

THE ARAB AMERICAN INSTITUTE FOUNDATION LAUNCHES THE FIRST MOROCCAN COHORT OF THE U.S.-MENA EXPERIENTIAL PARTNERSHIP

PRESS RELEASE

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Washington, D.C. – The Arab American Institute Foundation (AAIF) is delighted to announce the launch of the first Moroccan cohort of the U.S. – MENA Experiential Partnership - an initiative pioneered by AAIF with support from the U.S. State Department Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI).

The Partnership pairs distinguished current and former Arab American public servants and policy practitioners with officials in Morocco, for an innovative, year-long, peer learning and exchange of practices around the themes of decentralization, participatory governance, and public private partnerships. The Experiential Partnership allows public servants in the Arab world to make meaningful and lasting connections with American elected officials, to visit the United States for intensive training in good governance, to attract and develop public private partnerships, and to develop and fund small policy projects to benefit their local communities.

Elly Rostoum, the Director of the U.S.-MENA Experiential Partnership, stated, *“The goal of this pioneering experiential partnership is to immerse and provide newly elected officials in the Arab world with exposure to best practices in governance that engender transparency, civic engagement and entrepreneurship. In our inaugural cohort in Tunisia, the Experiential Partnership provided \$150,000 in funding for policy projects to strengthen service delivery. Thanks to MEPI, we are able to concretize some transformative projects that are much needed in the municipalities we have been working with. I am certain that the best practices and successes of the Partnership be replicated throughout the region, and we are so excited to be launching in Morocco.”*

AAIF was delighted to receive a high number of applicants interested in participating in the U.S.- MENA Experiential Partnership, during the 3-month application opening period. The selection process was competitive and was done in a manner that championed ensuring a diversity of representation across a number of factors, including but not limited to regions, rural and urban center, genders, experience in public service, and political affiliations. AAIF would like to congratulate the following elected officials on their selection.

Moroccan Peers

- Ms. Oum Kaltoum Ait Moulay Mhand, Councilwoman, Akkaighane
- Ms. Kawtare Bouzekri, Councilwoman, Tizegane

- Ms. Naziha Soussi Naimi, Councilwoman, Melloussa
- Ms. Majdouline Elalami, Vice President of Communal Council, Bettana
- Mohamed Bouhrist, President of Communal Council, Taghazout
- Youness Ezzair, Vice President of Communal Council, Ait Ourir
- Omar Elhyani, Councilman, Rabat
- Ahmed Faqihi, President of Communal Council, Skhirate

American Peers

- Ms. Mariam Aboudamous, City Council Member, City of American Canyon, California
- Ms. Rania Batrice, Political & Non-Profit Strategist, Dallas, Texas
- Mr. Bill Bazzi, City Councilmember, Dearborn, Michigan
- Ms. Mariam Bazzi, Judge, Wayne Country, Detroit, Michigan
- Ms. Annissa Essaibi-George, City Councilor At-Large, Boston, Massachusetts
- Mr. Mike Khader, City Council President, Yonkers, New York

For more information regarding the U.S. – MENA Experiential Partnership, please contact the local coordinating partner, Impact For Development at: impactfordevelopment@gmail.com