

Responses to D4I's Small Grants RFA

Questions & Answers

Q1: Please I would like to know if the grant to support research in family planning can be submitted from non USAID FP/RH priority countries for a USAID FP/RH priority country. For instance, can I submit a proposal on behalf of my country in Nigeria to support research in family planning in South Sudan.

A1: The original RFA had an error in it, excluding Nigeria from the list of USAID FP/RH priority countries. The error has since been corrected. BOTH Nigeria and South Sudan are FP/RH priority countries, so I encourage you to propose a research topic focusing on data from either of these countries.

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Q2: I want to sincerely register my concern and pain that Nigeria is not considered for this project that is likely to have a great impact on our community, and nation at large. Research been a veritable tools for national building has not been use optimally and here comes a chance to fill that gap and Nigeria is missing it, unfortunately. I want to passionately appeal for future consideration.

A2: The original RFA had an error in it, excluding Nigeria from the list of USAID FP/RH priority countries. The error has since been corrected. Nigeria is definitely a USAID FP/RH priority country! I encourage you to apply to this small grants opportunity.

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Q3: I am working as a full time Researcher in a Federal Government based Family planning research institute in Pakistan. Regarding RFA, I have a quarry. I want to know that as we are working in purely government setup, can we apply for the grant and submit our concept paper?

A3: Unfortunately, I was recently informed that Pakistan is no longer a USAID FP/RH priority country. I am sorry that we will not be able to fund research projects in Pakistan.

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Q4: Can you please provide us a list of USAID projects in Liberia that are involved with family or reproductive health? This will enable us to ascertain the availability of data before applying for the grant.

A4: I reached out to our contacts at USAID/Washington and they very quickly provided a list USAID-funded FP/RH projects in Liberia.

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|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| Strategic Technical Assistance for Improved Health System Performance and Health Outcomes Activity (STAIP) | JHPIEGO CORPORATION                            |
| MOH Fixed Amount Reimbursement Agreement 2.0                                                               | Ministry of Health                             |
| Breakthrough ACTION                                                                                        | John Hopkins Center for Communication Programs |
| Partnership for Advancing Communities (PACS)                                                               | International Rescue Committee (IRC)           |
| Global Health Supply Chain)-Procurement and Supply Management (GHSC-PSM)                                   | Chemonics                                      |
| Support For International Family Planning Organization                                                     | Population Services International (PSI)        |
| Private Sector Engagement                                                                                  |                                                |

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Q5: Me and my team would like to know if the research work should strictly be around secondary data analysis or others like primary data collection will be considered per the criteria laid out in the call.

A5: You are welcome to propose primary data collection to complement your secondary data, however, your main dataset should come from secondary data.

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Q6: I wanted to find out if an institution can send more than 1 concept note for the grants.

A6: There is no limit to the number of different concept notes a researcher or organization may submit. Please note that each application must contain all the required attachments (such as CVs of key research members).

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Q7: Myself and two other colleagues are interested in applying for the D4I small grants on FP. Our study if accepted will be conducted in Ghana. My other two colleagues are Nigerian. I am writing to Clarify whether the rules for this grant allows for participation of individuals from non priority countries (Nigeria ) to collaborate with nationals of a priority country(Ghana) to execute a study in the priority country(Ghana).

A7: The original RFA had an error in it, excluding Nigeria from the list of USAID FP/RH priority countries. The error has since been corrected. Nigeria is definitely a USAID FP/RH priority country, so I encourage you to propose a research topic focusing on data from either Ghana or Nigeria.

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Q8: What is the maximum number of proposals can one person submit as a principal investigator? In case a person cannot be a principal investigator on more than one proposal , can he or she be on more than one research team in another capacity?

A8: There is no limit to how many applications an individual may submit. Furthermore, one individual may be identified as the PI on multiple applications. Please note, each application must include all the necessary components, as specified in the RFA (i.e., cover letter, CVs, etc.), even if the research team includes the same individuals.

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Q9: With respect to the ongoing request for proposals to support research in family planning, I was wondering if primary data collection is permitted. My team and I would like to answer a question for which secondary data is limited or unavailable. However, the call explicitly states that studies should use secondary data. Would it be acceptable to propose primary data collection? Of course taking into account that these will have to be conducted remotely given Covid-19.

A9: You are welcome to propose primary data collection to complement your secondary data, however, your main dataset should come from secondary data.

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Q10: We have the following questions: Is an NGO from Afghanistan eligible to apply for this grant? How many NGOs from Afghanistan have been invited?

A10: Yes, NGOs from Afghanistan are eligible to apply for this grant since Afghanistan is an FP/RH priority country. And there is no limit to how many NGOs from a specific country can apply.

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Q11: Concerning the eligible proposals, the RFA states that the research team should have previous research experience, preferably in FP specifically or RH in general. We are a team of six early stage researchers (ESR), while three of our members have a fairly significant previous research experience in FP/RH, the other three have a strong interest but no experience. Our choice in setting up a research consortium with experts from other fields (computer science, communication, midwifery, sociology, etc.) is to encourage interdisciplinarity, in this vein, are we eligible for this call?

Regarding the application procedure, do we have to use a template for the Concept paper, if so, could you please forward it to us?

Are there any additional FP/RH database sources or websites, that you would like to recommend besides these: Family Planning 2020, Health Policy Plus, Family Planning High Impact Practices, Measure Evaluation, Performance Monitoring and Accountability 2020?

A11: It is fine if some of the members of your research team lack research experience. Because one of the objectives of this small grants is to build research capacity, we hope this opportunity will be a good way to strengthen team members' research skills. However, it is important that the principle investigator is an experienced researcher and has the skills to lead and mentor the research team.

We do not have an application form. Per the RFA, your application should include the following:

- brief cover letter;
- concept paper clearly summarizing the background/context, rationale for the study, research question(s), scope of analysis, description of dataset, and proposed data use and dissemination activities;
- illustrative budget in US dollars; and
- CVs of key personnel

It's difficult for me to recommend specific websites since I don't know what research topic you have in mind, but it may be helpful for you to look at the most recent Demographic Health Survey (DHS) for your country, as well as your country's national FP/RH strategy, which will outline the country's FP/RH priorities and perhaps even research gaps.

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Q12: I am writing to ask why Guinea, in West Africa is not included in this Grant ? Are there other grants that include Guinea?

A12: I do not know why Guinea - as well as some other West African countries such as Niger, Benin, and Togo - are not considered USAID FP/RH priority countries. Our donor, USAID, makes these decisions factoring in several considerations. I'm sorry but I am not aware of other grant opportunities that include Guinea.

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Q13: I wanted to find out if an application by an independent researcher who is not associated with any institution is allowed. Secondly, I wanted to know if an applicant can send more than 1 proposal for grants.

A13: As specified in the RFA, individuals representing themselves and not an institution/ organization are not eligible to apply. Eligible proposals should be comprised of a team of three people (minimum), submitted on behalf of an NGO, university, etc.

There is no limit to the number of different concept notes a researcher or organization may submit. Please note that each application must contain all the required attachments (such as CVs of key research members).

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Q14: I wish to find out if this research can be conducted in Cameroon because Cameroon was not mentioned among the list of countries, I will love to know if I can carry the research in Cameroon.

A14: Unfortunately, because Cameroon is not an FP/RH priority country, it will not be considered under this funding opportunity. I hope you are able to find another funding opportunity to support your research.

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Q15: Could you kindly clarify the following queries to facilitate our onward preparation of the application. We are interested in writing a concept in line with research topic 1 (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).

Following the fact that this call is to support use of secondary data;

1. Can we come up with a concept that allows us to collect data especially considering the fact that our topic of interest is tailored towards a qualitative study?
2. Will the grant finance the data collection process?
3. Is it possible to receive guidance from you on the possible sources of secondary data for our topic?

A15: You are welcome to propose primary data collection to complement your secondary data, however, your main dataset should come from secondary data. Your proposed budget should include costs related to data collection. Regarding possible datasets for your research topic, the best place to start is to look at USAID-funded FP/RH projects in Uganda and determine if any may be collecting data related to your research topic.

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Q16: Pakistan is not listed as one of the priority country for this call under USAID FP/RH Priority Countries, however Afghanistan is included in this list. As our research study is exclusively focusing on Afghan refugees in Pakistan, we wonder if we - GLOW (a Pakistan based research entity) - can still apply for this small grant programme.

A16: Unfortunately, GLOW would not be eligible for this funding opportunity because it is a Pakistani-based organization and your research study will focus on a population living in Pakistan.

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Q17: I am the Associate Director (Research and Programmes) for a local NGO in Ile-Ife Nigeria. We are interested in applying for the Small Grant to Support Research in Family Planning. Our interest is in Adolescents and or Young People's contraceptive use. I humbly request for your assistance in accessing datasets on USAID funded projects in Africa. I will be grateful for your help.

A17: Since USAID has a large health portfolio in Nigeria, I suggest you start by looking at what USAID-funded projects in FP/RH are being implemented in Nigeria. You can call the Mission office (803 900 9300) and ask to speak to the assistant to the FP/RH health officer, or you could contact Chad Weinberg at the USAID office in Washington, DC (cweinberg@usaid.gov). The USAID website will be helpful to see what projects USAID is implementing in other parts of Africa.

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Q18: This is a mixed-design multicenter study. As part of the study, we will require the use of historical (retrospective)/ secondary data of contraceptive uptake in all the facilities for the last 12 months prior to our study (as control data) while we prospectively collect data for 12 months following the introduction of a digital technology intervention. We have a mechanism in place to collect this data, however, we will also like to enquire on how any assistance may also be available to us for this purpose if successful with our application for the grant.

A18: The types of technical assistance (TA) we can provide related to data collection are as follows:

- Reviewing and providing feedback on data collection tools such as questionnaires or focus group discussion guides;
- Connecting sub-grantees to the appropriate USAID staff member, or director of a USAID-funded project, to obtain datasets; and
- Directing sub-grantees to useful online resources (e.g., free online courses, presentations, guides and manuals) to help with different aspects of data collection.

Some sub-grantees ask for or require substantial TA, while others need very little. Most sub-grantees receive the majority of TA during the end of their projects, when they submit the first draft of their manuscripts and we provide detailed review and feedback. But we are committed to strengthening sub-grantees' overall research capacity, so we are available to provide TA through the research project.

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Q19: Am I eligible? We are trying to set up a team to respond. I will not lead but another colleague will. What do you think?

A19: The short answer is that yes, all past sub-grantees are eligible. Keep in mind that with our limited funding, our first priority is to support groups we have not funded in the past in order to "share the wealth". If, however, a past sub-grantee submits a stellar application, we will consider supporting that organization again.

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Q20: I am a Ghanaian researcher based in Canada. Am I eligible to apply for the small grants research funding?

A20: Yes, you are eligible for this funding opportunity, but with two conditions: you would have to team up with a research group based in Ghana or another USAID FP/RH priority country (we cannot award sub-grants to individuals, only organizations, universities, hospitals, or government departments), and your research topic would have to focus on a population or topic in one of the USAID FP/RH priority countries.

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Q21: It looks like the call strongly encourages applicants to use existing/secondary data analysis, but the suggested topics can hardly be addressed using existing databases. They actually require collecting primary data. Are you open to applications that propose to collect primary data?

A21: You are welcome to propose primary data collection to complement your secondary data, however, your main dataset should come from secondary data.

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Q22: Our Adolescent Health unit is interested in applying for the above call. Information in the call mentions that, "D4I and USAID staff may help research teams connect with USAID-funded projects to obtain access to relevant datasets". I would like to enquire about how our team could avail of this opportunity.

A22: Should your application be shortlisted, you can send me an email with your specific needs or request and I will look into how we can assist you. For example, if your research project is related to digital technologies, and you know of a USAID-funded project in Nigeria implementing digital technology interventions but you don't know how to get in touch with the project staff to discuss sharing their dataset, we could help connect you to the appropriate people (or projects).

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Q23: We have an ongoing research project that is developing and testing a community-based intervention to generate demand for family planning using community-engagement methods in rural Uganda. In light of COVID-19, we are interested in expanding the intervention aims to include a component that will develop community-generated solutions for the delivery of services especially family planning in the event of future lock-downs or other epidemics/humanitarian crises. We believe this is in line with your announcement's stated research interests. However, we wanted to ask if it was acceptable to apply for this grant when we plan to conduct primary data collection. We saw that you said the grant was primarily for secondary data analysis. However, since we would be leveraging resources/infrastructure from our existing study, we believe it would be feasible with the funds provided.

In addition, we wanted to ask if you have a timeline for when the announcement of awards would be made and funds available. We only saw the date for submission of the full application, if invited, being August 18, 2020.

A23: It sounds like you have an interesting research project. While we are more interested in studies using secondary data, you are free to propose primary data collection. Please note that this may put your application at somewhat of a disadvantage if your methods are heavily skewed toward primary data.

I am anticipating that we will have our shortlist finalized by mid-August, our sub-grantees selected by mid-September, and the first payments wired at the beginning of October.

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Q24: There seems to be some confusion about the focus of the project. In one breadth, preference is for secondary data. In another, the suggested areas are generally tilted towards primary data generation given that most of the existing related datasets don't seem to have any variables for the topics of interest.

A24: The intention of this small grants program is for research teams to collaborate with USAID-funded projects so they can analyze those projects' datasets to explore their research topic. For example, perhaps the USAID-funded Strengthening the Care Continuum Project in Ghana has already collected data which you can use to answer your research question. You are welcome to propose primary data collection to complement your secondary data, however, we encourage you to use secondary data for your main dataset.

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Q25: My organization is an international NGO based in the US but has an office in Africa (but not registered as a local entity in the African country). Can the local field office in Africa apply directly? Or can the US office apply on behalf of the field office.

A25: Unfortunately, because you are with an international NGO that is based in the US, a research team from Population Council would not be eligible to apply. That is because we want to provide this opportunity to research groups who would otherwise not have access to outside funding or technical assistance.

However, if you would like to collaborate with a local (i.e., Ghana-based) organization or university and be a member of their research team, that would be fine.

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Q26: We had the following questions:

1. Are we eligible to apply by ourselves?
2. Are we eligible to apply with an NGO working in FP?
3. Does the NGO need to fulfill certain criteria for it to be eligible in terms of size, the number of people it serves, geographical reach e.g. state, multi-state etc. ?

A26: We do not have a minimum size or reach for which NGOs are eligible to apply. In the past we have awarded funding to quite large NGOs as well as small, newly established organizations.

You are eligible to apply yourselves and do not need to collaborate with an NGO working in FP. However, if none of the individuals proposed on your research team have FP/RH experience, your application may be at a disadvantage. If you choose to ask someone from outside your organization with FP/RH experience to join your research team, that would be fine.

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Q27: What is the recommended font size, spacing and font type for applications? Is there any total number of words required for the various parts of the grant application such the background/context, rationale for the study, research question(s), scope of analysis, description of dataset and how the data will be accessed and proposed data use and dissemination activity or product(s).

A27: We do not have any standards for font size, font type, word limit, etc. But since you are asking for guidance, I suggest you use Times New Roman font size 11.

Please refer to the RFA for length of application:

- Cover letter (1 page)
- Concept paper (3-4 pages)
- Budget (1 page)
- CVs (page length varies)

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Q28: We want to know if PRISMA, a Peruvian NGO that works more than 30 years in Support Research in Family Planning, can participate as itself for an intervention in Haiti or in consortium with one Haiti's organization? PRISMA, during these years have worked in countries such as Panama, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Ecuador, among other countries in the region in FP.

We also want to know if an organization can submit more than one proposal or for more than one country.

A28: There is no limit to how many applications one organization can submit. Unfortunately, since Peru is not a USAID FP/RH priority country, you are ineligible to apply. I wish you well in finding a future funding opportunity.

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Q29: I will like to ask also what is required for the section on scope of analysis that is what is it about.

A29: The scope of analysis is your data analysis plan. You have your research questions and what data you will use to answer your research questions. The scope of analysis should briefly outline how you will analyze your data to obtain your research findings.

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Q30: The RFA specifies priority countries. Does that mean that responses from other non-priority countries will not be eligible?

A30: That is correct. Only applications from the USAID FP/RH priority countries are eligible.

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Q31: Here is attachment of some questions related to Application of research grant to D4I project:

1. Is it possible to use International organizations that currently actively operate in the country?
2. Is it possible to request more than specified budget (\$11,000) by D4I project based on the data and research target?
3. Could I upload draft to get comment and feedback from D4I project before deadline?
4. Is there cover page format prepared by D4I project for this purpose and possible to access it?

A31: Below are the responses to your questions:

1. International NGOs are not eligible to apply because we want to provide this opportunity to research groups who would otherwise not have access to outside funding or technical assistance.
2. It is possible to request more than \$11,000. Per the RFA, \$11,000 is the minimum amount for a small grant. The total amount of the approved sub-grant may be higher as it will be based on what you have proposed.
3. We are not able to provide comments and feedback to draft concept papers.
4. We have no cover page requirement. I recommend your coverage page include the key information from your application: name and address of organization, name of principle investigator, title of research project, and budget amount.

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Q31: Do you know if this funding covers overhead? Staff salary? If so, how what percent of the 11K can be used for it?

A31: The amount that applicants request must cover all their expenses related to this research project: salaries, overhead, data collection, etc. The \$11,000 amount mentioned in the RFA is the base amount, but applicants may request more based on what they are proposing. However, keep in mind that submitting an application with a high budget (much higher than \$11,000) will limit your chances of being shortlisted.

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Q32: Are there specifics as to where data sets can be accessed or an applicant can use any data set they feel will help reach the objectives of the study at hand? Or is there an option of primary data collection?

A32: It is preferable that applicants use data sets from USAID-funded projects, however, you are free to use any data set that will best help you answer your research questions.

While we are more interested in studies using secondary data, you may propose primary data collection. Please note that this may put your application at somewhat of a disadvantage if your methods are heavily skewed toward primary data.



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Q33: In response to the D4I RFA, we are highly interested in applying for a grant to support research in family planning in Haiti. However, we have the following questions:

1. Is there any objection to include in our team someone who is working at an international NGO oversee (Out of Haiti)?
2. Given the COVID-19 context, which approaches D4I will use to build and strengthen the research capacity of the local agencies selected?
3. What is the expected date of publication of the final results of the selection process?
4. What is the expected start-up date of the implementation of the grant?
5. What kind of recognition if any, will be awarded to the selected local agencies after completing the grant?

A33: There is no objection to including someone from an international NGO on your research team. In fact, we encourage collaboration with an outside expert. However, that individual cannot be identified as the principle investigator (PI) or co-PI, nor can they be included in the budget.

All of the technical assistance that will be provided by D4I will be virtual. We have been issuing sub-grants for over a decade and we have had great success with supporting sub-grantees via email, phone, and Skype.

I am anticipating that we will have our shortlist finalized by mid-August, our sub-grantees selected by mid-September, and the first payments wired at the beginning of October.

Upon completion of the research projects, the sub-grantees' final working papers will be posted on the D4I website. Sub-grantees may also receive a certificate of completion, if requested.

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Q34: Could you kindly explain what you mean by an illustrative budget?

A34: For your application, we do not need a detailed budget, but you should list personnel expenses (the staff on the project and what you are budgeting for salaries), data collection and analysis costs (e.g., travel, training, any software package, etc.), data dissemination expenses, administrative costs, and any overhead.

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Q35: Please are IHP staffs eligible to apply to this?

A35: I don't know what an IHP staff is. Is it integrated health program? I see that you work for Abt Associates. Unfortunately, international NGOs are ineligible. That is because we want to provide this opportunity to research groups who would otherwise not have access to outside funding or technical assistance.

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Q36: My questions are as follows:

- Can a small- to mid-size US-based International NGO apply for this grant to help increase research capacity?
- Do all of the 3 team members need to be from the same country and are US-based team members allowed?
- Can we propose to use data yet to be collected as part of a larger RMNCH community-based project for this small grant, or does secondary data need to be already available at the time of submission?

- What kinds of illustrative costs are envisioned for the \$11K award?
- Would D4I's technical assistance costs be factored into this \$11K award, or is that separate/in addition to the \$11K award?
- When will the 12-month grant period begin and end? Is the publishable manuscript required by this end date?

A36: Unfortunately, international NGOs are ineligible. That is because we want to provide this opportunity to research groups who would otherwise not have access to outside funding or technical assistance.

The team members need not be from the same country. A US-based individual may be identified as a team member, however, that individual cannot be identified as the principle investigator (PI) or co-PI, nor can they be included in the budget. Again, this is to ensure that individuals in the USAID FP/RH priority countries are being given the opportunity to improve their research skills.

You may propose data as yet to be collected as long as the data will be available by November, which is when your research project would be starting.

Please note that \$11,000 is indicated as a base amount, but you may propose a higher budget if it is commensurate with what you are proposing. The budget should cover all expenses related to the research project, such as personnel salaries (i.e., staff time), data collection costs, administrative fees, dissemination expenses, and overhead.

The cost of D4I's technical assistance will be covered by D4I's internal budget and not the sub-grantees' budgets.

We anticipate the projects will begin in October 2020 and last 12 months. The working paper does not need to be finalized by October 2021, but it should be close to being finalized by then.

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Q37: I was wondering what the "max" for the award would be. I understand the base amount is 11k, however, it is difficult to know if this program would be a good fit for our organization without having the grant range, as we would likely have to hire an external consultant to manage it.

A37: While we purposely do not specify a budget ceiling, it is unlikely that we would fund a research project that exceeded \$16,000.