



Small Grants to Support Research in Family Planning: Request for Applications

The Data for Impact (D4I) project is pleased to announce a request for applications (RFA) for its small grants activity to increase the evidence base in family planning (FP). The three primary objectives of this activity are:

- 1) To **build and strengthen research capacity** among local agencies;
- 2) To **address research gaps** in FP to inform policy and programmatic decision making;
- 3) To **increase use of research findings** by providing an opportunity for the data to be disseminated to and used by local stakeholders and decision makers.

The small grants are intended to support secondary data analysis. The overall goal is to address information gaps in FP at the country or regional level and strengthen the capacity of local researchers. Small grant recipients are expected to produce a publishable manuscript and complete a data use activity.

Eligibility

Eligible candidates include country or regional academic institutions or centers, nonprofit and for-profit research organizations, parastatals, and research-focused nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) or firms. Individuals representing themselves and not an institution or organization are ineligible for this funding opportunity, as are those representing a regional or field office for an international NGO. All candidates must be from a United States Agency for International Development (USAID) FP/reproductive health (RH) priority country (see the list at the end of the RFA). Candidates must be seeking to build their capacity in research or data use.

Eligible applications will demonstrate use of appropriate and rigorous methods to respond to a question of interest to stakeholders in the country or region being studied. Priority research topics relate to **digital technology in FP, commodity supply chain for FP, and domestic financial contributions to FP programs**. Potential topic areas are listed at the end of the RFA.

Applications should include a data use activity or product to help ensure the use of research findings by appropriate stakeholders. These may include the following: developing a short briefing paper with recommendations and a presentation of the research and key actionable findings from the analysis; hosting a workshop for decision makers to discuss key findings and their implications for policies and programs; facilitating a meeting with staff from the relevant ministry of health to discuss the research findings and developing an action plan based on the findings; and presenting the research findings with donors and relevant implementing partners; and so forth.

Eligible proposals should comprise a team of three people (minimum), and be submitted on behalf of an NGO, university, etc. The team should have previous research experience, preferably in FP specifically or RH in general, but need not be highly proficient in research techniques because

tailored technical and administrative assistance from D4I will be available to the recipients throughout the small grants activity to build their organizational research capacity.

Small Grants Awards

The base amount for a small grant is US\$11,000, which is intended to cover basic research expenses for a **twelve-month** timeline. The total amount of the approved sub-grant may be higher as it will be based on proposed budgets reflecting realistic data collection and analysis activities. Anticipated data use and dissemination activities should be included in the proposed budget.

Funds will be paid in three installments: at the onset of the proposed study, after receipt of the first draft of a working paper, and after completion of the final working paper and other products related to data dissemination and use.

D4I will assign a staff member to provide technical assistance for data analysis, editing drafts, and data utilization, as needed. This individual will also manage administration of the sub-agreements.

Application Procedure

To apply, please submit the following in English:

1. Brief cover letter (1 page)
2. Concept paper (3–4 pages) clearly summarizing the following:
 - background/context
 - rationale for the study
 - research question(s)
 - scope of analysis
 - description of dataset and how the data will be accessed
 - proposed data use and dissemination activity or product(s)
3. Illustrative budget in US dollars (1 page)
4. Curriculum vitae of key personnel on the research team

Concept papers are due **July 14, 2020**. Applications received after this date will not be accepted. All candidates will be notified by August 18, 2020. Short-listed candidates will be requested to submit a detailed research proposal (5–10 pages) with the following sections:

- background and context
- research question(s)
- methods (study design, dataset, and data collection if needed)
- data analysis
- plan for how the research findings will be disseminated and potentially used
- composition of research team
- description of how the sub-grant will build research capacity
- detailed budget.

Once selected, sub-grantees will be required to submit proof of institutional or country ethics review and approval or exemption.

Selection Criteria

Applications will be assessed on:

- 1) The degree to which the application demonstrates a conceptual understanding of the problem the proposed research intends to address.
- 2) Evidence that the topic is a research gap in FP/RH in the country.
- 3) The fit between the research question(s) and proposed data to be used.
- 4) The degree to which the proposed research methods are appropriate and rigorous.
- 5) Evidence that the research findings would be relevant for decision making at the country, regional, or international level.
- 6) Applicant's prior experience working with proposed (or similar) data.
- 7) The feasibility and appropriateness of data use activities to the proposed research question(s).
- 8) The degree to which the small grant will build on the current capacity of the organization to conduct research and encourage data use.
- 9) Realistic budget and timeline based on the proposed research topic and available D4I funds.
- 10) The overall quality of the concept paper (i.e., it reads well, is easy to follow, and is technically sound).

Suggested Research Topics

All research topics must address a research gap in FP/RH. The following list contains examples of research topics in FP that are prioritized by D4I and USAID:

- Exploring the role, feasibility, and effectiveness (including cost effectiveness) of incorporating digital technologies to support health systems and service delivery for FP in the public and private sectors.
- Demonstrating how and under what conditions digital health tools can be used to improve how providers acquire and retain competencies needed to implement innovative client-centered FP/RH interventions.
- Investigating how direct-to-client and self-care approaches can increase access to and use of quality FP/RH services, particularly in light of COVID-19.
- Exploring the effectiveness of unconventional health sector communication channels, such as social media and telemedicine, to improve self-care interventions and access to FP information and methods.
- Evaluating electronic tracking systems on contraceptive commodity supply chain logistics, particularly in settings with recent emergencies (e.g., Ebola, COVID-19, and other manmade or natural disasters).
- Investigating how to strengthen the role of service providers and pharmacy managers in logistics management information systems (LMIS), stock management, and commodity forecasting for FP.
- Determining factors that facilitate sustainable commodity procurement and supply chain systems in countries with mature FP programs.
- Examining domestic financial contributions to FP programs.
- Identifying innovative approaches to increase domestic financing contributions to FP service delivery programs and contraceptive supplies.
- Exploring the effects of results-based performance or pay-per-performance on equitable access to FP and FP-related outcomes.
- Assessing the influence of performance-based incentives on quality of FP services and data.

Research teams are encouraged to collaborate with existing projects that may have appropriate datasets or relevant expertise or contacts to assist with the data collection, analysis, and dissemination of findings. D4I and USAID staff may help research teams connect with USAID-funded projects to obtain access to relevant datasets.

USAID FP/RH Priority Countries

The research must focus on one of the following USAID FP/RH priority countries:

Caribbean	Haiti
Middle East	Yemen
Asia	The Philippines, Afghanistan, Nepal, India, Bangladesh
Africa	South Sudan, Ghana, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Zambia, Mozambique, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, Liberia, Senegal, Uganda, Rwanda, Mali, the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Contact Information

Please send inquiries and completed applications to d4i_finance@unc.edu. Any questions must be received before July 1, 2020. Responses to the questions will be posted on the D4I website no later than July 6.

