



MIDDLE EAST REGIONAL COOPERATION (MERC)

Enhancing research and development cooperation between Israel and the MENA region

Following the Camp David accords, an initiative of the U.S. Congress brought about the Middle East Regional Cooperation (MERC) Program. The MERC Program promotes Arab-Israeli scientific cooperation, technology-led development, and capacity building. Emphasis is given to research and technology subjects of regional importance and relevance to the development of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). Benefits should target developing countries in the region and populations of limited income.

OBJECTIVES

- Support applied, actionable research that generates results relevant to regional development.
- Foster the implementation of research results and innovations to improve quality of life and achieve development impact in the MENA region.
- Build science and technology capacity in developing countries in the MENA region.
- Increase direct Arab-Israeli cooperation by establishing strong working relationships that last beyond the life of the project.

WHERE WE WORK

To date, MERC has awarded grants between partners in Israel, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia, and the West Bank and Gaza.

Algeria, Bahrain, Kuwait, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and the United Arab Emirates are also eligible to apply.

WORK WE SUPPORT

Drought and disease know no political boundaries. Meeting these challenges and fully realizing potential innovations requires cooperation across the Middle East. Israel has a vibrant scientific community with an emphasis on applying research to unique regional challenges. Arab scientists in the Middle East and North Africa are also using science and technology to overcome core development challenges. Fully realizing potential innovations requires cooperation beyond borders and across the region.

Examples of the types of development impacts MERC aims to achieve include but are not limited to: economic growth that increases incomes of the disadvantaged, improved environmental management, increased food production, water conservation and resource management, and improved delivery of health services through better treatments or health management strategies.

CONTACT

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FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Download the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO):

Go to [grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) and search for Opportunity Number NEAAC22MERC1001

Or follow this link: <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?oppld=343293>

Deadline for proposals: December 15, 2022

All proposals must include **at least one institutional partner in Israel and one in an Arab country/territory** eligible to receive U.S. foreign assistance. Proposals involving three or more regional partners are also allowed and encouraged. As part of the current NOFO, MERC is seeking to fund proposals in the following categories:

APPLIED RESEARCH GRANTS

Under this category, MERC seeks pre-proposals pertaining to applied research and technology development within the broad areas of the natural, physical, and social sciences and engineering. Pre-proposals under this category should present collaborative applied research projects on topics of regional development relevance between Israel and its Arab neighbors. Pre-proposals should relate to regional problems that benefit from cross-border cooperation.

Applicants under this category are required only to submit a 6-page pre-proposal as described in the NOFO (Section C). If a full proposal is invited, guidelines for preparing the full proposal and specific invitation conditions will be provided to the applicants.

Average award size is \$500,000 (ceiling is \$1,000,000) over 2 to 5 years. Applicants with complex, multi-partner concepts that justify a proposal budget in excess of \$1,000,000 may present a “phased” work plan with well-defined deliverables and outcomes at the conclusion of each phase. Each individual phase should not be in excess of \$1,000,000.

CONTINUATION GRANTS

Applicants with current or recently ended MERC awards may submit proposals to be evaluated as “continuation grants” (formerly known as “fast track”), skipping the scientific peer review process.

Continuation grants provide support for the implementation, commercialization, broader dissemination, or uptake of project results from MERC-supported research. Depending on the type of project and results obtained, MERC would favor private sector partnerships, a focus on end-user adoption of technology, or tailoring outcomes to be useful to regulators in government agencies. **Estimated award ceiling is \$500,000 over 1 to 3 years.**

TRAVEL AND WORKSHOP GRANTS

Proposals to support joint Arab-Israeli workshops, meetings, or exchange of researchers may be considered under this category. MERC seeks to support forums that advance dialogue on regional scientific issues, develop new partnerships, or deliver training on a topic relevant to regional development. Preference will be given to proposals that cite the development of new pre-proposals to the MERC program as a key outcome, engage students and early career researchers, meaningfully engage policymakers and stakeholders, and are organized in the Middle East region.

Estimated award ceiling is \$100,000 for one activity, event, or exchange to be completed within one year of the award.

SPECIAL CALL FOR PROPOSALS ON CLIMATE

MERC aims to promote Arab-Israeli partnerships and innovative approaches that address climate mitigation (reducing and sequestering greenhouse gas emissions) and adaptation (reducing climate vulnerability and improving resilience to climate impacts) priorities in the MENA. Applicants who wish to respond to this special call may apply for an **applied research grant, continuation grant, or travel and workshop grant** (as described above) and should aim to integrate the foundational principles from USAID’s Climate Strategy as described in the NOFO. This special call for proposals should not discourage applicants from submitting proposals on any other topic within the natural, physical, and social sciences and engineering.