



## Human Trafficking Research Initiative (HTRI) Application Guidelines for Request for Expressions of Interest Full Research Funding Round 3 (Fall 2024)

### Overview

IPA's [Human Trafficking Research Initiative \(HTRI\)](#) has launched its third Call for Expressions of Interest (EOI) for full [randomized controlled trials \(RCTs\)](#) and other rigorous impact evaluations to assess the impact of counter-trafficking programs. Proposals are due by **11:59 pm US Pacific time on January 10, 2025**.

HTRI invites proposals to evaluate counter-trafficking interventions focused on the "Prosecution" pillar of the 4P's framework: Prevention, Protection, Prosecution, and Partnership. The "Prosecution" pillar encompasses the entire justice system pipeline, including identification, referrals, investigations, prosecutions, adjudication, and legal aid. Proposals should align with the Prosecution section of [HTRI's Research and Learning Agenda \(RLA\)](#), which identifies key research gaps across the 4P's. Applicants are required to review the RLA and address one or more priority research questions listed under the Prosecution section or specify other relevant research questions related to prosecution not explicitly articulated in the RLA.

HTRI encourages innovative and evidence-based approaches to advancing knowledge in this critical area of counter-trafficking work. This initiative is focused on bringing increased rigor and use of applied quantitative research methods to the field of human trafficking research. Given the range of challenges applicants may face in designing and conducting randomized controlled trials (RCTs) in the prosecution sector, applications including the use of quasi-experimental designs (e.g. difference-in-difference, regression discontinuity, etc.) will be considered for funding. **Research that is exclusively qualitative or descriptive will NOT be considered for funding under HTRI.**

Applicants can request pilot research funding, full funding for RCTs or quasi-experimental research, partial funding for RCTs, funding for new arms of existing RCTs, as described below:

- **Full rigorous studies to assess the impact of a counter-trafficking prosecution program.** These grants are for research projects with a clear research question, committed implementing partner(s), well-defined research designs, and statistical power estimates. While most of the impact evaluations funded will be RCTs, studies that use high-quality quasi-experimental and/or natural experiments will be considered when a randomized experiment is not possible. Grants can also fund the continuation or completion of prosecution-focused RCTs that have already started without HTRI funding (including those for which data collection is complete). This can include midline and endline surveys, long-run follow-up surveys from previously published evaluations, or "downstream studies" that use an already-completed randomized trial to answer a human trafficking-relevant question. The expectation is that this work will result in a paper publishable in a top economic, political science, or science journal. Awards for full



RCT funding are between \$50,000 and \$500,000. Applicants should apply for the funds needed to yield the best research, but (all other things equal) lower budgets have a higher probability of being funded. In exceptional cases, projects demonstrating high impact and a well-justified need may be considered for funding beyond \$500,000.

- **Adding a human trafficking-targeted treatment arm to an existing prosecution study.** These are grants that will support expanding a study by adding a treatment arm explicitly focused on prosecution of human trafficking to an existing randomized evaluation. Applicants can request funding for the costs of expanding the study sample and survey as well as the human trafficking-focused intervention. Awards for adding a prosecution-focused study arm are between \$100,000 and \$250,000.
- **Adding human trafficking-focused survey modules or survey rounds to existing prosecution studies.** These are smaller grants that would fund the cost of adding human trafficking survey modules to upcoming data collection rounds for existing studies or add a new survey round to an existing study. They are intended for research studies that are likely to have an impact on trafficking but are not currently collecting human trafficking data. Awards for adding an additional survey module or survey round are between \$50,000 and \$125,000.
- **Small research pilots of promising interventions:** These are grants that would fund the cost of pilot research to assess the feasibility and value of a larger research project. These grants are intended to be the first step of formal research for promising interventions and anti-trafficking activities. Programs with monitoring and evaluation data, administrative data, and/or sound theories of change that indicate promising impact would be a good fit for this grant. Awards for pilot studies are between \$10,000 to \$75,000 per pilot.

## Application Instructions

A completed expression of interest must be submitted in IPA's online portal, which can be found [here](#), by **11:59 pm US Pacific time on Friday, January 10, 2025**. All applications and research products must be submitted in English. EOIs will be reviewed by an expert group of researchers and policymakers and assessed against the evaluation criteria noted below. Successful EOIs will be invited by the selection committee to submit a full proposal and will receive detailed application instructions at that time.

To learn more about the HTRI Competitive Fund, please read our [Frequently Asked Questions](#) document. A **Question & Answer session** for this EOI will be held **on Tuesday, December 10th at 9am ET**. If your team is interested in attending the session, please register [here](#). A recording will be posted [here](#) afterwards for those unable to attend the live session.

**Please note that with sufficient notice, HTRI staff are available to consult with potential applicants on proposal development, research design and partnership formation.** If you are interested in connecting with HTRI in advance of submitting your EOI, please email us at [ipa\\_htri@poverty-action.org](mailto:ipa_htri@poverty-action.org).



## Eligibility

### Research Teams

Research teams must include at least one member that either holds a PhD or is currently pursuing a PhD in a relevant social science discipline. The research team must include members with demonstrated experience in field research and randomized evaluations and members with a deep understanding of human trafficking in the target region/country.

IPA encourages proposals from diverse research teams. We welcome applications from researchers from multiple disciplines and historically underrepresented groups, and we strongly encourage research teams to include researchers from the countries where the project will take place, with clearly defined contributions from all members of the research team. Researchers with lived experience of human trafficking are strongly encouraged to apply. To learn more about IPA's commitments to diversity, equity, and inclusion, please see our [website](#). HTRI also encourages the contribution and input into research projects of people with lived experience of human trafficking, from the design stage through implementation and dissemination of results, at all levels of project leadership.

### Subrecipient Organization

Each application must designate an organization to receive and manage subaward funds. IPA cannot subaward to individuals.

Organizations must have written and established policies and procedures regarding financial management, procurement, and human resources management, as well as Errors & Omissions insurance. If you are unsure if your organization is eligible based on these requirements, please contact [htri@poverty-action.org](mailto:htri@poverty-action.org) for more information.

As this funding is originating from the U.S. Department of State, organizations must also have a Unique Entity ID (UEI) issued by SAM.gov. For more information, please visit <https://sam.gov/>.

### Eligibility of India-Based Institutions

Due to the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA), a law in India that regulates how foreign funds are used and accepted by individuals, companies, and associations, IPA cannot issue a subaward to an India-based institution subject to FCRA under this call.

### Geographic Focus

All projects must benefit people and communities in/from low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). To determine if your country is categorized as a LMIC, please visit <https://data.worldbank.org/country/XO>. Please note that project activities and interventions can take place anywhere outside of the United States, but the intended beneficiaries must be from LMICs. Projects that are proposed in high-income countries that do not have LMIC beneficiaries as the primary target of interventions will not be considered. All intervention sites are subject to review by the U.S. Department of State.

### Research

All submissions must present a clear set of hypotheses of why the research is important to the human trafficking research field. Applicants should review the key learning questions and



priority areas of research outlined in HTRI's [Research and Learning Agenda](#). Research should be designed to directly measure impact within the prosecution sector and respond to one or more of HTRI's learning questions or make a strong justification for answering other relevant prosecution-focused research questions not explicitly articulated in the RLA.

Awardees are expected to disclose all survey modules and project design details to HTRI. HTRI will expect the proposed survey modules to have either been validated in the location of the study or have other indicators of sound assessment capacity. Projects measuring human trafficking prevalence should incorporate guidance from the [Human Trafficking Statistical Definitions Prevalence Reduction Innovation Forum](#).

Studies must also be willing to accommodate best practices for ethical research of human trafficking victims. EOIs selected to move to the full proposal stage will be expected to produce both an outline detailing the role of ethics in their research design as well as a project risk register that includes provisions for encountering ethical challenges in the field. We expect this plan to reflect the needs of the respondents as well as the safety, security, and wellbeing of the staff.

HTRI strongly encourages current and upcoming IPA projects and/or affiliated researchers to apply. If you are not affiliated with IPA but are interested in working with an IPA country office, please make sure to reach out to the relevant IPA Country Office (see "About Innovations for Poverty Action" at the end of this document for full list of country offices and contacts) **well in advance of the submission deadline**. IPA Country Office staff will discuss your application – including the research design, implementation plan, and project feasibility – and if approved, will work with you on EOI submission and any proceeding budget and application materials. If you need assistance in reaching out to IPA Country Offices, please email [ipa\\_htri@poverty-action.org](mailto:ipa_htri@poverty-action.org).

### **Funding and Allowable Costs**

Funding is intended to be primarily used for research and research-related programmatic costs. Funding for the salaries and/or time of researchers in LMICs is allowed. Funding for salaries of researchers in high-income countries is generally discouraged but will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the selection committee.

Applicants are encouraged to budget for activities related to the publication and dissemination of findings, including (but not limited to) project briefs, evidence summaries, participation in panels, and other materials to ensure findings are effectively shared with relevant stakeholders.

### **Project Timeline**

Project timelines will depend on individual proposals. However, we expect research projects to launch in mid to late 2025 and to close before the end of 2027.

Based on previous funding rounds, it takes an average of six months to fully execute a subaward following award notification.



## Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated by an expert committee of researchers. The committee's decisions will be based on the project's potential to improve evidence around the design and implementation of prosecution-focused counter-trafficking programs. Projects should propose to respond to one or more of the research gap areas identified in the HTRI [Research and Learning Agenda](#) (or other relevant prosecution-focused research questions not explicitly articulated in the RLA) and shed light on how to make improvements in the criminal justice process for people who have been trafficked. The proposal should clearly state the research question the intervention seeks to respond to as well as the proposed outcomes that will be analyzed to determine a successful intervention. The potential scientific and policy insights will be directly weighed against costs of the amount requested.

All research grants must focus on one or both forms of trafficking in persons as defined by the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (as amended):

- Sex Trafficking – when a trafficker uses force, fraud, or coercion to compel a person to engage in a commercial sex act or when a trafficker causes a child who has not attained 18 years of age to engage in a commercial sex act.
- Forced Labor – when a trafficker recruits, harbors, transports, provides, or obtains a person for labor or services by using force, fraud, or coercion.

### **The selection committee will consider the following factors in evaluating proposals:**

- *Relevance to HTRI priorities* (use of causal inference methods to test counter-trafficking strategies that can be used to design evidence-based programs and policies): Does the study address specific knowledge gaps identified in HTRI's Research and Learning Agenda? Does the research strategy provide a bridge between a practical experiment and underlying theories about human trafficking? *Project viability*: Are the research question(s) and theory of change clear and realistic? Will results from the project be usable for building and designing future research projects? For pilots, do researchers describe how piloting activities would inform a full-scale randomized evaluation? Are there any logistical or political obstacles that might threaten the completion of the study (for example, government authorization or Human Subjects review)?
- *Academic contribution*: Does the study make a significant contribution toward advancing knowledge in the field of social science? Does the research strategy provide a bridge between a practical experiment and underlying theories about human trafficking? Is the proposal likely to isolate causal mechanisms or contribute to research designs for anti-trafficking work more broadly?
- *Policy and survivor relevance*: Is there demand from policymakers for more/better information to influence their decisions in this area? Will this research be "usable" by decision-makers? Are the research activities built on survivor-centered and survivor-informed principles, and will they ultimately contribute to the empowerment of survivors of trafficking?
- *Research funding and value for money*: Are the proposed costs reasonable and realistic? Is the cost of the study commensurate with the value of expected contributions



to science and policy? Are the proposed costs allowable under U.S. Department of State rules and regulations?

- *Relevant experience:* Does the research team have a track record of implementing successful projects similar to the one being proposed? Is the composition of the research team well-suited to carry out research on this sensitive topic, and is the level of effort proposed sufficient? Is the project adequately staffed to meet all deliverables?

## About Innovations for Poverty Action

Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA) is a research and policy non-profit that discovers and promotes effective solutions to global poverty problems. IPA brings together researchers and decision-makers to design, rigorously evaluate, and refine these solutions and their applications, ensuring that the evidence created is used to improve the lives of the world's poor. Since its founding in 2002, IPA has worked with over 600 leading academics to conduct over 900 evaluations in 52 countries. This research has informed hundreds of successful programs that now impact millions of individuals worldwide. IPA is present in 17 countries with permanent offices.

## Country Program Primary Contacts:

Burkina Faso/Mali/Côte d'Ivoire: Maud Amon-Tanoh, [matanoh@poverty-action.org](mailto:matanoh@poverty-action.org)

Colombia: Juan Felipe Garcia, [jfgarcia@poverty-action.org](mailto:jfgarcia@poverty-action.org)

Ghana: Salifu Amadu, [samadu@poverty-action.org](mailto:samadu@poverty-action.org)

Kenya: Ginger Golub, [ggolub@poverty-action.org](mailto:ggolub@poverty-action.org)

Malawi/Zambia: Tamara Billima-Mulenga, [tbillima@poverty-action.org](mailto:tbillima@poverty-action.org)

Mexico: Odette Gonzalez Carrillo, [ogcarrillo@poverty-action.org](mailto:ogcarrillo@poverty-action.org)

Nigeria: Funmilayo Ayeni, [fayeni@poverty-action.org](mailto:fayeni@poverty-action.org)

Peru: Barbara Sparrow, [bsparrow@poverty-action.org](mailto:bsparrow@poverty-action.org)

Philippines/Papua New Guinea: Aftab Opel, [aopel@poverty-action.org](mailto:aopel@poverty-action.org)

Rwanda/Uganda: Patrick Nalere, [pnalere@poverty-action.org](mailto:pnalere@poverty-action.org)

Sierra Leone/Liberia: Walker Higgins, [whiggins@poverty-action.org](mailto:whiggins@poverty-action.org)

Tanzania: Zachary Isdahl, [zisdahl@poverty-action.org](mailto:zisdahl@poverty-action.org)

Latin American Countries without a Country Office: Sergio De Marco, [sdemarco@poverty-action.org](mailto:sdemarco@poverty-action.org)

Multi-country projects: Pace Phillips, [pPhillips@poverty-action.org](mailto:pPhillips@poverty-action.org)

To connect with one of our country offices or questions about working with IPA, you may also contact the HTRI team at [ipa\\_htri@poverty-action.org](mailto:ipa_htri@poverty-action.org) or IPA's Project Development team at [pd@poverty-action.org](mailto:pd@poverty-action.org).



## Grant Terms and Conditions

If your proposal is accepted for award, the funds will be provided under a subaward from IPA to one prime research institution. Please refer to the terms and condition below for more details about the conditions of the award. Awards are typically paid on a cost-reimbursable basis.

Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval is required for all studies that intend to publish. This approval may come from your host institution's IRB or from IPA's own IRB.

## General Terms and Conditions

If an applicant is awarded funding by IPA, the grant agreement may include clauses similar to the following, and the Grant Recipient must comply with them:

1. SPONSOR may review and approve materials produced for program implementation that concern respondent or beneficiary safety or wellbeing, including any training materials, awareness raising materials, and communications materials.
2. SPONSOR may review and comment on materials that are part of the design of the research project but do not directly concern respondent or beneficiary safety or wellbeing, including research plans, survey instruments and data analysis, and documents and materials on research analysis and findings, which will be made publicly available.
3. SPONSOR reserves the right to conduct a baseline assessment and/or rigorous independent evaluation of grant performance, to include the collection and analysis of timely and reliable data and information. SPONSOR has full responsibility for oversight of these evaluations to ensure an unbiased assessment of the grant activities. GRANT RECIPIENT is expected to cooperate to the fullest extent possible if selected for an assessment. No additional funds will be made available for your participation, but a SPONSOR evaluation should not add to GRANT RECIPIENT costs. IPA will notify the GRANT RECIPIENT in advance if their project is selected for an evaluation. To facilitate review and evaluation related to the performance activity, GRANT RECIPIENT shall, whenever appropriate, disclose relevant data and information. The results of the assessment may be used for the development of SPONSOR best practices, to document program impact, assess return on investment, and to assure accountability for the American people.
4. Information which might require special consideration with regard to the timing of its disclosure may derive from studies or research, during which public disclosure of preliminary invalidated findings could create erroneous conclusions, which might threaten public health or safety if acted upon. IPA may identify (based on agreement with SPONSOR) specific information and/or categories of information which the SPONSOR will furnish to IPA and GRANT RECIPIENT or that the GRANT RECIPIENT is expected to generate which is confidential. Such confidential information may be identified from time to time during the performance of the award. If it is established that



information to be utilized under the award is subject to the Privacy Act, the GRANT RECIPIENT will follow the rules and procedures of disclosure set forth in the Privacy Act of 1974, and implementing regulations and policies, with respect to systems of records determined to be subject to the Privacy Act. Written advance notice of at least 55 calendar days will be provided to the IPA of the recipient's intent to release findings of studies or research, which have the possibility of adverse effects on the public or SPONSOR, as described above. If IPA (based on response from SPONSOR) does not pose any objections in writing within the 55-calendar day period, the GRANT RECIPIENT may proceed with disclosure. Whenever the GRANT RECIPIENT is uncertain with regard to the proper handling of material under the award, or if the material in question is subject to the Privacy Act or is confidential information subject to this Provision, the recipient shall obtain a written determination from IPA (based on written determination from SPONSOR) prior to any release, disclosure, dissemination, or publication.

5. Any publications or articles resulting from the award must acknowledge the support of the SPONSOR and include a disclaimer of official endorsement as follows: "This [article] was funded [in part] by a grant from the SPONSOR. The opinions, findings and conclusions stated herein are those of the author[s] and do not necessarily reflect those of the SPONSOR". The GRANT RECIPIENT must ensure that this disclaimer be included on all brochures, flyers, posters, billboards, or other graphic artwork that are produced under the terms of the award.
6. SPONSOR reserves a royalty-free, non-exclusive and irrevocable right to reproduce, publish, or otherwise use the work for SPONSOR purposes, and to authorize other entities, including other non-Federal entities, to do so. In addition, the SPONSOR has the right to obtain, reproduce, publish, or otherwise use data produced under a SPONSOR award.
7. All international travel charged to this award must be on an American flag carrier. If travel was on a foreign flag carrier, a statement justifying the use of a foreign flag carrier, which meets one of the exceptions cited in the "Fly America Act", must be included with the financial report. Travel on foreign flag carrier, which does not meet one of the exceptions of the Act, will be disallowed.
8. None of the funds made available herein may be used to promote, support, or advocate the legalization or practice of prostitution. Nothing in the preceding sentence shall be construed to preclude assistance designed to combat trafficking in persons, including programs for prevention, protection of victims, and prosecution of traffickers and others who profit from trafficking in persons, by ameliorating the suffering of, or health risks to, victims while they are being trafficked or after they are out of the situation that resulted from such victims being trafficked.
9. GRANT RECIPIENT certifies that, to the extent practicable, persons or entities providing legal services, social services, health services, or other assistance have completed, or will complete, training in connection with trafficking in persons.





10. Funds provided under an award are subject to Section 620M of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended, a provision titled “Limitation on Assistance to Security Forces” (the “Leahy Amendment”). Accordingly, none of the funds under this award may be used to provide training or other assistance to any unit or member of the security forces of a foreign country if the Department of State has credible information that such unit or individual has committed a gross violation of human rights. In signing an award, the GRANT RECIPIENT agrees to exercise due diligence to ensure compliance with the Leahy Amendment provision and Department of State policy, and to cooperate with the Department of State in implementation of the requirement. The Department of State implements the Leahy Amendment requirements by vetting units or individuals proposed for training or other assistance to check for credible information of a gross violation of human rights by such units or individuals. To facilitate Department of State vetting, the Recipient must provide a set of information for proposed participants at least sixty (60) calendar days prior to commencing award activities. The GRANT RECIPIENT must collaborate with the relevant U.S. embassy on a case-by-case basis to determine if the Leahy requirement applies to specific activities or proposed participants. Individuals who are not members of the security forces but who participate in activities under the award (e.g., politicians, academics, etc.) generally do not need to be vetted. Submission Deadline: Each candidate must be cleared under Leahy vetting in advance of participation in activities funded under this award. The vetting process typically takes approximately one month but may take longer if there are a large number of candidates or if issues arise. Thus, all information on proposed candidates must be received by the embassy at least sixty (60) days in advance of the training event or other activity. The GRANT RECIPIENT agrees that it will not include any security forces candidate in training or other activities funded under this award until the State Department advises that the candidate has cleared Leahy vetting and is approved for participation.
11. GRANT RECIPIENT shall comply with the Department of State Standard Terms and Conditions for Federal Awards, as applicable. Electronic copies containing the complete text are available at: <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/U.S.-Department-of-State-Standard-Terms-and-Conditions-10-01-2019508.pdf>
12. GRANT RECIPIENT will be responsible for reporting on progress as in a format to be provided by the HTRI Program on a schedule to be determined by mutual agreement. Progress reports must contain a comparison of actual accomplishments to the objectives of the award established for the period. This should include information on how costs are tied to accomplishments, the reasons why established goals and targets were not met, if any, and additional pertinent information including an analysis and explanation of cost overruns or high unit costs.
13. GRANT RECIPIENT will submit a budget in detail along with a written justification sufficient to determine the need and reasonableness for the proposed costs. Indirect costs will not be allowable charges against the award unless specifically included as a line item in the approved budget for the award. Indirect cost recovery for any actual indirect costs incurred by the recipient which are greater than the indirect cost line item



in the approved award budget is limited up to the award amount. A non-profit organization which has not previously established an indirect cost rate with a Federal agency, that believes the Department of State should be its cognizant agency, shall submit its initial indirect cost proposal immediately after the organization is advised that the award will be made and, in no event, later than three months after the effective date of the award. For all NICRA and indirect rate inquiries please contact [AQM-NICRA@state.gov](mailto:AQM-NICRA@state.gov).

14. GRANT RECIPIENT may charge to the award only allowable costs as incorporated in the approved budget. Reporting of expenses will be at the major category level with a frequency to be determined by mutual agreement between the parties. Any variance between major categories of 10% or greater must be explained in writing and approved by the HTRI Program.

This list is not exhaustive and subject to change. The Grant Recipient may be required in the grant agreement to comply with other requirements from IPA and IPA's prime donors.