

Request for Proposals

Overview

IPA's [Social Protection Program \(SPP\)](#) has partnered with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to co-create a learning agenda, develop and support research projects and share evidence strategically towards increasing women's economic empowerment, agency and health outcomes through Graduation programming. Through this new initiative and competitive fund, we endeavor to dive deeper into how to design and adapt Graduation programs to be responsive to the needs of women in extreme poverty and ensure sustainable improvements in gender outcomes. We will focus particular attention on new or ongoing studies with the scope to add data collection modules or that will facilitate additional analysis to understand gender-disaggregated and intra-households outcomes relevant to women's economic empowerment, agency and health.

Our goals for this work is to:

- Develop actionable evidence on promising adaptations to the Graduation model that support women's economic empowerment, health and agency.
- Share evidence and equip our partners to engage in evidence-informed decision-making around the adaptation and scale of Graduation programming.

In order to advance this work, SPP welcomes full proposals from selected applicants that focus on the following priority research areas:

- Increasing women's agency and economic empowerment
- Improving health outcomes for women and children
- Adapting the model for cost-effectiveness and scale

This initiative will further explore the following key questions relevant to different segments of women:

- **What variations on ultra-poor Graduation models can improve gender outcomes? How might innovations in content and delivery of multi-faceted programs impact women's access to productive credit and economic empowerment?**
 - For example, group versus individual coaching, the use of technology in training facilitation and follow-up, curriculum targeting improvements in

intra-household and inter-household communication and dynamics, interventions engaging men and boys.

- **What are the spillovers from women’s increased access to and control of income and resources on other domains of well-being, including maternal and child health?**
 - This includes an investigation into key pathways to improved child development. For example, more empowered women can: better optimize time and effort devoted to caregiving; increase allocation of household resources to children; develop stronger social networks that serve as additional caregiving resources and provide access to different caregiving techniques; if empowerment improves mother’s nutrition before and during pregnancy and during breastfeeding, this could lead to improved child outcomes; if empowerment reduces mothers’ stress, this could likely improve the quality of interactions with children and have direct biological effects during pregnancy.
- **How might a dual-generation Graduation program explicitly targeting caregivers, children, and the ways in which they interact, impact outcomes for women and children?**
 - This includes an investigation of caregiver support groups as a key pathway to achieving women’s empowerment; studies have shown that the groups help strengthen social relationships with other women and improve mental health, benefiting mothers and their children.
- **What are the possible intergenerational impacts of new components of the model that target child development outcomes?**
- **How might innovations targeting mental health and psychosocial well-being impact women’s access to productive credit and economic empowerment?**
- **What are the effects of a youth-focused graduation program on gender outcomes, and how do economic impacts vary by gender?**

The fund is prioritizing in-process evaluations of Graduation programs with projected midline/endline activities completed by July 2025 and projects that are able to add survey modules, measurement approaches or treatment arms aligned with priority areas of research. We also welcome proposals for pilot studies, process evaluations and full impact evaluations.

Application Instructions

Your proposal package should consist of (i) cover sheet and narrative; (ii) budget; (iii) letters of support; and (iv) power calculations (full impact evaluations, additional survey round or treatment arms that intend to randomize only). Please submit all materials in

English, or with translations, to jkedroske@poverty-action.org by **June 26th, 2024, at 11:59 p.m. Eastern.**

I. **Cover sheet and narrative:** Please use this [template](#).

Please keep in mind the following when developing the cover sheet and narrative:

- The narrative should not exceed 10 pages, including the abstract and appendices, but not including the cover page.
- Please use 11-point Arial font.

Successful proposals will demonstrate:

- A clear research question that is framed in relation to the priority areas of research for the New Wave Graduation Research Fund, including:
 - Adapting the model for cost-effectiveness and scale
 - Increasing women's agency and economic empowerment
 - Improving health outcomes for women and children
 - For proposals focusing on improving health outcomes for women and children, please review the [Women's Economic Empowerment & Health Linkages Framework](#) presentation and accompanying [indicator bank](#) and identify in your proposal key pathways to be explored in your research and/or those that you would be interested in integrating into your study with support from IPA. Please also include immediate and intermediate outcomes of interest.
- A robust research design, well-defined research instruments, and sample size estimates¹
- A feasible implementation plan
- Strong partnership commitment from implementing organizations (if applicable)

II. **Budget:** Please use this [template](#).

Please keep the following in mind when developing the budget:

- Budgets are expected to broadly adhere to the following broad budget guidelines:
 - Small add-ons to existing surveys: up to \$50,000
 - Addition of a new study arm or survey round to an existing RCT: up to \$250,000

¹ Please note that all funded projects will need to adhere to IPA's [Mandatory Research Protocols](#).

- RCTs: up to \$500,00
- In recognition that research in some locations or with some populations is more costly, on a case-by-case basis we will consider budgets over the above award maximums with appropriate justification.
- Awards are normally paid on a cost-reimbursable basis.
- Proposals must explain all costs in the “description” column of the budget, or include a brief budget narrative document detailing the major costs within the budget. For example, travel costs should include a breakdown of how many trips are planned, the estimated cost per trip, etc. If field costs are detailed in the budget template (number of field staff, roles, rates, etc.), they do not need further explanation in a budget narrative.
- Indirect costs:
 - Allowable indirect costs for different institutions:
 - Universities in high-income countries can charge up to 10% in indirect costs, applied to total direct costs.
 - Non-university non-profits from any location and universities from low or middle-income countries may charge up to 15% in indirect costs, applied to total direct costs.
 - Projects implemented through IPA Country Offices do not need to include indirect costs in budgets.
- Any equipment/asset purchases should include a breakdown of what is being purchased (e.g. how many laptops), as well as the project staff that will be assigned to the equipment.
- For full impact evaluations, we will be requesting the collection of program implementation cost data, following IPA’s costing guidelines. IPA will provide templates for this. Researchers are encouraged to budget up to \$1,000 for the collection of this data.
- It is the applicant’s responsibility to ensure that the budget follows the receiving institution’s policies for costs.
- Grantees must be able to comply with the prime donor’s contracting and spending guidelines.
- Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval is required for all studies. This approval may come from a host institution’s IRB or IPA’s IRB. If applicants are planning on using IPA’s IRB, please make sure to budget for this process per IPA’s IRB fee structure. See details [here](#).

Funding is for qualified research costs. We generally cannot support:

- Program or intervention implementation costs, except in extremely rare circumstances when necessitated by the research design

- Salary costs for researchers from institutions in high-income countries (funding for the salaries and/or time of researchers from institutions in low- and middle-income countries will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the review committee)
- Purely qualitative research that does not contribute to the development of impact evaluations
- Lab-in-the-field or survey experiments, except in rare circumstances, or within the context of piloting or implementing a broader impact evaluation
- Research using historical datasets, except in the context of a broader impact evaluation
- Costs labeled as incidental, miscellaneous, or contingency

III. Letters of support:

- If the applicant is a PhD student or candidate, please submit a letter of support from a PhD advisor(s). If an advisor would prefer to provide the letter to us directly, they can send it to displacement@poverty-action.org.
- If the applicant will be working with a research management institution (e.g. an IPA Country Office or a J-PAL Regional Office), we require a letter of support from the institution that will receive the grant.

IV. Submission Instructions

Applicants should submit the following materials by **June 26, 2024, at 11:59 p.m. Eastern** via email to jkedroske@poverty-action.org

1. **Cover sheet and narrative** saved as a single Word Document file titled [PI last name]_[Proposal title]
2. **Separate budget form** saved as a single Excel file titled [PI last name]_Budget
3. **Letter(s) of support** from PhD advisor and/or research management institution, if applicable, saved as PDF files titled [PI last name]_[Advisor/Partner name]

Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated by an expert committee of researchers, practitioners and the funder. Projects are assessed against five, equally weighted evaluation criteria:

<p>Academic contribution</p>	<p>Does the study make a significant contribution toward advancing knowledge in the field? Does it answer new questions or introduce novel methods, measures, or interventions? Is there academic relevance? How does the study compare with the existing body of research? Does the research strategy provide a bridge between a practical experiment and underlying economic theories?</p>
<p>Policy relevance</p>	<p>Does the study address the priority questions outlined above? Will results from the intervention have generalizable implications? How, if at all, will the “lessons learned” have relevance beyond this test case? Is there demand from policymakers for more/better information to influence their decisions in this area? Is there potential for the implementing partner to scale up this intervention?</p>
<p>Technical design</p>	<p>Does the research design appropriately answer the questions outlined in the fund overview? Are there threats that could compromise the validity of results? If so, does the proposal sufficiently address those threats? What changes could the researchers make to improve the design? For full study proposals, are there sufficiently detailed power calculations?</p>
<p>Project viability</p>	<p>Is the relationship with the implementing partner strong and likely to endure through the entire study? What is the credibility and policy influence of the implementing partner? Are there any other logistical or political obstacles that might threaten the completion of the study, for example, government authorization or Human Subjects review? Does the research team have a track record of implementing successful projects similar to the one being proposed?</p>
<p>Value of research</p>	<p>Is the cost of the study commensurate with the value of expected contributions to science and policy? Does the study leverage funding from other sources</p>

General Terms and Conditions

1. This Call for Proposals is not and shall not be construed to be a contract, offer, or request for an offer. Those responding to this call receive no rights whatsoever as a result of their submissions. Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA) will not have any express or implied obligations or responsibilities to those who respond and will not otherwise be bound by any terms or conditions, except to the extent set forth in a definitive, final, written grant agreement duly executed by the recipient(s) and IPA. There is no commitment by IPA that such a final grant agreement will be executed, even if IPA enters into negotiations with the applicants, proposed recipient(s), or his or her institution.
2. IPA in its sole and exclusive discretion may reject any or all proposals with or without notice or reasons, withdraw this call at any time before or after delivery of proposals, or if no proposal is accepted, abandon the call.
3. IPA further reserves the right in its sole and exclusive discretion to waive irregularities or defects in any proposal, but in no event will IPA have any obligation to do so. Moreover, IPA will not be responsible for errors or omissions by anyone submitting a proposal, and IPA shall be the sole judge of the responsiveness, appropriateness and completeness of any and all proposals.
4. IPA reserves the sole and exclusive right in its discretion to modify the timeline for decision-making or otherwise modify or amend this call as it deems appropriate.
5. All responses to this call become the property of IPA. Regardless of any markings identifying the proposal or its content as proprietary or confidential, IPA reserves the right to disclose or use any information contained in the proposals and other presentations responsive to this call. The review board making funding decisions includes external academics and policymakers, who will receive a copy of the proposals.
6. IPA is not responsible for and will not reimburse any costs incurred in submitting materials or information pursuant to this call or in otherwise responding to this call, including but not limited to evaluating, responding, providing follow-up, negotiating, and otherwise complying with it.
7. Applicants agree to be bound by the terms of their proposal for at least sixty days from the date such proposals are due, and otherwise agree to negotiate in good faith any other terms for a definitive arrangement if selected by IPA to do so.
8. Applicants certify that the work product they propose to create or use if they are a grant recipient will not infringe on or violate the intellectual property rights (including but not limited to trademarks, copyrights, patents, trade secrets, moral rights) or privacy rights of any person or entity. Applicants submitting proposals, materials, or information further certify that they have or will have such ownership or use rights in such work product sufficient to allow IPA to achieve its purposes as generally provided for in this call.
9. Grant recipients agree that, if requested by IPA, they will provide additional information about any subcontractors, graduate students, research assistants, and other third parties engaged by the grant recipient to provide services. IPA reserves the right in good faith to approve any such persons in order to ensure consistency with IPA's expectations of quality and character.
10. Applicants are required to disclose to IPA all funders of their project. Depending on the co-funders, an applicant may be ineligible for funding from IPA under this call. Further information may be requested from the Social Protection Program at IPA.
11. IPA reserves the right to request additional information from applicants. Applicants agree to make themselves available for follow-up as reasonably requested by IPA.

Grant Terms and Conditions

Information on which projects are eligible for funding can be found above and in our Request for Proposals. Budget requirements can similarly be found above. If an applicant is awarded funding by IPA, the grant agreement may include clauses similar to the following:

1. The Grant Recipient shall at all times comply with, and ensure that its employees, officers, contractors, subcontractors and other persons or entities involved with Partner or with the Project at all times comply with all requirements and obligations that apply pursuant to national and international laws and regulations. This shall specifically include, but not be limited to: (i) applicable data privacy law(s); (ii) any anti-bribery and anti-corruption laws and regulations that may apply; (iii) any applicable laws and regulations that prevent fraud, money laundering and financing of terrorism; and (iv) any Trade Sanctions imposed by the UN, EU or US, or any similar sanctions or restrictions.
2. In order to be eligible to receive funding, subgrantees must have the following:
 - a. Financial and accounting policies and procedures
 - b. Procurement policies and procedures
 - c. Conflict of interest policies and procedures
 - d. Errors and omissions insurance
3. Specific FCRA-related stipulations:
 - a. The Grant Recipient shall comply with, and ensure that its implementing partners involved in the Project (if any) comply with, FCRA and its relevant requirements.
 - b. The Grant Recipient shall keep IPA informed of the validity, as well as any changes in the status, of its FCRA registration and that of any key implementing partners. No payments shall be made by the Grant Recipient to any India-based entity that is subject to the FCRA, in relation to any period in which the entity's FCRA registration is not valid or not active.
 - c. The Grant Recipient shall be fully responsible for (non-)compliance with FCRA and other applicable laws, and is liable for any damages, losses, expenses and claims arising out of non-compliance by Partner or its implementing partner(s).
4. The Grant Recipient shall respect human rights and shall abide by applicable local laws, environmental legislation including multilateral environmental agreements, as well as internationally agreed core labour standards.
5. The latest subgrant end date will be May 31, 2027.
6. All projects will be required to collect cost-effectiveness data. Projects demonstrating positive impacts on the outcomes of interest will be required to make cost-effectiveness data publicly available, and all evaluations will be required to publish the per unit cost of programs.