



International Initiative for Impact Evaluation

Request for Qualifications: Impact evaluation of teacher training interventions in rural Henan Province, People's Republic of China 3ie Policy Window Three RFQ PW3.05.CH.PG.HP

Issue date: 28 January 2015

Deadline: 23:59 GMT, 2 March 2015

1. Introduction

The [International Initiative for Impact Evaluation \(3ie\)](#), requests research organisations or consortia, to submit qualifications for a proposal preparation grant, under 3ie's [Policy Window 3 \(PW 3\) grant programme](#).

The proposal will be for the [high-quality impact evaluation](#) of a teacher training intervention in rural areas implemented by the Henan Province Department of Education (DOE), People's Republic of China (PRC) or any other relevant intervention being implemented by the DOE. The proposal will describe the theory of change for the intervention and include research questions and an impact evaluation design.

2. Overview of Policy Window Three

3ie's Policy Window Three (PW3) funds high-quality, mixed-methods impact evaluations commissioned by policymakers and programme managers to answer questions about the attributable impact of interventions they implement. 3ie promotes theory-based impact evaluations that make use of an experimental or quasi-experimental counterfactual to examine the full programme causal chain and to answer questions about what works, why, how and at what cost.

Policy window grants are awarded in two phases.

2.1 Phase one: qualifications and proposal preparation

The first phase begins with this request for qualifications (RFQ). The qualifications will be reviewed and scored by at least one internal 3ie reviewer, two external reviewers, and one implementing agency representative.

The selected research team will receive a Policy Window Preparation Grant (PWPG) of US\$20,000 to develop one proposal. In case the selected research team and DOE see convenient to present more than one proposal, the total PWPG can be for up to a maximum of US\$30,000 (see section 4.3). Please see the [3ie PWPG agreement and grant administration templates](#) for more details.

The PWPG covers costs associated with proposal preparation activities, including costs of engaging with the implementing agency and 3ie. The costs include a field visit and one or more visits to work with the relevant staff of the implementing agency and to conduct capacity-building workshops with their staff. These activities ensure dialogue between implementing agency staff and the research team as a basis for the process of agreeing on the impact evaluation questions and design.

At the end of phase 1, the PWPG grantee will submit the proposal, including proposed budget, using the [3ie PW3 evaluation proposal form](#). The proposed design is due within three months of the signing of the PWPG grant agreement. More details about the timeline for this RFQ are provided below.

2.2. Phase two: full proposal and impact evaluation

The proposed impact evaluation design and budget will be reviewed and scored by at least two internal and at least three external reviewers, including a representative of the implementing agency. It is 3ie's intent, although not a guarantee, to fund at least one proposed evaluation, conditional on the proposal receiving adequate scores on all selection criteria (see section 4.5 for selection criteria). 3ie may provide comments and request a resubmission of a proposal that does not receive adequate scores. 3ie reserves the right not to award any follow-on impact evaluation grant.

If the proposal for phase 2 is accepted, 3ie will award the research team a grant to conduct the impact evaluation under 3ie's standard terms and conditions. Please see <http://www.3ieimpact.org/en/funding/policy-window/how-to-apply/> for the 3ie grant agreement and grant administration agreement templates.

3. Background

Seventy-six per cent of all children in school in Henan Province live in rural areas. In the last ten years, the Henan DOE has accomplished a number of improvements in rural education, including standardising rural school policies and benchmarks, implementing a remote education project, implementing a plan for special positions for rural teachers, establishing a subsidy system for rural teachers and implementing an innovative rural school feeding and dining room programme. The feeding programme, in particular, was informed by evidence from impact evaluations about child nutrition, including one funded by [3ie on anaemia](#).

The PRC currently has compulsory education through grade nine. The system is highly competitive and based on very challenging standardised exams. A significant and persistent gap exists between the performance of urban and rural students in Henan. Rural students perform more poorly during their early years of education and the gap increases as they progress.

To address this problem, the national government has been investing heavily in the National Rural Teacher Training Programme (NRTTP). Between 2010 and 2013, the national government spent US\$700 million, of which Henan received US\$68 million. The provincial authorities invested more than US\$90 million during this period. More than

380,000 teachers have received either short-term (10-15 days) or long-term (90 days) training. Training has been provided to elementary and junior high school teachers, as well as for preschool teachers. There is also a self-managed computer-based (80-120 hours) training, which is required for all teachers under age 40. The vast majority of teachers (323,000) have received the computer-based training.

Despite great deal of resources being spent on training, there is concern that NRTTP training is not being effective in improving the performance of rural educators. Thus, training does not appear to be adapted to the rural context; teachers often claim that they do not have the time to do the computer-based training, which is most commonly offered; or teachers may be assigned training not relevant to their core teaching responsibilities.

To date there has been no rigorous assessment of teacher training programmes at the provincial level. A national assessment (of teachers, not students) showed that teachers were satisfied with the training: in general, teachers claim that the training did have an effect on them. However, it is unclear whether the training has had any actual impact on student learning. Such impacts have not yet been examined.

The Henan DOE would like to know how cost-effective these large investments in teacher training are. The department recognises the importance of obtaining evidence to use as the basis for investing in such training programmes and ensuring they are achieving the intended objectives. More specifically, the DOE wants to know whether training improves teaching methods and if it improves student learning. DOE wants to know what types of training work best and what types of training are most cost-effective.

4. Policy Window Preparation Grant (Phase one)

4.1 Eligibility

1. Only legally registered organisations and consortia of registered organisations, not individuals, may apply.
2. The grant-holding organisation must be located in the PRC, with researchers of Chinese nationality as the lead or co-lead principal investigator (PI).
3. The application may include other researchers who are not employees of that organisation. Applicants are encouraged to include a researcher with a demonstrated international reputation as one of the PIs.

4.2 Preparation process and expectations

The study team will hold at least one workshop to build capacity among the implementing agency (Henan DOE) to increase understanding of impact evaluation among its staff during the preparation grant period. This workshop will form part of the process of identifying and illustrating the programme's theory of change and discussing possible evaluation designs.

The selected study team will engage with the DOE and other stakeholders it may identify to explain the rationale for conducting an impact evaluation, what will be learned from it and the implications for programme design, data collection, analysis and use of results.

During the preparatory phase, 3ie requires the research team to coordinate closely with the DOE on evaluation questions and study design. If needed, the study team is expected to conduct formative research needed to ensure high-quality design, within the PWPG time and resources available. Workshops for DOE staff and other key stakeholders help ensure an on-going dialogue between the DOE staff and the research team throughout the study.

3ie expects the workshop(s) and discussions with DOE staff to cover the following areas:

- Take stock of administrative and existing survey and other data that might be useful for the evaluation;
- Determine evaluation questions and timeframes for evaluation;
- Discuss a feasible evaluation design including identification methods;
- Discuss data collection methods; and
- Agree on and carry out scoping activities and other background research needed to generate information and develop a policy engagement and research communication plan, using 3ie guidance and templates.

The study team members must demonstrate their ability to conduct the study for which they win an award and their availability to start and finish the study within the timeframe indicated in this RFQ.

4.3 Budget

The preparation grant (US\$20,000 for one proposal, US\$25,000 for two, and up to US\$30,000 for three) will cover costs associated with the activities necessary for producing a strong impact evaluation research proposal(s), including evaluation questions, a feasible identification strategy and capacity-building plan. Eligible activities include a short and relevant literature review, formative field research, researcher time and travel to meet with implementing partners, engagement workshops (inception and capacity building), preliminary checking of relevant administrative data and site visits.

The preparation grant will be paid in two tranches. The first tranche will be 60 per cent of the approved budget, paid on contract signing. The second tranche will be 40 per cent of approved budget, which will be paid after review and approval (if it meets review and selection conditions) of the impact evaluation proposal.

4.4 Timeline

The following table includes an indicative list of deliverables and deadlines for both the preparatory phase (phase 1) and the full impact evaluation proposal phase (2).

Date in 2015	Activity or deliverable
28 January	RFQ call launched
2 March	Submission deadline

4-11 March	Review and scoring of team applications
11 March	Team identified
16 March	3ie contracts team
23 March-30 June	Preparation phase
1 July	Deadline for submission of full proposal
2-15 July	Review of proposal
15 July	Proposal selected and sent for approval; team notified
24 July	Team contracted to implement study
1 August	Latest date for starting implementation

4.5 Selection criteria

The qualifications submitted in response to the RFQ will be reviewed and scored according to the following criteria:

Preparation grant: Phase one	Weight (%)
Credentials of the research team	45
Organisational capabilities to hold and manage the grant	25
Sector experience and involvement of developing countries researchers and/or research organisations	25
Associate membership of 3ie	5
Full impact evaluation proposal application: Phase two	
Qualification of research team (including credentials, sector experience and involvement of developing countries researchers and/or research organisations)	20
Organisational capability to hold and manage the grant	20
Quality of technical proposal, internal validity	25
Demonstrated relevance of research question to the need of the implementing agency and potential for uptake of study findings	25
Cost	10

4.6 Phase one qualification review process

Qualifications will be reviewed and scored by one 3ie internal reviewer, two external reviewers, and one implementing agency representative. It is 3ie's intent, although not guarantee, to award the proposal preparation grant, conditional on the applicant receiving adequate scores on all criteria. 3ie may provide comments and request applicants to make change to strengthen their capacities. 3ie reserves the right to not award any grant in case no applicant meet the requirements.

5. Instructions for applicants

RFQ applications must include the following information:

1. Completed [organisation information form](#), located on the 3ie website.
2. Curriculum vitae (CV, not to exceed three pages each) of all proposed PIs, along with a signed letter from each indicating the share of working time during the three months of the preparation grant expected to be spent on the proposal preparation work and confirming availability for that expected share of working time. It is expected that these PIs will participate in the proposed impact evaluation. Applicants are required to provide only information relevant to the grant in their CV.
3. If applicable, include CVs (not to exceed three pages each) of additional researchers who will be involved in conducting the impact evaluation, if approved. Applicants need to provide only information relevant to the grant in their CV.
4. Copies of up to three impact evaluation reports or publications relevant for this call, with proposed PIs as named authors.
5. Proposed budget, for the proposal preparation costs (US\$20,000 for one proposal, US\$25,000 for two, and up to US\$30,000 for three). The proposed budget must follow 3ie's direct cost and indirect cost policies, including the cost of two engagement workshops. The budget should be presented in [3ie budget format and follow 3ie budget guidelines](#).

6. Submission guidelines

- Please submit all files in a single email message not to exceed **10MB** to pw3@3ieimpact.org mentioning 'PW China Henan' no later than **23:59 GMT, 2 March 2015**.
- Components three and four, above, should be submitted in a single Microsoft Word or .rtf file in font size equal to or larger than 11 point.
- The signed letters from the PIs and sample impact evaluation studies relevant to the grant may be submitted as separate pdf files.
- Budget notes may be submitted as a separate Microsoft® Word or .rtf file in font size equal to or larger than 11.

Incomplete submissions will not be considered.

Please direct any questions related to this RFQ to pw3@3ieimpact.org by 23:59 GMT on 30 January 2015. By 3 February 2015, a single document with all questions and answers will be made publicly available at [RFQ webpage](#).

This RFQ does not constitute a guarantee of an award.