



USAID
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MIDDLE EAST REGIONAL COOPERATION (MERC)

USAID MERC funds collaborative scientific research projects between Israel and its Arab neighbors. The primary goals of MERC are to contribute to development and the quality of life in the Middle East region through application of research and technology, and to promote Arab-Israeli cooperation by establishing strong working relations that last beyond the life of the project.

MERC awarded its first grant in 1981 to facilitate research collaboration between Egyptian and Israeli scientists after the signing of the Camp David Accords. Since 1993, the program has expanded to include researchers from Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia, the West Bank and Gaza, and is open to supporting projects with other Arab partners.

At a time of rapid change in the Arab world, MERC continues to bring together Arab and Israeli scientists and students to co-develop and share solutions to regional development challenges while promoting a peaceful exchange between neighbors.

WHERE WE WORK



GOALS

Promote peaceful cooperation and cultural exchange between Arab and Israeli scientists.

Encourage innovation by inviting open-topic research proposals so regional investigators work on problems most relevant to them.

Focus on student and young scientist training by emphasizing cross-border exchanges between Arab and Israeli researchers.

Utilize peer review by U.S. scientists to ensure unbiased, thorough evaluation of research proposals.

Conduct targeted outreach to extend beneficial research results into the communities that will benefit the most.

Encourage greater direct Arab-Israeli cooperation.

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 research applied to unique regional challenges. In cooperation with Arab scientists in the Middle East and North Africa, science and technology are being applied to overcome core development challenges in the following sectors:

AGRICULTURE: Drought and infection-resistant crops, irrigation technologies, pest management, beekeeping, livestock health and milk quality, aquaculture

PUBLIC HEALTH: Chemical and heavy metal exposure, smoking cessation, genetic disorder research and testing, substance abuse recovery

WATER: Irrigation technologies, water reuse, water and wastewater treatment, drinking water safety

ENVIRONMENT: Environmental impact assessment of Red Sea - Dead Sea conduit, soil salinization, air pollution, earthquake hazard mitigation, coral reef propagation and conservation, biodiversity and species discovery



Cheryl Wojciechowski & Kathleen Rankin

APPLICATION PROCESS

- **PRE-PROPOSAL:** Arab and Israeli researchers submit 4-6-page pre-proposals. *Pre-proposals are typically due in mid-December. A link to the pre-proposal instructions may be found on the USAID MERC webpage.*
- **PRE-PROPOSAL REVIEW:** Pre-proposals are reviewed by technical experts within USAID on the metrics of: Arab-Israeli cooperation, relevance to regional development, technical merit, and innovation. The MERC Committee (consisting of USAID technical staff and US Department of State representatives) vote whether or which pre-proposals should be invited to submit a full proposal. *MERC receives 40-100 pre-proposals annually, of which 15-20 are invited to submit full proposals.*
- **FULL PROPOSAL REVIEW:** Full proposals contain detailed information about the experimental plan, investigators, and outreach of the project. USAID calls peer-review panels of scientists and engineers active in the fields of research proposed. The panel votes to recommend if the proposal should be funded or not. The reviewers also suggest revisions to the proposal to strengthen the research and cooperation.
- **PROPOSAL SELECTION:** After the proposals have been graded, the MERC Committee discusses the technical assessment along with the other aspects of MERC's requirements., and decides which proposals move on to grant negotiation. Grants are awarded after all conditions have been met.