Request for Research

January 2023

HAEC | Humanitarian Assistance Evidence Cycle
ABOUT HAEC

The Humanitarian Assistance Evidence Cycle (HAEC) Associate Award works to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of emergency food security activities funded by the USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) by increasing the use of cost-effective and timely impact evaluations in humanitarian contexts. Impact evaluations provide robust evidence to inform technical approaches to improve the impact of humanitarian interventions.

HAEC is a three-year activity (2021-2024) funded by USAID/BHA and issued through the IDEAL Leader with Associate Awards Activity, implemented by TANGO International, in collaboration with Save the Children, 3ie, and Causal Design.

PHOTO CREDITS

Victoria Zegler

CONTACT:

Kimberly Cook
Director, Collaborating, Learning and Adapting
c/o Save the Children, Department of Hunger and Livelihoods
899 North Capitol St NE, Suite 900
Washington, DC 20002
kcok@savechildren.org
Mobile: 1-202-274-1548

DISCLAIMER

This Request for Research is made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents are the responsibility of the Humanitarian Assistance Evidence Cycle (HAEC) Associate Award and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**Acronyms** ........................................................................................................................................... iv
**Letter from Activity Director** .................................................................................................................. iv
**Introduction** ........................................................................................................................................... 1  
  HAEC Overview ................................................................................................................................. 1  
  Problem Statement .............................................................................................................................. 1  
  Overview of Application Process ........................................................................................................ 2  
**Eligibility Check List** ............................................................................................................................. 2  
  Application Steps ................................................................................................................................ 2  
**Award Guidance** .................................................................................................................................... 3  
  Eligibility for Funding .......................................................................................................................... 3  
  Number and size of awards .................................................................................................................... 3  
  Opportunity for HAEC-matched Research Partnerships ....................................................................... 4  
  Award timelines ...................................................................................................................................... 4  
    Timeline Considerations ..................................................................................................................... 4  
  Expected Outputs and Reporting ......................................................................................................... 4  
  HAEC Branding ...................................................................................................................................... 6  
  Learning focused products ...................................................................................................................... 6  
  Payments and Administration of Grant .................................................................................................. 6  
  Budget Guidance, Payments, and Funding Availability ........................................................................ 6  
  Support from HAEC ............................................................................................................................. 6  
**HAEC Funding principles** ....................................................................................................................... 7  
  Evidence Gap Map (EGM) Focus Areas ............................................................................................... 7  
  Research Team Structure .................................................................................................................... 7  
  Operational Research Focus ............................................................................................................... 8  
  Leveraging Existing Data ..................................................................................................................... 8  
**Overview of Application Process** ........................................................................................................ 9  
  Phase 1: Expression of Interest ........................................................................................................... 9  
  Phase 2: Research Design Co-creation .................................................................................................. 9  
  Phase 3: Invitation to Apply .................................................................................................................. 10  
  Institutional Review Board (IRB) Application ....................................................................................... 10  
  Applicant Scoring Criteria .................................................................................................................... 11  
**USAID Regulations** .............................................................................................................................. 13  
  Intellectual Property .............................................................................................................................. 13  
  Informed Consent ............................................................................................................................... 13
## ACRONYMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BHA</td>
<td>Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CITI</td>
<td>Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EAG</td>
<td>Emergency Application Guidelines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EGM</td>
<td>Evidence Gap Map</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERC</td>
<td>Ethics Review Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FCS</td>
<td>Food Consumption Score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HAEC</td>
<td>Humanitarian Assistance Evidence Cycle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HHS</td>
<td>Household Hunger Score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDEAL</td>
<td>Implementer-Led Design, Evidence, Analysis and Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IP</td>
<td>Implementing Partner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRB</td>
<td>Institutional Review Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rCSI</td>
<td>Reduced Coping Strategies Index</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RCT</td>
<td>Randomized Control Trail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RfR</td>
<td>Request for Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USD</td>
<td>United States Dollar</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dear prospective research applicants,

The Humanitarian Assistance Evidence Cycle (HAEC) is excited to release a Request for Research (RfR). The RfR is intended to accomplish two specific objectives:

- Generate rigorous impact evaluation evidence within food security humanitarian contexts with a focus on under-researched themes and/or contexts; and
- Demonstrate to the broader humanitarian community how impact evaluations can provide value to implementers, can be cost effective, and completed in a timely manner.

Implementers of emergency food security activities will have the opportunity to generate robust impact evaluation evidence around under-studied contexts and themes. Research funded through HAEC is intended to address operational and practical program-oriented research questions. The results from funded impact evaluations will provide direct value add to the implementer, expand the evidence base and contribute to the improved design, implementation, and overall effectiveness of emergency programming by USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) implementing partners.

To be eligible for HAEC funding, organizations must be a current USAID/BHA Implementing Partner (IP) of an emergency food security activity or must be applying for emergency food security activity funding in parallel through the BHA Emergency Application Guidelines (EAGs). At the time of this RfR, HAEC can only commit to undertaking impact evaluations which can be completed in 15 months. Applications for HAEC funding will be considered on a rolling basis up until May 31st, 2023 or funds are exhausted. Early submissions are advantageous as the call will be closed once funds have been exhausted.

This RfR application process is designed to require minimal resources and is broken out over three phases.

- Phase 1: Expression of interest
- Phase 2: Research Design Co-creation
- Phase 3: Invitation to Apply (which will be completed jointly with HAEC)

To learn more about the importance of conducting impact evaluations in humanitarian settings, you can read our recently published blog *The Untapped Potential of Impact Evaluations in Humanitarian Contexts* here. We look forward to receiving your applications and to working with you.

Sincerely,

Lloyd Owen Banwart

HAEC Activity Director
INTRODUCTION

HAEC Overview

The Humanitarian Assistance Evidence Cycle (HAEC) Associate Award works to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of emergency food security activities funded by the USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) by increasing the use of cost-effective and timely impact evaluations in humanitarian contexts. HAEC is a three-year activity (2021-2024) funded by USAID/BHA and issued through the Implementer-Led Design, Evidence, Analysis and Learning (IDEAL) Activity, implemented by TANGO International, Save the Children, 3ie, and Causal Design.

Problem Statement

Around the world, conflict, crisis, and disasters threaten the lives, rights, and security of millions. In 2022, OCHA estimated that 274 million people were in need of humanitarian assistance and protection, an increase of 39 million compared to the previous year. Demand is only expected to rise as climate change exacerbates the frequency and severity of extreme weather events and instances of violent conflict remain high. By 2030, 46% of the world’s poor are expected to live in fragile or conflict-affected areas. Every year, international donors spend approximately USD 30 billion on humanitarian assistance and emergencies. OCHA estimated that it would require $41 billion to reach only 67% of those in need in 2022. Every dollar counts. However, there is a notable absence of rigorous, high-quality evidence to inform this funding. A study commissioned by USAID in 2012 found that only 3% of the evaluations were impact evaluations.

Impact evaluations are a key tool to better understand program effectiveness, in terms of outcomes met and cost-effectiveness. Impact evaluations rely on rigorous methodologies that aim to establish which outcomes are causally attributed to interventions. The findings from impact evaluations allow staff to make data-driven programming decisions, provide evidence for replication and scaling, and influence broader policy. Over the past two decades, they have been applied widely to improve program effectiveness, test innovative interventions, and guide program replication and adaptations. However, while impact evaluations have become an established tool in development, this tool has not yet extended significantly to the humanitarian sector.

Despite the learning potential, significant skepticism remains around using impact evaluations in humanitarian contexts. Through a series of consultations, HAEC identified poor incentives, implementer bandwidth constraints, ethical concerns, short programming timelines, misaligned research partnerships, and lack of funding to be some of the core constraints - both real and perceived - limiting the use of impact evaluations in this context. While many of these constraints are not unique to humanitarian settings, they are certainly amplified in these contexts.

Despite the challenges of operating in humanitarian contexts, impact evaluations, if designed to successfully account for these differences, are feasible and can produce incredibly valuable, high-quality evidence and substantially inform sector knowledge and learning. HAEC wants to help you achieve this.
Overview of Application Process

ELIGIBILITY CHECK LIST
If you answer yes to all of these questions, you are eligible for funding!

☐ Are you a BHA funded Emergency award or applying for a BHA emergency funding via the EAGs?
☐ Does - or will - your activity contain a Food Security component?
☐ Is your activity in early implementation or not yet started?
☐ Will a significant component of the activity plan be completed before April of 2024?

Application Steps

1. IP completes an Expression of Interest (Phase 1)
   - IP Requirements: complete brief Expression of Interest form

2. HAEC and IP identify a research partner (Phase 2)
   - IP Requirements: One to two 45-minute meetings

3. IP and Research Partner co-create research design (Phase 2)
   - IP Requirements: Six 45-60-minute meetings

4. IP and research partner are invited to submit a full application for IE funding (Phase 3)
   - IP Requirements: Outputs from co-creation meetings are input into a single application form. If IPs are invited to this step, research funding is very likely.

5. Research partner and IP complete a partnership agreement (Post approval of research)
   - IP Requirements: Signatory by IP Activity and research partner

6. HAEC contracts with research partner for impact evaluation (Post approval of research)
   - IP Requirements: None, this is between HAEC and the research partner

7. Impact Evaluation is executed in partnership with between the IP and Research partner
   - IP Requirements: Routine and consistent partnership with researcher, monthly check-ins with HAEC
AWARD GUIDANCE

Eligibility for Funding

To be eligible for HAEC funding, organizations must be a current USAID/BHA Implementing Partner (IP) of an emergency food security activity or must be applying for emergency food security activity funding in parallel through the BHA Emergency Application Guidelines.

Activities that have not yet begun implementation within their award period, so that a research design can be embedded, are likely the best candidates for HAEC funding. However, HAEC will also fund research of existing activities provided the research design and implementation allow for an impact evaluation in HAEC’s funding window. This can be discussed together with HAEC during the research design co-creation phase.

At the time of this RfR, HAEC can only commit to undertaking IEs of awards that are 15 months or shorter in duration.

Number and size of awards

The funding mechanism for HAEC Impact Evaluations will be a fixed price contract between HAEC and the research entity (although if implementing partners demonstrate sufficient in-house capacity, HAEC will consider the IP taking the research partner and implementing partner roles). There are three roles in the HAEC funding agreement.

1. HAEC - the funder and reviewer of all research related products;
2. Principle Investigator/Researcher - the entity leading the research design, data collection, and analysis for the impact evaluation (i.e., the grantee); and
3. Implementing Partner - the organization implementing the BHA funded activity.

In Phase 1, IPs will apply for research with HAEC. In Phase 2, selected IPs will work with HAEC to jointly identify a research partner. The IP will then work with that research partner to submit a full application for funding. If the application is approved, HAEC and the research partner will enter into a fixed price contract for completion of the research. The IP and research partner will enter into a partnership agreement for the research.

HAEC has a total impact evaluation budget of $1.25 million. HAEC will not fund a research study more than $225,000 USD and expects most HAEC funded impact evaluations to be between $125,000 and $225,000. Over the life of the award, HAEC expects to fund up to seven impact evaluations.

HAEC strongly encourages RfR applicants to demonstrate a cost share commitment. Likely forms of cost share from IPs could include staff time (e.g., enumerators or team members to liaise with researchers), vehicle use for data collection, or direct research funding from activities themselves.
Opportunity for HAEC-matched Research Partnerships

Applicants that have the required research expertise in-house or have established research partners are encouraged to utilize these. If this is not the case, HAEC has a pool of vetted and implementer-focused research partners to match applicants with, including both research firms and individual consultants with deep expertise conducting impact evaluations in dynamic and vulnerable contexts. HAEC will work to accommodate partnership preferences indicated on the Expression of Interest when establishing partnerships but cannot guarantee meeting all applicants’ criteria.

To ensure successful partnerships, HAEC will provide resources and regular advisory to grantees on effective partnership strategies such as communication and navigating challenges that arise over the course of the evaluation. However, HAEC prefers to leave the structuring of roles and responsibilities within the partnership up to the implementing partner and research partner to ensure these are allocated according to partner preferences and constraints. Additionally, it will be between the implementing partner and research partner to co-develop the proposed research budget and decide how to allocate resources between them.

Award timelines

Full applications for HAEC funding will be considered on a rolling basis up until May 31, 2023 or funds are exhausted. Early submissions are advantageous as the call will be closed once funds have been exhausted. Additionally, there is an anticipated 4-5 week process between Expression of Interest submissions and invitation to submit applications. Thus, it is recommended to apply as early as possible. All final, approved deliverables are to be submitted to HAEC by June 30th, 2024.

Timeline Considerations

- A best-case scenario is that research is embedded in the activity design at the start of the activity. Therefore, activity implementation would start between February 2023 and July 2023. An alternative viable scenario would be the Theory of Change suggests there will be observable changes in outcomes between the start of research (first half of 2023) and end of research (no later than April of 2024).
- HAEC recommends that all data collection for the study be completed before April 30th, 2024 in order to submit final deliverables in time.

Expected Outputs and Reporting

Over the course of the grant timeline, the following outputs and reporting are expected from each research team (i.e., implementing partner and research partner) for submission to HAEC for review and approval (in order of expected completion):

1. **Design Document (output submitted by researcher).** The researcher will complete this document during the funding application process (i.e., final version of the Phase 3 RfR Application) and in partnership with HAEC. It will outline the impact evaluation methodology, sampling approach, outcomes to be measured, key technical risks and mitigation strategies, as well as the plan for how the team will manage ethical considerations and risks in the humanitarian context.
2. **Research Protocol (output submitted by research partner).** The research protocol will be a living document, but the first version must be approved by HAEC prior to any data collection activities. The research protocol must contain the following components.
   a. **Pre-analysis plan.** The pre-analysis plan will clearly outline the specific research questions, outcomes that will be measured, as well as a link between these indicators to the data sources (primary and/or secondary). The research protocol must include the analytical specification for estimating treatment effects including the syntax for implementing via statistical software of choice. Finally, the analysis plan must include the approach for the cost effectiveness analysis (see below).
   b. **Data collection plan.** This outlines how data will be collected and obtained (whether primary or secondary). If it is primary data collection, details on who will be doing the data collection, when data collection will occur, and a data quality assurance plan should be included. If secondary data collection, the research team should outline the process for compiling data and ensuring it is of high quality.
   c. **Plan for obtaining ethical approvals.** If local IRB approvals or research permits are required in the country where the study is taking place, the research team must include their plan for obtaining these approvals.
   d. **Survey instruments.** If primary data is being collected, then survey instruments must be included as an attachment in the research protocol.

3. **Monthly 1-page (or less) update reports (reporting submitted by research partner).** The monthly report is non-formal communication to HAEC on the progress of the research and should highlight challenges the research is navigating as well as how the challenges have been addressed. This is also a space to share early lessons’ learned or learnings. HAEC will provide the questions to be addressed in this update.

4. **Quarterly check-in call (researcher and implementing partner involved in call).** Every 90 days, HAEC will have a 90-minute call with all research teams, i.e., the implementing partner point of contact and lead principal investigator/researcher to discuss progress, challenges, and next steps.

5. **Draft Report (output submitted by research partner).** The draft research report and annexes for HAEC to review and provide comment upon. The draft and final report must include a cost effectiveness analysis of the intervention or interventions being studied, as prescribed by ADS 201 (201.3.6.4.A); see Discussion Note: Cost Data Collection and Analysis for additional information).” HAEC will provide a template for the reports to the research teams.

6. **Final Report (output submitted by research partner).** The final research report and annexes for final formatting and publication by the HAEC team. HAEC will provide graphic design support on grantee’s final deliverables.

7. **Learning Brief (output submitted by implementing partner).** HAEC asks for a learning brief on the key lessons learned and/or takeaways for the activity and/or organization as a result of the research. The learning brief must not exceed four pages.

---

**Outcomes to be measured**

Given the focus on food security interventions, all impact evaluations should measure the following three BHA food security indicators: Food Consumption Score (FCS), Household Hunger Score (HHS), and Reduced Coping Strategies Index (rCSI). Additionally, all BHA outcome indicators that are included in the IP’s Indicator Tracking Table should be measured. Finally, the research team is encouraged to include any other relevant outcomes to their Theory of Change, and HAEC will advise on this during the application process.
HAEC Branding

As a condition of receipt of the HAEC Applied Research Award, adherence to the HAEC Award Branding and Marking Guidelines is required. The guidelines will be sent to applicants whose applications are selected for further review or at the time of the award.

Learning Focused Products

HAEC places a priority on generating outputs that are valuable for implementers. As such, all final products should be tailored to implementer learning and decision needs. Final reports and briefs should highlight the implications of findings for implementers and their programs.

Payments and Administration of Grant

The grant will be in the form of a fixed price contract and the contract will be between TANGO International (HAEC award partner) and the Research Partner (or potentially with the IP if they have sufficient in-house capacity).

Payments for the research will be made in three tranches, and these will be negotiated during the co-creation process. The likely timing of the tranches will be

1. Tranche 1, estimated 35% of contact amount: Prior to baseline data collection
2. Tranche 2, estimated 35% of contact amount: Prior to endline data collection
3. Tranche 3, estimated 30% of contact amount: Upon submission and approval of all final products and deliverables

Budget Guidance, Payments, and Funding Availability

Applicants should prepare their impact evaluation budget in United States dollars (USD). A budget template will be shared during Phase 2 Research Design Co-Creation. Payment will be issued for properly invoiced amounts within 30 days of approval. Payment currency will be USD and issued from TANGO International.

Final funding levels for each award will depend on content, relevance, quality, and needs, with a ceiling of US $225,000 per research award (subject to availability of funds). Acceptance of an application under this RfR does not constitute an award nor does it guarantee that the application (if awarded) will be funded at the full dollar amount requested.

HAEC is committed to transparently sharing the costs to successfully execute impact evaluation research. The cost of the research, broken down by phases (planning/preparation, data collection, analysis and reporting, and partnership management) will be shared as an annex to the final impact evaluation report.

Support from HAEC

HAEC grantees will have access to a suite of resources:
- **Regular technical advisory.** HAEC will offer regular advisory to research teams through weekly virtual office hours. Research teams are encouraged to attend at their convenience to talk through technical or management challenges that arise over the course of their research study.

- **Online training curriculum.** HAEC is developing a comprehensive impact evaluation methods training that will provide an overview of key aspects of experimental and quasi-experimental impact evaluation design and implementation. This curriculum is specifically targeted to implementer staff to build a foundational knowledge of impact evaluation requirements in order to more effectively engage with research partners around impact evaluations. All members of the research team will have access to this training curriculum, and it is highly encouraged that all staff on the research team without previous training in impact evaluation methods complete the training.

- **Linkage with humanitarian actors.** HAEC will host learning events once a quarter with all grantees as an opportunity to share challenges and crowd-source solutions.

### HAEC FUNDING PRINCIPLES

#### Evidence Gap Map (EGM) Focus Areas

HAEC is committed to expanding and diversifying the evidence base of what works to improve food security in humanitarian contexts. To this purpose, we partnered with 3ie to develop an Evidence Gap Map to identify the primary evidence gaps in the literature. Through this process, we observed that while the volume of evidence has more than tripled over the past five years, it is generally spread thinly across interventions and outcomes, with only a more noticeable cluster of studies related to food, cash and in-kind transfers.

In response to this Evidence Gap Map, HAEC will prioritize funding under-researched interventions, contexts and emergencies such as:

- Evaluations of agriculture, nutrition, finance, water security, market-based or early warning systems interventions
- Evaluations of cash interventions that answer untested questions
- Evaluations conducted in rapid onset emergency contexts
- Evaluations of anticipatory action interventions
- Evaluations in under-studied but food-insecure countries such as Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Iraq, Libya, Madagascar, Mali, Mozambique, Myanmar, Papua New Guinea, Sudan, Syria, Tanzania and Venezuela.
- Evaluations with a focus of particularly vulnerable populations (e.g. women, children, internally displaced people, refugees, or persons with disabilities).

#### Research Team Structure

HAEC expects that the research team will comprise at least one member of the IP and a research partner. Based on consultations, it is highly recommended that IPs designate a key decision maker from their organization that will engage with the research partner. For their research partner, IPs may propose an
in-house impact evaluation expert or propose an external research partner. If neither option is viable, implementers can request to be matched with a HAEC research partner.

HAEC consultations identified a key constraint to conducting impact evaluations in these settings is implementer bandwidth to coordinate and support impact evaluations. The dynamic and fragile nature of humanitarian contexts leads to programs needing to adapt often. As such, it is strongly encouraged that impact evaluations have a minimum of one member of the research team based locally to allow for deeper understanding of the research context and be agile in the face of changing conditions. Possible models for this arrangement include: 1) having a strong local research partner, 2) embedding staff from a research partner within the implementing partner’s local office or 3) allocating a dedicated member of the implementer’s staff based locally to work on the impact evaluation. HAEC is open to other models that the research team proposes outside of this as long as the research team is able to propose a clear plan on how to navigate these contextual challenges.

**Operational Research Focus**

Given HAEC’s implementer focus, HAEC will prioritize operational questions about BHA-funded emergency food security activities. A/B testing approaches are encouraged to answer research questions (i.e., comparing two or more versions of a program against each other, without the inclusion of a pure control group that does not receive programming). Examples of operational research questions that may be relevant to implementers include but are not limited to:

1. What are the most effective strategies to identify beneficiaries and target assistance?
2. What is the right modality in which to deliver the intervention?
3. Which activity approach is most cost-effective?
4. What is the most effective dosage/intensity of assistance?
5. What is the most effective timing for delivering assistance?

**Leveraging Existing Data**

Given the operational focus of HAEC, HAEC strongly encourages researchers and activities to creatively leverage existing program data and secondary data for its impact evaluation needs contingent on quality and relevance of the data. This may include the use of high quality registration and/or activity monitoring data for the impact evaluation.

The purpose is to demonstrate how planned data collection efforts can be modified to meet activity needs, reporting needs, and impact evaluation needs with the aim to reduce the data collection costs associated with impact evaluations and minimize survey burden on beneficiaries.
OVERVIEW OF APPLICATION PROCESS

HAEC is committed to fostering fruitful impact evaluation research partnerships that generate implementer-focused learnings and are tailored to the dynamic and challenging constraints of humanitarian contexts. The application process is designed to encourage thoughtful collaboration between implementers and research partners to ensure these objectives are met. The application process consists of three phases.

Phase 1: Expression of Interest

Implementing partners submit a brief form that captures initial information about the applicant’s program, research questions of interest, relevance to HAEC’s research focus, and initial thinking on the design of the impact evaluation.

At this stage, it is not necessary that the applicant have a detailed approach for their impact evaluation design as the expectation is that this will be designed in Phase 2. HAEC will review Expression of Interests for:

1) Alignment with HAEC’s research focus,
2) Potential for impact evaluation (i.e., using an RCT or rigorous comparison group), and
3) Capacity of the proposed team for conducting an impact evaluation.

During this phase, applicants will indicate whether they are interested in being matched with a HAEC research partner (in the event they do not have the requisite impact evaluation expertise in house or another external research partner in mind). Applicants that indicate they would like a matched partnership, will be matched during Phase 2.

Expressions of Interest will be accepted on a rolling basis up until March 24, 2023. HAEC will respond to applications within two weeks whether they have been invited to Phase 2 of the application process.¹

Phase 2: Research Design Co-creation

Applicants that are successful in Phase 1 will be invited to co-create the research design to answer their key learning question(s) with HAEC. This process will be done over 4-6 consultations between HAEC. The timeline for Phase 2 will depend on stakeholder availability for consultations, HAEC anticipates this phase to take between 2-3 weeks. During these consultations, the following topics will be discussed:

- Identification of research partner
- Deep dive into the implementer’s program and local context
- Assessment of implementer and program/activity readiness for an impact evaluation
- Exploration of possible impact evaluation research questions and design options
- Ethical considerations of the research design
- Research team roles and responsibilities

¹ Matching with a HAEC research partner may take longer than two weeks.
Overview of HAEC research partnership expectations

It is expected that the IP and identified research partner use this phase to assess whether the match is a good fit. In instances where the IP has a preferred research partner, it is expected that this partner will play an active role in proposing evaluation design ideas in the research design co-creation and HAEC will play a supporting role.

Following the series of consultations, all parties (HAEC, the IP, and the research partner) will jointly decide whether to continue to pursue HAEC funding for their research design. If the IE is proposed to move forward, the IP and research partner will be asked to jointly complete the funding application document.

Phase 3: Invitation to Apply

In the final phase of the application, the IP and research partner will jointly submit their funding application document to HAEC to review. The application will compile the decisions made in Phase 2 into a single document (including readiness for an impact evaluation, impact evaluation questions and design, sampling approach, field logistics, ethical considerations and management approach).

HAEC also requests draft survey tools as part of the application, enabling the submission of the IRB application on behalf of the impact evaluation. HAEC acknowledges tools may not be completely finalized, but asks applicants to submit draft tools that capture the essence of the data they plan to collect. Additionally, HAEC will have template survey instruments and consent forms on FSNnetwork.org that research teams can download, adapt, and use.

Final funding decisions will be released approximately three weeks following the submission of a full application. HAEC would not invite an applicant to this stage without a high likelihood of impact evaluation funding.

Institutional Review Board (IRB) Application

HAEC is committed to ensuring that all impact evaluations undergo a thorough ethical review process. However, HAEC is mindful that a challenge of conducting impact evaluations in humanitarian settings is the time required to set up the research. As such, to expedite this process, HAEC will submit the IRB applications on applicants’ behalf. All applications will be submitted through Save the Children’s Ethics Review Committee. While HAEC will manage the IRB submission process, the research team should expect additional questions and requests from HAEC and the ethics review committee (ERC) during the IRB application review process.

Applicants will have two options: 1) to submit IRB in parallel with the Phase 3 funding application and include all necessary application materials up front or 2) submit IRB application immediately after the funding decision is released. IRB applications submitted in parallel with the funding application will receive approval more quickly. To submit the IRB application the following materials will be needed:

1. A completed funding application to HAEC
2. Draft survey instrument(s)
3. Consent form(s)
4) **Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative** (CITI) certification for each member of the research team\(^2\)

However, it is important to note that depending on the research requirements for a given country, a US-based IRB approval through Save the Children may not be sufficient. Research teams should investigate whether local IRB approvals and/or research permits are required for the country where the impact evaluation will take place. HAEC will discuss this with applicants during Phase 2. If local IRB approval and/or research permits are required, the research teams are expected to make plans to obtain the necessary approvals before data collection begins. If HAEC assesses that this is unlikely to be completed in a timely manner, it would negatively impact the likelihood of funding.

### Applicant Scoring Criteria

The maximum points possible between the technical and financial criteria is 100 points.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Alignment with HAEC Research Focus**<br>20 points | • The evaluation would expand and diversify the evidence base of what works to improve food security in humanitarian settings  
• Findings will be used to inform future implementation of emergency food security programming |
| **Readiness for Impact Evaluation**<br>10 points | • The activity’s theory of change has been established and thoroughly interrogated  
• There is a thorough implementation plan in place and external risk factors to implement have been identified and mitigation strategies outlined.  
• There are sufficient financial to conduct an impact evaluation (alongside HAEC funding) and bandwidth to coordinate with a research partner  
• Required stakeholders needed to implement impact evaluation are on board |
| **Impact Evaluation Design Approach**<br>40 points | • Proposed impact evaluation methodology is structured to establish causal attribution of impact  
• The proposed sampling plan is representative of the population of |

---

\(^2\) When signing up with CITI, applicants will need to select an institutional affiliation with Save the Children which will populate a list of modules. Candidates should select the module ‘Save the Children US Staff’. Please contact ethicalevidence@savechildren.org for any support needed during this process.
### Ethical Considerations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>10 points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- A robust data safeguarding plan for minimizing risks of exposing identifiable information has been outlined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- A robust child safeguarding plan for minimizing risks to vulnerable and marginalized populations and children has been outlined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Likelihood of receiving necessary IRB approvals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Management Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>15 points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Research team has the required skills and experience to conduct the impact evaluation in this context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Research partner is based locally or the team has a clear plan for developing contextual understanding if based elsewhere.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- A clear plan and decision-making structure is identified to navigate unforeseen challenges</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Budget

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5 points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- The research budget is below $225,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Budget is sufficient for the work proposed and research goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The budget takes into account major cost items for the proposed activity and demonstrates there are adequate resources for the IP and Research Partner to carry out the proposed activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The IP has included cost sharing in the form of vehicles, staff time for data collection, and impact evaluation coordination</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
USAID REGULATIONS

Intellectual Property

Any materials developed under this award relating to intangible property, such as intellectual property or patents, are subject to applicable rules under 2 CFR 200.315, “Intangible Property.” If applicants have intangible property developed previously under non-federal awards and are planning to use the intangible property in this award, clearly identify the intangible property and its anticipated use in the project. Applicants must also specify if the applications include any proprietary information and mark it as proprietary, if applicable.

Informed Consent

All informed consent must include language that allows: 1) Non-identifiable data shared on a public website for researchers. An example language may include: “Some of the information you provide will be available on a public website that researchers and others will be able to access without identifying you.”; 2) Potential multiple surveys for panel study, if applicable. An example language may include: “The data collected in this survey may be used as part of a study in the future. If your household is selected for the future study then additional surveys will be conducted. If you agree to participate in these additional surveys, the data from this survey will be used for comparison.”

---

3 In 2 CFR 200.315, “The applicant may copyright any work subject to a copyright that was developed under a Federal award. The federal government has the right to: (1) obtain, reproduce, publish, or otherwise use the data under a Federal award; and (2) Authorize other to receive, reproduce, publish, or otherwise use such data for Federal purposes.” For more details, see 2 CFR 200.315 and e-CFR 401 “Patents, Trademarks, and Copyrights.”