partnership Incubator Fund (PIF) – Digital Growth and Security Cluster**

Reference: Issued under International Research and Exchange Board (IREX) project and DOS Cooperative Agreement/Grant No. 72027824CA00001

This Request for Applications outlines the information required from the applicant for the development and submission of a proposal 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.

This Request for Applications (RFA) seeks to mobilize up to five (5) innovative, demand-driven partnerships between Jordanian higher education institutions (HEIs) and private sector stakeholders in the Digital Growth and Security sector. By embedding workforce development and fostering research-led collaboration, the RFA supports HEIs and industry partners in addressing sector-specific challenges, advancing market-relevant education, and driving innovation to strengthen Jordan's digital growth and security workforce and ecosystem, or advance applied research and development initiatives that drive innovation. This approach ensures that the Digital Growth and Security sector's capabilities—including digital marketing, cybersecurity, data analytics, and technological innovation—are strategically leveraged to unlock the full potential of Jordan's digital economy and its contribution to national growth.

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 [Department of State Standard Terms and Conditions](#) and [2 CFR 200](#) Subpart A through E apply.

This RFA is being issued and consists of this cover letter, Schedule A, and Annexes.

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.

Thank you for your interest in HEIG/IREX activities.

Sincerely,

Dr. Abdallah Abdallah

Chief of Party

Higher Education for Innovation and Growth (HEIG)

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

| | |
|-------|---|
| ADS | Automated Directives system |
| BPWA | Business and Professional Women Association |
| C3 | Catalytic Collaboration Cluster |
| CBOs | Community Based Organizations |
| CSOs | Civil Society Organizations |
| CFR | Code of Federal Regulations |
| FAR | Federal Acquisition Regulation |
| HEI | Higher Education Institution |
| HEIG | Higher Education for Innovation and Growth Activity |
| IREX | International Research and Exchanges Board |
| MTDC | Modified Total Direct Costs |
| NGOs | Non-Governmental Organizations |
| NICRA | Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement |
| OFAC | Office of Foreign Assets Control |
| PIF | Partnership Incubator Fund |
| Q&A | Question and Answer |
| RFA | Request for Applications |
| SAM | System of Award Management |
| SNP | Specific Needs Partnerships |

| | |
|------|--------------------------|
| SWP | Sector-wide Partnerships |
| U.S. | United States |
| UEI | Unique Entity Identifier |
| DOS | U.S. Department of State |
| USD | United States Dollars |
| USG | United States Government |

SCHEDULE A

SECTION I: FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

The Higher Education for Innovation and Growth Activity (HEIG) is a 5-year program funded by the United States Department of State (DOS) and implemented by the International Research & Exchanges Board (IREX), headquartered in Washington, DC, USA. It additionally convenes the Business and Professional Women Association (BPWA), Integrated International, and Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech) in its implementing consortium. HEIG aims to activate higher education institutions (HEIs) as key drivers of innovation and economic growth. The implementation timeline for HEIG is October 17, 2023 – October 16, 2028.

HEIG seeks to create an ecosystem where Jordanian HEIs provide quality, market-relevant, student-centered education, and foster innovation for economic growth through research-led partnerships with industry that bridge the gap between supply and demand.

The Digital Growth and Security PIF is informed by recent national evidence on Jordan's ICT skills ecosystem. The 2025 Supply and Demand Gap Analysis for Digital Skills in Jordan's ICT Industry shows that Jordan possesses strong technical talent, but that graduates face systemic barriers related to limited work-integrated learning, uneven exposure to emerging technologies, weak career transition pathways, and gaps in workplace readiness. The challenge is therefore not the absence of talent, but the need to strengthen the systems, partnerships, and applied learning models that convert talent into employment, innovation, and productivity outcomes.

Working within, between, and beyond HEIs, HEIG will strengthen workforce and innovation ecosystems and activate HEIs as effective and trusted actors within them. The activity has three main pillars:

1. Establishing effective and sustainable platforms for collaboration among HEIs, the private sector, youth, community, and government stakeholders, through the establishment of a Partnership Incubator, a Partnership Incubator Fund (PIF), and a series of sector-focused Catalytic Collaboration Clusters.
2. Strengthening the performance of HEIs' core functions (teaching and learning, research, engagement) in selected sectors through provision of material and technical assistance.
3. Supporting the development of a supportive and aligned policy environment that promotes HEI collaboration for innovation and growth.

The Monitoring and Evaluation and Learning framework designed for the HEIG Activity is crafted to operate on a results-based approach emphasizing the importance of achieving and assessing outcomes. **Annex 2** highlights some of the key indicators that the HEIG program uses to track its performance.

THE CATALYTIC COLLABORATION CLUSTER: DIGITAL GROWTH & SECURITY

The Digital Growth & Security (DGS) sector has been approved as the third priority sector under HEIG's cluster strategy. The DGS sector encompasses a broad range of disciplines and sub-sectors, including cybersecurity, data analytics, software development, artificial intelligence,

digital marketing, cloud computing, and IT infrastructure. As a cross-cutting enabler, the DGS sector has the potential to catalyze innovation and competitiveness across multiple industries.

For the purposes of this RFA, Digital Growth and Security should be understood not only as a standalone ICT sector, but also as an enabler of productivity, innovation, employability, and competitiveness across Jordan's priority economic sectors. Proposed partnerships should therefore demonstrate how digital capabilities can address verified workforce, business, research, or innovation needs.

For workforce and innovation ecosystem actors, the Digital Growth and Security Catalytic Collaboration Cluster (C3) will:

- Facilitate knowledge exchange among stakeholders to promote best practices in digital technologies, cybersecurity, and sector-specific digital transformation applications.
- Provide structured opportunities for sharing and discussing data on digital demand trends, HEI outputs in technology-related disciplines, emerging digital innovations, and sector use cases.
- Support and incentivize strategic partnerships between industry actors, academic institutions, and government agencies to leverage digital expertise and resources.
- Actively engage stakeholders in identifying shared value propositions and designing collaborative interventions that apply digital growth and security solutions to priority economic sectors.

THE PARTNERSHIP INCUBATOR FUND (PIF)

The Partnership Incubator Fund (PIF) is a catalytic financing mechanism designed to mobilize and de-risk demand-driven partnerships between the private sector and Jordanian HEIs.

PIF supports partnerships that:

- Are led by private sector demand;
- Substantially involve one or more Jordanian HEIs;
- Address workforce, productivity, or innovation needs; and
- Establish sustainable collaboration models beyond the grant period.

For this RFA, "private-sector demand" must be demonstrated through clear evidence of a workforce, productivity, innovation, research, or business challenge identified by employers or industry actors. Evidence may include letters of commitment, documented hiring needs, skill-gap statements, internship or trainee commitments, confirmed use cases, access to industry data or facilities, co-investment, participation of technical mentors, or commitment to test, adopt, scale, or recruit from the proposed intervention.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this RFA is to invite applicants to develop effective, demand-driven partnerships between Jordanian HEIs and private-sector organizations under the Digital Growth and Security

Cluster. These partnerships should address verified digital skills, workforce readiness, productivity, or innovation gaps by embedding employer demand into HEI teaching, applied research, work-integrated learning, and student transition pathways.

Priority will be given to proposals that translate private-sector needs into practical HEI-led or HEI-supported interventions, including illustratively curriculum modernization, emerging technology training, work-based learning, internships, applied research, prototyping, digital transformation solutions, career readiness models, and scalable HEI–industry collaboration mechanisms.

Partnership Types:

All partnerships must include at least one private sector organization and one Jordanian HEI within the Digital Growth and Security Catalytic Collaborative Cluster (C3)

To be eligible, applicants must apply under one of two focuses for the type of partnership:

- **Sector-Wide Partnerships (SWP):** Partnerships addressing shared challenges or opportunities affecting a broad segment of the sector, typically involving multiple firms or a representative body. These initiatives generate collective, non-competitive benefits such as workforce alignment, applied research, or policy-relevant improvements.
- **Specific Needs Partnerships (SNP):** Partnerships addressing clearly defined technical or commercial needs of one firm or a limited consortium of firms. These initiatives typically generate firm-specific value and may involve confidential or competitive elements.

Priority

Funding

Windows

Applicants should apply under either the SWP or SNP category, while also indicating which of the following priority funding windows best describes their proposed intervention:

- **Window 1: Work-Integrated Learning and Graduate Transition Pathways**
Partnerships that create or strengthen internships, cooperative training, capstones, employer-led projects, mentorship, trainee models, career services, professional portfolios, or internship-to-employment pathways.
- **Window 2: Emerging Technology Skills and Certification Pathways**
Partnerships that build applied skills in areas such as AI/ML, cybersecurity, cloud computing, DevOps, secure coding, data analytics, UX/UI, digital product management, or vendor-aligned certifications.
- **Window 3: Applied Research and Industry Problem-Solving**
Partnerships where HEI faculty and students work with firms to address digital transformation, cybersecurity, data, software, platform, automation, or innovation challenges.
- **Window 4: Scalable Digital Employability Models**
Partnerships that strengthen scalable models for digital employability, including university-based digital hubs, employer advisory models, professional portfolios, remote-work readiness, career pathways, or regional access to digital skills.

Examples of Areas of Intervention:

Applicants should select the category (SWP or SNP) that best fits their proposed approach.

The examples below are illustrative. Applicants are encouraged to design focused, feasible, and measurable interventions that respond to verified employer demand and align with one or more of the RFA's priority funding windows.

Sector-Wide Partnerships (SWP) – Illustrative Interventions:

These interventions address shared sector challenges and generate collective benefit, such as:

- **Establishing employer-validated digital skills pathways** that combine technical instruction, workplace readiness, applied projects, and assessment of employability competencies.
- **Creating credit-bearing or formally recognized work-integrated learning models** in partnership with firms, including internships, capstones, cooperative training, or employer-sponsored applied projects.
- **Facilitating employer engagement in curricular design and improvement for digital technologies**, including digital platforms, smart service systems, cloud-based applications, cybersecurity operations, and data analytics for sector-wide use cases across tourism, services, and experience-based industries.
- **Piloting digital transformation courses, modules, or micro-credentials within HEI programs**, focusing on areas such as digital marketing, data analytics, cybersecurity, UX/UI design, and smart service systems, embedded across IT, business, engineering, and related disciplines with potential for scaling across multiple sectors.
- **Enabling employer engagement in education delivery through guest lectures and co-teaching**, involving digital solution providers, cybersecurity firms, software companies, and data-driven service organizations contributing real-world applied knowledge.
- **Supporting experiential and work-based learning placements**, including internships and applied training in UX/UI design, software development, data analytics, cybersecurity operations, cloud computing, and digital product management.
- **Fostering structured pathways between students, graduates, and employers in the digital economy**, including internship-to-employment pipelines for software engineers, cybersecurity specialists, data analysts, digital marketers, and IT support professionals.
- **Delivering tailored training programs for industry digital transformation**, including digital payments, CRM systems, e-commerce platforms, data protection compliance, cybersecurity hygiene, and cloud adoption strategies aligned with national data protection frameworks.
- **Providing applied research and advisory services for digital innovation challenges**, including user behavior analytics, system optimization, cybersecurity risk assessment, digital accessibility, and AI-enabled personalization solutions.

- **Supporting evidence-based digital policy development**, including frameworks for data governance, cybersecurity standards, digital infrastructure regulation, e-commerce enablement, and digital service accessibility.
- **Strengthening faculty capacity in digital technologies**, enabling instructors to integrate emerging tools, cybersecurity principles, and applied digital innovation into academic programs.
- **Promoting student-industry applied learning initiatives**, including capstone projects, hackathons, and innovation challenges where students develop real-world digital solutions for industry partners.

Specific Needs Partnerships (SNP) – Illustrative Interventions:

These interventions address firm-specific technical or commercial needs, such as:

- **Co-developing firm-specific digital tools**, dashboards, platforms, AI-enabled solutions, cybersecurity assessments, or data analytics models with HEI faculty and students.
- **Embedding student and faculty teams within companies to solve defined digital transformation or innovation challenges** using structured supervision, deliverables, and assessment criteria.
- **Piloting company-specific trainee or internship-to-employment models** that address documented hiring bottlenecks.
- **Supporting proof-of-concept development**, testing, validation, or adaptation of digital products or services that respond to a specific business or market need.
- **Establishing new digital business models or service lines**, such as e-commerce platforms, subscription-based digital services, or integrated customer experience ecosystems supported by HEI-industry collaboration.
- **Addressing digital inclusion and accessibility challenges for specific organizations**, including multilingual platforms, accessible UX/UI design, and low-bandwidth digital service solutions.
- **Implementing HEI-led applied research and development projects**, including prototyping, system testing, cybersecurity audits, and technology validation for specific organizational needs.
- **Providing advanced data analytics and AI solutions tailored to firm requirements**, including demand forecasting, customer segmentation, personalization engines, and automated marketing systems.
- **Supporting digital transformation roadmaps for individual companies**, including diagnostics, strategy development, and implementation of digital maturity improvements.

HEIG intends for this RFA to complement and connect with other relevant USG-supported efforts that advance tourism development, economic growth, digital transformation, workforce readiness, and heritage-based opportunities in Jordan. Applicants are encouraged to identify how their proposed partnerships can create synergies, coordination, knowledge-sharing, or complementarity with relevant USG-supported initiatives where appropriate and feasible.

US Businesses Engagement:

HEIG encourages applicants to explore partnerships with U.S. businesses, U.S.-linked firms operating in Jordan, U.S. technology providers, U.S. industry associations, or U.S. business networks where such partnerships add technical, commercial, workforce, or innovation value. Such engagement may include mentorship, guest instruction, co-designed applied projects, certification pathways, access to tools or platforms, advisory support, internships, market linkages, or co-investment. U.S. business engagement is encouraged but not mandatory and will be assessed based on relevance, feasibility, and added value to the proposed partnerships.

Sustainability Expectations

Applicants must explain how the proposed partnership will continue beyond PIF support. Sustainability may include integration into HEI curricula, recurring internship or trainee agreements, employer advisory boards, certification partnerships, fee-based services, faculty or staff ownership, joint research agreements, alumni and career services systems, continued private-sector co-investment, or adoption by a sector association or cluster platform. Proposals that demonstrate credible institutional ownership and a realistic post-award continuation pathway will be considered more competitive.

USG Regulations:

[Department of State Standard Terms and Conditions](#) and [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 **up to five (5) cost reimbursable subawards, with a maximum of USD \$250,000 for each subaward**. The total amount available is **\$1 million**. The expected duration of IREX's support or the period of performance is a maximum of 16 months. 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 in Jordan and working in compliance with all applicable local laws. An applicant can show proof of effort to secure registration.
- Be operational in Jordan for at least 2 years.
- Meet the program's technical objectives and principles.

- Contain expected outcomes and results consistent with and linked to the program's objectives.
- Applicant is not a debarred organization.
- Must demonstrate financial and operational capacity to manage funds.
- Received a U.S. government Unique Entity ID (UEI) from SAM.gov or receive a UEI prior to the expected start date of the subaward, if selected.*

***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 subaward 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 U.S. 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 soon 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.

Types of Eligible Subawardees:

- Private Enterprises: Jordanian enterprises and U.S. enterprises registered and operating in Jordan.
- Non-U.S. Nongovernment Organizations (Non-U.S. NGOs).
- Community Based Organization (CBOs).
- Civil Society Organizations (CSOs).
- Professional Associations.

Partnership Requirements:

Each proposal must include:

- At least one private sector partner; and
- At least one Jordanian HEI.

Additional partners are encouraged.

HEI participation must be substantive and clearly defined. At minimum, the proposal must identify the HEI unit, faculty, department, center, or administrative function involved and explain its role in design, delivery, supervision, assessment, research, student engagement, or institutional adoption. HEI involvement may include curriculum integration, faculty participation, student recruitment and supervision, use of labs or facilities, applied research leadership, assessment and credentialing, career services engagement, or formal adoption of the partnership model beyond the grant period.

Private-sector participation must also be substantive and clearly documented. Private-sector partners should contribute one or more of the following: definition of the problem or demand signal, technical expertise, mentors, guest instructors, data or business cases, internship or trainee placements, access to facilities or tools, testing environments, employment pathway commitments, co-investment, or adoption and scaling support.

Allowable Expenses:

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.

The following types/examples of direct expenses are considered allowable under this RFA;

1. Supplies and Materials: Costs associated with purchasing necessary supplies or materials required for project implementation.
2. Equipment: Costs associated with purchasing or leasing necessary equipment required for project implementation. Any single equipment item costing over 5,000 USD will require an additional approval process.
3. Services: Costs associated with purchasing necessary services from individuals or suppliers, vendors, contractors that are required for project implementation such as leasing, training, events, legal advice, technical assistance, or consulting.
4. Personnel Costs: Salaries, wages, and benefits for project staff directly involved in implementing the fund activities. These staff may be already contracted by project partners or may be duly hired to conduct project activities. Values must be in line with the job market, and contracts and payments will be audited.
5. Subawards Costs associated with carrying out part project activities.
6. Any other duly justified expenses allowable by the United States Department of State (DOS).

NICRA & De-Minimis Indirect Rate:
If applicants do not have an approved Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA), a de minimis indirect rate of up to 15% may be applied on all “Modified Total Direct Costs ([MTDC](#)).” This rate must be used to pay for organizational indirect operating costs. Therefore, no organizational operating costs will be directly billed to this subaward. This rate must be used to pay for organizational indirect operating costs. Therefore, no organizational operating costs will be directly billed to this subaward.

Pre-award costs are not allowable and will not be reimbursed. All costs related to the development, drafting, and submission of applications in response to this RFA are the sole responsibility of the applicant.

Cost Share:

Cost share is required, which means that applicants are expected to exhibit vested interest by committing significant cash or in-kind investments towards the implementation of proposed

activities. This investment is a cost share contribution, i.e. a percentage of the budget covered by the applicant or from other demonstrable sources. **The minimum acceptable cost share is 30%.**

This represents the **minimum** amount of cost share required to be eligible for award under this RFA. HEIG encourages applicants to include additional cost share wherever appropriate to strengthen their application’s competitiveness.

All costs detailed in the application must be duly recorded and verified, including the cost share. Cost Share is exclusive of the requested amount for the proposed Fund. Cost Share must follow all applicable regulations and clauses in [2 CFR 200.306](#) “Cost Sharing.”

Authorized Geographic Code:

The Authorized Geographic Code for the procurement of goods and services is **937**. Geographic Code 937 authorizes procurement from the United States, the cooperating country, and “low-income” and “lower-middle income” economies.

SECTION IV: APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

Schedule of Events:

The following schedule applies to this RFA but may change in accordance with IREX’s needs or unforeseen circumstances. Changes in this timeline will be announced as a formal modification to the RFA.

| LINE | TIME | DATE | STEP |
|------|----------------------------|---------------|---|
| A | 14:00 – 15:00, Jordan time | June 2, 2026 | Information session, which will be recorded, to provide additional details about PIF and Security Cluster RFA and to offer prospective applicants the opportunity to related to this Microsoft Teams meeting Join: https://teams.microsoft.com/meet/210831853998553?p=Gq4NZyyJLj5IVGGG Meeting ID: 210 831 853 998 553 Passcode: xp9QQ2sy |
| B | 17:00, Jordan time | June 12, 2026 | Deadline for requesting clarifications from IREX. Questions must be submitted via grants.heig@irex.org . |
| C | 17:00, Jordan time | June 15, 2026 | Estimated date for issuance of any clarifications by IREX. All questions will be answered in a document inclusive of a link to view the information session recording and shared with applicants. |

| | | | |
|---|--------------------------|---------------------|---|
| D | 17:00, Jordan time | June 23, 2026 | Deadline for submission of applications. Applications must be submitted via email to grants.heig@irex.org . |
|---|--------------------------|---------------------|---|

IREX/HEIG will conduct an information session to provide additional details about the Partnership Incubator Fund (PIF) – Digital Growth and Security Cluster RFA and to offer prospective applicants the opportunity to ask questions related to this RFA.

The session will be held online via Microsoft Teams on **June 2, 2026**, from **14:00 – 15:00 (Jordan time)**.

Microsoft Teams Meeting Details:

Join: <https://teams.microsoft.com/meet/210831853998553?p=Gq4NZyyJTLj5IVGGGv>

Meeting ID: 210 831 853 998 553

Passcode: xp9QQ2sy

Interested applicants are encouraged to attend. The meeting will be recorded and shared with IREX responses to clarification questions.

Any further questions concerning this RFA should be submitted in writing no later than June 12, 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 IREX/HEIG'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

Applicants are required to clearly indicate the RFA number and organization name in the email subject line as follows:

IREX/HEIG/RFA/007/2026 – [Your Organization Name] Application Submission.

Failure to follow this format may affect the timely processing of the application.

Applications 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. Letters of support from key stakeholders and partners
- d. Organizational registration documents and CVs of key personnel

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.
- None of the funds awarded under this RFA may be made available for subawards, direct financial support, or otherwise used to provide any payment or transfer to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA).

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.

a. Technical Merit / HEI Engagement & Technical Value (45 points)

- ✓ Relevance to Digital Growth and Security priorities and program goals, including potential complementarity with other relevant U.S. Government-supported efforts.
- ✓ Sustainability of project results and potential for scale beyond PIF support.
- ✓ Anticipated workforce or innovation outcomes within the proposed period of performance.
- ✓ Depth and relevance of HEI contribution and creativity of approach.
- ✓ Sound methodology and realistic workplan.
- ✓ Clear articulation of demand and level of private sector commitment.
- ✓ Strength and clarity of the HEI–industry partnership, including roles, incentives, and shared values.
- ✓ Defined roles, governance, and evidence of collaboration readiness.
- ✓ Relevance to HEIG Performance Indicators (the extent to which the application aligns with the specified indicators and demonstrates a clear understanding of their importance), highlighted in Annex 2.

- ✓ Target Setting: The appropriateness and feasibility of the proposed targets for each indicator.

b. Past Performance / Organizational Capacity (25 points)

- ✓ Past performance in relevant projects in terms of complexity.
- ✓ Relevant staff skills to the proposed project documented by submission of staff bios or CVs.
- ✓ Experience in the geographical region.
- ✓ Written accounting and procurement procedures.
- ✓ Capacity to adhere to DOS financial guidelines.

c. Cost Effectiveness & Co-Investment (30 points)

- ✓ Reasonableness of budget - costs are reasonable, allowable, and allocable.
- ✓ Level of cost-share and co-investment from partners (a minimum of 30% cost-share required). Cost-share may be financial or in-kind and may include:
 - Cash contributions toward digital research, training, or technology equipment;
 - Staff time (technical, supervisory, academic);
 - Use of facilities, labs, digital infrastructure, or equipment;
 - Paid internships or trainee stipends in digital tourism roles;
 - Digital tools, software licenses, or prototyping inputs;
 - Digital product testing, user experience research, or commercialization costs.
- ✓ Overall cost effectiveness of the proposal.

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 Agreement. 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 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

- U.S. Department of State Standard Terms and Conditions ([Final FY26 - Standard Terms and Conditions for Federal Awards](#))
- 2 CFR 200 Uniformed Administrative Requirements Subpart A-through E ([eCFR :: 2 CFR Part 200 Subpart E -- Cost Principles](#))
- 2 CFR 600 The Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/subtitle-B/chapter-VI/part-600>)
- 2 CFR 601 Nonprocurement Debarment and Suspension (<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/subtitle-B/chapter-VI/part-601>)

Annex 2: Relevant HEIG Performance Indicators

| Indicator Name | Indicator Definition | Link to HEIG Indicators |
|--|---|-------------------------|
| Number of New Employability Pathways Created for Specific Skill Sets | <p>This indicator tracks the number of new employability pathways specifically designed to develop targeted skill sets that are in demand by the local job market. These pathways should be created in collaboration with external partners such as businesses, industry associations, or governmental bodies.</p> <p>To be counted, the educational programs, training courses, or skills development initiatives should focus on specific skills identified as high demand in the local job market. Each pathway must involve the collaboration of at least one external partner</p> | A.P.1 |
| Number of Innovations Created with Support from HEIG Assistance | <p>This indicator tracks the number of new innovations (e.g., methods, technologies, solutions) developed with HEIG support. These innovations should be created through collaborative efforts involving higher education institutions (HEIs) and external partners such as businesses, government agencies, or NGOs.</p> <p>To be counted, new innovations should be designed and developed with the involvement of external partners. And these innovations should address specific needs or challenges and have the potential for adoption by public or private sector entities.</p> | A.P.4. |
| Amount of Private Investment Attracted | <p>This indicator measures the total amount of private sector funds invested in projects supported by HEIG funding. It includes both cash and in-kind contributions.</p> | A.P.5 |
| Amount Increase in New Investments in HEIs | <p>This indicator tracks the increase in new private or other non-USG investments directed towards higher education institutions to support innovation pathways. It measures the absolute increase in investment amounts over a specific period.</p> | 2.3.2 |
| Number of Learners Who Receive Market | <p>This indicator counts the number of learners who satisfactorily participate in educational activities specifically designed to equip them with competencies and expertise that directly align with the demands and requirements of the current job market or industry</p> | 1.3.2 |

| | | |
|---|--|--------------|
| <p>Needed Skills Training</p> | <p>needs. These learners participate in training sessions or educational programs or initiatives developed and delivered by the consortium or supported partners that focus on developing practical skills, knowledge, and proficiencies sought after by employers or industries operating within Jordan's economic sectors identified as high-growth or in demand. This indicator measures the number of learners benefiting from skill-building initiatives aimed at addressing workforce gaps and enhancing employability by tailoring education to the demands of the labor market. Educational initiatives can include curricular or extra-curricular courses or initiatives (such as design challenges, internships or mentorship programs) that have a skill building component and defined intended learning outcomes.</p> | |
| <p>Number of Faculty Members, Administrative Staff, or Learners Participating in Research and/or Innovation Capacity-Building Programs or Initiatives</p> | <p>This indicator measures the number of individuals engaged in structured activities aimed at enhancing their abilities, skills, and competencies in conducting research or fostering innovation.</p> <p>This indicator refers to faculty members, administrative staff, or learners who actively participate in programs specifically designed to develop their personal, or their institutions' research or innovation capacities.</p> | <p>1.3.3</p> |

PUBLIC NOTICE
REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS (RFA)
for the Higher Education for Innovation and Growth Activity

Issuance Date: May 19, 2026

Closing Date: June 23, 2026, 17:00 Amman, Jordan Time

I. SUMMARY:

The Higher Education for Innovation and Growth Activity (HEIG) is a 5-year program funded by the United States Department of State (DOS) and implemented by the International Research and Exchange Board (IREX). The Higher Education for Innovation and Growth project seeks to create an ecosystem where Jordanian HEIs provide quality, market-relevant, student-centered education, and foster innovation for economic growth through partnerships with industry that bridge the gap between supply and demand.

Working within, between and beyond HEIs, HEIG will strengthen workforce and innovation ecosystems and activate HEIs as effective and trusted actors within them.

II. PURPOSE:

The purpose of this RFA is to invite applicants to develop effective, demand-driven partnerships between Jordanian HEIs and private-sector organizations under the Digital Growth and Security Cluster. These partnerships should address verified digital skills, workforce readiness, productivity, or innovation gaps by embedding employer demand into HEI teaching, applied research, work-integrated learning, and student transition pathways.

Priority will be given to proposals that translate private-sector needs into practical HEI-led or HEI-supported interventions, including curriculum modernization, emerging technology training, work-based learning, internships, applied research, prototyping, digital transformation solutions, career readiness models, and scalable HEI–industry collaboration mechanisms.

III. LOCATION OF ACTIVITIES:

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

IV. PROGRAM OBJECTIVES:

- Establishing effective and sustainable platforms for collaboration among HEIs, the private sector, youth, community, and government stakeholders, through the establishment of a Partnership Incubator, a Partnership Incubator Fund (PIF), and a series of sector-focused Catalytic Collaboration Clusters.
- Strengthening the performance of HEI's core functions (teaching and learning, research, engagement) in selected sectors through provision of material and technical assistance.

- Supporting the development of a supportive and aligned policy environment that promotes HEI collaboration for innovation and growth.

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 in Jordan and working in compliance with all applicable local laws. An applicant can show proof of effort to secure registration.
- Be operational in Jordan for at least 2 years.
- Meet the program's technical objectives and principles.
- Contain expected outcomes and results consistent with and linked to the program's objectives.
- Applicant is not a debarred organization.
- Must demonstrate financial and operational capacity to manage funds.
- Received a U.S. government Unique Entity ID (UEI) from SAM.gov or receive a UEI prior to the expected start date of the subaward, if selected (see more information in the RFA).

VI. Cost share Requirements:

Cost share is required, which means that applicants are expected to exhibit vested interest by committing significant cash or in-kind investments towards the implementation of proposed activities. This investment is a cost share contribution, i.e. a percentage of the budget covered by the applicant or from other demonstrable sources. **The minimum acceptable cost share is 30%.** See the RFA for more information on cost share requirements.

VII. Award Information

Subject to the availability of funds, IREX expects to award five (5) cost reimbursable subawards, **with a maximum of USD \$250,000 for each subaward.** The total amount available is **\$1 million.** The expected duration of IREX's support or the period of performance is a maximum of 16 months.

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 send an electronic version of your application packet to grants.heig@irex.org.

Applicants are required to clearly indicate the RFA number and organization name in the email subject line as follows:

IREX/HEIG/RFA/007/2026 – [Your Organization Name] Application Submission.

Failure to follow this format may affect the timely processing of the application.