

Re-examining Traditional Method Use: Request for Concept Memos

Concept Proposal Deadline: **04 Oct 2019**

Overview

Introduction

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) would like to invite initial submissions (“Concept Memo”) from qualified organizations (“Applicants”) interested in receiving grant support to conduct mixed-methods research on the patterns of and motivations for use of traditional contraceptive methods among women in developing countries.

This investment will produce in-depth data and analysis on traditional method use in three BMGF family planning (FP) focus geographies to give the FP field a better understanding of motivation/reasons for traditional method use. Although it is often assumed that women use traditional methods when they can't access modern ones, several recent studies on traditional method use in developing countries suggest traditional methods may be a preferred choice among the better educated, wealthier and urban women who tend to have the best access to modern methods. This investment will provide in-depth investigation not attainable by simply revising current FP survey questionnaires. Findings will be key in helping to determine: 1) if traditional method users are accurately captured in current survey approaches (including PMA and DHS), 2) whether traditional method use represents a personal preference or part of the pathway to modern method use, and 3) how the FP field should account for traditional method users in FP goals and program strategies.

We are making a Request for Concepts (RFC) for mixed-method research that will produce new datasets and analysis of traditional method use in developing countries. **Concepts should describe how they are going to answer the following questions** and list any other questions they propose to include:

- 1) Are women who use traditional methods accurately captured in current surveys (e.g., DHS and PMA) or is traditional method and other non-modern method use, particularly simultaneous modern and traditional use or sporadic traditional method use, systematically underreported? What can current survey data tell us about who we are missing and why?
- 2) What are user characteristics of traditional method users and how do these vary across study settings and type of method used?
- 3) Do traditional method users express a strong preference for traditional over modern methods? Why?
- 4) What do traditional and sporadic users give as reasons for use? Are they satisfied with their choice of method and does this vary by awareness of other methods, experience with other methods, strength of desire to avoid pregnancy, support from partner, etc.?
- 5) Do traditional method users face barriers to using modern methods? Do previous experiences with modern methods or the health system shape traditional method user preferences?
- 6) How do women who use traditional methods learn about these methods? How confident are traditional method users in the effectiveness of their method to prevent pregnancy?
- 7) Do traditional method users report using traditional methods sporadically and/or concurrently with modern methods? Do traditional method users tend to move between traditional and modern methods or to use/have used (a) traditional method(s) exclusively?
- 8) How is traditional method use associated with fertility preferences, particularly strength of and/or unstable fertility preferences? Are women with ambivalent fertility preferences more likely to use traditional methods even when modern methods are available?
- 9) How can large-scale surveys and other FP research approaches better account for concurrent or sporadic use of traditional or peri-coital/coital-dependent methods?

The **expected outcomes** from this research include the following:

Outcome 1: Estimates of traditional method use in study sites in three countries (1-2 study sites per country)

Outcome 2: Rigorously collected quantitative and qualitative data on sociodemographic characteristics of users and reasons/motivations for traditional method use and other non-modern contraceptive strategies for pregnancy avoidance among current and former traditional method users

Outcome 3: Three scientific papers submitted to peer-review journals on traditional method use in specific contexts, with at least one paper on aggregate findings from across the study settings

Outcome 4: Publicly-available quantitative and qualitative data on traditional method use for further analysis

After review of the concepts, we will identify one or more organizations/consortium from which to request a full proposal. Based on further review of the full proposal, we expect to make one award of \$1.5–\$2 million for up to a 2-year project grant for primary data

collection in three countries. The ideal proposal will put forth a consortium of partnerships between multiple skilled organizations, with locally-based research partners who are co-PIs. All proposals must identify how they will meaningfully engage locally-based partners in the research design, data collection, analysis and dissemination of findings.

With this investment, BMGF seeks to fund research that better informs the FP community about traditional method use specifically, and other “non-modern” methods of pregnancy avoidance more broadly, in order to better inform FP programming and research. This investment is not designed to promote or demote traditional methods of contraception but to better understand the generally neglected preferences and motivations of women who use traditional contraceptive methods to avoid pregnancy.

Background

The global FP field has shifted to focus almost exclusively on modern contraceptive use, largely because of the higher efficacy rates of modern methods and perceptions in the FP field that use of “traditional methods” is an intermediate step in the pathway to modern method use or a barrier to modern method use, with traditional method use inevitably decreasing over time. The characterization of non-modern methods as “traditional”, however, may not be accurate as it implies they were used in the past but are likely to be abandoned with the spread of modern contraceptive methods^{1,2} and it is not clear that in contemporary developing countries how widespread periodic abstinence and withdrawal were prior to the introduction of modern contraception³. Despite declines in traditional method use in many countries, it remains prevalent in others. In sub-Saharan Africa, one in five contraceptive users uses a traditional method, a proportion that rises to one in two in Central Africa⁴. In South Asia, 9.2% of Pakistani women and 5.8% of Indian women use a traditional method, and traditional method use is substantial in several Latin American countries, including 14.8% in Peru and 7.2% in Guatemala⁵.

Though the exact definition and classification of traditional methods varies, the most widely used classification is from the DHS which considers withdrawal, periodic abstinence (also known as the rhythm method or calendar method), and a small category of “other” traditional methods as “traditional”. As withdrawal and periodic abstinence account for the vast majority of traditional method use, however, “traditional methods” are often synonymous with these two contraceptive approaches, and these two methods are the primary focus of this Request for Concepts. Although the objective of this research project is a better understanding traditional method use and how it fits into the current FP landscape, it is likely that other forms of non-modern methods and/or coitally-dependent methods may figure prominently as well.

There is growing evidence that traditional method use is under-reported by respondents in large-scale studies, including the DHS^{6,7,8} with several localized studies throughout sub-Saharan Africa have documented rates of traditional use far greater than reported in the DHS^{9,10,11} by as much as 25%^{12,13}. There is also evidence that the “current use” and contraceptive calendar reporting used in DHS, PMA and other surveys leads to under-reporting of methods that are coital-specific or episodic^{14,15}. This under-reporting suggests that in some settings unmet need calculations may be inflated¹⁶ and that more specific questions on traditional or other non-modern methods of pregnancy avoidance would find that a larger proportion of women use these methods than previously thought.

The lack of research on traditional method use contributes to the unresolved issue of how to classify traditional users in definitions of met and unmet for FP. For example, “unmet need for modern methods” could be interpreted to imply that traditional method users could or should transition from traditional to modern method. Assuming traditional method users as having an unmet need for modern methods is prevalent in FP organizations and advocacy research: FP2020 considers traditional method users as having an unmet need for family planning¹⁷, the Sustainable Development Goals specifically focuses on demand satisfied by modern methods and categorizes traditional method users as having “unmet need for modern methods”, and Guttmacher’s *Adding it Up* report has defined women who use traditional methods as having an unmet need for contraception because these women face a higher risk of pregnancy¹⁸. In these instances, traditional method users are lumped together with non-users, even though they are using a form of contraception –one that in some instances may be their preferred method of contraception. Additionally, some researchers have argued that the unmet need calculation is problematic because it doesn’t clearly account for traditional methods and doesn’t incorporate strength of motivation for pregnancy avoidance¹⁹, which may be associated with traditional method use. Even where users of modern and non-modern methods are differentiated, for example in CPR and MCPR comparisons, traditional method users are rarely studied or reported on in the same detail as modern users – even in countries where traditional methods are among the most popular contraceptive methods – consistently overlooking this substantial number of women who use traditional contraception.

Perhaps most relevant for FP programs is the assumption that women who are highly motivated to use contraception resort to less effective traditional methods of contraception only because they are unable to access modern methods, in which case traditional method users are arguably the “lowest hanging fruit” for FP programs and a top priority segment for FP program targeting. A number of smaller-scale qualitative studies^{20,21,22,23}, however, have found that many traditional method users express a preference for traditional methods over modern ones, even when able to access modern methods and when they are knowledgeable about the lower efficacy of traditional methods. For example, urban, educated women identified in some settings as more likely to use or expressing a preference for traditional methods^{24,25}, and several recent studies have found that wealthier, more educated, wealthier and/or urban women are the greater “traditional” method users in Ghana²⁶ and generally in sub-Saharan Africa^{27,28}, although in some cases it is poorer and less educated women who are more likely to use traditional methods²⁹. Findings on traditional method use and discontinuation present a more mixed picture on potential preferences for traditional over modern methods^{30,31}. It is highly programmatically relevant to better understand how these profiles vary by context and whether reasons for traditional method use are standard across contexts with similar traditional use profiles.

Without information on women who became pregnant while using traditional methods beyond that provided by the DHS, we don’t know whether these women may have been using traditional methods in part because they were simply more ambivalent about a pregnancy

than modern users, in which case less effective methods may not be as problematic, or if FP programs are failing to provide these traditional method users with adequate information and better access to FP to ensure they are having “children by choice, not by chance”. While the DHS, PMA and other surveys provide some comparative information on current users of traditional methods, women using traditional methods are not considered in those surveys to have unmet need they are thus *not* asked to give a “reason for non-use” of modern methods. As a result, we do not have insights into motivations or reasons from respondents around traditional, rather than modern, method use from the DHS. Instead, we are reliant for this information on few smaller-scale studies and papers that have looked more in-depth at traditional method users to try and piece together an overall picture of traditional method users that can inform programmatic accounting of and approaches to traditional method users generally and within specific settings.

Without new mixed methods approaches, particularly qualitative data, to gather data to provide a clearer picture of the profile and motivations of traditional method users in FP2020 countries, we risk continued misclassification and misunderstanding traditional method users in our research and program approaches and evaluations, including in critical on-going discussions around universal access and demand satisfied as the FP community defines its post-2020 agenda. This Request for Concepts seeks to identify the best partners and research approaches to help fill the gap in the current literature on FP on reasons and motivations for traditional method use among women in contemporary developing countries that can inform and guide broader FP research and programming.

Anticipated Outcomes

The expected outcomes of this investment are:

Outcome 1: Estimates of traditional method use in study sites in three countries (1-2 study sites per country)

Outcome 2: Rigorously collected quantitative and qualitative data on sociodemographic characteristics of users and reasons/motivations for traditional method use and other non-modern contraceptive strategies for pregnancy avoidance among current and former traditional method users

Outcome 3: Three scientific papers submitted to peer-review journals on traditional method use in specific contexts, with at least one paper on aggregate findings from across the study settings

Outcome 4: Publicly-available quantitative and qualitative data on traditional method use for further analysis

Specifically, **this investment will answer the following questions**, as well as any others that surface during the inception period/formative research phase:

- 1) Are women who use traditional methods accurately captured in current surveys (e.g., DHS and PMA) or is traditional method and other non-modern method use, particularly simultaneous modern and traditional use or sporadic traditional method use, systematically underreported? What can current survey data tell us about who we are missing and why?
- 2) What are user characteristics of traditional method users and how do these vary across study settings and type of method used?
- 3) Do traditional method users express a strong preference for traditional over modern methods? Why?
- 4) What do traditional and sporadic users give as reasons for use? Are they satisfied with their choice of method and does this vary by awareness of other methods, experience with other methods, strength of desire to avoid pregnancy, support from partner, etc.?
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- 9) How can large-scale surveys and other FP research approaches better account for concurrent or sporadic use of traditional or peri-coital/coital-dependent methods?

The datasets from this investment will be made publicly available, for further analysis beyond the grants scientific paper deliverables, to make sure this data is a part of broader research work on non-modern methods of pregnancy avoidance. In-depth findings on traditional method use from this investment will be used to:

- 1) Provide recommendations for revisions to current approaches to measuring traditional method use in program strategies and survey questionnaires.
- 2) Inform discussions for BMGF and the global FP community about how to treat traditional methods as we define and measure “universal access” when accounting for FP preferences that may lead women to choose traditional methods over modern contraceptives
- 3) Influence the global FP framing of what “counts” as valid contraceptive behavior by directly informing discussions on whether the FP field should continue to focus singularly on MCPR as the primary outcome measure for FP access and use

Scope and Approach

Addressing these issues in the current literature on traditional method users will require an in-depth mixed-methods study in three countries on patterns of and motivations for use of traditional methods of contraception. The research approach should match quantitative data on rates of traditional method use and user characteristics with in-depth qualitative data from past and current traditional method users on reasons and motivations behind their use of traditional methods (and modern methods, where applicable).

Concept memos may include phased study structures, including an initial inception phase, such as:

Phase 1: Inception phase of 6–10 weeks, during which the study team will conduct a comprehensive literature review of traditional method use and approaches for studying non-modern methods of pregnancy avoidance and will prepare and present a detailed study implementation plan to BMGF. The inception phase will be an iterative and collaborative process between the grantee and BMGF and the output will be an inception report which can serve as a resource for subsequent IRB submissions

Phase 2: Quantitative data collection

Phase 3: Qualitative data collection

Phase 4: Analysis, results and final report write-up, and publication submission

Quantitative data will be gathered on traditional method use rates in the study population (e.g., cluster or a census enumeration area) to both provide estimates on traditional method use in the study area and to identify a representative sample of traditional method users (past and present). It is anticipated that obtaining representative and statistically significant samples of traditional method users for in-depth analysis will require mapping and initial screening with a greater number of households than for surveys on modern methods, given the lower rates of traditional compared to modern method use.

Qualitative in-depth follow-up interviews on traditional method use and motivations will then be conducted with traditional method users on patterns of use (e.g., exclusive use, intermittent use or concurrently with modern methods), knowledge of traditional methods, and reasons for traditional and/or non-modern method use. Using open-ended qualitative questions can provide insights into reasons and motivations for and attitudes towards traditional method use that cannot be easily ascertained from survey data. This qualitative data will help us better understand the meanings that respondents attach to responses about method use in population-based surveys such as DHS, PMA, and MICS³².

This investment seeks to generate genuinely new knowledge and explanations about traditional method use in contemporary developing countries, particularly through in-depth qualitative data collection. Proposed qualitative data approaches could include ethnographic or grounded theory approaches that allow theory/theories on traditional method use to emerge from the data that is collected, rather than starting with a predetermined theory on traditional method use, to allow the formulation of theories from the data to explain why women use or choose traditional methods. Another approach could borrow from the initial and repeat interview approach from the DHS follow-up study of unmet need for the Ghana 2014 DHS (*Understanding Unmet Need in Ghana: Results from a Follow-up Study to the 2014 Ghana Demographic and Health Survey*), with a more specific focus on past and present non-modern method use and different qualitative data collection approaches. These are examples of possible approaches only and are not required; other proposed mixed-methods research approaches are welcome as well.

Geographic coverage: Concept memos must propose three study and should include one South Asian country (India or Pakistan), one Central African country (with strong preference for DRC, which has very high traditional method use) and one other country with a different traditional method use profile priority for countries that are in sub-Saharan Africa and/or is a BMGF FP priority country. Details on site selection within each country (2-3 sites per country) are desirable but not required for the concept memo phase but will be required for invited proposal submissions.

It is the grantee's responsibility to ensure studies are conducted with sufficient prior knowledge of survey design, modern and traditional methods of contraception, quantitative and qualitative research approaches, and broader pregnancy avoidance strategies.

Rules & Guidelines

Funding Details and Eligibility

Estimate of Funds Available and Number of Grants Anticipated

The BMGF Family Planning Team anticipates to award one grant from this Request for Concept (RFC). BMGF intends to provide between \$1.5–\$2 million dollars in funding for this scope of work. BMGF reserves the right to fund any one or none of the concepts submitted.

Estimated Start Date and Period of Performance

The anticipated start date is the date for this scope of work is February 2020. The anticipated period of performance or project duration is approximately 2 years.

Operational and Management Capacities:

This Request for Concept Memos is open to any U.S. or non-U.S. organization, non-profit, or for-profit entity, 501(c)(3) public charity status or a foreign organization that has obtained, or is able to obtain, an equivalency determination and who completes the template within the required deadline for submission and who fit the criteria as described throughout this request. Concepts must cover proposed research in all three proposed countries.

Applicants can seek partnership with other organizations or individuals to complete the work. In the case of a multi-partner approach or consortium, the proposed project must have an organizing/coordination lead to manage the consortia. This partner may be an implementer, provide technical contribution, or be a third party.

Concept Memos must outline the following operational and management capacities:

- Administrative and organizational capabilities (operations, accounting and finance, human resources, compliance, legal)
- Willing to agree that Intellectual Property of content developed may be openly licensed
- Demonstrated experience in working collaboratively with multiple partners
- Ability to issue and manage subawards (as needed)

Technical Capacities:

Qualified organizations and teams will have proven experience and capabilities in:

- Documented experience of conducting quantitative research studies in proposed geographies
- Documented experience of qualitative data collection methods (e.g., study design and implementation, data management, qualitative data analysis)
- Mixed-methods approaches, including synthetic review and combining findings from quantitative and qualitative data
- Thorough understanding of family planning programming and research; in particular, issues related to family planning uptake, reasons for non-use, discontinuation and switching
- Excellent communications and synthesis skills and the ability to translate and lift-up evidence / findings
- Ability to work in an iterative and developmental way

Proposals should provide a succinct summary of how your organization meets the skills and qualifications, any unique capabilities of your organization that are relevant to the proposed project concept.

Exclusion Criteria

We will NOT consider funding for:

1. Concepts that do not propose a mixed-methods approach
2. Concepts aimed at measuring on contraceptive effectiveness
3. Concepts that include research aimed to define/re-define terminology related to modern/traditional methods or on classifying fertility awareness methods as modern or traditional
4. Concepts that do not propose to work in geographic areas of interest as outlined by BMGF
5. Concepts which do not respond to the key goals of the Request for Concept Memos
6. Concepts that do not meaningfully include a local in country partners
7. Concepts that do not include specific study countries
8. Concepts where the applicant or partners (if applicable) do not have demonstrable capacity in the areas of expertise defined in the Request for Concepts
9. Concepts that propose budgets outside of the identified range

How to Submit a Concept

Concept Submission Requirements

To apply, the concept should include all of the components listed below. Other attachments will not be reviewed.

1. **Concept narrative** describing the proposed project (up to 5 pages, using template and guidelines provided);
2. **Annexes: All annexes including the required components below must not exceed 10 pages in length.**
 - **Budget** for the proposed activities (using template and guidelines provided) and **Budget Narrative**
 - **Bio-sketches of key personnel and organizational structure**
 - **Details on past performance for similar grants/activities**

Details:

Concept memo - (5-page maximum, using the template and guidelines provided) which includes the following sections:

- **General information:** Summary with basic proposal information including names, address, contact information, proposed budget, etc.
- **Project Scope/Program description:** Description of overall approach you will take to achieve the intended results of the project.
- **Investment Outcomes:** Propose outcomes of the project and associated outputs needed to reach those outcomes. Describe how the proposed approach will achieve the desired outcomes and/or outputs and how this will be verified.

- **Organizational Fit:** Describe the experience of all the organizations in the consortium to implement the proposed work (not just the prime).
- **Risks/Challenges:** Describe the anticipated challenges to the success of the project and your proposed mitigation strategies.

Budget – (using the template and guidelines provided) which includes the following sections:

- **High Level Excel Budget:** estimates can include a range broken down by cost category
- **Budget Narrative:** Brief description of major cost drivers by cost category

Additional Requirements:

Management Structure: (not to exceed 1 page)

- Outline the proposed overall project management structure, including information on how a lead organization will manage the overall project in close partnership with partner organizations.
- Describe how the proposed Management Structure will contribute towards achieving the objectives and results described in the activity description
- Describe and justify the team/organizational composition and organizational structure of the activity and outline the roles and responsibilities for each key staff proposed
- For consortium approaches: The Applicant must describe the roles and responsibilities of the lead organization's key personnel, identify key personnel at proposed partner organizations, and outline the Applicant's strategy to coordinate implementation of the proposed activities and achievement of results

Key personnel: (not to exceed 1 page)

- Applicants must provide a description of how the proposed key personnel will contribute towards achieving the objectives and results described in the Activity description. This should clearly explain how the technical expertise, education and experience of all key personnel members contribute to achieving expected results; the role and estimated amount of time each key personnel member will devote to the Activity and/or specific components within the Activity.

Applicants may choose to submit a cover letter in addition to the package materials detailed above. The cover letter will not be reviewed as part of the merit review criteria.

- The full application must be submitted as single email with attachments
- All applications must be submitted in word and/or excel. PDF documents will not be accepted, unless a word or excel version is also submitted
- All applications received by the submission deadline will be reviewed for responsiveness to the request for concept and the application format. No addition or modifications will be accepted after the submission date.
- BMGF will not allow the reimbursement of concept development costs under this investment.

Evaluation Criteria

Concepts will be selected for funding in a two-phase process of 1) short concept memos followed by 2) invited longer full proposals.

Submissions received by the deadline will be evaluated on the following criteria:

- A. Technical Approach
 - Demonstrated understanding of the all issues presented and clear description of how the proposed work will respond to the research questions and outcomes
 - Appropriateness of the types of disciplines or approaches that will be used for the proposed research; any known limitations are discussed
 - Description of how local or in-country partners/organizations will lead/engage in development of the research design, data collection, analysis and disseminations of findings
- B. Management and Operational Approach
 - Personnel and Management Structure spells out clear roles and responsibilities for all staff proposed including required knowledge, skills and qualifications and coordination mechanism between team members to accomplish the program objectives
 - The extent to which the Applicant, consortium members (if applicable) and any proposed sub-partners demonstrate adequate capacity and experience required to achieve expected results
 - The Applicant provides a clear coordination approach to working with partners and key stakeholders, indicating how the applicant approaches to utilize to leverage resources and influence
- C. Key Personnel
 - The extent to which the application clearly demonstrates that each proposed key personnel has the required qualifications, experience and skills and collectively complement each other to successfully and effectively implement the proposed technical approach and accomplish the program objectives
- D. Business Review
 - Cost is reasonable within stated range of concept request.
 - Completeness of full concept memo template, including adhering to guidelines regarding budget, and other requirements

Successful submissions will show:

- Demonstrated capacity to conduct mixed-methods research in the relevant outcome area(s)
- Staff with sufficient experience have been assigned to roles
- Demonstrated capacity to work effectively with partners that bring a diverse set of expertise (e.g. data collection, enumerator training, data compilation and cleaning, qualitative analysis approaches, etc.)
- Strong familiarity, experience or expertise in family planning surveys and measurement
- Have a project duration of approximately 2 years
- Have an estimated budget in the range of \$1.5–\$2 million

Funding criteria:

The selection of Applicant(s) to submit full proposals will be based on the technical merits of the concept memo, the organization's capacity, strength of proposed partners (as applicable), and proposed budget.

Activities and Timeline

BMGF will review initial concepts submitted and provide feedback and requests for full proposals soon after, followed by a very fast turnaround for proposal review. With this in mind, applicants are encouraged to seek appropriate institutional feedback for proposal submission permissions during the concept submission stage, in order to stay on track for a potential request for proposal following the concept note submission.

Successful Concept Memos will be followed by an invitation to submit a full proposal according to the timeline presented below:

- August 20:** Request for Concept Memo announced.
- August 20–September 12:** Q&A period for clarifying questions
- Sept 12 (23:59 PST):** Last day to submit clarifying questions
- Mid-September:** Compiled Q&A document sent to prospective partners
- October 4 (23:59 PST):** Deadline for submitting Concept Memos
- Mid-October:** Finalist(s) notified to submit full proposal
- November 15:** Deadline for submitting full proposal
- February 2020:** Anticipated date for final approval of grant and funding

We recognize it may be difficult to establish firm partnerships (to conduct the grant's proposed activities) within the concept note deadline, and applicants are encouraged to still submit promising concept outlines and provide as much detail as possible on potential or secured partnerships within the given timeframe. Our goal is to ensure highly compelling ideas are captured, and request proposals where the applicant believes partnership can be established by the time a full proposal is potentially requested.

Submission Instructions

Concept Memo applications must be submitted electronically via email to the following email address:

FPproposals@gatesfoundation.org

Concept Memo applications must be submitted by the October 4, 2019 deadline stated in the "Activities and Timeline" Section. Applications submitted after this date and time will not be accepted.

The submission must be clear, concise and complete. BMGF reserves the right to mark a submission down or exclude it from the process if it contains any ambiguities or lacks clarity. Submissions will be evaluated based on the information submitted by the deadline. Applicants should submit only such information as is necessary to respond effectively to the request.

Questions and Answers (Q&A):

All questions regarding this RFC must be submitted in writing via email to **FPproposals@gatesfoundation.org**

Clarifying questions must be submitted via email from **August 20–September 12** as stated in the Activities and Timeline Section above. Any information given to a prospective Applicant will be distributed to all other prospective Applicants by the time and date stated in the Activities and Timeline section. Clarifying questions submitted after the deadline for questions will not receive responses. Questions on process or on Foundation templates will be accepted on a rolling basis.

Help Contact(s)

For programmatic clarification and questions, please email **FPproposals@gatesfoundation.org** Please see the "Activities and Timeline" Section for Q&A deadlines.

More Information

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Who can participate? This is an open solicitation. We welcome submissions from academic and research organizations, NGOs with strong research departments, for-profit organizations and government. Strength in designing and implementing mixed-methods research, whether directly or through collaboration with other organizations, will be required. Organizations or consortiums will be expected to have presence or strong partnerships with organizations in proposed study geographies who must be meaningfully engaged in development of the research, intervention, and dissemination of learning. Members of the consortia must have a proven record in collecting and analyzing mixed-methods and qualitative data, and a focus on local partner capacity building for data collection and analysis. We welcome submissions from organizations in all sectors (academic, NGO, for-profit, government).

Is there a preferred list of agencies to engage with for technical expertise? There is no preferred list. We highly encourage applicants to refer to their own networks or form new networks and contacts for this application.

When are responses due? Concept Memos are due no later than 23:59 PST on **October 4, 2019**.

When will proposals be selected? The finalist(s) will be invited to submit a full proposal by mid-October 2019 with at least 20 days to complete the full proposal. It is anticipated that the final grant/award approval will happen in Q1 2020.

What is the proposed timeline for the project? The anticipated timeline to complete this project is 1-2 years, but this may be flexible if the applicant can rationalize a highly compelling alternative timeline.

What is the available budget for this work? The maximum award available is expected to be \$1.5–\$2 million. Proposals with budgets higher than this amount with extremely strong justification for larger resources may be considered but are likely to fall out of scope for this program.

Will I receive any compensation for submitting? You will not receive any compensation for your submission even if it is used by the foundation or third parties in any way.

What will the foundation do with my submission? The foundation will review all submissions. We may also share your submission, or ideas contained within it, with internal or external partners for technical review and comment. Proprietary information will be redacted if shared externally.

Key Terms and Conditions

A. Disclosure Notice

To help the foundation with its review of RFC responses, the foundation may disclose proposals, documents, communications, and associated materials submitted to the foundation in response to this RFC (collectively, "Submission Materials") to its employees, contingent workers, consultants, independent subject matter experts, and potential co-funders. Please carefully consider the information included in the Submission Materials. If you (the "Applicant") have any doubts about the wisdom of disclosure of confidential or proprietary information, the foundation recommends you consult with your legal counsel and take any steps you deem necessary to protect your intellectual property. You may wish to consider whether such information is critical for evaluating the submission or if more general, non-confidential information may be adequate as an alternative for these purposes.

Notwithstanding the Applicants characterization of any information as being confidential, the foundation the foundation is under no obligation to treat such information as confidential.

B. Disclaimer

This RFC is not an offer to contract or award grant funds. The foundation assumes no responsibility for the Applicants cost to respond to this RFC. All responses generated by this RFC become the property of the foundation.

C. Release and Verification

In exchange for the opportunity to be awarded a grant or contract, the Applicant agrees that the foundation may, in its sole discretion: (1) amend or cancel the RFC, in whole or in part, at any time; (2) extend the deadline for submitting responses; (3) determine whether a response does or does not substantially comply with the requirements of the RFC; (4) waive any minor irregularity, informality or nonconformance with the provisions or procedures of the RFC; (5) issue multiple awards; (6) share responses generated by this RFC with foundation staff, consultants, contingent workers, subject matter experts, and potential co-funders; and (7) copy the responses.

Applicant agrees not to bring a legal challenge of any kind against the foundation relating to the foundation's selection and award of a grant or contract arising from this RFC.

Applicant represents that it has responded to the RFC with complete honesty and accuracy. If facts provided in Applicant's response change, Applicant will supplement its response in writing with any deletions, additions or changes within ten days of the changes. Applicant will do this, as necessary, throughout the selection process. Applicant understands that any material misrepresentation, including omissions, may disqualify it from consideration for a grant or contract award.

By responding to this RFC, you are representing: (i) that you have authority to bind the named Applicant to the terms and conditions set forth above, without amendment; and (ii) that you agree to be bound by them.

D. Global Access and Intellectual Property

Intellectual property (IP) rights and the management of IP rights are likely to play an important role in achieving the goals of this project. To this end, the foundation requires that, even at this stage, all applicants seriously consider their willingness to submit a response in compliance with the foundation's response requirements, a portion of which may ask for certain information and intentions regarding intellectual property concerns and Global Access. Specifically, the foundation requires that;

You will conduct and manage the Project and the Funded Developments in a manner that ensures Global Access. Your Global Access commitments will survive the term of the Agreement. "Funded Developments" means the products, services, processes, technologies, materials, software, data, other innovations, and intellectual property resulting from the Project (including modifications, improvements, and further developments to Background Technology). "Background Technology" means any and all products, services, processes, technologies, materials, software, data, or other innovations, and intellectual property created by You or a third party prior to or outside of the Project used as part of the Project. "Global Access" means: (a) the knowledge and information gained from the Project will be promptly and broadly disseminated; and (b) the Funded Developments will be made available and accessible at an affordable price (i) to people most in need within developing countries, or (ii) in support of the U.S. educational system and public libraries, as applicable to the Project.

The foundation will be selecting applicants based on the conclusion that their technologies and expertise will be most appropriate for the success of this RFC.

As part of the foundation's review and evaluation of each response, the foundation will conduct due diligence with respect to each applicant's ability and commitment to manage intellectual property in a manner consistent with the stated scientific and charitable goals of the foundation. Due diligence activities may include inquiry into an applicant's:

- 1) Freedom to operate (FTO) and ability to freely use and acquire needed background technology;
- 2) Commitment to promote the utilization, commercialization and availability of Funded Developments for public benefit

The foundation encourages you to include this information in your response.

About the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Guided by the belief that every life has equal value, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation works to help all people lead healthy, productive lives. We work with partner organizations worldwide to tackle critical problems in four program areas. Our Global Development Division works to help the world's poorest people lift themselves out of hunger and poverty. Our Global Health Division aims to harness advances in science and technology to save lives in developing countries. Our United States Division works to improve U.S. high school and postsecondary education and support vulnerable children and families in Washington State. And our Global Policy & Advocacy Division seeks to build strategic relationships and promote policies that will help advance our work. Our approach to Grantmaking emphasizes collaboration, innovation, risk-taking, and, most importantly, results.

To learn more about the foundation's work, visit www.gatesfoundation.org.

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