Amsterdam, 7 February 2022

# CALL FOR PROPOSALS No. RD 2/02-2022

## IEA Research and Development Funds

## Open Call for Research Proposals due 4 April 2022

### 1. Introduction and objectives

Starting from 2021, the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) invited proposals for research and development to advance and improve the science and methodology of IEA studies, ensuring that they remain at the forefront of international large-scale assessments (ILSA) in education. The aim of the IEA Research and Development (R&D) Funds relates to IEA's mission to advance research and innovation. Funding is drawn from an overhead on participation fees across IEA studies.

Over time, the R&D program will address a range of topics through *open* and *thematic* calls. The first R&D call in 2021 was thematic and related to technology/computer-based assessment (see New Research and Development Call | IEA.nl for details).

This 2022 call for proposals is open, i.e., not focusing on a specific thematic area.

For clarity, awards are not intended to fund substantial or policy-related studies nor related secondary analyses.

### 2. Eligibility

IEA R&D calls for proposals are open to external researchers (e.g., individuals or those associated with a university or survey organization) regardless of their current involvement in IEA studies, as well as staff and experts from study centers for IEA studies, and IEA staff. The program welcomes proposals from all groups and award will be based on proposal merit only.

The level of funding is generally based on the proposed project's needs and will fall into either

- tier 1: projects up to 50,000 EUR/USD; or
- tier 2: projects between 50,000 and 100,000 EUR/USD.

Proposals for the 2022 cycle are accepted for both funding tier 1 and 2. While proposals at tier 2 are likely to provide more depth, proposals at tier 1 are more likely to translate into more varied and timely insights for IEA. Tier 1 proposals can also benefit a larger number of applicants and are hence preferable.

Proposals must identify a lead researcher. A lead researcher may not submit more than one application for a given funding call and may only hold one active grant from the fund as the lead researcher. This restriction does not apply to any administering organizations, which may submit multiple proposals if they are for different projects and have different lead researchers.

All projects covered by the IEA R&D funds must:

- be based on rigorous, intellectually ambitious, and technically sound research that is relevant to the most pressing questions and opportunities in IEA's work on ILSA;
- be clearly related to methods and approaches that IEA uses in one or more of its studies, or related to those methods and approaches that would, in a forward-looking way, have the potential to significantly improve IEA's work in the future;
- propose specific approaches, innovations, and methods with a tangible outcome or recommendation that adds value to IEA studies and can be realistically implemented and used within the work of IEA; and
- must not be duplicative of work already ongoing at IEA.

Please note that proposals that fail to meet these criteria will not be considered.

IEA R&D projects should relate to one or more of the four major strands of the *Technical Standards for IEA Studies* (Martin, Rust, & Adams, 1999):

- designing, managing, and implementing IEA studies;
- developing data collection instruments;
- data collection and processing; and
- analyzing data and reporting results.

## 3. Thematic direction and possible topics

This 2022 call for proposals is *open*, i.e., proposals are field-initiated and not related to a predefined topic, theme, design or method and the choice is up to the proposing researcher(s). This type of call is intended as an incentive to the research community and network to recommend changes, innovations and improvements to the IEA, based on the applicant's observation of IEA studies' designs and methodologies.

International large-scale assessments (ILSAs) in education have undergone foundational transformations in recent decades and many areas have seen substantial progress to better understand antecedents, processes and outcomes of education and their societal implications. This also applies to IEA and its current studies including, but not limited to, the mathematics, science, and reading assessments (TIMSS and PIRLS), the International Computer and Information Literacy Study (ICILS), and the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS). [1]

A non-comprehensive set of sources on these advances and possible topics for this call include:

- Rutkowski, von Davier and Rutkowski (2013), who brought together recognized scholars in the field of large-scale assessment to describe technological and statistical advances;
- Bennet (2018), who describes the possible future of educational assessment, including what is likely to change and what is unlikely to do so;
- Johnson, Pennell, Stoop and Dorer (2018), who collate and illustrate advances across various areas of social science research in cross-cultural settings;
- Nilsen, Stancel-Piątak and Gustafsson (2022), who are collating overviews and current developments in education across a range of ILSAs in a living edition volume;

[1] For a full description see: https://www.iea.nl/studies/ieastudies

- and, specific to the IEA context, Wagemaker (2020) provides an overview of key validity, reliability, and comparability considerations and advances for contemporary IEA studies.

Applicants are also strongly recommended to consult international and technical reports for IEA studies and related materials.

Although this is not a requirement, topics may relate to a specific area or study phase or cut across a number of them. IEA typically organizes the implementation of its studies around 10 keys phases: (1) defining policy goals and research questions; (2) developing assessment, conceptual and/or contextual frameworks; (3) developing and piloting instruments (assessments and questionnaires); (4) translation and translation verification; (5) sample design and selection; (6) technical standards and field operations; (7) data collection and quality observations; (8) data management and cleaning; (9) scaling and analyses; and (10) reporting and dissemination.

Proposals can also be related to other quality frameworks, including the *total survey error* paradigm (Biemer et al., 2017) or the *Cross-cultural Survey Guidelines* (CCSG; Survey Research Center, 2016), i.e., those covering major aspects across the full lifecycle of international surveys and assessments.

## 4. Evaluation process and criteria

The review process will consist of a single-blind review approach. The identity of the applicant(s) will be known to the reviewer(s) but not vice versa. A minimum of two reviewers, typically one from IEA's staff and one from the wider network of experts, will be assigned to each proposal based on their methodological and/or subject matter expertise. Internally authored IEA proposals will only be sent to external reviewers. In cases of conflicting/pronounced differences in scoring, a third reviewer may be involved at the IEA's discretion.

At all stages, those with conflicts of interest regarding a particular proposal will be excused from both the review process as well as subsequent award decisions.

Following an initial screening for eligibility (see Section 2 above), reviewers will evaluate all in-scope proposals for scientific quality and originality using the following set of criteria.

- Significance/relevance of the project for IEA
- Theoretical background
- Research design, rigor, and ambition
- Potential impact and feasibility / "theory of change"
- Adequacy of budget, relative to the call's funding tiers
- Appropriateness of timeline
- Project team competence and qualification

Each criterion will be rated on the scale: *1 = poor, 2 = fulfills minimal requirements, 3 = good, 4 = outstanding*.

Proposals that use data and/or insights from multiple countries and those that have relevance for multiple countries and/or across IEA studies are preferred.

Proposals will be reviewed, and any requests for clarification made, within about a two-month period following the submission deadline.

The R&D funds administrators will formulate recommendations based on the merit and transactional value of the reviewed proposals for IEA and submit those to the IEA Standing Committee, which will decide on the projects to fund, followed by award notification (or rejection) in about July 2022.

Successful applicants will be offered a sponsored research agreement with the IEA where the proposal constitutes the statement of work. A clear timeline (see Section 5 for guidance) and required progress reports to IEA, including to its Technical Executive Group (TEG) and the Publication and Editorial Group (PEC), will be specified. If new intellectual property is generated as part of the work, this shall be vested in the IEA yet include an appropriate return license. Finally, the agreement will specify the type of product/deliverable (typically a research report or manuscript for a journal) as well as the conditions for its public sharing, noting that the IEA is committed to the principle of open access/science (e.g., using Creative Commons licensing).

Successful proposals, provided that a research agreement is in place by that time, will be announced to IEA members at the IEA General Assembly in October 2022. Public announcements on the IEA website and social media will be made in the months following.

Rejected proposals might be invited for re-submission or can be re-submitted by the lead researcher(s) for subsequent calls for proposals, provided that substantial concerns and feedback are addressed in the revised proposal. On request, the reviewers' comments on the proposal will be provided.

IEA reserves the right to accept or reject any or all proposals. IEA further reserves the right to reject proposals from an applicant who, in the opinion of IEA, has previously failed to perform properly, failed to complete work on time, or is not in a position to perform the work.

## 5. Guidelines for submission

There is no requirement to submit a letter of intent. There is no requirement to separate technical and financial proposals. The process starts with a full proposal, which must be submitted in English and electronically via the third-party grant management system used by IEA (see link below). This requires the applicant to register on the platform and accept the respective data privacy policies.

Required proposal information includes:

- Summary (up to 500 words)
- Theoretical background, research design and possible impact (each up to 1,000 words)
- References (no limit)
- Timeline and milestones
- Budget, notes, and justification
- Lead researcher information (including CV) and team member bios and roles (each up to 250 words per person)
- Declaration of no conflicts of interest with respect to commercial/financial interests
- Declaration of intent and name of an authorized representative of the organization

Biographical notes on team members should highlight the relevance of the person's expertise and experience to the proposed activities.

Importantly, proposals need to discuss the type and use of project outcomes or product envisaged (e.g., a tool, methodology, or framework). Further, proposals should clearly describe the extent to which collaboration with IEA and/or access to non-public/confidential information is expected or required.

When developing timelines, proposals should assume a start date of October 1, 2022, preferably earlier. As outlined in the evaluation process and criteria, it is envisaged that most projects will be completed within three to six months (tier 1) or six to twelve months (tier 2). Starting later or

extending the duration is possible but requires clear justification. However, it is important for the IEA to provide a final report no later than by the time of the following General Assembly meeting, assumed to take place in October 2023, if possible.

Budgets must include the expected number of working days needed to complete each activity related to the project and a total budget in Euros or US dollars. Funding would be provided as a lump sum and can be used for staff (including one's own position) and direct project costs (e.g., travel, software, publication). Indirect cost charges and institutional overheads need to be clearly described and justified and should be kept to a minimum. Applicants should also describe if and to what extent the proposed project has previously received or will receive co-funding from other sources, including the applying organization's own funds.

Additional guidance on completing the electronic proposal form are provided in the Good Grants platform.

**All proposals must be submitted via Good Grants: https://ieard.grantplatform.com**

**The deadline for proposals is Monday, 4 April 2022 at 13:00 CET.**

## 6. Further information

Questions may be submitted at any time to Lauren Musu and Ralph Carstens via rd@iea.nl.

An informational webinar will be hosted by IEA to present the R&D call for proposals and address the questions of interested researchers on Tuesday, 22 February 2022 at 14:00 CET. For registration, please click here.

## References


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