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MIDDLE EAST REGIONAL COOPERATION (MERC)

WHERE WE WORK

Through grants for applied research and technical exchanges, the MERC Program promotes scientific cooperation, technology-led development, and capacity building between partners in Israel and the Middle East and North Africa region including: Algeria, Bahrain, Kuwait, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, and the West Bank and Gaza

CONTACT

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USAID's Middle East Regional Cooperation Program (MERC) funds research collaboration between scientists in Israel and the broader MENA region on regional development challenges.

WORK WE SUPPORT

Drought and disease know no political boundaries. Meeting complex, regional challenges requires cooperation across borders. Scientists across the Middle East and North Africa are using science and technology to tackle development challenges and overcome resource constraints. Engaging with the vibrant scientific community and innovation ecosystem in Israel, multi-national teams of researchers are generating new knowledge and leading developments in agriculture, environment, water resources, and health.

Examples of development impacts MERC aims to achieve include: 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.

MERC funds **applied research grants** and **travel and workshop grants** in support of regional scientific cooperation.



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GRANT CATEGORIES

[Download the Notice of Funding Opportunity \(NOFO\) from grants.gov](#)

Opportunity Number: NEAAC24MERC1002

Deadline for submission: January 15, 2025

The MERC Program funds peer-reviewed, collaborative, applied scientific research and technical exchanges between Israeli partners and eligible MENA partners. MERC is seeking to fund proposals in the following categories. The Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) provides details on how to prepare and submit a proposal and the evaluation criteria.

APPLIED RESEARCH GRANTS

Pre-proposals under this category should present collaborative applied research projects on topics of development relevance to the MENA region within the broad areas of the natural, physical, and social sciences and engineering. The consortium of applicants must at a minimum be bi-lateral (one Israeli institution and one institution from among the eligible MENA partners) but may include partners from multiple eligible MENA countries/territories. Concepts should relate to regional problems that benefit from cross-border cooperation.

Average award size is \$550,000 (estimated award ceiling is \$1,000,000) over 2 to 5 years. 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 for each phase. Each individual phase should not be in excess of \$1,000,000.

CONTINUATION GRANTS

Applicants with current or recently ended Applied Research Grants may submit proposals to be evaluated as “continuation grants.” Continuation grants provide support for the implementation, commercialization, broader dissemination, or uptake of project results from MERC-supported research. This option can also be used to propose the incorporation of an additional country partner to a current award, or to propose an additional objective(s) as supported by preliminary findings. **Estimated award ceiling is \$500,00 over 1 to 3 years.**

TRAVEL & WORKSHOP GRANTS

Proposals to support cooperative 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. **Estimated award ceiling is \$100,000** for one activity, event, or exchange.

2025 SPECIAL CALL FOR PROPOSALS: MENA REGION FOOD SECURITY

In the MENA region, conflict and political uncertainty exacerbates food security challenges posed by extreme heat, floods, droughts, desertification, plant and animal pathogens, and other pressures. This special call for proposals encourages submission of concepts that seek to advance agricultural productivity and mitigate against risks to food security in the MENA region. Applicants who wish to respond to this special call may apply for **an applied research, continuation, or travel and workshop grant**, and should address one or more of the following thematic areas:

- Near-term solutions for local food production
- Long-term improvement of staple food crops
- Long-term conservation of genetic resources and establishment of seed systems
- Sustainable animal agriculture
- Waste reduction and value additions
- Education projects on food security