

Call for expressions of interest: Women's Economic Empowerment in a Low-Carbon COVID-19 Recovery

Date issued: March 16, 2021

Deadline for submissions of expressions of interest: April 13, 2021 (17:00 Eastern Daylight Time)

Overview

Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC) is pleased to announce a new funding opportunity, implemented through its [Sustainable Inclusive Economies](#) division. This call for expressions of interest aims to advance the generation and use of context-specific evidence that can contribute to women's economic empowerment in the Global South in the context of responses in lower-income countries to the COVID-19 pandemic and the growing climate crisis.

This call will support solutions-oriented, local research and evidence that help address the specific and systemic barriers women face during and following the COVID-19 pandemic, and in accessing opportunities that arise in new low-carbon economic activities. The call will address new barriers that have arisen during the pandemic, the continued disproportionate burden of unpaid care work and gendered social norms, and ways to support and scale women-led initiatives that promote sustainable recovery.

The call will support projects with a clear plan for how the results of the research are to be used by policymakers, private-sector actors, and women-led and other organizations who are well positioned to advance women's economic empowerment at scale. Proposed projects must take place, and be carried out, by organizations based in low- and lower-middle-income countries in Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, South and Southeast Asia, and the Middle East.

The call will support collaborative projects involving research organizations, policymakers, private-sector actors, non-profit and grassroots organizations, and/or other key actors, including in different countries.

This call for Expressions of Interest (EOI) invites qualifying organizations to submit a short proposal that follows the guidance on this site.

Duration of grants: up to 30 months

Budget: CA\$750,000 – CA\$1,000,000 per project. Grants will be awarded subject to availability of funds.

Contact email: sie@idrc.ca

Language: Applications can be submitted in either **English or French**

The Link: <https://www.idrc.ca/en/call-expressions-interest-womens-economic-empowerment-low-carbon-covid-19-recovery#eligibility>

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ABOUT IDRC

IDRC is a Canadian Crown corporation that funds research in developing countries to create lasting change on a large scale. IDRC supports local organizations in the Global South to generate the evidence that is relevant in their context. We provide financial resources, advice, and training to researchers in developing countries to help them find solutions to local problems, and encourage knowledge sharing with policy-makers, researchers, and communities.

BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

The COVID-19 pandemic is reversing hard-fought progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. The immediate health impacts of the pandemic have been devastating, as are the impacts on economy, livelihoods, poverty, and inequalities. In lower-income countries, governments' ability to implement supportive measures and economic stimulus has been limited.

As countries and people are recovering from the pandemic, the impacts and costs of climate change are increasing. At the same time, lower-income countries are committed, and need to invest in building climate resilience and low-carbon economies. This is leading to changes in economic opportunities, with the potential for new “green” jobs, but also to losses in opportunities in other sectors. The pandemic may have reduced the ability to invest in these future opportunities.

Women are disproportionately affected by these major changes, due to deep-rooted inequalities. The COVID-19 pandemic has amplified gender inequalities: women tend to be over-represented in the sectors most affected by COVID-19 lockdowns, they are bearing an even more unequal burden for care work, and gendered norms that disadvantage women may be strengthened during the pandemic. Women tend to be disproportionately affected by the impact of climate change and may not gain equally in new economic opportunities emerging in a green economy.

The recovery from the pandemic also may contain opportunities to address persistent gender inequalities. Women-led initiatives and organizations have

been central in addressing the impact of the pandemic and have the potential to play a key role in “building back better”.

This IDRC call aims to help ensure more inclusive and sustainable pandemic responses and recovery in low- and lower-middle-income countries.^[1] It will support the generation of data and evidence — using an appropriate combination of methodologies — to promote effective public, private sector, and non-governmental action that promotes gender equality for economic opportunities in COVID-19 responses and transitions to a low-carbon economy. The call will support partnerships and ways for researchers and stakeholders to work together to ensure that robust evidence leads to better practices, policies, and outcomes. It will also support research organizations working together to promote peer learning and enhance the likelihood of research uptake. Sections 4 and 5 of this document provide details.

OBJECTIVES OF THE CALL AND PRIORITY RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The objective of the call is to contribute to building more inclusive and sustainable pandemic responses and recovery in low- and lower-middle-income countries. It will support solutions-oriented research (described in section 4) that addresses the following research questions:

- In COVID-19 responses and recovery, what policy responses, interventions, business and investment initiatives, and women-led actions and organizations can effectively support women’s economic empowerment through the provision of inclusive and decent employment opportunities, while addressing the growing climate crisis and creating a pathway for a climate-resilient economy? ^[2] Which interventions and solutions have the potential for scale?
- What policies, business and investment initiatives, and support for small- and medium-sized enterprises can promote women’s opportunities in sectors that have the highest potential to accelerate the transition towards a low-carbon economy, such as energy, transport, infrastructure, tourism, agriculture, and natural resource conservation?
- What policies, business, and innovative finance initiatives can promote cross-border trade and value chains that promote quality opportunities for women while contributing to decarbonization and climate resilience?

- How can transition to sustainable production and green jobs accelerate the COVID-19 recovery and create economic opportunities for women? What public policies and incentives can support these?

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

- This call is open to institutions with legal corporate registration, and with demonstrable capacity to manage and undertake the proposed work, including:
 - the ability to implement, monitor, and report on research grants from international funders
 - the ability and procedures to assess and manage project, organizational, and funding-related risks
- Proposed projects must be carried out in low- and lower-middle- income countries and areas in Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, South and South-East Asia, and the Middle East.
- In Asia, institutions in advanced economies and large emerging economies, including China and India, are NOT eligible as leads in the current call.
- The call will fund projects that have partnerships between research organizations, policy-makers, the private sector, civil society organizations, and/or other key implementing partners, that are well-positioned to achieve intended development outcomes.
- Projects can be single- or multi-country focused.
- Institutions and consortia comprising more than one institution can apply. One partner must be designated as the lead institution, and the lead institution should submit the application to IDRC on behalf of the consortium.
- The lead institution must be based in the country of research focus, or in one of the focus countries in the case of multi-country projects.
- North-South partnerships are eligible, but the Southern partner should be the lead.
- Applicants can be involved in multiple proposals but can be lead in only one.

- UN, donor, and multi-lateral organizations are NOT eligible to apply.
- Applications from individual persons will NOT be accepted.

WHAT TYPE OF PROJECTS WILL THE CALL SUPPORT?

The call will fund projects with the following characteristics:

- Clear pathway for impact — We will support projects with demonstrable relevance to the country(ies) of focus, with clear pathways of impact. Selected candidates will be asked to submit full proposals that demonstrate clear pathways through which the proposed work will inform policies and actions. The Expressions of Interest (Eoi) should summarize plans for this.
- Solutions-orientation — We will support research that identifies and promotes solutions that can be scaled. The call will NOT fund descriptive studies — i.e., studies that only describe problems, without analyzing, assessing, or testing solutions.
- Multi-stakeholder — We will support projects that actively engage multi-stakeholder teams to identify effective and feasible solutions, policy options, and interventions. This includes proactive engagement of researchers and knowledge users (policy-makers, private sector, civil society, and/or implementing agencies) throughout the research process to set strategic directions and priorities, and frame and conduct research into practical solutions that can be taken up. Selected candidates will be asked to submit full proposals that detail these partnerships. The Eoi should summarize plans for this.
- Ethical standards — We will support projects with demonstrable capacity to apply appropriate research ethics procedures that include mitigation strategies for addressing the risk of potentially negative consequences for affected or targeted populations.
- Structural gender inequalities — We will support projects that identify ways to address structural barriers to gender equality, such as social norms, and institutional and policy barriers affecting women's economic and employment choices and opportunities, including women's disproportionate burden for unpaid care.
- Intersectional approach to gender — We will support projects that adopt an intersectional approach to gender, avoid treating women as a homogenous group, and identify what interventions will work for different

categories of women (for example, young women transitioning out of school, rural women, and women working in the informal economy).

- We will support projects that respond to the twin challenges of gender inequality and climate crisis — i.e., effective public, private, and civil society action, in specific contexts, that promotes gender equality for economic opportunities in COVID-19 responses and transitions to a low-carbon economy.

BUDGET AND DURATION OF RESEARCH GRANTS

The SIE division will award grants to institutions on a **competitive basis**.

We expect to fund **10 to 13 institutions** with grants between **CA\$750,000** and **CA\$1,000,000** per research project.

Projects should be scheduled to be completed within a timeframe not exceeding **30 months**, including all research activities and final reporting.

APPLYING FOR THE CALL: REQUIRED INFORMATION FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

Interested organizations that meet the eligibility criteria listed in section 4, above, and with the ability to implement projects as described in section 5 are invited to apply to this call.

The process for applying for this follows multiple stages. At this stage, organizations are invited to **submit an Expression of Interest (Eoi), with short proposals, through the IDRC online application portal**. We recommend that you use one of the following browsers: Safari, Chrome, or Microsoft Edge. We do not recommend that you use Internet Explorer.

Applications can be submitted in either **English or French**.

Expression of interests should include the following information:

A. Key Project Information

Project title, country(ies) where the project will take place, project duration, estimated total budget requested.

B. Applicant Information

Project lead and institution (including information related to ability to legally conduct research in research countries indicated, provide audited financial statements, etc.).

Partner/collaborating institutions and key project team members and their main role, research discipline and gender.

C. Project Proposal (total maximum 1,500 words)

This section should describe concisely:

- the background for the proposed project, and what problem it intends to address (max. 200 words)
- project purpose, objectives, preliminary research questions, and how these are relevant to affect intended change (300 words)
- project design and proposed research methodology, including approach to gender (350 words)
- anticipated results, specifying how the research will help achieve them (350 words)
- research team capacities and how the proposed team is positioned to implement this project successfully, including multi-disciplinarity, as appropriate (150 words)
- partnerships with research users (150 words)

D. Indicative Budget

Cost breakdown by budget category, within the maximum stipulated in this call. An indicative budget must be **uploaded** using the template provided on the **online application platform**. In a later phase of project development, successful applicants will be required to complete a more detailed budget. The following must be considered when presenting the indicative budget in this EoI:

The amount of an IDRC grant is based on the forecasted costs of the project at the exchange rate between the working currency of the project and the Canadian dollar **at the time the full project is approved. IDRC's liability is limited to the amount quoted in Canadian dollars.**

E. CVs of Principal Researcher(s)

Applications must include the CV of the principal investigator from the lead institution, and CVs of the lead partners of each collaborating institution.

Each CV must not exceed **2 pages**.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Submitted Eols will be evaluated according to the following criteria and weighting:

Assessment Criteria	Weighting (%)
Relevance <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clear demonstration that the proposed work has the potential to inform policies and practices to foster inclusive and sustainable COVID-19 response and recovery• Potential to generate concrete and scalable solutions	35%
Quality and rigour of the research <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clarity of the research questions and objectives• Appropriateness of the proposed methodology, including:• adaptability to rapidly changing contexts• inter- and multi-disciplinarity• approach to gender that addresses structural barriers and intersectionality	35%

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • strategies for engagement with research users 	
Strength of proposed team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strength of team composition, including integration of multi-stakeholder and multi-disciplinary teams matching the needs of the proposed activities • Research track record on the proposed topic (e.g., peer-reviewed publications) • Capacity and expertise on gender 	30%
Total:	100%

Project selection by IDRC will take into account the need for a balanced portfolio of projects engaging a variety of researchers, themes, and regions.

TIMELINE

a. Deadline for applications of expressions of interest

Applications including supportive documents for this EoI have to be submitted online via the [IDRC application portal](#) by **April 13, 2021 at 17:00 PM Eastern Daylight Time**.

Eols that are incomplete or received after the submission deadline date and time will not be considered.

To avoid risks associated to connectivity, we strongly recommend that you do not wait until the last minute to submit your application.

Acknowledgements of receipt will be sent to applicants whose applications were received before the deadline.

b. Selection of Expressions of Interest

The Eols will be reviewed by IDRC on the criteria for eligibility and evaluation described in this call, as well as for programmatic considerations. The selection will take into account the need for a

balanced portfolio of projects that engages a variety of research disciplines, covers the research questions of the call, and reflects a regional balance.

IDRC aims to provide notification of shortlisted/retained proposals within four weeks of closing of the call. We aim to correspond with shortlisted applicants by **May 12, 2021** that they have been pre-selected to develop a full research proposal.

ADDITIONAL IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

Country procedure

In some cases, IDRC has scientific and technical cooperation agreements with the governments of the countries where we support projects. Where such agreements exist, IDRC may require additional or alternative approval processes to be followed in order to comply with such agreements. Otherwise, grantees must follow the prevailing approval procedure as required by the government authority. This is often administered by a coordinating or nodal agency of the government and varies by jurisdiction.

An IDRC grant administration representative will advise the successful applicants if any country procedures need to be followed. A grant agreement will only be issued if country clearance(s) is/are obtained beforehand. In cases where the recipient will manage sub-grantees, the country requirements that apply to sub-grantees are also documented in the grant agreement. It becomes the responsibility of the IDRC grantee to ensure that sub-grantees meet these requirements.

Research ethics

IDRC requires that research involving human subjects be carried out in accordance with the highest ethical standards possible (see [IDRC Corporate Principles on Research Ethics](#)). When relevant, applicants may need to obtain approval from an official institutional or national research ethics body prior to commencing research. The process for this will need to be specified at the full proposal stage. Where obtaining national ethics approval is not possible (e.g., contexts where there is no official institutional or national research ethics body), the application will need to propose mechanisms for setting up an ethics review committee for the project. Successful organizations will be expected to submit the ethics and security protocols to IDRC.

Permission for use, disclosure and retention of information

By way of submitting an application under this call, the applicant consents to the disclosure of the documents submitted by the applicant to the reviewers within IDRC who are involved in the proposal assessment and selection process. The applicant further consents to the disclosure of their name, the name of the lead researcher, and title of the proposed project in any announcement of selected projects.

All personal information collected by IDRC about grant applicants is used to review applications, to administer and monitor grants, and to promote and support international development research in Canada and in the regions where IDRC operates. Consistent with these purposes, applicants should expect that information collected by IDRC may come to be used and disclosed in IDRC-supported activities.

As a Canadian Crown corporation, IDRC is subject to Canada's *Access to Information Act*. Consequently, any submissions in response to this call for research proposals will be held by IDRC in a manner consistent with the *Access to Information Act*, including IDRC's obligations to disclose documents requested by members of the public.

Open data

Applicants must be committed to publishing research findings in the public domain in accordance with IDRC's [Open Access Policy](#). This policy is consistent with the broader movement toward open access, supported by research funders and governments, including the Government of Canada, as a way to increase transparency, accountability, and efficiency.

In accordance with IDRC's Open Access Policy and [IDRC Open Data Statement of Principles](#), researchers are encouraged to openly share research data after publication. In the full proposal stage, successful proponents will be asked to complete a data-management plan.

Conflict of interest

In submitting an application, the applicant must avoid any real, apparent, or potential conflict of interest and must declare to IDRC any such conflict of interest. If any real, apparent, or potential conflict of interest cannot be resolved to IDRC's satisfaction, IDRC will have the right to immediately reject the applicant from consideration.

ANNEX 1: TIMELINE OF THE SELECTION PROCESS: EOI, FULL PROPOSAL, GRANT NEGOTIATION

Stage 1: Competitive call for expressions of interests (Eoi) (as described in the main document above)

Timeline: Eoi deadline **April 13, 2021**, shortlisted institutions notified **May 12, 2021**.

Applicants are required to submit a completed application package using the [IDRC online application portal](#) by Monday, **April 13, 2021 at 17:00 Eastern Daylight Time**. Only those proponents who have submitted completed application packages on time and complied with all eligibility criteria will be reviewed according to the evaluation criteria.

Applicants will receive a confirmation of completed submissions using the portal. Institutions that are shortlisted to prepare a full proposal will be informed by **May 12, 2021**.

We expect to shortlist 20–25 institutions to develop a full proposal.

Stage 2: Short-listed institutions submit full proposals

Timeline (expected): Submission of full proposals, including detailed budgets, **June 24, 2021**, notification of decision **July 31, 2021**.

Short-listed institutions will be invited to develop full research proposals. This will entail further elaboration of all aspects described in the Eoi, including:

- background
- project objectives and research questions
- research methodology
- ways in which the research intends to make an impact
- team composition and partnerships
- gender, diversity, and inclusion consideration in team composition and research design
- monitoring

- research ethics
- detailed budget for the proposed research and research activities.

Shortlisted institutions will be required to submit documentation such as corporate documents, banking information, etc. Details will be confirmed at that stage.

Stage 3: Final selection and grant negotiation

Timeline (expected): Granting finalized **September 30, 2021**.

A team of IDRC internal and external peer reviewers will review the submitted full proposals and detailed budgets.

During this process, applicants will engage with IDRC program officers and may be asked to provide further clarifications to submitted proposals and budgets. If that is the case, necessary revisions will need to be returned to IDRC in a timely manner.

During this stage, IDRC will also carry out institutional and risk assessments of shortlisted institutions. Applicants will engage with IDRC grant administration officers and may be invited to submit additional documentation. After an institutional assessment of an applicant's organization is performed, IDRC reserves the right to require the applicant's organization to partner with another institution as a condition of receiving a grant.

When all administrative considerations are deemed satisfactory, IDRC will engage in internal project approval in accordance with its policies and procedures, followed by grant negotiation.

Selected proponents will be required to sign IDRC's Standard Grant Agreement, as amended by IDRC from time to time. The grant agreement will provide a schedule for submitting interim and final technical and financial reports. For more information, please consult IDRC's guidance on [applying for managing an IDRC research grant](#).

IDRC reserves the right to cancel the granting process at any time without prior notice and/or reserves the right to grant — at its discretion — all or none of the awards under this process.

Please note that even if IDRC engages with an applicant in the first EoI or second full proposal stages, **there is no guarantee that the applicant's**

project will be funded, if IDRC and the applicant do not come to an agreement on the full budget and proposal.

It is anticipated that 10–13 proposals will be selected for funding.

[1] As defined and classified by the World Bank, see <https://datahelpdesk.worldbank.org/knowledgebase/articles/906519-world-bank-country-and-lending-groups>

[2] As in the GrOW program, we apply the following working definition of women’s economic empowerment: “Economic empowerment is the capacity of women and men to participate in, contribute to, and benefit from growth processes in ways that recognise the value of their contributions, respect their dignity, and make it possible to negotiate a fairer distribution of the benefits of growth.” Please consult the [GrOW Policy Brief](#) on the need for using clear definitions.