MEPI Alumni Connection

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**Alumni Venture Fund
Application Instructions
Spring 2018**

Program Overview

The Alumni Venture Fund (AVF) provides small grant opportunities for MEPI alumni to collaboratively utilize the leadership skills they developed through their various MEPI program experiences. This small grant program supports alumni to work together on innovative solutions to economic and/or community needs. The small grants provide seed funding for innovative ideas to develop new partnerships, foster sustainable collaboration in priority areas, and expand the impact of alumni to address needs within their communities. The Alumni Venture Fund part of the MEPI Alumni Connection, a program of the U.S.- Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) and implemented by IREX.

Spring 2018 AVF Timeline:

- Applications open: June 25, 2018
- Applications Deadline: July 22, 2018
- Grant Award Recipients Announced: September, 2018
- Grant Period: September – January 2018
- Final Report Due: February 2019

Technical Eligibility Requirements

Candidates will be considered without respect to race, color, religion, national origin, or gender. Persons with disabilities are strongly encouraged to apply. The Alumni Venture Fund is a merit-based competition open to:

- MEPI Alumni in good standing, who have successfully fulfilled all requirements of previously awarded alumni grants and other USG opportunities, if applicable, and have completed the 2018 MEPI Alumni Needs Assessment survey; and
- MEPI Alumni ("Team Leader") who submit a complete application with at least one collaborator ("Team Member 1"). Additional team members are encouraged but not required.

  - The Team Leader is responsible to IREX for all financial responsibilities and project deliverables including a completed Application, a signed Terms & Conditions of Participation (T&Cs), a bank wire transfer information, and a Final Narrative Report.
  - 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.

- The Team Lead and Team Member(s) must be current citizens of and currently reside in one of the following eligible countries: Algeria, Bahrain, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, West Bank/Gaza, and Yemen. Alumni from West Bank/Gaza should be aware that their application will trigger US government vetting.

Individuals in the following circumstances are **NOT** eligible for the Alumni Venture Fund:

- Individuals currently residing outside of the following countries: Algeria, Bahrain, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, West Bank/Gaza, and Yemen. Note that Residents or Citizens of Egypt, United Arab Emirates, or Oman are not eligible
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- Local employees of the U.S. missions abroad who work for the U.S. Department of State are ineligible for grants during the period of their employment and for one year following the termination of employment; or
- Current IREX employees and consultants and their immediate family members (spouses, parents, children, and siblings).

Selection Criteria
Eligible applications will be reviewed competitively against the following Selection Criteria:

- Strength and feasibility of the project design
- Impact and responsiveness to an identified local need
- Creativity and innovation of the project
- Clarity and reasonableness of the collaboration plan
- Transparency and reasonableness of budget
- Relevance of monitoring, evaluation, and learning plan
- Potential for sustainable impact beyond the grant period

Examples of Eligible Initiatives (other project ideas are also welcome):

Community Service
- 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

Private Enterprise
- Seed funding to develop a model machine to increase efficiency in production of a locally produced resource

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- An employment agency business model that contributes to alleviating unemployment issues
- A company that provides trainings and resources for farmers on sustainable agriculture techniques

Social Enterprise
- A project that donates one item of clothing for every item sold in the store
- A business that is 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

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Application Evaluation

All completed applications received by **11:59 pm EST on July.22,2018,** will be evaluated competitively against the technical eligibility and selection criteria by a selection committee.

IREX reserves the right to verify all of the information included in the application. In the event that there is a discrepancy, or information is found to be false, the application will immediately be declared invalid and the applicant ineligible. Incomplete applications will not be considered.

All proposed projects selected for award must be reviewed and cleared by the U.S. Embassy to the proposed country of the project, prior to final selection.

Reporting Requirements

All Alumni Venture Fund grantees will be **required** to submit a Final Narrative Report to IREX following the completion of the project or no later than **February, 2019.** More information about reporting requirements will be included in the Terms and Conditions document signed by grantees.

Financial Provisions:

> **Grant award minimum:** $500
> **Grant award maximum:** $8,000

Disbursement of Funds
Grantees will receive their grant funds as a wire to the personal bank account provided to IREX by the Team Lead. Accordingly, these grantees will be asked to supply bank information in a Wire Transfer Bank Information Form; grantees must also provide bank information for any intermediary bank that may be necessary to complete the transfer of grant funds from the United States to the MENA region.

> **Please note:** Some banks may charge a fee for the transfer of funds to the grantee's account. Grantees should contact their bank to determine if there will be a fee. Grantees will need to budget for any bank fees in the project budget. Some banks may also hold funds for a short while after they are received, and before they are disbursed to the grantee. Grantees should anticipate this kind of possible delay and plan for it in their project calendar.

Allowable Costs
Grant funds **may only** be used to purchase materials for the activity or to implement the activity. Examples of allowable costs are:

✓ Transportation to a hospital, orphanage, or historical location;

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✔ 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.

Unallowable Costs
Grant funds **may not** be used for the following:

 × 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; or
 × To provide honorarium or salaries to Alumni of programs funded by the U.S. Department of State
 × Grantees may not charge the award security costs unless specifically approved in writing by IREX.
 × Special Provision for Performance in a Designated Combat Area (SPOT) applies to work in Iraq.

General Application Instructions

 ♦ Please answer all questions completely.
 ♦ All forms and supporting materials should be typed (if possible) and submitted with the complete application.
 ♦ If including optional letters of support, please provide translations for such letters that are in languages other than English or Arabic.
 ♦ Include the full legal names, as spelled on the international passports, of the Team.
 ♦ Include program name(s) and year(s) that all members of the Team participated in a MEPI or other DOS program.
 ♦ Provide complete contact information for the Team, including postal index codes for all addresses, country, and city codes for telephone numbers.
 ♦ Please complete your project budget in the local currency **and** provide value in U.S. dollars
 ♦ Do not leave any question blank. If a question does not apply to you, write N/A (not applicable).

Tips for Creating Your Budget

 ♦ Start planning your budget as soon as you begin thinking of the activities you want to implement. The first step is to think about each activity that you will be carrying out and make a list of each expense you anticipate will be associated with each activity. The goal is to think about everything—big and small—that you will need to purchase in order to implement your project successfully.
 ♦ To accurately estimate prices in your budget, identify stores or vendors from which you can purchase the items that you require. Possible resources for getting price estimates include local shops, the internet, your Team, other MEPI alumni who may have done a similar project before, your professional colleagues, etc.
 ♦ Please remember to account for any estimated bank fees in your project budget (please refer to **Financial Provisions**). The Team Lead must be able to receive funds to her/his bank account.

Submission Guidelines

♦ Applications must be received on or before the due date. Applications received after the deadline will not be considered.
♦ All applications must be submitted along with a proposed budget, project timeline, CVs of the Team, and agenda for workshops/conferences (if applicable).
♦ Letters of support from potential project partners are encouraged but not required. Please note that MEPI / State Department staff cannot provide letters for this purpose.
♦ Please be sure to keep a copy of your completed application.

Only one application for any individual alumnus/alumna Team Leader will be considered per application round. Individual alumni may be listed on other applications as a Team Member or other collaborator during the same application round.

If Selected:

♦ Grantees will be required to complete a Terms & Conditions of Participation (T&Cs) along with a Wire Transfer form before the grant period begins.
♦ Grantees will be required to complete a final report, due no later than Jan.19,2018

Resources Available to Applicants:

♦ All applicants may join our live coaching sessions throughout the open application period. The scheduled is as follows:

   o First coaching session, **2 July 2018, 5 PM - GMT**
   o Second coaching session, **10 July 2018, 5 PM - GMT**
   o Third coaching session,**15 July 2018, 5 PM – GMT**

The live coaching sessions will also be available to download and review at a later time.

♦ Please also utilize the trainings available to you in the Maktabat MEPI Library: http://maktabatmepi.org/

International Exchange Alumni – U.S. Department of State

All DOS alumni are encouraged to register and use the International Exchange Alumni Website, at https://alumni.state.gov. This site allows alumni to stay in contact with one another through networking and the sharing of useful information about professional opportunities. International Exchange Alumni may assist applicants for the Alumni Venture Fund by providing resources for project development and further funding; access to other alumni to help to formulate a project idea, or forums for disseminating information about a project to other alumni.