Human Trafficking Research Initiative
Partnership, Piloting, and Seed Grants – Request for Proposals

IPA's Human Trafficking Research Initiative

Due to the gravity and pervasiveness of human trafficking, it is of vital importance that practitioners, policymakers, and researchers strengthen the evidence on what programs work to reduce trafficking and protect victims. **Innovations for Poverty Action established the [Human Trafficking Research Initiative (HTRI)](#) to work with researchers and partner organizations to expand the evidence base on effective solutions to reduce modern slavery and human trafficking.** Over the next five years, IPA aims to facilitate and support meaningful, rigorous, and policy-relevant studies on trafficking to help combat this egregious global problem.

The purpose of this research fund is to build on sound theory and programmatic information for combating human trafficking. This Initiative is supported by the U.S. Department of State's Program to End Modern Slavery and academic leadership of Dr. Cecilia Hyunjung Mo and Dr. Guy Grossman. All research grants must focus on one or both forms of trafficking in persons as defined by the Trafficking Victim Protection Act:

- Sex Trafficking – when a trafficker uses force, fraud, or coercion to compel a person to engage in a commercial sex act or when a trafficker causes a child who has not attained 18 years of age to engage in a commercial sex act.

- Forced Labor – when a trafficker recruits, harbors, transports, provides, or obtains a person for labor or services by using force, fraud, or coercion.

From IPA's experience developing and carrying out more than 830 randomized evaluations, we know that strong research partnerships and high-impact studies take time and effort to build. **IPA plans to release calls for proposals for full-scale field studies in the fall of 2021 and spring of 2022.** To be able to generate a more expansive pool of high-quality research proposals, **in this funding round, we primarily seek to support early-stage activities to develop partnerships, carry out exploratory research, and demonstrate the feasibility of larger-scale studies.**

Call for Proposals for Seed Grants for Partnership Building, Pilots, and Data Analysis

IPA invites proposals from researchers and organizations that intend to design and carry out studies on how to reduce human trafficking or respond to the needs of human trafficking victims, but need some additional time and support to push the research project to the next stage. **The objective of these small grants ranging between $2,500 and $35,000 is to advance early-stage discussion between researchers and implementing organizations to the point where they have viable research project designs and plans.** We also provide small grants to work with existing data to provide new or more refined (theory building or theory testing) insights. Importantly, we are open to providing funding for a wide range of activities that may be necessary to develop or strengthen a partnership or assess the viability of a given project.

We expect to fund a total of 6 to 9 proposals in this round that, as noted, could cover a range of different activities. We hope that these early-stage grants will generate a set of meaningful partnerships, refined evidence, and promising projects that will become viable applicants for full-scale studies at a later stage. In future funding rounds, IPA will primarily target funding for full-scale studies using RCTs as their methodology for causal inference. Given the limited number of large-scale field studies on human trafficking, we will be open to other types of research designs that can make meaningful contributions to the field, including establishing unique panel data, developing and testing new measurement techniques, and utilizing administrative data to provide novel insights. The large grants are intended to support research costs and not project implementation costs, though modest additional implementation costs will be considered.

For researchers interested in partnering with an IPA office to implement research, please refer to IPA's list of country offices for support in the [guidelines](#) for a complete list of contact information.

Proposals are due by March 21, 2021. These grants are geared to rapidly generate usable data and analysis, so we expect all projects to produce **substantive progress reports by December 31, 2021** and **close by March 31, 2022**. Those interested in applying are asked to first read through our funding priorities below. If you have any questions about the application or are interested in matchmaking HTRI support to a relevant research or implementing partner, please reach out to ipa_htri@poverty-action.org.

In this round, the HTRI will consider proposals that include:

- **Small research pilots of promising interventions**: These are grants that would fund the cost of a small pilot to assess the feasibility and value of a larger research project. These grants are intended to be the first step of formal research for promising interventions and anti-trafficking activities. Programs with monitoring and evaluation data, administrative data, and/or sound theories of change that indicate promising impact would be a good fit for this grant (for example, an employer-incentive scheme that has qualitative reports of success, or a reintegration program with promising signs of reduced rates of re-trafficking). We anticipate funding between $10,000 to $35,000 per pilot.

- **Seed money for a travel grant or staff time to build on nascent research ideas**: In normal times, IPA has issued small travel grants for researchers to develop partnerships and explore the logistics of promising research ideas. While this grant can be used for travel, we recognize it may not be safe due to COVID-19. Therefore, we encourage proposals that outline how project ideas and contextual factors can be appropriately explored given COVID-19 constraints. For instance, site visits by nationally based academics are highly encouraged in lieu of international travel. IPA country offices are also able to provide support. We anticipate funding between $2,500 and $15,000 per award.

- **Small grants for data work using existing sources to examine program impact**: These are small grants that will support researchers to use a partner's administrative data or other existing data sets, conduct desk research to deepen previous research analysis, or create new analysis to help inform research project design and viability. We expect to see applications either explain how existing analysis could be improved or potentially be used to draw additional conclusions (for example, how further analysis of existing social network platforms can further isolate trafficking recruitment mechanisms). We would expect these

applications to include fairly in-depth analysis plans. Preference will be given to applicants who chart how their results can influence future research. We anticipate funding between $5,000 and $10,000 per award.

Eligibility Criteria

All researchers must meet the terms of the U.S. Department of State's Trafficking In Persons Office eligibility requirements. For more details, please review the "terms and conditions" section of the guidelines.

All projects must benefit people and communities for lower- and middle-income countries (LMICs). Please note that project activities and interventions can take place anywhere, but research beneficiaries must be from LMICs. In other words, a project that targets (as beneficiaries) trafficked West Africans in southern Spain is eligible, but a project that targets trafficked Polish workers in the UK will not. **Preference will be given to proposals working in/with Kenya, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Costa Rica, India, Guinea, and Senegal, but other LMICs are eligible**. Additionally, all intervention sites are subject to review by the US State Department.

The Human Trafficking Research Initiative will give **preference to underrepresented researchers in the field**. We encourage applications from minority researchers, such as women, junior scholars, first-generation college graduates, and citizens of lower- or middle-income countries. Local researchers and local organizations are necessary for the success of many human trafficking programs and assessments; this will be incorporated into our proposal assessment.

We strongly encourage current and upcoming IPA projects and/or affiliated researchers to apply, though we will not favor them over proposals from outside sources. For full list of eligibility criteria and terms and conditions, please see the Application Guidelines.

How to Apply:

Applicants should submit their completed application and all supporting materials using the link below **prior to March 21, 2021**:

https://innovationsforpovertyaction.formstack.com/forms/htri_partnership_piloting_and_seed_grants_rfp