



Call for Capacity Statement

USAID/El Salvador and Central America-Mexico Regional Mission and OCE Impact Evaluation Design for the Integrated Responses on Migration in Central America (IRM) Program in Costa Rica, Panama and El Salvador

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) El Salvador and Central America-Mexico Regional Mission (USAID/El Salvador-CAM), USAID's Office of the Chief Economist (OCE), 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 (CS) from teams of researchers to assess the feasibility of, and to design and conduct one or more randomized evaluation(s) of specific interventions that are part of the ongoing Integrated Responses on Migration in Central America (IRM) program in Costa Rica, Panama and El Salvador.

A. Background

The IRM program is funded by USAID/El Salvador-CAM and implemented by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Belize, Costa Rica, and Panama. The objective of the program is to contribute to safe, orderly, and regular migration in Central America with a goal of addressing gaps in fundamental aspects of sustainable reintegration and integration needs of migrants. Through IRM, USAID and IOM, in partnership with various local government and non-government institutions in these six countries, provide services to migrants and returnees to meet basic needs upon arrival and to aid integration in their host or home communities by providing livelihood support (programming to support employment and entrepreneurship). The program also prioritizes attention to psychosocial needs of migrants and returnees, integrating psychosocial assistance into its livelihoods programming and providing referrals to additional services.

The program's period of performance is 2020-2026. The IRM team is currently planning its 2025-2026 programming approach, in which it anticipates expanding program scope to reach large numbers of new beneficiaries, especially in Costa Rica, Panama, and El Salvador. USAID/El Salvador-CAM intends to engage researchers to design and conduct randomized evaluation(s) of specific interventions during the two remaining years of programming in these three countries.

Costa Rica and Panama receive significant flows of migrants, some in transit to other destinations and some intending to remain. In these countries, IRM supports both the regularization process and an integration process for the migrants who choose to remain. Regularization assistance may include payment of fees, legal assistance, and information. The design and implementation of regularization assistance programming will be shaped by pending national-level policy decisions affecting the number and types of visas available. The integration process aims to connect migrants with livelihood

opportunities, through either employment and vocational training support or support for entrepreneurship.

In **El Salvador**, roughly 500 migrant returnees arrive at the Migrant Reception Center in San Salvador each week. Between October 2022 and June 2023, 11,261 migrants were served at the Migrant Reception Center in San Salvador. IRM's goal is to reach this population with a reintegration approach that includes interventions targeted at the individual returnees, their communities, and eight municipalities prioritized for program activities. Individual support may include job placement services, seed capital for business creation, or referrals for health or psychosocial support services. IOM works with Local Rights Committees at the community level to raise awareness about prevention of irregular migration and promote reintegration, and works with municipalities to train municipal officials and leaders to build capacity for reintegration support. Follow-up with migrants who pass through the reception center to connect them with reintegration programming is a significant challenge in El Salvador.

Randomized evaluations may identify ways to improve targeting and retention of migrant beneficiaries, improve sequencing and intensity of economic (re)integration programs, and/or address implementation challenges to improve impact.

Potential areas for research include:

- Targeting
 - Reaching the target population and maintaining contact to be able to provide add-on services (e.g., successfully reaching recent migrants for regularization services, and then following through with integration activities, or providing reintegration services to returnees after they leave the reception center.)
- Streamlining regularization efforts
 - Increasing number of recent migrants who receive assistance with regularization and complete the process to receive residence and work permits
 - Increasing the number of recent migrants utilizing support services through improved information delivery/campaigns
- Economic re/integration
 - Improving employability and entrepreneurship pathways for migrants and returnees
 - Testing the impact of reintegration programming in El Salvador using standardized reintegration tools/indices developed by IOM
- Social cohesion/psychosocial support for migrants and returnees

B. Research Study Information

Through the LASER PULSE program, and with the support of OCE, USAID/El Salvador-CAM will take a phased approach to this evaluation design and implementation 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 one or more randomized evaluations. Given the different program activities

and countries involved, there could be multiple options for randomized evaluations that are not mutually exclusive. Evaluation options proposed could focus on one, two, or three of the countries.

If a randomized evaluation is feasible and USAID/EI Salvador-CAM and the research team decide to proceed, the LASER PULSE award will be amended to include an evaluation implementation phase (“Phase 2”). Phase 2 is dependent upon the feasibility of the evaluation, availability of funds, and other considerations. If Phase 2 is cleared by USAID/EI Salvador-CAM and OCE, 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 one or more randomized evaluations to answer USAID/EI Salvador-CAM and IOM’s learning and program implementation questions in the final two years of IRM programming. To meet this objective, the research team will engage in a series of consultations, including site visits, with USAID/EI Salvador-CAM, IOM, and other stakeholders. This will allow the research team to understand the program in detail, identify potential research questions, determine if a randomized evaluation is feasible, and design an evaluation.

During these consultations, the research team will be expected to identify and share relevant lessons from existing evidence and theory on related interventions, outcomes, or behavioral insights, with USAID/EI Salvador-CAM and IOM. The research team’s insight on relevant existing evidence may guide decisions about program design for the final two-years of programming. This could include studies related to migrant regularization and integration, workforce development, seed funding for entrepreneurship, and psychosocial support for migrants, among other topics.

The research team is expected to prepare and present a Randomized Evaluation Design Memo that includes a literature review of relevant evidence and describes one or more experimental research designs. If no opportunity to conduct experimental research exists, the research team should state that with appropriate justification. 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. 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 primary outcomes, potential risks to the integrity of the evaluation (both programmatic and contextual/political), data needs (including use of existing administrative data and any additional data collection), 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 the Latin American context).

	Deliverables	Prospective Deadline (to be adjusted once the research team is identified)
1	Presentation of relevant evidence	During consultations/site visits
2	<p>Randomized Evaluation Design Memo: This should include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Evidence review b. Proposed research question(s) c. Proposed experimental design description (including sampling, treatment arm(s) descriptions, measurement strategy, and power d. Design options to consider (if any) including the motivation for each with respect to research questions e. Risk assessment: What are the perceived primary risks of the design (and of any optional designs) f. Costs: What is the estimated cost (including differential costs of any options, if applicable) 	o/a September 30
	LASER PULSE and USAID review	Within 2 weeks of submission
3	Randomized Evaluation Design Memo presentation/webinar	Within 2 weeks of receiving USAID comments
4	<p>Full Evaluation SOW and Budget</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● USAID may choose to approve an evaluation design presented in deliverable 2. If the decision is made to conduct this evaluation, the research team will finalize the Randomized Evaluation Design Memo, incorporating feedback from the review and discussions in deliverable 3. The SOW should reflect USAID's SOW template (https://usaidlearninglab.org/resources/evaluation-statement-work-template) 	

Estimated Funding and Timeline for the Evaluation Design Phase: USAID estimates that Phase 1 will require approximately 40-50 person days between mid- August and mid-October 2024. Roughly \$40,000 will be available for Phase 1. The estimated funding and timeline for the evaluation implementation phase will be determined after the close of Phase 1.

II. Phase 2: Evaluation Implementation (Potential)

It is expected that upon approval of the Evaluation SOW and Budget, and pending availability of funds, USAID will initiate Phase 2 to conduct the chosen evaluation design with the Phase 1 research team. In Phase 2, the research team will refine the evaluation Scope Of Work (SOW) and will conduct the evaluation. The final Program Description (award agreement between the research team and LASER

PULSE) for Phase II will be co-created with USAID and the research team, and will include execution of the approved SOW, any inception events; embedding a research coordinator with IOM (if feasible); all data analysis; and drafting, submission, and revision of evaluation reports, presentations, summaries, and other knowledge products.

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

USAID and LASER PULSE seek capacity statements (CS) to identify and assess the feasibility of one or more options for a randomized evaluation of (an) intervention(s) of the IRM activity in Costa Rica, Panama, and El Salvador.

The applicants should meet the qualifications, expertise, and experience in areas and roles identified in the eligibility and qualifications section 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 scholars with track records of publishing research in top-tier peer-reviewed academic journals. OCE also encourages the meaningful engagement of scholars 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 (RLT) 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 migrant regularization or integration, workforce development, SME development and/or other relevant topics
- 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 Costa Rica, Panama, El Salvador, 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

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

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 El Salvador, Costa Rica, or Panama. The CS will be assessed according to the strength and experience of the Research Leadership Team when applying as a team.

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 El Salvador, Costa Rica, and Panama.

V. Required Documents for Submission

Use the [Capacity Statement Template](#) provided. The CS 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/El Salvador-CAM and OCE Integrated Response to Migration RCT
- b. **Contact details (Team/Individual):** Full name, position, affiliation, role on the project, and contact information. 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 and interest in the research project (half page), and describe how you approached management and coordination with implementers and other stakeholders on one previous randomized controlled trial you've been engaged in (half 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 40-50 days of LOE for this scoping phase.
- f. **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)
- g. **Research Leadership Team (RLT) background and relevant expertise:** Complete the [RLT Expertise Listing Worksheet](#) provided.
 - Tab 1: Please complete for all members of the RLT. The RLT consists of researchers expected to provide intellectual leadership and who will be co-authors on academic outputs. In some cases, this may be all team members, but not necessarily.

- 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. The selected outputs should demonstrate the research team’s qualifications as described in section C.II. above.

VI. 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 research that requires primary data collection in El Salvador, Costa Rica, and/or Panama, and/or Central America
- 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 bi-/multilateral client-funded research²
- Professional fluency in Spanish and English

D. Timeline

- Release of Call for Capacity Statement: July 3, 2024
- Questions and clarifications by: July 16, 2024 at 5pm EDT
- Application deadline: July 30, 2024 at 5:00 pm EDT.
- Announcement of selected team: Tentatively August 8, 2024.

E. NEXT STEPS

Once a CS is selected, the selected 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.

² Bi/multilateral client-funded research refers to research projects procured or otherwise financially supported by a bi-/multilateral client of a client-funded activity or program (such as the research commissioned through this call for capacity statements).

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.