

Cash Transfers for Child Health (CaTCH)

Proposal Guidelines

Covid-19 2020

Release Date: 24 June 2020

I. Background

The Cash Transfers for Child Health (CaTCH) Initiative is managed by J-PAL South Asia and funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. **Given the pressing demand from policymakers for evidence that speaks to the challenges of the ongoing pandemic, CaTCH is hosting a special Request for Proposals window for studies directly related to covid-19.** Specifically, CaTCH will accept proposals that address questions related to the following **priority themes and topics**:

- Impact of covid-19 on both covid and non-covid-19 related care, and evaluations that test innovative solutions to address the current disruption in the supply and demand for routine healthcare services, particularly reproductive, maternal and child health services.
- Impact of cash transfer programmes and other social protection programmes that focus on mitigating the impact of covid-19. This may include direct evaluations of such programmes, or studies that aim to address demand and supply-side barriers to the take-up of government relief and social protection programmes.
- Studies that focus on vulnerable groups, particularly returning migrants and their households in the home state, including impacts on intra-household decision-making, particularly related to women's health and maternal health.

Geographic Focus:

CaTCH will fund proposals for studies to be implemented in India.

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 Friday, 14 August 2020.

II. Proposal Types

Under the special covid-19 window, CaTCH will fund studies designed to test scalable, cost-effective interventions addressing themes described in the previous section. Two types of proposals will be considered:

1. *Full Evaluations*: These grants are for rapid full evaluations that evaluate interventions that seek to offset the health and economic impacts of covid-19. The proposal should include a clear research question, a robust randomization design and description of the treatment, a theory of change, well-defined research instruments, and sample size estimates. The proposal should also include a description of how the research may be used to inform specific policies and programmes related to covid-19. We are also accepting proposals for evaluation of add-on covid-related interventions added to existing projects. These need not be projects that have been previously funded by CaTCH. A brief

description of the original study and implementing partner background must also be included in the proposal, in addition to the other requirements for full evaluation proposals.

2. *Proposals to collect data for descriptive analyses related to covid-19:* These grants are for additional data collection for descriptive analyses that might be of use to policymakers in their covid-19 response. These proposals need not have a randomisation design or theory of change, but should include a description of how the study sample will be accessed (for e.g. through an existing sample with valid phone numbers or government administrative data), and how the analyses might be useful to policymakers.

Compared to the typical non-COVID J-PAL RFP, this RFP will put more weight on the project's ability to make an important, timely contribution to understanding and alleviating the current public health crisis and less weight on its contribution to the academic literature in economics or other disciplines. During this covid-19 RFP, we will consider proposals for a maximum of \$67,500. All proposals must adhere to [J-PAL's COVID-19 response guidelines in regard to in-person interactions with subjects](#).

III. Researcher Eligibility

The network of eligible applicants for CaTCH includes all J-PAL affiliates, J-PAL post-docs, and CaTCH invited researchers. Proposals may include collaborators outside of this network but the principal investigator (PI) must be a J-PAL affiliate or CaTCH invited researcher. 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 grants under this window. 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 for add-on covid-19 related work as part of that same project.
- *What can they apply for?*
 - All types of proposals described above, capped at \$67,500.
- *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

Unlike our regular RFP, under this window we do not require that projects have a government implementing partner in order to be eligible for funding. However, in case you have any supporting

documents from a government partner expressing interest in the findings of the study please submit it along with your proposal.

V. Local Researchers

CaTCH is committed to nurturing the capacity of local researchers working on Health-related topics in India. 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 full evaluation proposal on the six criteria listed in the table below and will provide a 1-2 sentence justification for each score. Proposals for data collection for descriptive analyses will be reviewed based on their relevance to the covid-19 policy response:

<i>Relevance to Covid19 Policy Response</i>	<i>For the covid-19 window the focus can be outside cash transfers/p4p and child health. This can include studies that address questions related to how governments can respond to challenges in healthcare delivery and/or access stemming from the covid19 outbreak; the impact on health outcomes of cash transfers and other social protection programs or strategies to improve the delivery of such programmes; and/or studies that focus on vulnerable groups (eg: returning migrants, their households in the home state, etc) To what extent can findings from this research be relevant and generalizable beyond a covid 19 context?</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>Feasibility</i>	<i>Can the research be implemented rapidly/in a timely manner? Can it provide quick insights to policy makers? Are there any logistical/implementation, political or bureaucratic obstacles (especially those related to the covid19 outbreak in India) 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 for full evaluation proposals) should clearly describe the underlying intervention 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 evaluation 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.

Proposals for data collection for descriptive analyses are required to submit their applications using the same template. The proposal should clearly describe the policy relevance of the analyses, background context, target population, and data collection plan.

There are two main types of proposal applications that we are considering under this window:

1. Proposals for data collection for descriptive analyses:

Award Ceiling: \$67,500

CaTCH will accept proposals for data collection for descriptive analyses intended to enable J-PAL affiliates and co-investigators to collect and analyse timely data related to the priority themes of this window that would benefit policymakers in their covid-19 response. In order to apply, interested researchers will need to complete the proposal cover sheet, a narrative proposal (up to four pages in length), and the budget template (available on [the CaTCH website](#)).

The proposals should clearly provide the following information:

- A summary of the policy problem that motivates this research and how it fits under the covid-19 CaTCH window, including government partner interest if relevant;
- 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 background context and target population;
- A comment on resilience of the project to a resurgence of covid19;
- A description to what extent findings from your intervention may be relevant and generalizable beyond a COVID-19 context; and
- If the project has other funders, the proposal should clearly explain the marginal contribution of these requested funds.

In case the project is not being run out of the J-PAL SA:

- A description of the safety measures in place for both research staff and human subjects;
- A comment on the research protocols regarding fieldwork; and
- A letter of support from the institution receiving the award

2. Full evaluation proposals:

Award Ceiling: \$67,500

Full evaluation proposals (including those adding covid-19 related interventions to existing studies) should address all of the topics noted above and also include:

- A clear explanation of the evaluation design and program intervention;
- A theory of change demonstrating impact on outcomes related to covid19;
- Power calculations

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

VIII. 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. The roster will be assembled by the three permanent members of CaTCH and will not have a conflict of interest.¹ Each application will be reviewed and scored by three referees consisting of academics and/or policy experts, at least one of whom is also a CaTCH Review Board member. Proposals will be scored using the evaluation criteria described earlier in this document in this stage.

Second, following peer review, proposals will be reviewed by the five members of the CaTCH Review Board, which includes: (i) three permanent CaTCH Review Board members², (ii) a policy expert from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and (iii) one senior policy expert from J-PAL South Asia. 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; (4) reject and resubmit; or (5) 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.

IX. Timeline for covid19 RFP

Friday, 14 August 2020	Proposal Submission Deadline
Wednesday, 26 August 2020	Peer Review Process Concludes
First Week of September 2020	CaTCH Board Meeting and Funding Decisions
Mid September 2020	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 cover sheet. 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.

¹ Please see CaTCH Conflict of Interest Policy, Appendix 1

² The permanent Review Board members are Pascaline Dupas (Stanford University), Seema Jayachandran (Northwestern University), and Karen Macours (Paris School of Economics).

- **Trial Registration:** For full evaluations, grantees must register their trial with the AEA RCT Registry (<http://www.socialscisearch.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*.³ All de-identified datasets (baseline, follow-ups, 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 an instance would be if the government partner does not permit publication of data until after completion of study. In addition, full randomized evaluations should also adhere to J-PAL's Data and Code Availability Policy, which can be found [here](#). Please note that CaTCH requires data publication and availability of funded projects earlier than the standard J-PAL policy.
- **Gender-disaggregated results:** J-PAL, through its Gender sector, is making an effort to study heterogeneity in program impacts by beneficiary/participant gender more systematically. Please note that the following request only applies to J-PAL internal reports and does not extend to the academic paper or online J-PAL summary.

Many studies funded by J-PAL initiatives already collect study participants' gender. In such cases, and when outcome data are individual-specific, we request that grantees conduct heterogeneity analyses by beneficiary gender for the study's main results for internal reporting to J-PAL (to be shared in the final grant report). A single study might be underpowered to detect heterogeneous treatment effects, or null results might not seem interesting in one study, but these findings may be meaningful when included in an analysis across studies. J-PAL will use the reported results for (a)

³ 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.

determining potential pooled statistical analyses to conduct across studies and (b) generating gender-related policy lessons in child health. Our reporting template will include a question on this, which researchers are encouraged to fill in when applicable. We recognize that there will be cases where this reporting is not applicable, for various reasons. In these cases, the PIs can just provide a brief explanation to be shared with the Gender sector.

- **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. Given the urgency of the policy response during the pandemic, we will also request researchers to share results (final or preliminary) on a more expedited timeline to inform our donor, for projects funded under this window. These need not be detailed reports, but can include summary/preliminary findings.

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 submission to CaTCH. 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.

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 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. In case you wish to transfer this award to an institution other than J-PAL South Asia, please contact the CaTCH initiative staff at catch@povertyactionlab.org at least 2 weeks prior to submitting your proposal.

It is **required** 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 and drawing funds.

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 (if available):** In case you are submitting any letters of support from your implementing partner, save each as a single PDF file with the title [PI Last Name, First Name] [Name of Organization Letter of Support].pdf. Under this window we do not require that the project be implemented in collaboration with the government. In the case of full evaluations, letters of support from the implementing partner may include the following:
 - a. The implementing partner's support for the activities proposed
 - b. How the results of the research or other activities may strengthen its policymaking
 - c. How it sees a partnership with J-PAL South Asia to be valuable
 - d. What costs will be shared by the implementing partner 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 partner include all of the items above in their letter. In such cases, you can submit a more general letter of support and address the remaining points in your proposal narrative. If you are unable to submit any of the required documents before 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 Covid-19 2020 Proposal: [PI Last Name, First Name]

**The deadline for submission is:
11:59pm U.S. Pacific Time, Friday, 14 August, 2020**

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 review of their proposal.