



Request for Statements of Interest

Iraq University Linkages Program Small Grants

IREX (the International Research & Exchanges Board) invites U.S. universities to participate in the Iraq University Linkages Program (ULP) Small Grants Project, supported by the U.S. Embassy – Baghdad.

Through the ULP, the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad has made an important contribution to strengthening Iraqi universities through its focus on partnerships and linkages to U.S. universities. The ULP aims to build sustainable relationships between Iraqi and U.S. higher education institutions and develop the capacity of Iraqi universities to be better equipped to engage globally and to promote social, political, and economic development in Iraq. The ULP partnerships have spawned strong personal connections and fostered mutual understanding among participating faculty and administrators.

To further build on this foundation of cultural understanding and capacity building, IREX is opening participation in the small grants to additional Iraqi and U.S. universities. Grants to existing ULP universities would be aimed at building onto next steps in collaboration while expanding institutional impact and sustainability on those campuses. Grants to non-ULP universities would be aimed at providing seed funding for U.S. and Iraqi partners to develop longer term relationships and partnerships through targeted collaboration.

This is a competitive process which began with the submission of the Small Grants applications by the Iraqi Universities. IREX then created a menu of partnerships for funding based on the areas of interest for joint projects identified by Iraqi universities. IREX invites U.S. universities to review the list of selected proposals and submit a Statement of Interest (SOI) if there is a desire in developing this type of partnership in any area identified by the Iraqi campuses. U.S. partner universities will be selected from submitted SOIs based on shared goals and areas of strength with the participating Iraqi institutions.

Applicants are invited to develop a collaborative project that will be completed within 6-12 months. Applicants can request from \$5,000 to \$50,000 for the project. Grants receiving higher amounts of funding must show broader impact to the Iraqi campus. IREX reserves the right to suggest alterations to an applicant's proposal or to fund some, but not all, components of an application.

Possible areas for collaboration for this grant could include but is not limited to:

- Focused capacity building in faculty instructional strategies in a specific academic department
- Review and update the curriculum for a specific degree program
- Institutional Research Capacity building
- University Administrative training
- Industry Engagement

Examples of projects from the 2014 Small Grants:

- Integrating software-based analysis tools into the electrical engineering curriculum.
- Developing a foundation in the field of sustainability studies and green building through faculty exchange, training and curriculum development.
- Conducting an introductory ABET accreditation workshop for Iraqi engineering faculty.
- Developing the concepts of entrepreneurship, technology transfer and curriculum development of a course in Entrepreneurship.
- Conducting in person workshops to introduce Iraqi engineering faculty to problem based learning.

1. PROGRAM OVERVIEW AND BACKGROUND

While Iraq earlier enjoyed a long and proud tradition in higher education, wars, isolation and sanctions over the past three decades have severely damaged the education system. The Government of Iraq (GoI) recognizes that enormous challenges remain ahead and is committed to rebuilding its education system. Iraqi policy-makers, administrators, faculty and students view linkages with the West, particularly the U.S., as a key way to expedite the process of rebuilding the higher education system.

The governments of Iraq and the United States, through the Strategic Framework Agreement between our countries, are jointly committed to the establishment of affiliations between Iraqi and American academic institutions to promote and facilitate cooperation and coordination in the field of higher education and scientific research. In 2010, the Public Affairs Section (PAS) of the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad launched the University Linkages Program with the establishment of seven linkages between U.S. and Iraqi universities, three of which are managed by IREX.

2. PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

- A. Build higher education capacity in Iraq in targeted program areas related to curriculum development, technology, institutional research and pedagogy;
- B. Promote higher education capacity as an important pillar in rebuilding civil society by bridging the gap between universities and the private sector in Iraq;
- C. Promote mutual understanding and strengthen U.S./Iraqi relationships through technical assistance, collaboration, online and videoconferencing courses and training and exchanges; and
- D. Promote substantive and long-term connections between U.S. and Iraqi universities that will endure beyond the scope of the program as a sustainable partner network.

3. ABOUT THE PUBLIC AFFAIRS SECTION, U.S. EMBASSY IRAQ, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

The Embassy's Public Affairs Section explains and supports American foreign policy and promotes U.S. national interests through a wide range of information programs and promotes mutual understanding between the United States and Iraq.

4. ABOUT IREX (INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH & EXCHANGES BOARD)

IREX is an international nonprofit organization providing thought leadership and innovative programs to promote positive lasting change globally. We enable local individuals and institutions to build key elements of a vibrant society: quality education, independent media, and strong communities. To strengthen these sectors, our program activities also include conflict resolution, technology for development, gender, and youth. Founded in 1968, IREX has an annual portfolio of over \$70 million and a staff of over 400 professionals worldwide. IREX employs field-tested methods and innovative uses of technologies to develop practical and locally-driven solutions with our partners in more than 125 countries. [<http://www.irex.org>]

5. U.S. UNIVERSITY PARTNER RESPONSIBILITIES

The U.S. partner universities will work with Iraqi partners to jointly develop and implement small grants. These small grants will provide an opportunity to support creative ideas that build on and foster sustainable collaboration in priority areas for Iraqi higher education and expand the impact of the ULP for participating faculty and departments. Iraqi universities will create projects based on their particular priority areas and needs.

Recipients of the small grants will receive award funds in a variety of methods including direct payment of expenses from IREX/Washington or IREX/Iraq, cost reimbursable sub-awards to Iraqi or U.S universities, or limited wire transfers from IREX/Washington. Grantees will be required to provide full documentation including invoices, bank information, etc. along with the Terms and Conditions.

6. STATEMENT OF INTEREST INSTRUCTIONS

Based on areas identified by Iraqi partners for collaboration listed below, IREX requests that interested universities submit a Statement of Interest letter of no more than two pages for partnership in a specific field. The Statement of Interest should describe the university's capacity to serve as a linkage partner for the Iraq ULP. It should briefly outline the university's academic expertise in selected departments/areas of focus, and the university's previous experience with international linkages. Statements of Interest should also include examples of proposed program activities, a total cost estimate based on the small-grants provisions outlined in this document, as well as any cost-share the university can contribute. SOIs should include attachments of biographies highlighting expertise of key faculty participating in the linkage program.

US universities should include illustrative activities in SOIs however universities selected for partnership with Iraqi institutions will be asked to develop final work-plan, timeline, and activities jointly with Iraqi partners and IREX staff.

Focus Areas for Partnership with Iraqi Universities

- Capacity Building in Women's Health
- Capacity Building in Nursing
- Capacity Building in Communications Engineering and IT
- Capacity Building in Transportation Engineering
- Capacity Building in Faculty Instructional Strategies in Water Resources and Environmental Engineering
- Curriculum Development for Automotive Technology
- Curriculum Development for Academic Debate and Critical Thinking in Scientific Fields
- Virtual Learning Environment for Electrical Engineering

7. ELIGIBILITY

Accredited U.S. colleges and universities with relevant departments or programs who have expressed interest in participating in ULP activities are eligible to apply.

8. SELECTION CRITERIA

IREX staff will evaluate Statements of Interest based on the university's overall capacity to administer programs of this nature, feasibility of program activities and ideas for long term collaboration with Iraqi university partners. The participating Iraqi University administrations will be given the top SOIs for final selection in consultation with PAS Baghdad.

**Statements of Interest will be due
Thursday, May 28, 2015 by 5pm Eastern Time
E-Submit to irex-ulp@irex.org**

Additional Information for Applicants

- Examples of successful activities from previous linkages are attached to this SOI request to assist universities in planning proposed partnership activities.
- List of 2014 of Small Grants

Sample Activities for Successful ULP Partnerships

- **Intensive workshops:** For example, for curriculum review: Each day structured so that the 1st half of the day focused on foundational information sharing; 2nd half of the day in breakout sessions where faculty *create or do* review with assistance from U.S. partners. Depending on the academic discipline and focus, t workshops could be held at either the Iraq or U.S. university. Third country locations will be considered on a case by case basis. Experience has proven it is cost effective to have U.S. faculty travel to Erbil to conduct workshops in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region where security is stable and travel costs for numerous Iraqi faculty not as high.
- **Site visits to the U.S.:** key Iraqi faculty visit U.S. institution for very focused workshop/training/observations, etc. These visits would be highly structured with pre-travel training and information sharing, focused and agreed upon activities and outcomes of the visit, and follow on activities upon return. It is also expected that each Iraqi faculty member who travels to the US conduct information sharing or training with peers upon return that has been jointly developed during the US visit.
- **Site visits to Iraq:** key U.S. faculty spend intensive time with Iraqi participants on the ground working through new concepts/materials and conducting training workshops.
- **Faculty development:** While on an exchange, Iraqi Faculty have attended conferences and participated in online courses to further deepen understanding, gain experience, practice new skills.
- **Research Grants:** While this grant is not specifically related to individual faculty research, where appropriate, it may be possible for U.S. and Iraqi university faculty to submit a joint proposal for research grants, publication in peer reviewed journals, and conference participation.