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

The MEASURE Evaluation project is pleased to announce a request for applications for its small grants program to increase the evidence base in routine health information systems (RHIS) in family planning and reproductive health (FP/RH). The three primary objectives of this program are:

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

The small grants are intended to support primary and secondary data analysis – especially national and sub-national program or policy evaluation. The overall goal is to use the research findings to improve RHIS and advance FP outcomes. 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, non-profit and for-profit research organizations, parastatals, and research-focused NGOs or firms. Individuals representing themselves and not an institution/ organization, as well as those representing a regional/field office for an international NGO are ineligible for this funding opportunity. All candidates must be from a USAID FP/RH priority country (listed at the end of the RFA). Candidates must be seeking to build their research and/or data use capacity.

Eligible applications will use appropriate and rigorous methods to respond to a question of interest to stakeholders in the country or region being studied. Potential topic areas are listed at the end of the RFA. Applications should also include data use activities and/or products that help ensure the use of research findings by appropriate stakeholders, which may include: the development of a short briefing paper with recommendations and a presentation of the key actionable findings from the analysis; holding a workshop for policymakers and/or program decision makers to discuss key findings and the implication of these findings for policies and programs; organizing a meeting with national or regional level staff from the ministry of health to discuss the research findings and develop an action plan based on the findings; and so forth.

Eligible proposals should be comprised of a team of three people (minimum), 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 as technical and administrative assistance will be available to sub-grantees at all stages of the small grants program to build organizational research capacity.

Small Grants Awards

The base amount for a small grant is US$10,000, 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. Travel to an international conference to present the research findings may not be requested.

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.

MEASURE Evaluation will assign a technical staff member to provide assistance for data analysis, editing drafts, and/or data utilization, as needed. This individual will also administratively manage the sub-agreements.

Application Procedure

To apply, please submit the following in English:
- brief cover letter;
- concept paper (3-4 pages) 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
- curriculum vitae of key personnel.

Concept papers are due by **January 5, 2018**. Applications received after this date will not be accepted. All candidates will be notified by January 25, 2018. Short-listed candidates will then be requested to submit a detailed research proposal (5-10 pages) with the following sections:
- background/context;
- research question(s);
- methods (study design and data collection);
- 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; and
- detailed budget.

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

Selection
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 this is a research gap in FP and RHIS.
3) A good fit between the research question(s) and proposed data to be used in the study.
4) The degree to which the proposed research methods are appropriate and rigorous.
5) Evidence that the research findings are relevant for decision-making at the country, regional, or international level and/or address an issue of significance related to routine health information.
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 MEASURE Evaluation 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 routine health information for FP/RH. The following list contains examples of research topics in FP and RHIS:
- Exploring how effectively FP data in the RHIS is analyzed, interpreted, and communicated so the information is understood and useful;
- Assessing the influence of performance-based incentives on quality of FP services and/or data;
- Incorporating indicators for assessing quality of FP services and care in RHIS;
- Examining the barriers and enablers to implementing FP guidelines and standards of practice;
- Exploring how to create interoperable systems to link FP service delivery statistics (e.g., number of postpartum FP visits; number of vasectomies performed), population-based statistics (e.g., number of births; percent of women of reproductive age who are internally displaced), and resources for health (e.g., skills mix of human resources for health; geographical distribution of health workers);
- Evaluating electronic tracking systems on commodity supply chain logistics in FP, specifically contraceptives;
- Investigating how to strengthen the role of service providers and pharmacy managers in logistics management information systems (LMIS), stock management, and commodity forecasting; and
- Examining how to improve data quality to make information systems more reliable and useful.

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

<u>Caribbean:</u>
Haiti

<u>Middle East:</u>
Yemen

<u>Asia:</u>
Philippines	Afghanistan	Pakistan	Nepal	India
Bangladesh				

<u>Africa:</u>
South Sudan	Ghana	Tanzania	Ethiopia	Kenya
Madagascar	Malawi	Liberia	Zambia	Rwanda
Mozambique	Nigeria	Senegal	Uganda	Mali
Democratic Republic of the Congo				

<u>Contact Information</u>

Please send inquiries and complete applications to **measure_rfp@unc.edu**. All questions must be received before January 2, 2018. Responses to the questions will be posted on the MEASURE Evaluation website the following day, January 3.