

Exploratory Grant Proposal Template
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Call for Proposals | Researcher Diversification Initiative | Exploratory Grant Funds for Early-Career African Researchers

Exploratory grant funds for early-career researchers affiliated with research institutions in Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire

In early 2021, Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA) began implementing [a strategy](#) to diversify its research network. While we have conducted more than 900 impact evaluations - alongside an extensive network of researchers and institutions from all across the world - only twenty-seven percent of our research network comes from low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). This mirrors development industry trends, where most research continues to be produced by researchers in the Global North.

At IPA, we believe that greater diversity and insight into the local context can lead to higher-quality research and more impactful policy and practice. Moreover, supporting researchers in LMICs underscores our commitment to address inequalities within the international development research community.

We are soliciting proposals for a small grant fund which is part of our Researcher Diversification Initiative's [vision](#), particularly in Francophone West Africa. This call for proposals will result in the selection of two projects (one in Côte d'Ivoire and one in Burkina Faso) to be implemented by the successful early-career PIs in collaboration with the IPA Francophone West Africa country office. IPA will award a funding of \$10,000 (USD) to each selected project.

The fund is targeting early-career African researchers to facilitate the development of researchers starting their careers as independent investigators in Africa.

Submissions

We invite submissions from **early-career African researchers**. Successful proposals should be in line with the research priorities of the IPA Francophone West Africa country office, which include **Mental Health, Education, Early Childhood Development in Côte d'Ivoire, and Social Protection, Environment and Climate, Agriculture, Health, and Early Childhood Development in Burkina Faso**. Additionally, proposals should include a quantitative, empirical component, or mixed-methods research, or exploratory work to establish this type of research.

Objectives

- Support talented early-career African researchers to establish an independent research agenda in African institutions;
- Enable evidence-based high-quality research that addresses the global poverty problem;
- Support early-stage research from African scholars, which can then inform future impact evaluation research;
- Provide an opportunity for early-career African researchers to gain experience in preparation of grant applications and management;
- Improve south-south communication and collaboration among researchers, policymakers, and implementers, and for community participation in research and agenda-setting.

Requirements

These grants will fund **exploratory work** that is meant to develop preliminary research ideas. We expect these grants to help researchers develop subsequent impact evaluations. Activities may include travel, relationship development, descriptive or observational analysis, data development or collection, research assistance, and in some cases principal investigator time. These grants are earmarked for early-career researchers, Ph.D. students, and other researchers who do not have other sources of funding for exploratory work. **Awards are capped at USD\$10,000 (plus OH).**

The IPA FWA Researcher Diversification Strategy Initiative plan has USD 20,000 to grant in this round. We expect projects to be completed within 4 (March to June 2024) months of disbursement of funds.

Eligibility

Eligible proposals must demonstrate clear alignment with the research priorities of the IPA Francophone West Africa country office specified above.

Eligibility is limited to early-career researchers affiliated with Universities or Research organizations in Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire. This refers to individuals who are (a) currently studying at a university or research institute in Africa, and/or b) currently teaching

at an African university or research institute.

Note: An early-career African researcher working on a project can also include scholars based outside or inside of Africa as part of the team.

During the implementation of the project, which spans 4 months, the successful researchers are required to work 2 out of 5 days from the IPA Côte d'Ivoire and IPA Burkina Faso country offices. This presence aims to foster close collaboration with IPA teams to ensure data collection adhering to IPA standards, benefit from the sharing of experiences, and receive guidance for a thorough analysis of the results.

Note: Funds will be transferred directly to the researcher in accordance with a contract established between them and the IPA Francophone West Africa country office.

Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be reviewed by a group of internal staff. Projects will be assessed against five, equally weighted evaluation criteria:

1. **Academic contribution:** Will 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?
2. **Policy relevance:** Will results from the research have generalizable implications? How, if at all, will the “lessons learned” have relevance beyond this test case? Is there a demand from policymakers for more/better information to influence their decisions in this area? If an intervention has been identified, is there potential for the implementing partner to scale up this intervention?
3. **Technical Design:** Does the exploratory work plan identify a path toward developing a research design that will appropriately answer the questions outlined in the proposal?
4. **Project viability:** Are there any other logistical or political obstacles that might threaten the completion of the study, for example, government authorization or Human Subjects review? Do researchers describe how exploratory or piloting activities would inform a full-scale impact evaluation?
5. **Value of research:** Is the cost of the study commensurate with the value of expected contributions to science and policy?

Additional Considerations

When reviewing proposals, the reviewers will also consider:

- **Ethics:** Reviewers will consider whether there are any risks of harm to research participants, what the proposed risk mitigation strategies are, and how the possible benefits of the research compared to the possible harms.
- **Team Diversity:** The Researcher Diversification Strategy team welcomes proposals

from diverse research teams. We would encourage Country Office teams to consider working across disciplines and require them to work with researchers from the countries where the project will take place.

- **Alignment with IPA FWA research priorities**

Application Process

Please send all submissions (proposal narrative, budget in USD, and CV) to vzongo@poverty-action.org.

The proposals should be in French and English. Applicants are asked to use the following templates when submitting their applications:

- [Template for IPA FWA Exploratory Grant Proposals](#)
- [Budget Template](#)

Deadline for submission is February 12th, 2024, 5 pm GMT.