

## **National Community Portal Expression of Interest (EoI)**

Final Report  
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*This report was prepared by Majied Qasem, in collaboration with Chemonics International Inc., prime contractor to the U.S. Agency for International Development for the AMIR Program in Jordan.*

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**Table of Contents**

Background..... 1  
Challenge ..... 2  
Vision..... 2  
Direction ..... 3  
Bidder Qualification Process ..... 5  
Selection Criteria ..... 6  
Form of Expression of Interest ..... 6  
Deadline for submission ..... 7  
Contact Details..... 7

## National Community Portal Expression of Interest (EoI)

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### **Background**

Jordan has taken great strides to bridge the digital divide and create a knowledge-based economy. This effort hinges on Jordan's e-readiness and its ability to leverage technology for broader socio-economic development.

To this end, the Ministry of Information and Communications Technology (MoICT), The Ministry of Planning (MoP), in close coordination with USAID and several other governmental, non-government, and donor organizations have been involved in many e-initiatives focused on turning Jordan into a knowledge-based-community.

To optimize Jordan's investment and national impact, a broad national strategy is introduced, named the "Connecting Jordanians".

In developing its connectedness agenda, Jordan has made great leaps, including its commitment to the development of a national broadband learning network, linking its 8 public universities, 22 community colleges, 3,000 schools and all community access centers (Knowledge Stations) to a predominantly fiber based network. The University Broadband Network is currently under development for the benefit of 125,000 students, while the K-12 network will provide the benefits of access to knowledge to over one million Jordanians.

To succeed, this agenda calls on Government to introduce connectivity and access programs that are built on consensus, and can be expanded in affordable and sustainable ways, broadened to include all governorates in the Kingdom, and harnessed to yield higher levels of prosperity to businesses, communities and families.

Due to the relative continual success of the "Connecting Jordanians" initiative, Jordan can now provide a huge segment of the population with an Internet Access Point that is within close proximity of their homes. These access points are provided through Community Access Centers (Knowledge Stations), Schools, Universities, and other internet access points.

Under the umbrella of "Connecting Jordanians' Forward Agenda", providing access and connecting Jordanians is only the start and not the end of building Jordan's knowledge economy. Keeping in mind that connectivity will only contribute to development only when the average Jordanian, whether a student, a small business, and the most remote community can attribute their current well-being and future growth prospects to its benefits.

## **Challenge**

The challenge now is to provide a foundation of content, information, and services to encourage Jordanians to go online. This foundation should not only incentivize people to go online, but should have direct impact on the average Jordanian lifestyle. Using this foundation, citizens should be able to improve his/her skill to attain a job, improve his/her current job, and better leverage existing tools/programs to improve various aspects of their living conditions to name a few of the services that can be offered. Statistics from the Knowledge Station Initiative's management housed at the National Information Technology Center (NITC) pertaining to the use of the Knowledge Stations showed that they are being used primarily as training centers. As far as internet access is concerned, there is an under utilization by Jordanians. This is mainly due to:

- Jordan's inability to develop content and provide services at the community level
- Lack of incentives for people to use the internet, which is a direct result of the lack of awareness on how being "Connected" can directly improve the living and professional conditions of people.

Both the Knowledge Station Initiative and the NetCorps Jordan Program are helping bridge this gap from building points of access within reach to creating awareness around the internet, however, the gap of community based content remains a challenge.

## **Vision**

It is the intent of USAID-funded AMIR Program to deploy a portal, The Community National Portal, that will be the nucleus where citizens and communities of citizens access updated content, share knowledge, learn, collaborate, and interact at the community level; which will result in a coherent and knowledge-based society.

The Community National Portal will operate at the **community level** to:

- Provide updated information and other forms of content that is carefully selected and updated by the communities to the communities
- Provide a foundation for other specific and problem-targeted portals by the different initiatives currently taking place. This foundation will be in the form of a:
  - Portal Framework that can be used by other community portals
  - Community infrastructure in the form of Knowledge Stations, NetCorps Interns, and other resources on the ground at the communities that can provide the proper training and awareness
- Manage the community content and moderate the publishing and service offering process in a way that ensures the continual relevancy and updating of content and services for maximum effectiveness

## National Community Portal Expression of Interest (EoI)

Hence, the national community portal will enable citizens in the different communities to access relevant content and services at their community levels on one hand, and give community content and service providers with a platform that allows them to create content, publish services, and educate local communities on the other.

To ensure success, we are targeting different NGOs and private sector firms to build, operate, and manage the National Community Portal.

### **Direction**

We are able to support and fund the implementation of a National Community Portal project for up to one year. The National Community Portal is in line with the Ministry of Information and Communications Technology's (MoICT) objectives of creating knowledge-based nation. The portal aims at harnessing the power of the internet and the various e-initiatives to promote social and economical development at the community level by encouraging the creation and development of relevant community focused content and services based on the needs of communities around the country.

The community portal will serve as a foundation that will:

- Enable local communities to access/create relevant content
- Provide an infrastructure for other initiatives to leverage for the development their community focused services and content
- Provide a support and an outreach mechanism through existing and future programs such as NetCorps Jordan Program. Hence, complementing other initiatives and giving them a comprehensive set of tools to: Provide Access, Initiate Awareness and create content to finally generate the desired impact of using IT as a tool for personal and professional development.

The USAID-funded AMIR Program is looking for partners that have a track record in building, managing, and operating portals in Jordan. The partner should have specific experience in working with, and building online communities in Jordan in specific and the Arab world in general. The partner should also be Jordan-based and owned.

The partner should demonstrate its ability to manage the technical, operational, and community development aspects of the portal. These aspects are:

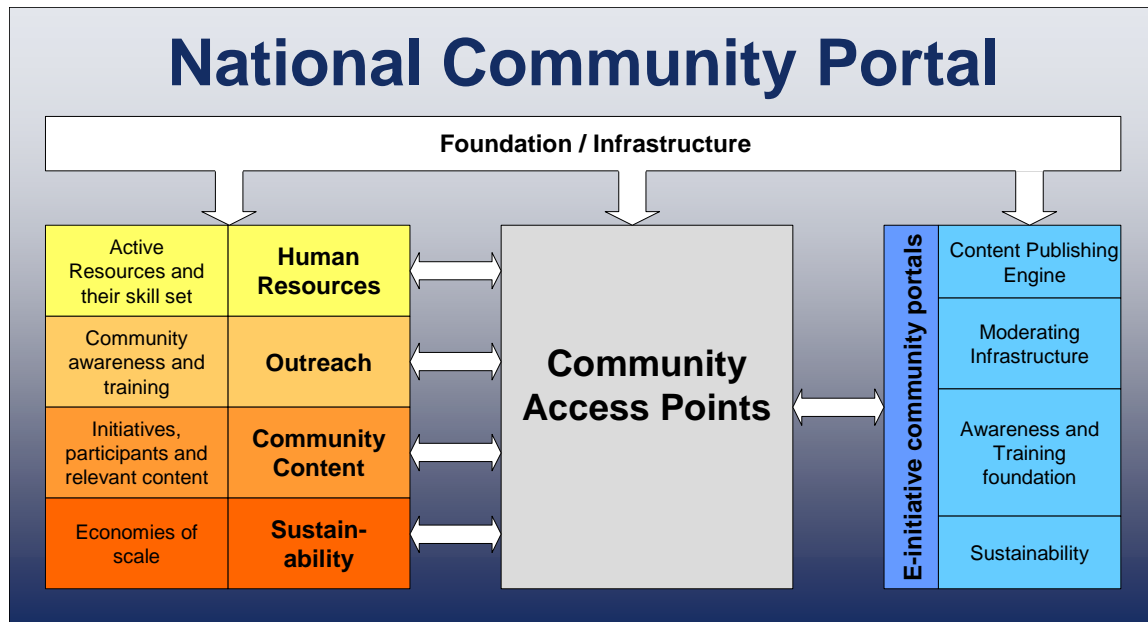
- Ensure portal financial sustainability moving forward.
- Develop the portal engine in a way that allows local community members to easily create, publish, and access content. This could be built on top of an existing portal, or developed from the ground up. It is; however, the preference of stakeholders to re-use of build on top of an already existing portal.
- Populate the portal with a breadth of static content on communities, initiatives within communities, cities, and other national initiative

## National Community Portal Expression of Interest (EoI)

- Aggregate the portal infrastructure to enable other e-initiatives to create their own portals. Other initiatives interested in developing their own specialized community portal should be able to leverage this infrastructure to develop, manage, and host their portal on the infrastructure. Qualified partners need be able to provide this service to prospect initiatives against a pre-agreed up fee structure.
- Operate and manage the portal for a period of 3 - 5 years, with clear sustainability plans for a sustained portal after the end of AMIR program, which is expected to happen approximately in one year. The plan needs to provide a clear breakdown of the cost items required by the partner to manage and operate the portal. This has to be broken down into:
  - Technical development and maintenance
  - Resources (hired or outsourced)
  - Overhead related to these costs
  - Revenue model and revenue sources that will sustain the portal and ensure its existence beyond the first year
- Reach out to the different e-initiatives to integrate them into the portal. The partner needs to have the support and staff structure to work closely with ongoing relevant initiatives. The partner will need to present a clear methodology/approach for working with the different initiatives for the mutual benefit of the communities and the sustainability the all parties involved.
- Identify and take advantage of community and national events to attract third party relevant content and services
- Promote the portal by rolling out awareness and training programs in the different communities. The partner needs to demonstrate a clear approach for engaging NetCorps interns, Knowledge Station managers and trainers, and other outreach initiatives that may be available within the communities.
- Reach out to the private sector to build partnership and support programs
- Support the ability to generate a wide range of reports focused on providing insight on the effectiveness of the different initiatives and portals within a community, a location, or other demographics that might be relevant.

Due to the scale of the project, the large number of parties involved, and the strategic value it has for Jordanians and the “Forward Agenda”, the partner should have solid demonstrated skills in Project and Program management. Furthermore, the partner should clearly demonstrate the ability to market the portal to a wide range of geographically dispersed communities facilitated by the existence of 80 Knowledge Stations and other types of access points covering the whole Kingdom.





The success of the partner will be measured by the impact created on:

- Volume and quality of published content at the community level
- SME gone online through the portal local community level, either through the portal, their own, or third party service provider
- Number of citizens that frequently visit the Knowledge Stations and other internet access points to access the internet
- Email Traffic
- Sustaining the project with in 1 year
- Creation of success stories
- Jobs created / Positions filled via the portal or Internet

### **Bidder Qualification Process**

- Potential bidders should comprise a Jordanian based and owned company or NGO with experience in Portal management, operation, and development
- The company must have a minimum turnover / cost recovery of JD500,000.
- The company / NGO must have experience in the development and management of different online communities through the provision of online content, services, training, and other tools
- The company / NGO must have demonstrated experience in building and hosting content that is developed by the organization itself or by third party content and service providers
- The company / NGO should have demonstrated experience in managing geographically disbursed resources for the management, moderation, creation of content; as well as the delivery of local services such as training

## National Community Portal Expression of Interest (EOI)

- The company / NGO should have experience in supporting large number of user-base (15,000+ possible users) located at various disbursed
- The company / NGO must be capable of delivering a portal design that is attractive, intuitive, multilingual (Arabic and English), easily managed and updated and ethically compliant with USAID's regulations
- The company / NGO should propose a strategy for the monitoring and reporting mechanisms recommended to track the progress and measure the desired impact
- In the interest of effective competition, no Jordanian company may be part of multiple consortia (i.e., on proposals with more than one group of companies).
- We are not obliged to select any bidder if in our opinion none of the companies proposals meet the specifications set in the EOI and Request for Proposals.
- The company / NGO must outline its commitment to project beyond the first year. The company / NGO must present a plan for the sustained management and sustained operations of the portal, through revenue generations, donors, and other funding sources.

### **Selection Criteria**

Qualified bidders will be selected based on the criteria below:

40%	Sustainability plan beyond the first year; either through revenue generation, additional fund raising, cost sharing, other viable means
20%	Experience in providing customized online services geared toward addressing the needs of different target audiences
20%	Relevant experience in multi-lingual online content development
20%	Proposed strategy and framework for measuring and tracking impact of the portal

The project will be funded through a fixed obligation grant or a contract.

### **Form of Expression of Interest**

Interested bidders should indicate their interest by providing the following

- Full name of the company(ies) / NGOs and the contact person(s), postal address, telephone and e-mail address
- Details of ownership structure of the Jordanian Company / NGO and a company outline for every subcontractor
- Audited financial statements for the last two years
- Technical and Operational capabilities

National Community Portal Expression of Interest (EoI)

- Years of operation in the portal management, content development, and community development
- Community profiles and number of users that are served daily, monthly, and annually and their regional disbursement. (in the event that the interested bidder has managed or is currently managing a local or national portal)
- Customer profiles and number of customers which have been served in the last two years
- Range of web, localization, and other hosting services provided
- In the case of consortium partner companies, each subcontractor must submit a letter addressed to AMIR, acknowledging their participation

The non-financial details should not exceed five pages.

**Deadline for submission**

May 20th, 2004, 16:00hrs Amman.

**Contact Details**

1 copy of the expression of interest should be faxed to the number below with a supporting electronic copy [grants@amir-jordan.org](mailto:grants@amir-jordan.org).

AMIR Program

Fax 06.550.3069

Email: [grants@amir-jordan.org](mailto:grants@amir-jordan.org)