



CALL FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST FOR IMPACT STUDIES

Estimating the long-term, large-scale impacts of CGIAR research on development outcomes

Email expressions of interest to: spia@cgiar.org no later than 9am CET, on Monday October 14, 2019.

For questions, contact Nancy Johnson (n.johnson@cgiar.org)

Background and context

The [Standing Panel on Impact Assessment \(SPIA\)](#) is an external, impartial panel of experts in impact assessment that advises the CGIAR system. Part of SPIA's mandate is to expand and deepen evidence of impact of [CGIAR research investments](#).¹ To that end, SPIA is inviting expressions of interest (EoIs) for studies that measure the contribution to development outcomes of CGIAR-related technological, institutional or other innovations that have been in long-term use, ideally over large geographical scales.²

SPIA hopes to commission a number of studies over the next 12 months. Regardless of start date, all studies must be completed by the end of 2023. There is no budget ceiling for individual studies, and we expect to award about \$1.6 million dollars in grants³. Proposals for studies that pool resources from different funding sources are eligible for consideration and such pooling is encouraged.

Study Scope

The studies to be funded here are considered “accountability-oriented” studies which means that they attempt to assess whether a past research investment actually contributed to the anticipated impacts. Impact assessments of this type target innovations that are (believed to be) widely diffused, and for which it is hence possible to study impacts at scale, as such providing the base to empirically test the global (or regional) public goods argument for CGIAR research.

While the call is open to innovations resulting from any type of CGIAR research investment, studies focusing on under-evaluated research areas, for example natural resource management, policies and institutions, or farming systems involving livestock, fish or non-cereal crops, are especially encouraged.⁴

Studies focusing on multiple outcomes (economic, environmental, nutrition, gender and equity) and studies with sufficient statistical power to study heterogeneity (by sex, age, wealth, land holdings, ethnicity, ...) are encouraged.

What constitutes “long term” adoption and impact will vary depending on the innovation and context under study, however the key elements that we seek to capture in these studies are:

1. that innovations have been in use long enough to be certain that what is being observed is not merely experimentation with agricultural research outputs but rather sustained adoption of them, and

¹ Specifically to provide evidence of impact on the CGIAR's system level outcomes (SLOs): reduced poverty, improved food and nutrition security for health, and improved natural resources systems and eco system services, as well as evidence of impacts on intermediate development outcomes (IDOs) including increased resilience, enhanced smallholder market access, increased income and employment, increased productivity, improved diets, improved food safety, improved human and animal health through better agricultural practices, enhanced natural capital, enhanced benefits from ecosystems goods and services, and more sustainable managed agroecosystems.

² Such innovations are distinct from those still in the pre- or early-adoption scale like those under field testing or in pilot studies and hence not validated by significant diffusion.

³ This is the budget ceiling for all long term, large scale studies, whether funded through the first call for EoIs issued in January 2019, through this call, or through any subsequent calls.

⁴ Under-evaluated means that few rigorous studies have been done relative to the size of the CGIAR investment in the research area ([Elven and Krishnan, 2018](#); SPIA, 2019).

2. that sufficient time has passed to allow for the consequences of adoption and use on development outcomes to be measurable, through both direct and indirect pathways.

While empirical validation of multiple pathways may not be possible for some study designs, theories of change should be articulated for all studies and documented where possible.

The call is open to studies that employ different types of empirical methods ([Gollin, Probst and Brower, 2018](#)). What is important is that the proposed approach is appropriate for the specific evaluation question, and that it rigorously and transparently addresses challenges associated with causal inference ([Stevenson, Macours and Gollin, 2018](#)).

This call explicitly seeks studies whose results cover or are representative of large geographical areas and/or large numbers of people.

Process for submission and selection

Some lessons from the first call for Eols issued on January 31, 2019 were:

- Few Eols were able to make a strong case for widespread adoption/uptake of the innovation(s) under study. Convincing evidence of adoption/uptake is a necessary condition for investment in an impact assessment and must be assembled before a study can be funded, not as part of the study.
- Most studies proposed quasi-experimental approaches however their proposed identification strategies were not sufficiently well described for their feasibility to be assessed.
- Some Eols referred to the availability of baseline survey data or diffusion data (e.g., from monitoring and evaluation systems) however these data were rarely fully described nor had preliminary analysis been conducted to confirm their utility in the proposed studies.

To avoid these problems in the current round, we will have a two-track proposal development process. The Eol review process will be the same for all submissions. Those that are identified as promising will be assigned to one of two tracks. For those Eols assigned to Track 1, study teams will be invited to prepare full proposals. For those Eols selected for Track 2, study teams will be offered short-term support in the form of proposal development grants to conduct preliminary data compilation and/or analysis to determine whether an impact study is appropriate and feasible. Support to teams under Track 2 can be financial and/or technical. While SPIA ultimately decide which Eols are invited to proceed and on which track, study teams are welcome to indicate in their Eol whether they would like to be considered for Track 2.

To assist proponents in developing strong Eols and proposals, we will post successful proposals and elements of strong Eols and proposals [here](#). This process will take time so if the folder is empty when you look, please check back later.

Elements to be considered

Eols should be max 4 pages⁵ and include

- Title and short (100 word) description
- Innovation to be assessed, links to CGIAR research and the existing evidence base regarding its potential impacts (including lab, pilot, or efficacy trial evidence)
- Documentation on existing diffusion of the innovation, including reference to available data or evidence
- Outcomes to be measured, for which populations and/or geographical areas using which proposed indicators
- Proposed methods– including approach to causal inference
- Proposed data, including potential of combining different data sources (surveys, administrative records, remote sensing, qualitative interviews, machine-readable text, ...). In this section, proponents can indicate whether they wish to be considered for Track 2 in order to obtain data and conduct preliminary analysis

⁵ Where the proposal builds on previous analyses, these can be added as references

- Study team
- Budget, from SPIA and from other sources (expected and/or secured)

Selection procedure

SPIA will review each EoI and invite promising studies to move ahead under Track 1 (prepare full proposal) or Track 2 (conduct initial analysis to support case for full proposal). Invitation to proceed along either Track is no guarantee of funding. Where possible, under either track, SPIA will offer suggestions for strengthening proposals to ensure we receive the strongest possible set of full proposals.

EoIs will be scored according to the following set of criteria:

- Technical merit (20%)
- Feasibility (including availability of existing datasets and previous analyses) (20%)
- Innovativeness of proposed impact assessment questions (types of research, outcomes assessed) and research design (including scale) (20%)
- Relevance and quality of the research team, capacity and reputation of proposed grantee (20%)
- Cost effectiveness (10%)
- Other outstanding aspects of the proposed study (10%)

Applicants can expect responses regarding the outcome of the EoI review process by Friday November 8.

The tentative proposal submission process would be:

- Track 1 – proposals due December 16 and applicants would be notified by the end of January 2020.
- Track 2 – study teams seeking financial support from SPIA should submit a request by Nov 31. Work conducted under these grants should be completed within 6 months.