

Timeline

9-10AM EDT

Date

September 27, 2021



Human Trafficking Research Initiative Request for Expressions of Interest: Full Research Studies

Academic leads: Cecilia Hyunjung Mo, Guy Grossman
IPA: Jeni Sorensen, Ellen Bates-Jefferys
www.poverty-action.org/human-trafficking-research-initiative



Q&A Session | Human Trafficking Research Initiative Request for Expressions of Interest (EOIs)

On September 27, 2021, IPA's [Human Trafficking Research Initiative \(HTRI\)](#) held a Q&A session for its Fall 2021 Request for Expressions of Interest (EOIs).

You can now [view the slides](#) that were provided in the presentation at the beginning of the session. Please see below (embedded on this page) for the English video recording of the session. Versions of the recording are also available with subtitles/written transcript in [Arabic](#), [French](#), and [Spanish](#) (the audio is in English, but the written subtitles/transcript are in those respective languages).

Please don't hesitate to reach out to [the HTRI team](#) with any questions.

IPA HTRI Q&A Session | September 27, 2021: [Video automatically transcribed by Sonix](#)

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Jeni Sorensen:

All right. Hi, everyone. I think I'll slowly get us kickstarted now that we've reached the hour. So welcome. This is IPA's Human Trafficking Research Initiative's Request for Expressions of Interest Q&A Session. So for today's call, we're just going to give you a brief 10 minute presentation and then that will be followed by the Q&A during the presentation. If you do have questions, please just write them in the chat. After the presentation will be an opportunity. We could read out your questions in the chat or use the raise hand feature, but we will try to go through the chat. Sorry, the presentation first, just because we may end up answering some of your questions in the presentation to help with bandwidth. We do have people joining from all over the world, so if you could keep your camera off for now, you're welcome to turn it on if you ask a question after the presentation. Also, please make sure you're on mute during the presentation, and that's it. I'll get us started. Excellent. Yeah. So please don't forget to mute yourself, thank you. So my name is Jeni Sorensen. I'm the director of the Human Trafficking Research Initiative at Innovations for Poverty Action. Again, this is a Q&A session for requests for expressions of interest for our full research studies under HTRI. And just so you know again, I'm the director of the initiative, my research manager, Ellen Bates-Jefferys is here on the call and she'll be supporting me in this presentation and in the Q&A.

Jeni Sorensen:

And our academic leads are Dr. Cecilia Mo and Dr. Guy Grossman. Next Slide. Ok, very briefly, the HTRI is a five year program that started last fall, so we're about 1 year in, almost. This is funded by the U.S. Department of State's Office to combat trafficking in persons sometimes known as J-TIP. And it's funded within the pot of funding called the program to end modern slavery or PEMS. HTRI is a 5.6 Million dollar total investment over five years, and the goal of this initiative is to produce evidence about what works to counter trafficking, using rigorous research methods. And at IPA those, the kind of preference for those methods is randomized controlled trials or randomized evaluations. So that's what the focus of this initiative really is to use that research method to garner evidence around human trafficking and then develop and share those results to improve human trafficking policies and programs worldwide. Other way. There you go. Ok, so we're all in the call today because we're going to talk about the main component of this initiative, which is HTRI's Competitive Research Fund. Under the research fund, there's kind of two pots of funding. The first is seed funding and we've had two well, we've had one round so far. We're going to have at least one or two additional. And our next round for seed grants will come out in January. That's when we're expecting to release it.

Jeni Sorensen:

And seed funding is looking at examining existing data program data. You can be doing travel grants, you can be doing pilot RCTs so kind of testing out whether this kind of research model works for the question that you're seeking to answer. And those can go from ten thousand to thirty five thousand. What we're here to talk about today is our first round of funding for full scale randomized evaluation. So this is partial funding, it can be full funding. Again, this is our first round and applications will be due October 15 and we will have at least one, possibly two more rounds coming up. We don't have the exact timeline nailed down on that, but just I wanted to make sure that you are aware that these two kind of different kinds of funding exist. If you weren't, if you weren't aware of this initiative for the first round. And then also if

it is a challenge for you, your organization or as a researcher to get everything together by our October 15th deadline, this is not your only chance to apply for funding from the initiative. Next slide. Go back one. There you go. Ok, so the basics: our EOI submissions, we're using an online portal and Formstack. You can reach that through IPA's website. Again, the due date is before midnight Eastern Daylight Time on October 15. The research types that will be considered are full funding for randomized evaluations, partial funding for randomized evaluations or funding for new arms of existing randomized evaluations.

Jeni Sorensen:

So this can be in trafficking adjacent fields like economics or public health. There's other things that are happening. The addition of research questions around human trafficking could benefit those existing studies, and the applications must be submitted in English. Next slide. All right, eligibility. The lead PI must hold a PhD or be in the process of pursuing a PhD in a relevant social science discipline, and I would say in some cases, pure science also could be considered. Other members of the team do not need to have a Ph.D. The projects must benefit people and communities in and from lower middle income countries, so we have had in the past people asking whether they could apply for funding in the high income country because they are assisting victims of trafficking from lower middle income countries. And that is possible. We can consider it, although we strongly prefer that the projects take place in LMICs. Our funding is from the Department of State, as I mentioned earlier, and so it's a little harder to get permission to implement projects in this country. So again, it's not impossible. But if possible, we would prefer applications come from LMICs and we will be accepting applications from all countries in the world that are. Although there's a slight preference for some countries that have projects happening right now.

Jeni Sorensen:

And so the list is on your screen right now. And we'll also share this out after the presentation and it's in the guidelines as well and comes again as a program to end modern slavery. Program funded by J-TIP. All right, and applications, again, you can request full funding, partial funding or funding for new arms. Only applications that include the use of randomized evaluations or similar rigorous research methods will be considered for funding. So this isn't that we don't appreciate and recognize the value of qualitative and descriptive research. But we recognize that there's a gap in quantitative experimental methods to examine human trafficking intervention. So that's what this fund is isn't intended to do to fill that gap. Next slide. Ok. When you're developing your application, please read and reference the learning and research agenda. We talked to, I want to say about one hundred experts and organizations researchers in the human trafficking space over the last six months. And I also, for those of you who don't know me, I come from the human trafficking project implementation space. I worked on human trafficking programs for 20 years, so we used kind of the research and experience of people in this area to come up with what are the research gaps and propose research questions to fill those gaps. So for under each of these, the four P's, you can find questions and sub questions. And in the it's in table one of the learning and research agenda.

Jeni Sorensen:

And so we really would like you to again kind of take in that document and then reference

which gap you intend to fill with your proposed research. Next slide. Ok. To give you a sense of the timeline, so we will be convening our selection committee. Ellen and I are staff on this project, so we are not on the selection committee. Our academic leads, Dr. Mo and Dr. Grossman, are and we're going to have additional experts in the space that we invite to to be on the committee. They will assess the applications and shortlist the strongest and most relevant research projects immediately following the deadline, which is October 15th. The selected applicants will be invited to submit a full RFP to IPA. That timeline is November December, and then the committee will convene again shortly after the holidays, beginning before the holidays, hopefully, but we'll see after the holidays and then select their recommendations for the winning organizations. We'll get review and approval by J-TIP in January, and so we're hoping that we'll have notifications out and sub agreement signed by mid-February or Valentine's Day is what we're aiming for. It's like. Ok. Evaluation criteria. You can find those the detailed criteria in the guidelines on pages four and five. But just to go over them quickly, relevance to HTRI priorities. So that includes the kind of link to the learning agenda, the project viability. So, you know, is it possible to do this project? Academic contribution - How does it contribute to the academic literature. Policy relevant? So we want to make sure that this research is not only contributing to the literature, but will actually be implemented and used by organizations and governments.

Jeni Sorensen:

Value of the research. So that's kind of looking at again, how much money you'll be applying for and then relevant experience of the proposed research team. Our funding is limited to research that falls under these two definitions, these are the definitions and the TVPRA. And so these are the ones that we have to use. Next slide. Ok. And I see that we are getting some requests for links. The links are available on our website and then I included some additional links here because we have IPA country offices in several of the countries where you might be looking to implement your project. You do not have to engage an IPA office, but IPA offices are there as a resource and can help support research and are very experienced in this kind of research. So you're welcome to reach out to our IPA country offices. If again, if they are in one of the countries where you're looking to do your research, you can go to this link or look in the EOI guidelines on Pages five to six to find out who to contact in which countries we're talking about. Again, the learning and research agenda is a key document for you to look at.

Jeni Sorensen:

Also the annual Trafficking in Persons report. That's what the U.S. Department of State puts out every June. If you're looking to do research in a specific country, you should definitely read the country summary for that country or the countries that you want to do. Your research in the Global Modern Slavery Directory is a great resource for looking at what implementing NGOs are working in each country. So if you were a researcher and you want to be linked up with implementing organizations, I suggest looking there. And then Delta 8.7 is really good, has dashboards per country on everything to do with modern slavery so that it includes child labor or forced labor and human trafficking. That's a great resource if you're kind of doing a partnership with the government, ministry or other government groups, law enforcement. And then finally, the Promising Practices Database = Walk Free puts that out. There's one from 2015. They're actually releasing their updated version this week. And so that's again, a resource for you to see what research has been done to date in all forms of

modern slavery, including human trafficking. I think that's it, that's like. Ok, yep. So you can stop sharing the presentation, thanks for listening, and Ellen is going to help me go through whatever questions we've had so far and feel free to raise your hand if you'd like to ask a question on video. Thanks.

Ellen Bates-Jefferys:

Great. So just to go quickly back over the questions that were asked in the chat, yes, NGOs are eligible to receive funding. And yes, we can. You can apply as a consortium. In fact, that's usually what we expect to see. We expect to see researchers as well as implementing organizations apply. And then, yes, we will send out this recording to everyone who's interested in it. And we do have some people who have requested translations as well. So we have that sort of set up for those who previously requested it and anyone who reaches out to us who is not on this list of invites but who is interested in receiving it. We are happy to send it to as well.

Jeni Sorensen:

Ok. And I see one question that just came in about whether international organizations are eligible to receive funding. Absolutely. They are. Ok. Any hints as to when the next round of calls would be expected again, the next round of seed grant funding? We're anticipating it to be released January of next year for the next round of funding. Ellen and I think we were thinking mid to late 2020. Again, it's not nailed down, but this is a five year program. So we are cognizant that research takes time and so we won't wait too long between rounds. But we can keep you guys updated, and if you are not already, if you're not sure if you're on our mailing list, go ahead and send an email. We'll send out the link also through our our general email address. But it's ipa_htri@povertyaction.org. And we'll make sure that you're on our list. So any time we have updates on the initiative, we'll send out.

Ellen Bates-Jefferys:

Just looking through the chat again. Yes, UK based organization and universities are eligible to apply. All of the research, though, must be for the benefit of people in low and middle income countries. So that's where we would expect most of the research to happen. And. Yes, and if you already receive PEMS funding, you are eligible to also win this grant. There are no restrictions when it comes to sort of who like the organization that's doing the implementation. It's all based on sort of the research arm, provided you can receive U.S. Department of State funding and that eligibility criteria. There is not a maximum number of countries to be included in the research. Obviously, it turns into a logistical concern and available funding at a certain point. But if you have a cross country application, that is just fine. Again, lower middle income countries is the sole focus for the beneficiaries of this project. As for how to apply, I encourage you to go to our website under the competitive fund and that really lays out everything step by step, including all relevant links. If you have any concerns with links or any technical problems, please reach out to us at the email that's listed on the website. We're happy to respond and troubleshoot with you. We haven't had any concerns yet, so please let us know if anything develops. For the NGO applications, so if the NGO is actually applying as the budget holder for the grant, the lead research eligibility is somebody who has the appropriate background in research. That would be the most important part. We do want to see evidence that this person is strong in causation research,

meaning they have experience sort of looking at programs and trying to identify the exact impacts in a rigorous way. And the lead researcher must either have a PhD or be in the process of getting a PhD.

Jeni Sorensen:

Yeah, and just to jump in there, it's possible that the lead PI could be someone who is a human trafficking research expert who does not have experience using causal methods or experimental methods. But then we would expect to see someone else on your team that does so they could be a lead, co-lead PI or just another PI. But we are looking at kind of the spectrum of the experience on the whole team, not just the lead PI, but again, the PI does have to have a PhD or going for a PhD.

Ellen Bates-Jefferys:

Yeah. I also see a question here about looking for examples of RCTs in this field. To be frank, there are not that many, but the ones that exist that we have located are in the learning agenda. There's a section in the annex that sort of identifies both causal research and also sort of what we would call adjacent research, where there's actually some very good evidence that already exists. You can kind of see the type of design that we would expect for the research applicants.

Jeni Sorensen:

I want to jump in there. We may not have had all of them because we referenced the promising practices database that Walk Free put out earlier. So there may be updated RCTs that we didn't catch that are in that. So I would encourage you again to look at if you Google Walk Free Promising Practices, you'll see that pop up later this week.

Ellen Bates-Jefferys:

Perfect. Just going through the list still. For funding research on human trafficking in American U.S. Schools. This would not apply. This would not apply for something we would not fund something that focuses on U.S. schools. We are again lower and middle income countries. And non academic institutions are eligible to apply, especially if they have experience in research and investigations, and again, we do expect to sort of see teams being built with somebody who does, is implementing a practice or a program to be studied and somebody who will be doing the research role. For us, we're just more interested in a strong team that is researching something that's relevant to understand how we can reduce trafficking. So that would be the main focus, but there's no limitations on, again, who's sort of the primary budget holder is, provided, again, they meet the eligibility standards of the U.S. State Department to be someone who can receive a grant.

Jeni Sorensen:

And speaking of finances, Ellen, I think there was an earlier question about the range or broad indication of the financial contribution. Did we talk about that?

Ellen Bates-Jefferys:

No, the sort of rough contribution is just to kind of go over the, I mean, do you want to go over the sort of ranges or I can? Yeah, yeah. So there are two sort of things we expect to

fund, and one is full randomized controlled trials, for example. So if somebody came to us with a project that they want to investigate and they want to do a full investigation and they want the full research funding, we expect to see those sort of ranges from two hundred to four hundred thousand with probably five hundred thousand is a cap. And that is again, if you're doing the entire research project based on our funding. However, we're also open to sort of partial funding. So if you're already engaged in a research project that you think impacts human trafficking, so for example, if you're studying child labor or if you're studying immigration due to conflict and these settings, we expect to see higher risk for human trafficking. And if you think you have that impact and you want to add an arm, either like a treatment arm would probably be the largest way to do it or just update your surveys so that you are still actively trying to figure out about the human trafficking that is in the populations that you're looking at. We would also fund that and that we would expect to see a lower request more from the like, you know, the absolute lowest if you're just adding updating a survey tool, a fifty thousand probably about one hundred and fifty thousand if you really need to tweak the design to be able to capture human trafficking. And I would add just on that, if you are a researcher and you need to sort of really increase sample size to sort of track, to sort of have enough power to find human trafficking, that is something else we would fund as well.

Jeni Sorensen:

And I just copied and pasted the website in the chat for the person who was asking about the website.

Ellen Bates-Jefferys:

Great, I'm a bit behind in the chat, but I'm seeing questions sort of again about the eligibility of academic researchers versus NGOs. So again, any consortium can apply that can be an NGO. We do expect someone on the team to be familiar with and capable of conducting academic research, which means like academic research that is causationally based. So again, randomized controlled trials are usually what people discuss when they're looking at academic research that identifies cause. We recognize there might be some other ways that we will make sense, given both ethical concerns and also just realistic logistic concerns for studying different parts of human trafficking, especially with things like prosecution. But we do expect to see on the team somebody again with that academic research experience.

Jeni Sorensen:

And then someone asked the question about the deadline, it's for the EOI. We did try to make the barrier to entry fairly low for this stage. So there's no detailed budget, you know, there's fewer things that you need to submit at this point. And then after that, we would expect more like a detailed budget and CVs of the proposed research team and power calculations, other things that are kind of involved in for a full application. But at this stage, we really want to encourage people to share out their ideas and we'll be providing detailed feedback. So for promising research that doesn't quite hit the mark at this stage, we would be providing you that feedback so that hopefully you could apply in a future round and make it through the next time.

Ellen Bates-Jefferys:

Exactly. And yes, Thailand related trafficking research is eligible. Just continuing to go down the questions. And as for the prioritization of countries, so there is, that is there - there will be a slight preference, but our true priority is good research. So a strong application from any lower middle income country will be our top priority. And yes, we do value all four P's as equally valuable for the research, again, because research of this sort of type is relatively new to the field, in some ways it's endless opportunity for organizations because we have our general research questions that need to be followed. But that includes all four P's, and we're very open to sort of exploring any good practices that we can identify as having a substantial impact. As for the timeline for the research projects, because this is the beginning of the grant, again, there's a bit more wiggle room, so we would expect it would be just fine to have a project that had timelines from two, three, even four years to be considered. Although obviously we do prioritize ones that can - prioritize I think is the wrong choice of words there. We do expect to see results probably by time, four years is, we're approaching that deadline because that would be sort of the end of the five year program that we are currently involved in. As for the IRB process, so we will expect every organization that gets funded to go through the IRB process. We are flexible with which IRB that is. IPA does have an IRB, an internal one. But we are sort of open to other organizational IRB. I would say we do expect to see the best practice of IRBs, one that is internationally recognized and common practice in use, and one that is local to really consider any ethical implications in the regional context would be the best practice we would hope to be followed. You do not have to have matching funds to apply for this opportunity, and yes, matching funds are not required.

Jeni Sorensen:

Right. And they do want to clarify or do you want to talk about kind of project implementation versus research implementation?

Ellen Bates-Jefferys:

Of course. So I think one of the key things for everyone on this call is that we fund the research component of any project. So what we're here to do is, we're here to improve research and fund research, and that means we expect to see the lion's share of all of the money that we give going to research activities themselves. This would be then the implementing partner would be sort of be considered to continue their program, either as is or minor tweaks, to accommodate research design. So we do not expect to fund programs. We do not expect to fund implementation costs. We do not expect to fund program staffing costs. There are some slight exceptions to this, and that is if there's a program adjustment that is required for the research design to be viable and there were some minor costs associated with that. For example, if for the sake of randomization, now programmatic cost, like the program, implementers need to travel further. We could, we would accept those costs on the research grant. But again, the bulk of all our funding will go to research activities. As for IP clauses attached to the use of technology in this grant, if there's a specific clarification question happy to answer it, we would not expect to receive proprietary information about how technology works. We would expect access to all data and findings with, again, within the limitation of what's appropriate of an IRB. So no PII. But we expect to see, we expect to be able to see all the data. There is no concrete list of eligible costs, but everything will sort of just have the question of is this a research cost or is it not, or is this cost necessary for the research to be undertaken?

Jeni Sorensen:

You know, there are some provisions around because this is U.S. government funding, there's some things to keep in mind regarding the Fly America Act. If you would be having researchers flying from the U.S., there's, you know, you have to use U.S. carriers or get special permission not to do that. And then there's some things with supplies. You may know that there are different prohibitions against using specific technology from different Chinese companies, so we could walk you through those if, when, if and when you get to the RFP stage. Nothing too complicated, I think. But good to know. And yes, you're welcome to submit as many eyes as you have time to submit, you know, as long as they're well thought through. We're happy to consider them or international organizations can too. And if you're coming from an IO or U.N. organization, we do have special provisions for the terms and conditions. So we're happy to share more information about that, but we are able to work with you and organizations as well. Clarity on administrative versus program cost. Ellen, do you have? Would you want to address that?

Ellen Bates-Jefferys:

Sure. So I'm assuming that the administrative costs have to do with sort of the organizational standard administrative costs in which case, think about, this is another project you can imply, if an administrator is directly supporting the research portion of the project, then they can apply that percentage of their time if they are not. If it's an administrator that's administering to a program or portion, they cannot, they will not be funded under this particular initiative. And yes, sorry to say both, but you can definitely apply for both seed funding and full scale funding, and in fact, in a lot of ways they should be seen as linked for some projects. If you have something that you want to see if it's viable or not, if it's a good idea, that might be a great idea for an RCT, but you're not sure yet. Please apply to the seed funding round. Spend the money to get travel grants, spend the money to really put together a team and really test to see if this is viable. We even fund small pilots. And if the answer to that is yes, then we would sort of expect that to grow into an application in a future round. This last question is a little tricky, so to answer it would be, this would be a hard, a hard sell to get funding. But if you can demonstrate that the victims of trafficking or the survivors of trafficking in the U.S., whatever the program is, would benefit people in lower middle income countries, then it would be considered. But again, that's a pretty high bar if you're working with people who are in the U.S.

Jeni Sorensen:

And I would say we might, you know, if there are survivor led organizations on this call or, you know, of survivors who are interested in participating in the research process, we would encourage you to reach out to us directly and we can, you know, part of our job is also matchmaking. We've had organizations reaching out to us looking for researchers and vice versa. And we are very happy to include survivors in that process to make sure that all of our research is grounded in the experience of survivors. So we would encourage you to reach out to us if that's your situation. And also just separately, there's I think you might have seen an announcement by I think it was the Freedom Fund last week that they have pots of funding available and they got a generous donation from, the what's the name of the woman from Amazon? Mackenzie, we're going to forget her last name, but there's funding available for survivor based organizations and, to, I think, of \$15000 and kind of unrestricted funding. So

I'm happy to look that up really quickly and share that out too if that's of interest. It wouldn't be, you know, randomized research, but it would be something else that would be an option, a resource for you.

Ellen Bates-Jefferys:

So anyone else has a question? You're welcome to raise your hand or just unmute yourself and turn on video and ask the question. So there is not a strict regional proposal at all. And there's definitely not a minimum of countries that have to be included. Again, the real eligibility requirement there is just that the beneficiaries are people in low and middle income countries or who are citizens of low and middle income countries. So either the origin has to be a lower middle income country or sort of the area of contact has to be a more lower middle income country.

Jeni Sorensen:

Ok. It seems like the questions are slowing down. If you have any last, this is your last opportunity. What are the winning factors for their research proposals? I think, so we put our selection criteria in the presentation and it's in the guidelines, so we're happy to send that around again. In general, it's contribution to the field. You know, there's lots of gaps, so there's lots of opportunities to contribute. We have identified some of the ones that we think are the kind of most, most available, lowest hanging fruit. What are the, what are the gaps that we can see right now? Those are all in the learning agenda. So again, encourage you to look at that, the strength of the proposal team, the reasonableness of the cost element, also maybe not thinking of a few more. The strength of the research design, some of the things are great ideas, but in this framework within randomized evaluations, there's a need for numbers. And so the power calculation will be part of the next stage of the research. But this is something you need to be thinking about because a lot of counter-trafficking interventions are small scale. And so we do need to have kind of a large enough group of people, organizations, villages to examine.

Ellen Bates-Jefferys:

Yeah, I think this sort of thing to ask is like for the program that you're interested in studying is really identifying what exactly that impact is both related directly to trafficking and also any other benefits that you see of the program. And then really designing research to measure that exact thing you think you have impact in and then really thinking through what else needs to be measured to make sure that we're, we have it all rights, like what are the administrative things that need be measured, to like to make sure the programs doing like targeting the people we think they're targeting, having the implementing procedure, we think they're having, that all leads to impact, essentially just sort of think of it, the theory of change you have. And then like, what is this program doing? What is its value? And then really just designing research that captures everything you need to in that theory of change to assess whether or not, whether or not it has that impact and how big that impact is. So that's kind of what we're looking to see clearly in applications. Any questions about that?

Jeni Sorensen:

And another resource I didn't put on the slide, but IPA has a group called Right Fit Evidence, and so if you're trying to think through what is our theory of change and how does that link to

the program, the change that we want to see in the world? That's a great resource for you. So there's if you go on its website and look at that evidence or the Goldilocks challenge, you'll find a toolkit there. There's a book, you know, there's a lot of great resources there, and that's really we kind of expect everyone to have done that as a starting point so that the programs that you're examining are doing the thing that they said they were going to do. So then we can take the next step and look at the impact of the programs. But that is a good resource for just looking at whether you're gathering, if you're an implementing organization, whether you're gathering the data that you need to be gathering and how that can then contribute to looking at the impact of your programs. Ok, I think we're near the end, so thank you all for these really great questions.

Jeni Sorensen:

I think we've sent out, we'll send this out again to everyone who was here. We have your email addresses since you registered for the Q&A. So we'll send out the links to the presentation, to the slides. And you can also feel free to email Ellen and I. If you think of additional questions after this is over, our team email is again ipa_htri@poverty-action.org, but you'll also get an email from us so you don't have to memorize that. But please do reach out. We are here to help you come up with the best possible application that you can put in front of the selection committee, so we want to be a resource for you. We have had a lot of interest in this, so we may not respond right away, but we're really trying to keep up with emails and get back to you and set up calls if needed. But we again, we're just so excited to see so much interest in this and we look forward to reading your applications.

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