

Middle East Regional Cooperation (MERC)

Program Overview

The Middle East Regional Cooperation (MERC) Program supports collaborative, applied scientific research among the United States, Israel, and countries across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). MERC funds innovation-driven projects that advance U.S. economic and technological leadership while addressing regionally relevant challenges. Through strategic partnerships among researchers, institutions, and the private sector, MERC promotes regional cooperation, expands U.S. commercial opportunities, and strengthens regional partnerships.

Objectives

Support applied scientific research that advances the priorities of the United States and recipient countries, including innovation, commercialization, and market adoption of new technologies.

Accelerate the transition of research results into practical applications, commercial products, or scalable solutions that generate economic value, including opportunities for trade, investment, and private sector engagement.

Enable direct cooperation, strengthen peaceful partnerships, and establish durable working relationships between individuals, organizations, and communities in Israel and the broader MENA region.

Priority Sectors

MERC is open to proposals from any sector or scientific discipline, but prioritizes projects demonstrating strong alignment with U.S. strategic, economic, and technological interests, including:

- Critical & Emerging Technologies
- Energy Security & Systems
- Water & Infrastructure
- Advanced Agriculture & Ag-Tech
- Critical Minerals & Advanced Manufacturing
- Health Security & Biotechnology

Eligibility Requirements and U.S. Private Sector Engagement

All projects must include a **minimum one Israeli recipient and one recipient from an eligible MENA country/territory**, including: Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, and the West Bank and Gaza.

The following organization types are eligible to apply:

- Public and private educational institutions
- Corporations and for-profit organizations
- Not-for-profit organizations, including think tanks and civil society/non-governmental organizations
- Public International Organizations and governmental institutions

American recipients, including private sector companies, are eligible to participate as consortium members in MERC-funded projects. Private sector participation is particularly valued when it:

- Advances U.S. economic competitiveness and technological leadership
- Promotes adoption and integration of U.S. technologies in regional markets
- Creates pathways for technology commercialization and market-driven solutions
- Demonstrates clear commercial potential of research outcomes

Funding Details

Grants may range from approximately \$100,000 to \$2,000,000 over one to four years.

See the program's current Notice of Funding Opportunity for more details:

<https://www.grants.gov/search-results-detail/363070>, or search for funding opportunity number DFOP0019227 on grants.gov. Statements of interest are due September 30, 2026.

Contact

For more information on applying to MERC, including eligible consortia and concepts, contact: Dr. Anne Dare, DareAE@state.gov