



# CEDIL Call for Proposals

Programme of Work 1: Understanding Complex Interventions

March 2019



## Contents

1.	Objective of the Programme.....	4
2.	Evaluations .....	4
2.1	Evaluations: Budget and timelines.....	5
3.	Secondary Data Analysis/Retrospective Evaluations .....	5
3.1	Secondary data projects: budget and timelines .....	5
4.	Evidence synthesis.....	5
4.1	Evidence synthesis: Budget and timelines .....	6
5.	Further information.....	6

## Preface

This document sets out the requirements for projects submitted to Programme of Work 1. It should be read in conjunction with the **Call Overview** and the **Application Guidance Note**.

## 1. Objective of the Programme

There is an increasing tendency among donors to structure development interventions as 'packages' including several different types of activity to deliver a set of related outcomes. The rationale for this approach is clear: the barriers to intended benefits can be multiple and multi-faceted, and success seems more likely if a wider range of these are confronted simultaneously.

However, a complex intervention presents numerous challenges to rigorous evaluation. The various activities are likely to interact in myriad ways to generate outcomes. Existing approaches tend to either isolate and evaluate components or measure the overall effect size. Information from such evaluations is of little use for making decisions about how to modify complex interventions to improve their efficacy or adapt them to other contexts, as the impact on overall outcomes of changes to individual components cannot be assessed.

This programme of work seeks to strengthen methods to evaluate complex interventions and broaden theoretical understanding of how and why combinations of interventions work. It will achieve this by supporting prospective and retrospective evaluations and review projects which assess existing evidence on how systems and processes work in categories of complex interventions.

Three types of projects are invited under this programme of work: evaluations, secondary data analysis/retrospective evaluations, and evidence synthesis projects.

## 2. Evaluations

Evaluation projects should develop and apply innovative methods to evaluate a complex intervention. Projects should propose a theoretical framework that hypothesises how components of an intervention interact to generate outcomes, and design an evaluation methodology which will test its validity. Both the interactions between intervention components and with the intervention context should be considered. Innovation will be required for these evaluations, but this can take several forms, including: novel combinations and mixing of methods, the adaptation of methods used in one sector or discipline to another, interdisciplinary conceptual frameworks or the development of entirely new methods.

Large projects should produce outcomes which will provide decision makers with useful information to improve the efficacy of the complex programmes being evaluated, where these are not completed, or design new interventions with similar objectives.

Examples of research questions that can be addressed by these evaluations include:

1. To what extent do various components of an intervention generate necessary and sufficient conditions which account for results?
2. What contextual factors appear crucial to the success or failure of the complex intervention?
3. What emergent outcomes are produced by particular 'packages' of interventions and what processes are responsible for these outcomes?
4. Are the benefits of complex evaluations distributed equitably? Are there certain components of interventions that are critical for ensuring that vulnerable and marginal populations benefit from the intervention?

5. What new outcomes measures or combinations of outcomes should be used in evaluating these programmes? And what is the cost-effectiveness of the intervention across these multiple outcomes?
6. To what extent are complex interventions implemented as they were designed? What factors account for divergence?

## **2.1 Evaluations: Budget and timelines**

Large projects will be provided with up to £1 million for up to three years of work. We expect projects to commence no later than 31 January 2020. We recognise that within this time period, projects may not be able to conduct traditional baseline and endline data collection prior to an intervention's start and following its completion, respectively. Hence we encourage (1) proposals which include an innovative design and baseline and mid-term data collection, with the expectation of additional funding being sought from elsewhere for endline and final analysis at a later date, and (2) proposals for studies of ongoing interventions using existing data sources for baseline data, especially innovative approaches to recreating baseline data, and new data collection for endline.

Especially for the former, as the emphasis of these projects is to understand the processes through which interventions generate outcomes, rather than their effects, we expect projects to be able to propose research activities that will generate useful evidence and insights within this timeframe.

## **3. Secondary Data Analysis/Retrospective Evaluations**

This programme of work will also support retrospective evaluations of projects that have already been completed or that are about to end. These evaluations may require the collection of some end-of-project data, but in most cases they will require gathering secondary data. Secondary data may consist of existing household level data (such as for example DHS and LSMS data), project monitoring data, administrative data, or any other secondary data such as satellite images and other big data, which will be used to construct baselines and control groups.

As with all CEDIL projects, our aim is to support projects which implement innovative methods for conducting secondary data analysis.

### **3.1 Secondary data projects: budget and timelines**

Secondary data/retrospective evaluation projects will receive up to £300,000 and should be completed in 2 years. Projects should start no later than 31 January 2020.

## **4. Evidence synthesis**

In addition to evaluations of specific complex interventions, this programme of work will also support several smaller scale review projects to improve understanding of the dynamics of complex interventions. These projects should review evidence that adopts a systems or process approach to analyse the impact of complex interventions. Reviews should assess the strength of evidence related to causal chains of how multiple activities interact in specific intervention categories, and identify

gaps. They should produce recommendations on both future priorities for research and how the evidence reviewed can be most effectively used by policy makers.

## **4.1 Evidence synthesis: Budget and timelines**

Evidence synthesis projects will receive up to £200,000 and should be completed in 18 months. Projects should start no later than 30 September 2019.

## **5. Further information**

Applicants to the Programme of Work are advised particularly to review the following inception papers produced by CEDIL. Proposals are not required to build on or follow approaches set out in these papers, but applicants are likely to find them a useful reference point to characterise their work in relation to previous activity.

- Almas, et.al. Using data differently and using different data
- O. Attanasio and D. Blair, Structural modelling in policymaking
- E. Jimenez, et.al. Mixing and matching: using qualitative methods to improve quantitative impact evaluations and systematic reviews of development outcomes
- D. Kneale, et.al. Causal chain analysis in systematic reviews of international development interventions

Questions on this call specification should be directed to: [cedil.commissioning@opml.co.uk](mailto:cedil.commissioning@opml.co.uk)