



All CCS and Cross-sectoral Open Call

Cultivating Culture Advocates: iac Berlin Launches Learning Journey for MENA Organizations

Organizations working to support the arts and culture sector in Tunisia, Morocco, Jordan, Egypt, and Lebanon are being offered a unique opportunity to strengthen their role as field advocates.

The [iac Berlin is launching an 18-month program](#) that will provide peer learning, experimentation grants, and coaching to help these groups further develop as pivotal players within the civic space. This initiative, funded by the Ford Foundation, aims to establish a sustainable model for field supporter roles that can be passed on to regional organizations by the program's end in 2026. Participants will have the chance to test new approaches, share best practices, and work towards a more vibrant, resilient cultural ecosystem across the MENA region.

Mahmoud Darweesh, 1999

These few words – whether understood in the context of Mahmoud Darweesh’s overall writing or just read on their own – convey an image of absurdity, scarcity, struggle, persistence, and beauty simultaneously. In the field of arts and culture across the MENA region, quite a few stones are being gnawed at that relate to scarce funding and a sense of constant emergency, among others. Yet, the possibility of cultivating jasmine may seem blurred or even distant at times.

The invitation below does not come with remedies, nor does it presume answers about the ways to (more) jasmine. Instead, it offers an opportunity to take a closer look at the sense of togetherness that the quote starts with: the "we". And it intends to open a space for one of the superpowers of Mahmoud Darweesh and his poetry: imagination.

In today’s context, this invitation may seem particularly difficult to follow – as difficult as it may be to still see the individual stones in the piles of rubble around us. Yet, we invite you to walk these challenging terrains together. We recognize that adapting to the field’s challenges of the present and of the future will require a continuous collective effort. Our guiding question on this path shall therefore be: “How can we further evolve and build field-supporting roles within the civic space of arts and culture in the MENA region?”

The invitation

In the MENA region, the civic space and the arts and culture sector face significant challenges such as organizational self-preservation, reliance on external funding, and the need to constantly adapt to emergencies. Additionally, deteriorating operating conditions in contexts of censorship and armed conflicts exacerbate these challenges. While some factors seem hard to influence, this invitation supposes that taking an ecosystem perspective on the wider field of arts and culture and its connection to the civic space offers valuable questions in working with these challenges and the means to address them.

Such questions include:

What promising practices already exist and provide a starting point for further development of the field?

What relationships between actors or networks can be initiated or worked on for the benefit of the whole system?

What are the current roles and their distribution, and how could they be developed to increase the capacity to shape the civic space?

What would an imagined future require in terms of learning practices and resources?

How could the field benefit from more and stronger linkages with other stakeholders within the civic space?

The program offers

The program invites twelve organizations working in Tunisia, Morocco, Jordan, Egypt, or Lebanon to a learning journey to further develop their role as field supporters and to work on their learning practice towards the field they operate in. Operating in another country in the region is welcome, as long as at least one of the five mentioned countries is a major focus. Diaspora organizations coming from the region and working for the region are equally invited to take part.

It is an 18-month pilot program (2024-2026), comprised of three core components:

Peer-learning: Up to four gatherings will be organized for selected participants and co-learners to facilitate knowledge exchange.

Role-experimentation grants: Participants will receive a total of 20,000 USD in two installments to support tailored interventions and integrating learning into organizational processes.

Practicing the role of a field supporter: Participants will self-define activities or approaches to explore and develop, while receiving coaching and support throughout the program.

The iac Berlin runs this program from 2024 to 2026 also with the aim to establish a caring role for field supporters which can be

handed over to one or more organizations from the region in its final phase. The program is funded by the Ford Foundation.

Call for applications

This program is suited for organizations engaged in field supporting activities, particularly those dedicated to improving the health and sustainability of the arts and cultural fields in their civic spaces. Ideal applicants view this opportunity as a pathway for experimentation, organizational growth, and professional development. We are looking for organizations which have a long-term strategic interest in taking on a pivotal role in nurturing and supporting the field they operate in.

The call for applications for this learning journey will be open until July 7, 2024, 11:59 PM CEST.

Find out more [and apply here](#)