

Cash Transfers for Child Health (CaTCH)

Request for Proposals

Winter 2018-2019 – Round 3

Release Date: November 8, 2018

I. Background

The Cash Transfers for Child Health (CaTCH) Initiative managed by J-PAL South Asia and funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, seeks to *improve child health by generating policy-relevant rigorous evidence on the design and delivery of cash transfer programs in India*. Specifically, these transfers generally fall into three groups:

1. *Conditional Cash Transfers (CCTs)*
2. *Unconditional Cash Transfers (UCTs)*
3. *Pay for Performance (P4P) schemes for health workers.*

Through use of randomized evaluations, the initiative aims to better understand and address important constraints to improving child health and how cash transfers¹ can relieve these constraints. In order to emphasize the policy-relevant nature of this initiative, potential evaluations must assess the impact of cash transfers implemented by government partners. **Research must concern transfer programs that clearly demonstrate potential to improve child outcomes.**

To submit a proposal for consideration, please complete the application requirements described in this document and email to CaTCH@povertyactionlab.org by no later than 11:59pm U.S. Pacific Time on Thursday, 31 January 2019.

¹ CaTCH initiative funds research on cash transfers, which for the purposes of the initiative includes conditional and unconditional cash, vouchers, and in-kind transfer programs.

II. Proposal Types

CaTCH studies should be designed to test scalable, cost-effective interventions *implemented by the government* that improve child health through the evaluation of better designed and delivered cash transfer and pay-for-performance programs. Three types of proposals will be considered:

1. *Travel/Proposal Development Grants*: These grants are limited to a maximum of \$5,000. Travel grants enable interested J-PAL affiliates and their co-investigators to visit South Asia in order to secure support from potential government partners. Travel grants should ideally aim towards supporting a future pilot study proposal or a full research project proposal. The initiative also accepts travel/proposal development grant proposals from eligible participants, including graduate PhD students advised by J-PAL affiliates, on a rolling-basis outside of the RFP cycle.
2. *Pilot Studies*: These grants are limited to a maximum amount of \$45,000. Pilots are defined as studies with a clear research question, but require piloting for one or more of the following
 - a. the design and implementation of an evaluation requires further testing, pilot data, and/or partnership development;
 - b. the feasibility of some aspect of cash transfer program design has not yet been demonstrated under “real world” conditions.
3. *Full Evaluations*: These grants are for full randomized evaluations at a mature stage of development. Not only must the research question be clear, but applicants must also demonstrate a strong partnership commitment from a partner government, a robust randomization design, a theory of change, well-defined research instruments, and sample size estimates. An important criterion for proposal evaluation is the improvement of child health outcomes.

III. Researcher Eligibility

The network of eligible applicants for CaTCH includes all J-PAL affiliates, J-PAL post-docs, and a specially invited group of researchers specializing in cash transfers that have been pre-approved to participate in CaTCH. Proposals may include collaborators outside of this network but the principal investigator (PI) must be a J-PAL affiliate or CaTCH special invitee. If you have questions regarding your eligibility to participate, please send an email to the CaTCH Initiative at CaTCH@povertyactionlab.org. Additionally, PhD students advised by J-PAL affiliates can also apply for travel, pilot, and full evaluation grants to the initiative. The following are the conditions for **PhD student eligibility** under CaTCH:

- *Who can apply?*
 - Full-time PhD students who have a J-PAL affiliate adviser on their formal thesis committee.
 - Applicants who received travel/proposal development funding as PhD students but have since graduated and moved to another institution may only apply for funding to continue that same project.
- *What can they apply for?*
 - Travel/proposal development grants, up to \$5,000 (accepted on a rolling basis as well).
 - On-Cycle pilot and full evaluation proposals, up to \$45,000.

- PhD students are eligible to submit a maximum of two travel/proposal development grants and two pilot/full evaluation grants during their time as students. All else equal, priority will be given to students who have not applied before.
- *Additional application materials*
 - In addition to the application materials listed in this RFP and provided on the website, the affiliate adviser must provide a letter of support and indicate willingness to remain involved in a supervisory role throughout the lifetime of the project.
 - If the affiliate is not based at the student's host university, a letter is also required from the student's department confirming that the affiliate is a member of his/her official thesis committee.

IV. Government Commitment and Partnership

CaTCH is committed to creating policy relevant research that will directly affect the design and implementation of future cash transfer programs. As such, all proposals for both pilot studies and full evaluations will require strong government support and commitment to implement any cash transfer program. Full evaluations should **not** be implemented by NGOs or other civil society organizations. However, pilot studies may use NGO or other implementing partners in order to further prove certain aspects of cash transfer design. Pilot proposals should still take into account and demonstrate government commitment so as to ensure project success.

V. Local Researchers

CaTCH is committed to nurturing the capacity of local researchers working on child health and cash transfers. Submitted proposals are strongly urged to engage in collaboration with local researchers and will be looked upon favorably by the Review Board.

VI. Proposal Evaluation Criteria

In this round of grant making, referees will score each pilot and full evaluation proposal on the six criteria listed in the table below and will provide a 1-2 sentence justification for each score. Travel grant proposals will be scored on their relevance to CaTCH.

<i>Relevance to CaTCH</i>	<i>Does the study address questions crucial to understanding how cash transfers or pay-for-performance programs impact child health or the provision of critical services to children (age 0-5)?</i>
<i>Academic Contribution</i>	<i>Does the study make a significant contribution toward advancing knowledge in the field? Does it answer new questions, or introduce novel methods, measures, or interventions? Is there academic relevance? How does the study compare with the existing body of research? Does the research strategy provide a bridge between a practical experiment and underlying economic theories?</i>
<i>Technical Design</i>	<i>Does the research design appropriately answer the questions outlined in the proposal? Are there threats that could compromise the validity of results? If so, does the proposal sufficiently address those threats?</i>
<i>Government Commitment and Partnership</i>	<i>Is the relationship with the implementing partner strong and likely to endure through the entire study? Are there any other logistical or political obstacles that might threaten the completion of the study, for example, government authorization or Human Subjects review?</i>
<i>Local Researchers</i>	<i>Will the study be conducted in collaboration with local researchers/post-docs - including those in fields complementary to the social sciences?</i>
<i>Scalability</i>	<i>Will results from the intervention have broader policy implications? How, if at all, will the “lessons learned” be relevant beyond this test case? Can the intervention be effectively replicated or scaled up?</i>

VII. Proposal Application Guidelines

Your narrative (not to exceed six pages in length) should clearly describe the underlying project and evaluation, including a summary of the policy problem that motivates this research, description of the treatment, evaluation design, target population, and implementing partners. The narrative should also address each of the topics in the Proposal Evaluation Criteria listed above. Full evaluations and pilot proposals will be required to use the proposal narrative template (available for download online). Full evaluations should also submit the one-page technical appendix to provide more information on issues like sample size and statistical power. Proposal narratives should also include a 100-150 word abstract of the study, which will be uploaded to CaTCH’s web page if the project receives funding.

There are three main proposal types:

1. Travel/Proposal Development Grant:

Award ceiling: \$5,000

CaTCH will accept proposals for travel grants that are intended to enable J-PAL affiliates and co-investigators to visit India, in order to secure support from potential government partners. Travel grants should ideally aim towards supporting a future pilot study proposal or a full research project proposal. Travel Grant funds can be used towards international travel to and within-country travel in India. In order to apply, interested researchers should complete the proposal cover sheet and travel budget template (available on the website), along with a 1-page description of the purpose of travel.

The travel grant budget may have 2 components: (i) Travel expenses to be reimbursed by the investigator through J-PAL Global at MIT, and (ii) travel expenses incurred by J-PAL South Asia staff providing additional local support (to be charged to/reimbursed from J-PAL South Asia at IFMR).

2. Pilot Studies:

Award ceiling: \$45,000

CaTCH will accept pilot proposals for projects that are at an early stage of development and that lay the groundwork for a full research proposal.

Pilot studies can be qualitative or quantitative in nature, and can serve as a diagnostic to reveal barriers for effective cash transfer programs aiming to improve child health. Pilots may test the feasibility of some aspect of a cash transfer program design that has not yet been demonstrated under “real world” conditions. Proposals can also be designed to test the efficacy of an intervention or an evaluation design, to acquire pilot data, and/or to pilot a project in the same form in which it would be scaled-up if successful. The research question should be very clear. Pilot proposals are not expected to fully elaborate on their project design but should explain how they are a necessary step in the development of a full evaluation. In particular, they should explain the conceptual and methodological distinction between the pilot study and any future follow-on studies as well as what exactly the pilot will enable researchers to learn. These funds may be used towards the partial costs of pilot implementation as well as any scoping, evaluation, or data collection. Please use the proposal narrative, cover, and budget templates, available on the CaTCH website, for your submission.

The proposal should clearly provide the following information:

- A summary of the policy problem that motivates this research and how it fits CaTCH goals;
- The project’s potential contribution to academic literature;
- A description of the potentially proposed treatment;
- A description of research goals;
- A description of the target population;
- A comment on whether the proposal addresses gender issues in any way or if you plan to disaggregate results by gender;
- A description of implementing partner in India and government commitment;
- A comment on whether the project has scale-up potential and whether the program costs and impacts may be suitable for a cost effectiveness analysis; and
- If the project has other funders, the proposal should clearly explain the marginal contribution of these requested funds.
- A letter of support from the implementing government partner, indicating their commitment for the project.

3. Full Research Proposals

Please use the full research proposal narrative template for this type of application. Full research proposals should address all of the topics noted above for pilot studies and also include:

- A clear explanation of the evaluation design and program intervention;
- A theory of change demonstrating impact on child health;
- Power calculations; and
- A strong demonstration of commitment from implementing partner.

Applicants may also choose to discuss the project's policy relevance, potential for scale-up, local capacity development, and potential cost-effectiveness.

VIII. CaTCH Postdoctoral Partnership

In order to help create a pipeline of valuable research, the CaTCH initiative has hired a full-time postdoctoral fellow to collaborate on research activities. This optional resource is available to help projects conduct high quality research. As the position is based in New Delhi, our postdoctoral fellow is well placed to partner on innovative research ideas. Projects do not have pay for the fellow's time, but should explain the nature of the proposed partnership as well as justify the requested support and time allocation. Please see the Postdoctoral Fellow's bio attached.

If a potential partnership with the CaTCH postdoctoral fellow sounds interesting, you may complete the following [Partnership Expression of Interest form](#) and our team will get in touch with you for an initial discussion, or alternatively write to the postdoctoral fellow at jcooper@povertyactionlab.org.

IX. Proposal Evaluation Process

Grant making will follow a two-stage process to assess the quality and appropriateness of all proposals. First, proposals will be distributed for peer review to referees selected from a roster of researchers and policy experts with experience in the cash transfer programs and/or child health. The roster will be assembled by the three permanent members of CaTCH and will not have a conflict of interest.² Each application will be reviewed by three referees consisting of academics and/or policy experts, at least one of whom is also a CaTCH Review Board member.

Second, following peer review, proposals will be reviewed and scored by the five members of the CaTCH Review Board, which includes: (i) three permanent CaTCH Review Board members³, (ii) a policy expert from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and (iii) one senior policy expert from J-PAL South Asia. Proposals will be scored using the evaluation criteria described earlier in this document. During the review process, the CaTCH Review Board and initiative manager may contact applicants to clarify certain aspects of a proposal. Following the two independent levels of review, the CaTCH Review Board holds a meeting to discuss projects, review referee comments, and make final funding decisions. Review Board Members with a conflict of interest must recuse themselves from this process. All proposals will be categorized as either: (1) unconditionally approved; (2) conditionally approved with minor revisions or clarifications required; (3) request for revise and resubmit; or (4) not approved.

If you would like to appeal a decision of the CaTCH Review Board, you may contact the CaTCH Initiative (CaTCH@povertyactionlab.org) within one week of the results' announcement with a document detailing the reasons for appeal (maximum two pages in length), which will then be communicated to the CaTCH Board.

VIII. Timeline for Winter 2018-2019

² Please see CaTCH Conflict of Interest Policy, Appendix 1

³ The permanent Review Board members are Pascaline Dupas (Stanford University), Seema Jayachandran (Northwestern University), and Karen Macours (Paris School of Economics).

Thursday, 8 November 2018	Request for Proposals Sent to Eligible Applicants
Thursday, 31 January 2019	Proposal Submission Deadline
Wednesday, 21 March 2019	Review Process Concludes
Late March 2019	CaTCH Board Meeting and Funding Decisions
Early April 2019	Decision Letters Sent to Applicants

X. Grant Conditions

Applicants who are awarded a grant will be asked to do the following:

- **Start-up report:** Grantees must submit a brief start-up report due 3 months after the project's proposed start date as indicated on the application coversheet. This will allow J-PAL to monitor the initial stage(s) of Initiative-funded projects and whether there are any delays in the implementation of the project activities.
- **Peer Review:** Researchers are asked to make themselves available to peer-review proposals in future CaTCH Initiative RFP rounds in which you are not applying for funding.
- **Trial Registration:** For full evaluations, grantees must register their trial with the AEA RCT Registry (<http://www.socialscienceregistry.org>) before starting field work. Registration includes 18 required fields (such as your name and a small subset of your IRB requirements) and the entire process should take less than 20 minutes. There is also the opportunity to include more information, including power calculations and an optional pre-analysis plan. J-PAL will reach out to grantees during the process of establishing the award and ask for confirmation of registration. For questions and support with the registry, please contact Keesler Welch (Keesler@mit.edu).
- **Implementation Cost Collection:** For full projects, you are required to collect data on program costs associated with this evaluation, which may be used as an input to J-PAL and cost-effectiveness analyses (we will, of course, contact you before undertaking such an analysis). We will ask for costs on an annual basis, but only expect fully complete information at the end of the project. CaTCH will provide a costing template to collect this information. If implementing partners' program budgets (i.e. the organizations' costs to implement the program or intervention, exclusive of research costs) are already available, please share those with us. As part of the first annual reporting cycle, we do require submission of the above costing template.
- **Annual Progress Reporting:** Grantees should provide brief annual progress narrative and semi-annual financial reports using templates provided to them by CaTCH.
- **Data publishing and availability:** Full randomized evaluation studies funded by the initiative are required to make any survey data available (without identifiers and treatment assignment) *within 18 months of the completion of that survey's activities*.⁴ All de-identified datasets (baseline, follow-ups,

⁴ Completion of survey activity implies that all activities related to data collection have been completed successfully and the data set is ready for cleaning and data processing. This includes verifying data quality (by re-checking a subset of survey responses), tracking non-respondents to improve the survey response rate, verifying select survey responses with respondents in case of any anomaly in the responses, and other such activities.

with unique ID for merging) shall be made available with treatment assignment within 18 months of completion of the endline survey activities. Researchers can request for a waiver to the data publication policy from the Initiative Co-chairs (for either the entire survey data or part of the survey data), which will be granted in special instances. An example of such as instance would be if the government partner does not permit publication of data until after completion of study.

- **Gender-disaggregated results:** Grantees will be required to include in their final report to J-PAL their main results showing heterogeneity by gender, where applicable. Further details will be provided prior to the RFP due date.
- **Data Methodology and Instruments:** Share data collection instruments and methodologies with other grantees, as needed.
- **Credit to CaTCH:** Any presentations and publications that emerge from this research project should credit the J-PAL CaTCH Initiative with the following text: “Funding provided by the J-PAL South Asia Cash Transfers for Child Health Initiative”
- **CaTCH Activities:** Participate in at least one of CaTCH’s activities on a mutually agreed date and place. This activity could be an evidence workshop, a matchmaking conference, or a presentation to one of CaTCH’s donors, or at a conference that is attended by sector experts and/or practitioners.
- **Final Technical and Financial Reports:** J-PAL SA requests a final technical report and a final financial report within 60 days of completion of the award period, and a final project report with preliminary results within a maximum of 6 months of completion of the award period for full evaluations, within 60 days for pilot studies, and within 30 days for travel grants. We will send you reminders and instructions about these reports. Survey Instruments: At the completion of your project, we request any survey instruments used for this project.

XI. Budget Details

As CaTCH is based out of J-PAL South Asia’s office hosted at IFMR, applicants will have to follow particular guidelines provided by our host institution. It is the applicant’s responsibility to submit a complete, accurate budget that follows the J-PAL South Asia’s policies. Due to limitations arising from host country regulations, J-PAL South Asia cannot award the entire grant to a host institution outside of India and costs will be settled through J-PAL South Asia on a cost-reimbursable basis. Additionally, this limitation means that CaTCH will not be allowing applicants to budget for the time or salary of Principal Investigators. In exceptional cases, funding may go towards RAs or PAs based at US universities. Researchers may budget travel and accommodation as necessary in order for them to visit the project. In order to complete budgets in a timely manner, applicants may complete budget work with the Admin and Finance team at J-PAL South Asia to create project assumptions and subsequently create a project budget.

In order to achieve a timely submission of budgets, he/she should adhere to the following guidelines:

*The Admin and Finance team, and the Research vertical (contact details below) need to receive a *near final* technical proposal **at least 15 days** in advance of the proposal deadline. If substantial parts of the*

proposal are missing, A&F will be unable to proceed with supporting and approving the proposal. Once the draft proposal is shared, A&F requires 7 days to work with PIs to develop assumptions, and another 7 days to develop the budget. The timeline for budget development and approval is non-negotiable. If substantial changes to the proposal occur within the 15-day budget development period, A&F will require another 15 days for budget support and approval from the time that updated information is shared. Proposals submitting technical proposals less than 15 days in advance of the due date will not be approved, and will need to wait for a later funding application deadline.

Additionally,

- CaTCH will not charge any overhead or indirect costs to the project.
- All applications must include budget notes in the column provided in the budget template, specifying the costs within the budget. For example, Travel Costs should include a breakdown of how many trips are planned, the estimated cost per trip, etc. Field costs that are detailed clearly in the budget (e.g., # of respondents times \$/respondent = total \$) do not require additional justification in the budget notes.
- Any large computer/equipment purchases should include a breakdown of what is being purchased, e.g. how many laptops, and the project staff that will be assigned to said equipment.
- CaTCH funds may not be used to cover materials and supplies at the PI's host university.
- Unallowable costs include: Costs labeled as "incidental", "miscellaneous", or "contingency" and rent, unless a separate project office is to be covered specifically for this effort;
- If there is co-funding for the project, then applicants must complete both the "Total Project Budget" and the "CaTCH Budget" spreadsheets in the budget template.
- For full research projects, implementation costs are expected to be borne by the government partner or another third party.

X. Award Requirements and Process

If an applicant's proposal is approved, awarded funds will be held at J-PAL South Asia and be used through a project code set up for billing via J-PAL South Asia. J-PAL South Asia will then run the project out of its office. Projects will be required to administer projects that adhere to J-PAL South Asia quality assurance in terms of data collection and cleaning. Travel grants will be reimbursed through J-PAL Global at MIT, however, researchers may budget for part of the funds through J-PAL South Asia for payments to be made to any local staff or for their travel.

It is **strongly recommended** that alongside applications to the initiative, applicants secure approval from IFMR's Institutional Review Board (IRB) for any human subjects protocol required to implement your project in addition to an IRB approval from investigator institutions. Additionally, grantees will have to secure IRB approval from their own university **before** beginning the project.

XI. Application Instructions

Applicants must submit completed versions of all of the following documents by the submission deadline. No information and/or documents from applicants will be accepted or considered after the closing date unless otherwise requested by CaTCH.

- **Cover Sheet:** This document must be completed in its entirety;

- **Proposal Narrative:** This document must not exceed six pages in length (and an additional one page technical appendix for full evaluations) and must address all of the items discussed in the relevant Proposal Application Guidelines table above. Please save the cover letter and proposal narrative as a single Word file with the title: [PI Last Name, First Name] [Topic Name].doc(x).
 - **Proposal Budget:** This Excel spreadsheet must be completed in its entirety using the enclosed table and saved as a single file with the title: [PI Last Name, First Name][Budget].xls(x);
 - **Letter(s) of Support:** Please obtain a letter of support from all government partners and save each as a single PDF file with the title [PI Last Name, First Name] [Name of Organization Letter of Support].pdf. Both pilot study and full evaluation studies require letters of support. In the case of full evaluations, letters of support from government partners should indicate the following:
 - a. The government's support for the activities proposed
 - b. How the government plans to use the results of the research or other activities to strengthen its policymaking
 - c. How it sees a long-term partnership with J-PAL South Asia to be valuable
 - d. What costs will be shared by the government and an initial total budget amount (if exact costs are not available, then a broad commitment to pay for implementation or other costs is sufficient)
 - e. Willingness to share program implementation cost data with project for the purpose of conducting program cost analysis
- Note:** We understand that in some cases it may not be feasible or appropriate to have the government partner include all of the items above in their letter. In such cases, please secure a more general letter of support from the government and address the remaining points in your proposal narrative. If you are unable to submit the letter of support, or any additional document in time for the RFP deadline, please write to the initiative manager at catch@povertyactionlab.org to request an extension.
- **Submit an email** with all of the above attachments to CaTCH at CaTCH@povertyactionlab.org. In the subject line, please write: CaTCH Winter 2018-2019 Proposal: [PI Last Name, First Name]

**The deadline for submission is:
11:59pm U.S. Pacific Time, Thursday, 31 January, 2019**

Appendix 1: CaTCH Conflict of Interest Policy

A two-stage peer review process is used by CaTCH to assess the quality and appropriateness of all proposals. The first level of review is carried out by a panel of peer researchers selected from a roster of researchers and policy experts with experience in topics related to CaTCH. The second level of review is carried out by the CaTCH Review Board, which comprises five individuals including the CaTCH Co-Chairs, a J-PAL affiliated researcher, a policy expert from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and a senior policy expert from J-PAL South Asia.

Peer Referees and CaTCH Review Board Members

1. No individual named on a proposal application may serve as a peer or Board referee in the round in which his or her proposal is being reviewed.
2. No spouse, partner, or immediate family member of any individual named on a proposal application may serve as a peer or Board referee in the round in which the applicant's proposal is being reviewed.
3. Board members with a conflict of interest may attend only the portion of the Board meeting that does *not* concern the CaTCH grant-making process.