



Call for Capacity Statement

USAID/Guatemala and OCE Impact Evaluation Design for the Central American Service Corps - National Youth Service Initiative Activity in Guatemala

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) [Office of the Chief Economist](#) (OCE), USAID Guatemala, and Long-term Assistance and Services for Research, Partners for University-Led Solutions Engine ([LASER PULSE](#)) at the Purdue Applied Research Institute, Global Development Innovation Division (PARI-GDI) seek Capacity Statements (CSs) from multidisciplinary team of researchers to design options for an impact evaluation using a Randomized Controlled Trial (RCT) or other rigorous methods for the Central American Service Corps - National Youth Service Initiative (CASC-NYSI) activity in Guatemala.

A. Background

USAID Guatemala and OCE are seeking a research team to design an impact evaluation of the Central American Service Corps - National Youth Service Initiative (CASC-NYSI) activity in Guatemala.

The goal of the CASC-NYSI activity is to connect young people with meaningful opportunities to build their futures in Guatemala and address drivers of irregular migration among those most likely to migrate through paid community service opportunities, mentorship, and paths to future employment. It will target youth aged 15-29 with the following elements: access to education, particularly for youth who dropped out of school; workforce readiness training (financial literacy and soft skills); stipends; and community service. The activity is set to launch in 2024 piloting various activity components focused on building a solid foundation for nationwide implementation with yearlong cohorts starting in various departments in Fiscal Year 2025 and scaling to other departments in outyears. The activity aims to involve 25,000 youth, ages 15-29, in its five-year duration. The activity is expected to lay the groundwork for a nationally owned youth service corps, and the evaluation will yield important information for a successful transition and scale-up. CASC-NYSI will be implemented by Fundación Crisálida (Glasswing International), which laid the initial groundwork for developing a service corps through research, design, and stakeholder engagement over an 18-month+ period and conducted two youth-led community service operational pilots in 2023 and 2024.

An impact evaluation is planned for the CASC-NYSI activity and is required in the activity award. The impact evaluation will take place with annual cohorts of approximately 5,000, beginning in early 2025. The impact evaluation will focus on interventions intended to create opportunities for youth, and may explore questions related to operational considerations, such as selecting the appropriate stipend amount and the effects of the stipend on youth participation and decision-making; changes in youths' intent to migrate; means of engaging youth in workforce development and service programming, and/or program impact, such as whether. The initiative serves as a catalyst for change at the individual or community level, post-program choices and outcomes related to education, employment, civic engagement, migration, etc. The USAID Guatemala Mission and implementing partner are eager to use the impact evaluation to generate actionable evidence to improve the effectiveness of programming and inform a transition to national ownership of this program.

B. Research Study Information

Through the LASER PULSE program, and with the support of the Office of Chief Economist (OCE), USAID/Guatemala will take a phased approach to this activity design and evaluation process. This approach begins with an evaluation design phase (“Phase 1”) during which the research team will assess the feasibility of and draft potential designs for a randomized impact evaluation. If a randomized impact evaluation is feasible and USAID/Guatemala and the research team decide to proceed, the LASER PULSE award will be amended to include an evaluation implementation phase (“Phase 2”), and the research team will evaluate the CASC-NYSI activity. Phase 2 is dependent upon the feasibility of the evaluation, availability of funds, and other considerations. If Phase 2 is cleared by USAID, it is expected that the same Research Team will conduct both phases under this award.

I. Phase 1: Evaluation Design:

The primary objective of this phase is to design up to three options for a rigorous impact evaluation, of which at least one must be a randomized controlled trial (RCT). To meet this objective, the research team will engage in a series of virtual and in-person consultations and site visits with the USAID Implementing Partner (IP) Fundación Crisálida, USAID stakeholders (the USAID Guatemala Mission, LAC Bureau, and OCE, among others), and other stakeholders or subject matter experts. This will allow the research team to understand the activity in detail, identify potential research questions for an impact evaluation based on stakeholder learning objectives, and assess the feasibility of experimental or, if necessary, quasi-experimental impact evaluation approaches. The research team should plan for in-person site visits and consultations in July or early August 2024.

During these consultations, the research team will be expected to share relevant lessons from existing evidence and theory with USAID Guatemala and the IP and discuss options to evaluate the impact of operational approaches under consideration (such as the size of a stipend on program participation and outcomes; or the effect of information on participant decision-making), and/or the overall impact of an intervention on key outcomes. They could also include examining the relative cost-effectiveness of different delivery methods or intensities of program components.

The research team is expected to prepare and present an evaluation options memo that describes up to three impact evaluation options, including at least one randomized controlled trial, if feasible. If no opportunity to conduct a rigorous impact evaluation exists, the research team should state that and may propose another evaluation or assessment (e.g., formative or performance evaluation) that will not address issues of impact attribution. The impact evaluation must include cost analysis. For each evaluation option, the research team will:

- 1) **Propose research questions and provide a high-level description of the evaluation methodology to answer them.** These research questions should address stakeholder interests, e.g. operational and/or impact research and learning questions. The associated evaluation should be designed to provide actionable information to stakeholders, e.g. to inform decisions around design adaptations, scale-up of the intervention, or adoption of the approach by other stakeholders.
- 2) **Describe the feasibility of the option.** Including the benefits and limitations of the proposed design with respect to the evaluation’s ability to credibly measure the intervention’s impact, potential risks to the integrity of the evaluation (both programmatic and contextual/political), and any other issues that stakeholders should consider when selecting an evaluation option (e.g., contribution to the state of evidence on an approach/theory in Central America).

It is expected that, during discussions to identify these options, the research team may also provide evidence-based recommendations to USAID Guatemala and the IP on the design of one or more interventions that comprise the workforce development components to be evaluated. However, no deliverables associated with these potential recommendations will be required and the IP will not be required to incorporate them.

	Deliverables	Prospective Deadline (to be adjusted once the research team is identified)
1	A draft memo proposing one to three evaluation design options, of which at least one should be an RCT. The write-up should include the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Proposed research question(s) b. High-level description of the methodology to answer the research question c. Feasibility discussions (including advantages/benefits and risks/limitations) of each d. Estimated cost of each option 	By September 5, 2024
2	Memo presentation/webinar	By September 16, 2024.
3	LASER PULSE and USAID review of draft memo	By October 4, 2024
4	Draft full evaluation SOW and budget	By October 25, 2024

Funding and Timeline for the Design Phase: Approximately 40-50 person days over 3-5 months. The estimated Funding and Timeline for the Impact Evaluation Phase will be determined after the close of the Design and Scoping Phase.

II. Phase 2: Impact Evaluation (Potential)

It is anticipated that upon presentation of the evaluation options memo, and pending availability of funds and feasibility of an impact evaluation, USAID will initiate Phase 2 to implement one of the impact evaluation options proposed in the evaluation options memo (listed as Deliverable 1 in Phase 1 deliverables) with the Phase 1 research team. The final Program Document for Phase II will be co-created with USAID and the research team, and will incorporate some or all of the following:

- 1) The Research Team, in coordination with USAID/Guatemala and the IP, will propose an evaluation workshop, launch event, or other in-person gathering to ensure stakeholder alignment with the evaluation goals and implementation.
- 2) Evaluation activities will include the design and testing of data collection instruments; data collection (including, but not limited to specifying the sample frame, surveys, collection of any monitoring data not collected by the IP, and any relevant administrative data), all data analysis; and drafting, submission, and revision of evaluation reports, presentations, summaries, and other knowledge products. As appropriate and feasible, the impact evaluation will incorporate cost analysis. The research team will coordinate with USAID, the IP, and local stakeholders to align with the intended use of the final products in policymaking and future programming (including the evaluation report and translated products, such as policy briefs and/or evidence briefs). These activities will be further refined in the evaluation scope of work for this phase.

C. OVERVIEW OF CAPACITY STATEMENT (CSs) AND SELECTION PROCESS

USAID and LASER PULSE seek capacity statements (CSs) to identify and assess the feasibility of up to three options for a rigorous impact evaluation, of which at least one must be a Randomized Controlled Trial (RCT), of an upcoming USAID youth service corps and workforce development activity in Guatemala.

The applicants should meet the qualifications, expertise, and experience in areas and roles identified in the eligibility and qualifications sections below. We require all applicants to register on the LASER PULSE Network at <https://laserpulse.org/network/>.

I. Principles

The Office of the Chief Economist (OCE) aims to increase the use and generation of high-quality cost-effectiveness evidence in USAID programming. OCE intends for the impact evaluations it supports via LASER PULSE to yield not just actionable evidence on the programs being evaluated, but also knowledge that expands the global evidence base and serves as a global public good. To this end, OCE encourages applicants to assemble diverse Research Leadership Teams¹ that include academics with track records of publishing research in top-tier peer-reviewed academic journals. OCE also encourages the meaningful engagement of academics from historically underrepresented groups, such as women, researchers from the countries and/or regions of study, and those affiliated with low- and middle-income country (LMIC) institutions.

II. Qualifications

Applicants are expected to include at least one Principal investigator (PI), with a preference for the involvement of a team. Collectively, the Research Leadership Team must have the following qualifications:

- Ph.D. in political science, economics, or related field
- Experience conducting rigorous empirical research, including impact evaluations utilizing randomization, in youth-focused workforce development, service learning, and/or youth engagement.
- Articles published in peer-reviewed academic journals, including at least one presenting results of a randomized controlled trial (RCT)
- Experience conducting research that requires primary data collection in Guatemala and/or Central America
- Demonstrated ability to work and coordinate closely with the implementing partner, USAID, and local stakeholders to find a workable design that meets both the needs of the evaluation and matches the operating environment and implementation realities
- Professional fluency in Spanish and English

III. Eligibility

Every applying team is encouraged to include researchers from Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the US and/or Low and Middle-Income Countries (LMICs), especially from Latin America and/or Guatemala. The CS will be assessed according to the strength and experience of the Research Leadership Team when applying as a team.

¹ “Research Leadership Teams” consist of research team members expected to provide intellectual leadership and be coauthors on any academic outputs.

Teams must apply under an umbrella institution that can receive U.S. federal funds, i.e., an institution registered on <https://sam.gov/content/home> with a UEI number provided by the U.S. government, or an institution in the process of registration on <https://sam.gov/content/home> to acquire UEI (please read the requirements in the call).

Applicants with an active SAM.gov registration will be given priority, though applicants with a SAM.gov application in process will also be considered.

IV. Data collection capabilities

The PI's recipient institution should have the ability to subcontract for data collection through an affiliated University or other institution in Guatemala. Please identify the data collection firm(s) you anticipate working with if Phase 2, Impact Evaluation, is undertaken.

V. Required Documents for Submission

Use the [Capacity Statement Template](#) provided. The CSs must be in English, with narrative portions prepared in MS Word or Open Office format, using Calibri font, size 11, or similar typeset in single line spacing. They must include the following sections:

- a. **Title:** USAID/Guatemala and OCE Impact Evaluation Design for the National Youth Service Corps
- b. **Contact details (Team/Individual):** Full name, position, affiliation, role on the project, and contact information. If applying as a team, include the PI and all other collaborators on the team and their roles and responsibilities (For example, Co-PI, sector technical expert, etc).
- c. **Summary:** Summarize team's relevant expertise, interest in the research project, and describe one previous randomized controlled trial you've been engaged in that required management and coordination with multiple stakeholders. (one page)
- d. **Work plan and management:** describe how the research team will accomplish the proposed activities, including the management structure for the research team (one page)
- e. **Budget.** Applicants must propose a high-level budget for accomplishing the activities described in the work plan. USAID estimates up to 50 days of LOE for this phase.
- f. **Youth engagement in research.** Please describe how the team will meaningfully engage youth (defined, for this activity, as those aged 15-29) in this scoping engagement. Examples include but are not limited to, engagement of youth as post-doctoral members of the research team, research assistants, research coordinators, etc. If youth are not included in this Phase 1 call, please describe how you anticipate including youth on the research team if Phase 2 were to be implemented. (half page)
- g. **Availability for impact evaluation:** upon completion of the scoping phase and at the approval of USAID, do you anticipate your team will be available to implement an impact evaluation selected from the options memo? Please list additional partners you may include for the IE implementation phase. (This is not binding and may change to reflect the selected evaluation design)
- h. **Research Leadership Team background and relevant expertise:** Complete this [worksheet](#).
 1. Tab 1: Please complete for all members of the Research Leadership Team
 2. Tab 2: List up to 15 research outputs that demonstrate experience relevant to the research request in this call for capacity statements. Research outputs should involve primary data collection that was conducted in the country/region of this activity, and/or

be randomized controlled trials. Research outputs may include peer-reviewed publications, conference papers, presentations, working papers, or pre-analysis plans for ongoing research.

VI. Capacity Statement submission information and deadline

- Applicants should submit their (1) Capacity Statement and (2) Research Leadership Team background and relevant expertise through Qualtrics at this link (Add the link here) by May 16, 2024 at 5:00 pm EST. Items to submit include:
 1. Capacity Statement with required documents listed under Section V: Required Documents for Submission except the (h) Research Leadership Team background and relevant expertise workbook, which must be submitted as a separate .xlsx file. All the rest of the documents should be combined into one PDF file.
 2. Research Leadership Team background and relevant expertise listed under Section V (K): This should be submitted as a separate document in MS Excel Worksheet.
- Prospective applicants can submit any questions concerning the call for capacity statements. Questions should be sent to Leulsegged Kasa (Imekonen@purdue.edu) with the Subject Line: “Questions for LASER PULSE OCE Guatemala CASC Impact Evaluation Application”. Questions should be received no later than May 2, 2024 at 5:00 pm EST.
- Announcement of finalist teams will be released tentatively on May 30, 2024.

VII. Capacity Statement Review

LASER PULSE and the USAID team will review all capacity statements. The submitted CSs will be evaluated by a committee of peer reviewers, jointly selected by USAID and LASER PULSE. Capacity statements will be rated on the degree to which each Research Leadership Team demonstrates the following capabilities:

- Experience conducting randomized controlled trials (RCTs) (also known as “randomized evaluations”)
- Relevant subject-matter expertise
- Publications in peer-reviewed academic journals
- Meaningful engagement of researchers with primary institutional affiliation in an LMIC and gender diversity
- Experience conducting research that requires primary data collection in Guatemala and/or Central America
- Proposed engagement of youth in the scoping and/or evaluation phase
- Professional fluency in Spanish and English
- Cost will be considered among highly rated-proposals

Using the abovementioned criteria, the highly ranked CS will move to the next round of co-creation. USAID OCE will provide a final review and selection.

D. NEXT STEPS

Once a CS is selected, the finalist team will be invited to an orientation session hosted by LASER PULSE. The co-creation among the research team, LASER PULSE, and USAID commences after the orientation meeting to refine an in-depth program description of the Design and Scoping Phase. As part of the full program description co-creation, the finalist team will be required to

do the following:

- The Principal Investigator (PI) (and Co-PI) must (a) register on <https://laserpulse.org/network/> and (b) complete both LASER PULSE's online training [gender analysis in research](#) and [Embedded Research Translation training](#).
- All the other members of the research team are encouraged to register on the network and complete the training.

NOTES:

- LASER PULSE may contact applicants with follow-up questions on the CS submission if clarification is needed.
- LASER PULSE reserves the right to select individuals from different CSs to form a qualified research team based on experience in Guatemala and study expertise.
- LASER PULSE reserves the right to have another call for CSs if the quality of CSs received is not satisfactory.