



## Call for Capacity Statements

### USAID/El Salvador and OCE Impact Evaluation Design for the Educational Innovation Project in El Salvador

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) El Salvador Mission, 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 design and conduct a randomized impact evaluation of the [Educational Innovation Project \(EIP\)](#) in El Salvador.

#### A. Background

El Salvador's Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MINEDUCyT) is rolling out its New Pedagogical Model,<sup>1</sup> part of the national educational reform called "My New School." MINEDUCyT has identified 1,143 pilot schools to prioritize for the New Pedagogical Model. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, MINEDUCyT undertook a strategic rethinking with accelerated changes in certain areas of the educational system, assimilating the lessons learned from the pandemic to strengthen strategic planning. As a result of this, MINEDUCyT created a new pedagogical model that moved from an approach focused on information and teaching to one focused on the development and learning of the child, and it is based on seven steps: from subjects to *areas of development and learning*; from class schedules to *development and learning routines*; from classes to *learning experiences*; from methodologies focused on information to *playful and participatory methodologies*; from unidirectional organization to *multidirectional environments and interactions*; from an evaluation associated with grading to *an evaluation for learning*; and from limited, closed, and rigid educational materials to *multiple resources and pedagogical tools of an open and autonomous nature*.

USAID/El Salvador's Educational Innovation Project (EIP), implemented by FHI 360 and a consortium of specialist organizations, supports MINEDUCyT in implementing the New Pedagogical Model in the classroom. One of EIP's primary goals is to improve the quality of primary education by enhancing teachers' pedagogical and classroom management skills in language and mathematics classes. To this end, the project helps teachers integrate innovative strategies in language and mathematics teaching, such as social-emotional learning (SEL), universal design for learning (UDL), educational reinforcement or Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL), and multimodal strategies/information and communication technologies (ICT).

**USAID/El Salvador, in collaboration with FHI 360 and MINEDUCyT, plans to conduct a randomized impact evaluation of EIP, focused on the integrated teacher training model.** The purpose of the teacher training model is to create continuous professional development that is holistic, systematic, pertinent, and meaningful, as presented by the National Directorate of Teacher Training. Evidence from

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<sup>1</sup> MINEDUCyT is currently implementing the New Pedagogical Model in grades one through three in 1,143 prioritized schools; grades four through six in the rest of public schools will receive it possibly starting in 2025.

this impact evaluation will inform MINEDUCyT's plans to expand the model to new schools and grades and will identify ways to improve continuous teacher professional development.

Between 2022 and 2027, EIP will work in 300 public schools, conducting an integrated process of teacher training, educational accompaniment and teacher learning communities, strengthening the practices of more than 2,050 teachers to reach 80,000 students.

In 2024, EIP is working with the first cohort of 150 schools, refining its approach and learning lessons to integrate into the implementation of training in the second cohort. **Cohort 2, which will be included in this randomized impact evaluation, will begin in the 2025 school year and will involve another 150 treatment schools.** The schools targeted for the Cohort 2 evaluation (both treatment and control schools) will be randomly selected from the approximately 950 remaining MINEDUCyT pilot schools. The second cohort of teachers will receive classroom training days starting in January 2025 and continuing professional development through in-service training.

## **B. Research Study Information**

The primary objective of this research study is to design and implement an impact evaluation to answer USAID/EI Salvador program impact questions. USAID has a strong preference for a randomized impact evaluation. However, if a randomized impact evaluation is not feasible, the research team may propose a quasi-experimental design, or they may recommend against doing an impact evaluation. If no impact evaluation is recommended, this award may conclude with the submission of all evaluation design deliverables, or the research team and USAID/EI Salvador may agree on a different approach (such as a detailed cost analysis of activity components, structured implementation monitoring, or other rigorous research to answer critical research or scale-up questions that do not involve causality). The award is structured in two parts: 1) the evaluation design period, and 2) the evaluation implementation period.

**Evaluation design period:** October 7 - November 18

This research study begins with an evaluation design period during which the research team will scope and assess the feasibility of an experimental impact evaluation and draft a randomized impact evaluation design. In the evaluation design period, the research team will complete a number of activities, which include but are not limited to:

- Review program documentation, relevant resources from USAID/EI Salvador and USAID technical offices, and other relevant information, which may include documents from MINEDUCyT.
- Engage in a series of consultations, including site visits, with USAID/EI Salvador, FHI 360, MINEDUCyT, and other stakeholders, to understand program implementation and MINEDUCyT's plans for program scale-up. Travel will take place in mid- to late October.
- Discuss and refine research questions with USAID/EI Salvador, FHI 360, and MINEDUCyT.
- Draft an evaluation design memo and presentation.

**Evaluation implementation period:** If an impact evaluation is feasible and USAID/EI Salvador, OCE and the research team decide to proceed, the research team will co-create a Statement of Work (SOW), with a detailed evaluation budget, in collaboration with USAID/EI Salvador and OCE. The research team will then implement activities as specified in the SOW.

**Deliverables:**

**Evaluation design period:** The research team is expected to prepare and present an Evaluation Design Memo that describes an experimental research design. If no opportunity to conduct experimental research exists, the research team should state that with appropriate justification, and may propose a quasi-experimental impact evaluation design, or recommend against conducting an impact evaluation. The Evaluation Design Memo should:

- a. Propose research question(s) that reflect the mission and other stakeholder learning objectives
- b. Proposed experimental or quasi-experimental design description (including sampling, treatment arm(s) descriptions, measurement strategy, and power)
- c. Risk assessment: What are the perceived primary risks of the design (and of any optional designs)?
- d. Cost: What is the estimated cost?

	<b>Deliverables</b>	<b>Prospective Deadline (to be adjusted once the research team is identified)</b>
I. Evaluation design period		
1	Evaluation Design Memo	o/a November 4, 2024
2	LASER PULSE and USAID review	Within 3 business days of submission
3	<p>Evaluation Design Memo presentation</p> <p>The research team will share the Impact Evaluation memo by the date noted above, and will facilitate a discussion of the memo during the week following the submission of the memo.</p> <p>The objective is to discuss, finalize and select the evaluation strategy by considering the research team's recommendations, the potential implementation partner and the feasibility for evaluation.</p>	Within 3 business days of receiving USAID comments
<p>If, upon presentation of the Evaluation Design Memo, the research team and USAID agree to implement an impact evaluation as designed, the research team will proceed with activities and deliverables specified below under II. Evaluation Implementation Deliverables (deliverable 4, if relevant, and deliverable 5).</p> <p>If, upon presentation of the Evaluation Design Memo, the research team recommends against conducting an impact evaluation, the mission and research team may discuss alternative research questions to explore and will modify the Evaluation Implementation Deliverables accordingly.</p>		
II. Evaluation Implementation Deliverables		

	<b>Deliverables</b>	<b>Prospective Deadline (to be adjusted once the research team is identified)</b>
4	<p>Random assignment to treatment and comparison groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● If a randomized impact evaluation is feasible and USAID and the research team decide to proceed, the research team will complete random assignment of schools/teachers to treatment and comparison groups by November 18, 2024.</li> <li>● Note: Planning for teacher training necessitates this tight timeline. USAID and FHI360 can provide a substantial amount of data on school, teacher, and student characteristics, as well as selection constraints, to enable randomization on this timeline.</li> </ul>	By November 18, 2024
5	<p>Full Evaluation SOW and Detailed Budget</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● USAID may choose to approve an evaluation design presented in deliverable 3. If the decision is made to conduct this evaluation, the research team will finalize the Randomized Evaluation Design Memo, and complete a costed Statement of Work.</li> <li>● Once the SOW is completed and approved by USAID/El Salvador, with input from USAID/OCE and the LASER PULSE AOR, this sub-award with LASER PULSE will be amended to include the full evaluation SOW and all deliverables, requirements, and timelines therein.</li> </ul>	By November 25, 2024

**Estimated Funding and Timeline:**

**Evaluation Design Period:** USAID estimates that the evaluation design period will require approximately 40-50 person days between early October and late November 2024, and estimates that these activities will require approximately \$40,000 to complete.

**Evaluation Implementation Period:** If an evaluation is feasible and USAID and the research team agree to proceed, USAID expects the evaluation implementation period to last from late November 2024 to approximately June 2027, with a total estimated cost of up to \$750,000, to be determined in discussions between the research team and USAID and based on the agreed-upon SOW.

**E. OVERVIEW OF CAPACITY STATEMENT (CS) AND SELECTION PROCESS**

USAID and LASER PULSE seek capacity statements (CSs) to design and implement a randomized impact evaluation of the EIP activity in 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 Teams<sup>2</sup> 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 must have the following qualifications:

- Ph.D. in education, political science, economics, or related field
- Experience conducting rigorous empirical research, including impact evaluations utilizing randomization, in education and related sectors
- 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 El Salvador and/or Latin 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 United States and/or Low and Middle-Income Countries (LMICs), especially from Latin America and El Salvador. 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.

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<sup>2</sup> “Research Leadership Teams” consist of research team members expected to provide intellectual leadership and be coauthors on any academic outputs.

#### 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.

#### 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 and USAID/OCE Educational Innovation Project Impact Evaluation
- 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 government stakeholders on one previous randomized controlled trial the team has carried out (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 level of effort for the evaluation design period, with additional level of effort to be proposed later by the research team to accomplish the evaluation implementation, if relevant.
- f. **Availability for impact evaluation:** Upon completion of the evaluation design period and at the approval of USAID, do you anticipate your team will be available to implement an impact evaluation (IE) of the Educational Innovation Project? Please list additional partners you may include for the IE implementation period. (This is not binding and may change to reflect the selected evaluation design.)
- g. **Research Leadership Team background and relevant expertise:** Complete this [worksheet](#).
  - Tab 1: Please complete for all members of the Research Leadership Team. The Research Leadership Team 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 E.II. Qualifications 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 and/or Latin 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
- Professional fluency in Spanish and English