



# REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS 2018

## I. GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The Eleanor Crook Foundation (ECF) is pleased to announce a RISE (Research, Innovate, Scale and Establish) for Nutrition Request for Applications (RFA) for 2018 for up to three grants of \$1.35 million each. The RFA is for implementation research projects designed to test innovations and delivery mechanisms with the potential to increase the effectiveness of nutrition interventions and take them to scale in East Africa. This builds on two previous rounds of RISE for Nutrition RFAs in 2016 and 2017.

Founded in 1997, ECF is a growing US-based philanthropy focused on global nutrition. We continue to work towards our mission of improving global nutrition through research, advocacy and capacity building. To our knowledge, we remain the only funder who solely focuses on advocacy and research in this technical sector. We are sick of “business as usual” and we seek to continually push the envelope on the role private funders can play. ECF supports over two dozen non-governmental and research organizations across half a dozen countries.

At the Global Nutrition Summit in Milan in 2017, ECF made its first large financial pledge: to invest \$100 million in nutrition by 2030. The RISE for Nutrition annual RFA is a key vehicle through which ECF will fulfil that pledge. Also, at this event, USAID, DFID and ECF signed a tripartite agreement to commit to leveraging additional funding for nutrition in the coming years, with an additional \$50 million in matched funding for nutrition from DFID. This collaboration will aim to bring USAID and DFID’s support for nutrition scale-up alongside ECF’s capacity to pursue innovative and more cost-effective approaches. The commitment extends through 2030, backing implementation research, capacity building and advocacy for global nutrition.

To bridge the gap between identification of successful interventions and getting those interventions to those who need them most, ECF launched the RISE for Nutrition grant portfolio in 2016. This portfolio funds research on cost-effective, scalable innovations designed to improve nutrition interventions. ECF conducted a round of RISE in 2016 and in 2017; however, we are looking to do things a bit differently this year. The process now consists of: 1) an initial open call for concept notes; 2) the shortlisting of Semi-Finalists whose projects best fit the selection criteria; 3) a workshop series where ECF supports the Semi-Finalists to develop a full proposal in collaboration with the Foundation and external experts; 4) the scoring of final applications and the selection of Finalists, who are presented to the Board for approval; and 5) the grant refinement process, where ECF and the prospective grantee agree on final implementation and research parameters.

## II. BACKGROUND

### A. DESCRIPTION OF THE CHALLENGE

Malnutrition continues to be a leading driver of the global burden of disease. It is responsible for almost half of all deaths of children under five years old – more than HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis combined.<sup>1</sup> Malnourished children have lower resistance to infection, are more likely to die from common childhood ailments like diarrheal diseases and respiratory infections, and they fall into a vicious cycle of recurring sickness, faltering growth and diminished learning ability.<sup>2</sup> 151 million children under five are stunted and 51 million are wasted, with 16 million of them severely wasted, while obesity continues to rise, with 38 million children obese globally.<sup>3</sup> East Africa is the region in the developing world with the highest prevalence of stunting, at 35.6%.<sup>4</sup> While the prevalence of wasting is not as high in East Africa at 6.0%, this data masks the significant country and sub-national variations in wasting, particularly in parts of Somalia, North-East Kenya, North-East Uganda and Ethiopia that frequently experience cyclical droughts. The high prevalence of anemia and its consequences should also not be overlooked.<sup>5</sup>

Despite the significant burden of malnutrition (both short and long-term consequences) and the commitments of the international community, global nutrition continues to be a neglected area of development aid. Even though nutrition interventions have been consistently identified as one of the most cost-effective development actions, global donor spending on undernutrition is a mere 0.5% of official development assistance (ODA)<sup>6,7</sup>. For many reasons, including financing challenges, coverage of nutrition-specific interventions is poor in most parts of the world where they are most needed<sup>8</sup>. In particular, programs focusing on nutrition promotion, including infant and young child feeding (IYCF) programs, reflect generally low rates of coverage<sup>9</sup>. For many nutrition-sensitive interventions, the nutrition community knows even less. There are substantial evidence gaps on costs and impact on nutrition-sensitive outcomes. Attribution for various cross-sector interventions in reducing the burden of malnutrition (particularly stunting and anemia) is not well understood<sup>10</sup>. These trends underlie the need for innovative ways to increase the scalability, sustainability and effectiveness of existing nutrition interventions and investigate new approaches to tackling the challenge of malnutrition.

<sup>1</sup> Black et al, Maternal and child undernutrition and overweight in low-income and middle-income countries. *Lancet*; 382: 427-451, 2013.

<sup>2</sup> Black et al, Maternal and child undernutrition and overweight in low-income and middle-income countries. *Lancet*; 382: 427-451, 2013.

<sup>3</sup> UNICEF/WHO/World Bank Joint Child Malnutrition Estimates 2018.

<sup>4</sup> UNICEF/WHO/World Bank Joint Child Malnutrition Estimates 2018.

<sup>5</sup> UNICEF/WHO/World Bank Joint Child Malnutrition Estimates 2018.

<sup>6</sup> Horton, S. and J. Hoddinott. "Benefits and Costs of the Food and Nutrition Targets for the Post-2015 Development Agenda: Post-2015 Consensus." *Food Security and Nutrition Perspective paper*. Copenhagen Consensus Center, 2014.

<sup>7</sup> Development Initiatives, *Global Nutrition Report 2017: Nourishing the SDGs*. Bristol, UK, 2017

<sup>8</sup> Gillespie, Stuart, Menon, Purnima, and Kennedy, Andrew L., "Scaling Up Impact on Nutrition: What Will It Take?" *Advances in Nutrition: an international review journal*, July 2015, Vol. 6: 440-451, 2015.

<sup>9</sup> International Food Policy Research Institute. *Global Nutrition Report 2016: From Promise to Impact: Ending Malnutrition by 2030*. Washington, DC, 2016.

<sup>10</sup> Shekar et al. *An Investment Framework for Nutrition: Reaching the Global Targets for Stunting, Anemia, Breastfeeding and Anemia*. The World Bank, 2017.

## B. GLOBAL AND REGIONAL COMMITMENTS TO NUTRITION

Major bilateral donors have attempted to mobilize support and visibility of efforts to eliminate malnutrition worldwide and ensure access to healthier and more sustainable diets. This is in conjunction with many other stakeholders: the World Health Assembly (WHA), who adopted the Comprehensive Implementation Plan on Maternal, Infant and Young Child Nutrition (MIYCN) in 2012; the UN, who negotiated the Sustainable Development Goals in 2015; and the UN General Assembly, who proclaimed 2016-2025 the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition. The United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID) has a globally recognized nutrition program and has played a key role in both setting the global agenda and mobilizing the global community. DFID has committed a total £3.3 billion for nutrition programming for the period 2013 to 2020<sup>11</sup>. Likewise, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has an overarching strategy for nutrition (the 2014-2025 Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Strategy<sup>12</sup>) that aligns nutrition priorities across its major multi-sector investment portfolios. The first of its kind at USAID, the strategy also aligns with the 2025 World Health Assembly (WHA) Nutrition Targets. It addresses both direct and underlying causes of malnutrition and affirms USAID's commitment to play a major role in the international fight against malnutrition.

At the regional level, in 2003 African governing states committed at least 10% of their national budgets towards agriculture and food security within the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP).<sup>13</sup> In principle, nutrition is a cross-cutting theme throughout all four CAADP Pillars. However, CAADP Pillar III specifically addresses the chronically food-insecure and those populations who are vulnerable and affected by crises and emergencies. Pillar III is intended to be implemented through four flagship programs: 1) Food Fortification; 2) Home-grown School Feeding; 3) Diet Diversity; and 4) Maternal and Child Health. Subsequently, at Malabo in 2014, the African Union (AU) made a declaration on Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Transformation<sup>14</sup> and reaffirmed the CAADP commitment to end hunger and reduce stunting on the continent to 10% by 2025. Unfortunately, a lack of institutional coordination has hindered these initiatives; thus, a number of them have not yet been operationalised.

## C. REVIEW OF IDENTIFIED EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES

In the seminal 2013 Lancet Series on Maternal and Child Undernutrition, leading academics and nutrition experts identified 10 evidence-based, nutrition-specific interventions organized into four packages of support whose scale-up to 90% coverage would significantly reduce stunting as well as the number of global deaths in children under five<sup>15</sup>. These include:

- Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF), consisting of promotion of early and exclusive breastfeeding and continued breastfeeding through 24 months and appropriate complementary feeding and maternal nutrition;
- Management of acute malnutrition, consisting of management of severe acute malnutrition (SAM) and management of moderate acute malnutrition (MAM);
- Optimum maternal nutrition during pregnancy, consisting of multiple micronutrient supplementation in pregnancy, maternal calcium supplementation, maternal balanced energy protein supplementation and salt iodization; and
- Micronutrient supplementation in children at risk, consisting of vitamin A supplementation and preventive zinc supplementation in children 6-59 months of age.

<sup>11</sup> DfID, Independent Commission for Aid Impact, DfID's Contribution to Improving Nutrition, Report 36. July 2014

<sup>12</sup> USAID Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Strategy 2014-2025, found October 3, 2018 at: [www.usaid.gov/nutrition-strategy](http://www.usaid.gov/nutrition-strategy)

<sup>13</sup> Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme, found October 9, 2018 at: [www.un.org/en/africa/osaa/peace/caadp.shtm](http://www.un.org/en/africa/osaa/peace/caadp.shtm)

<sup>14</sup> Malabo Declaration on Accelerated Agricultural Growth, found October 9, 2018 at:

[www.nepad.org/resource/malabo-declaration-accelerated-agricultural-growth](http://www.nepad.org/resource/malabo-declaration-accelerated-agricultural-growth)

<sup>15</sup> Black et al, Maternal and child undernutrition and overweight in low-income and middle-income countries. Lancet; 382: 427-451, 2013.

The two packages with the largest predicted impacts on mortality are management of acute malnutrition and appropriate infant and young child feeding, both of which have high potential for community-level scale-up. Unfortunately, coverage of these packages is low. Experts predict that even scaling up the recommended 10 nutrition-specific interventions to 90% would only lead to a reduction in stunting by 20%. In order to truly end the global burden of chronic malnutrition, the global nutrition community still needs to identify how to tackle the remaining 80%.<sup>18</sup>

In a recent ECF-commissioned report ‘Minding the Undernutrition Evidence Gap: Findings of the Key Expert Consultation’<sup>19</sup>, key nutrition thought leaders were consulted on their assessments of key gaps in global nutrition. The results identified several gaps in the nutrition community’s understanding of the etiology of various forms of malnutrition, specific approaches to addressing the drivers of malnutrition, and how to implement impactful and cost-effective interventions. The key themes emerging from the report include:

- We need a better understanding of the drivers of malnutrition and how the different forms of malnutrition interact with each other;
- We need to prioritise research on how we deliver what we know works at scale, cost-effectively;
- Research is also needed into multi-sector packages that can achieve impact.

Given the complexity of the challenge that malnutrition presents, there is broad consensus that a multi-sector approach to nutrition will be more likely to support large-scale improvements than nutrition-specific interventions alone<sup>20</sup>. Specifically, there is increasing recognition of the role of nutrition-sensitive activities in supporting cross-cutting nutrition outcomes. Nutrition-sensitive activities draw on complementary sectors to address additional underlying causes of malnutrition and enhance the coverage and effectiveness of nutrition-specific interventions.<sup>21</sup>

### III. ECF’S APPROACH TO IMPLEMENTATION RESEARCH AND THE RESEARCH, INNOVATE, SCALE AND ESTABLISH (RISE) FOR NUTRITION PORTFOLIO

Building on WHO and Global Fund definitions, ECF defines implementation research as “research that seeks to field test the feasibility, acceptability, effectiveness and/or efficiency of innovations to enhance the effectiveness of an intervention”.<sup>22,23</sup> Implementation research does not focus on research for academic purposes. ECF has decided to focus on implementation research to build on existing evidence in the nutrition sphere, while leveraging the knowledge and comparative advantage of partners who have proven experience in the implementation of nutrition programs, functional operational platforms and access to the population(s) in need. ECF is interested in both nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive innovations. Focusing on implementation research allows ECF to support context-specific, feasible and unproven innovations with a high potential to boost impact, while simultaneously ensuring clear and measurable direct outcomes for targeted communities. For ECF, this approach represents the best of both worlds: contributing directly to local nutrition improvements and engaging constructively in global discussions on how to improve nutrition impact.

<sup>18</sup> Black et al, Maternal and child undernutrition and overweight in low-income and middle-income countries. *Lancet*; 382: 427-451, 2013.

<sup>19</sup> ECF, Minding the Undernutrition Evidence Gap: Findings of the Key Expert Consultation. 2018, found at: [www.eleanorcrookfoundation.org](http://www.eleanorcrookfoundation.org)

<sup>20</sup> Development Initiatives, Global Nutrition Report 2017: Nourishing the SDGs. Bristol, UK, 2017

<sup>21</sup> Ruel et al. “Nutrition-sensitive interventions and programmes: how can they help to accelerate progress in improving maternal and child nutrition?” *Lancet*; 382: 536-51, 2013.

<sup>22</sup> WHO, The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis, Framework for Operations and Implementation Research in Health and Disease Control Programs, 2008.

<sup>23</sup> World Health Organization on behalf of the Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases (TDR), Implementation Research Toolkit, 2014.

The goal of the RISE portfolio is: “To improve the nutritional status of vulnerable populations<sup>24</sup> in East Africa.” ECF views investments in sustainable and scalable innovations as essential to achieving cost-effective and transformational change in global nutrition; the concepts of sustainability and scalability are inherently and implicitly reflected in all our grant-making activities. ECF defines scaling as “deliberate efforts to benefit significant numbers of people and communities with access to effective nutrition innovations that have been tested through rigorous research”. ECF defines sustainability as “the ability to maintain services and benefits over time” utilising the elements outlined in ECF’s Sustainability Conceptual Model (Figure 1). Therefore, we consider the ability of government and local actors to implement directly, and/or integration of the innovation into existing systems, as critical. Further information and guidance on ECF’s approach to sustainability and scale and what applicants should consider on how to address issues of sustainability and scale when responding to this RFA can be found in the document ‘ECF Grantee Guidance Series: Theory of Sustainability and Theory of Scale’.<sup>25</sup>

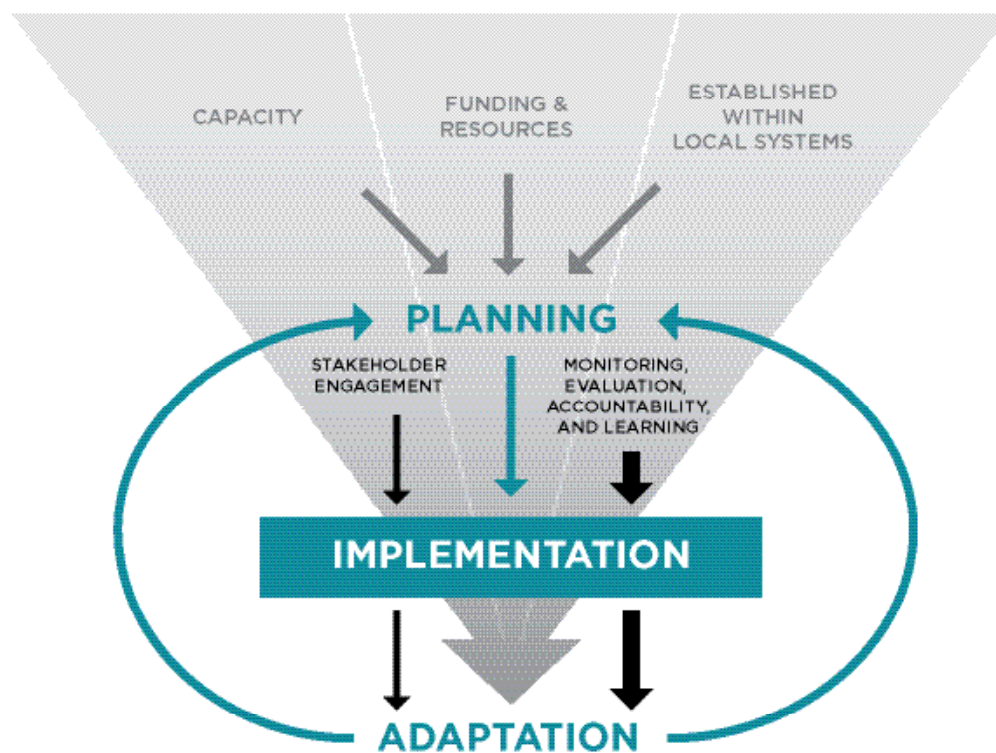


Figure 1: ECF Sustainability Conceptual Model

ECF realizes that taking any intervention or innovation to scale is a 10-15 year process and we are committed for the long haul. To that end, the RISE for Nutrition program includes three phases, as illustrated in Figure 2. In Phase One, grantees pilot test potentially scalable nutrition innovations using rigorous research in a real-world setting. In Phase Two, ECF supports further testing of effective innovations from Phase One to solidify the evidence base, improve scaling prospects and enhance buy-in and support (assuming promising results from Phase One). In Phase Three, ECF supports additional review and adaptation, followed by intensive and intentional scale-up by partners (especially government), but also including other actors such as the private sector and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

<sup>24</sup> Vulnerable populations include women of reproductive age, including breastfeeding and pregnant women; adolescents; children under five years including infants; and the elderly.

<sup>25</sup> ECF Grantee Series: Theory of Sustainability and Theory of Scale. 2018, found at: [www.eleanorcrookfoundation.org](http://www.eleanorcrookfoundation.org)

During each phase of the scaling process, ECF will work with grantees and stakeholders, including an Expert Advisory Board<sup>26</sup>, to conduct a systematic review of the innovation and adapt it accordingly to ensure it remains scalable and established within the local context. ECF will provide funding for and work closely alongside its grantees to advocate to governments, international institutions and other local actors to review scaling and sustainability progress and prospects. ECF will share results generated from RISE research activities with stakeholders in government, multilateral and bilateral organizations, international and national NGOs, the private sector, local and global research institutions, faith-based organizations (FBOs) and others, both across East Africa and globally. It is our expectation that only a subset of the interventions ECF supports at Phase One will progress to Phase Two and that not all of those that receive Phase Two funding will proceed to Phase Three.

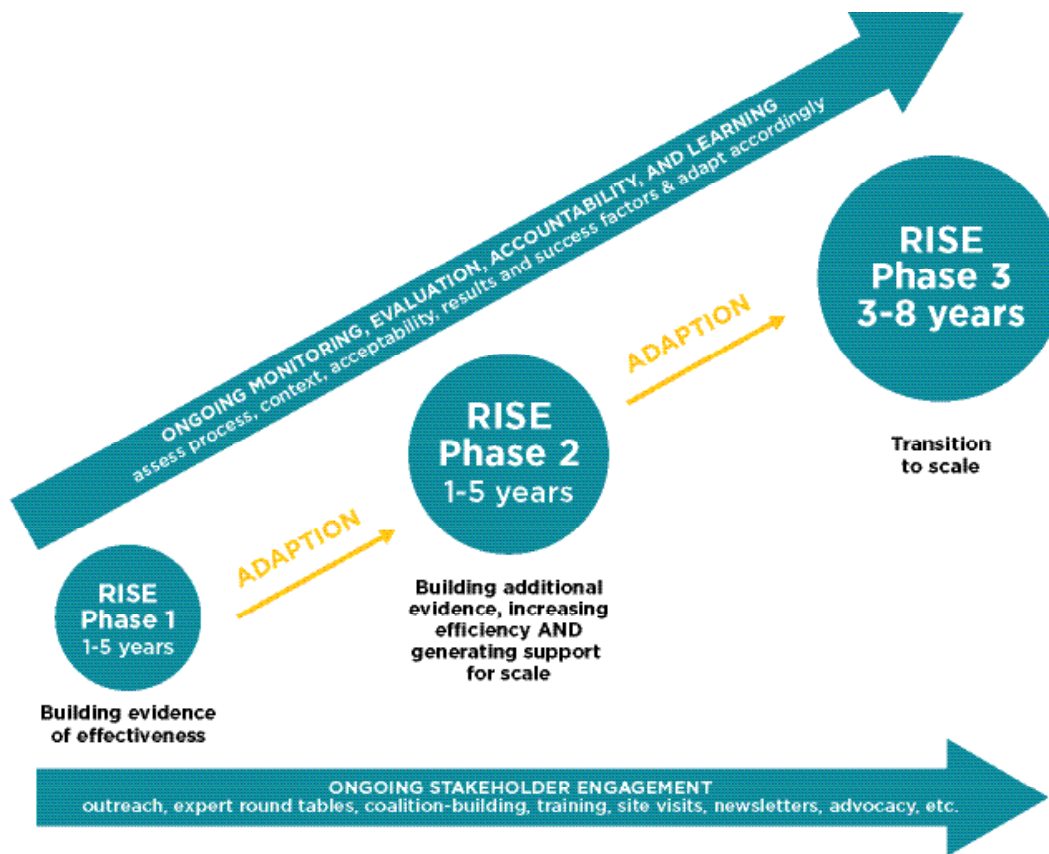


Figure 2: ECF Scaling Conceptual Model

<sup>26</sup> The EAB's objective is to provide expert review and feedback on ECF's approach to funding global nutrition, including through this RFA process and towards critical global nutrition advocacy opportunities. EAB members will serve as a technical sounding board for decisions on ECF's grantmaking, grant management, and strategic planning process.



#### A. Examples of successful past and current Implementation Research projects funded by ECF through the RISE for Nutrition Portfolio

##### **(1) Decreasing Stunting by Reducing Maternal Depression in Uganda**

In this project, researchers are investigating a cost-effective treatment for depression called Interpersonal Psychotherapy for Groups (IPT-G) and its potential impact on mothers' functionality, care behaviors and child nutrition through a randomized control trial in Kitgum, Uganda.

##### **(2) Engaging Fathers for Effective Child Nutrition**

This project is investigating the impact of male involvement on IYCF behaviors through a randomized controlled trial in the Mara Region of Tanzania. The study aims to reduce stunting among children under two years old through five study arms, three of which are funded by ECF: (1) women peer groups on nutrition; (2) women peer groups plus engaging fathers as partners in nutrition behavior change within their own households; (3) women peer groups on nutrition and early child development; (4) women peer groups plus engaging fathers on both nutrition and early child development; and (5) no intervention.

##### **(3) Evaluating the Impact of Text Messages with and without Community Support Groups on Infant and Young Child Feeding Practices**

This project is testing the mNutrition approach to improve child nutrition in the Mtwara region of Tanzania as a standalone intervention and in combination with a nationally endorsed interpersonal communication program through a four-arm cluster randomized controlled trial. This study will test the impact of mNutrition on nutrition behaviors, child growth outcomes and cost-effectiveness of intervention packages.

##### **(4) Study of a Simplified Algorithm and Tools for Community-level Treatment of Acute Malnutrition**

An ECF-funded study in South Sudan assessed the feasibility and acceptability of a simplified algorithm and tools for severe acute malnutrition (SAM) treatment without medical complications by low-literate community health workers (CHW). The Phase One study found high performance among CHWs and a 91% recovery from SAM to moderate acute malnutrition (MAM) using the simplified tools and protocol. Based on these results, ECF has increased funding for this project to test the tools across three additional countries, including Kenya, Malawi and Nigeria, through a coalition of partners. This newly established research coalition will carry out additional tests and further solidify evidence around these potentially ground-breaking tools. The findings are intended to be used to produce a set of global guidelines to support wide-scale rollout of the community-based simplified treatment protocol.

## IV. REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS PROCESS 2018-2019

ECF will award up to three grants in 2019 in one or more of the following East African countries: Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Uganda, Tanzania, Sudan and Somalia. Each grant will consist of a maximum award of \$1,350,000 for an implementation research project of up to three and a half years duration to test an innovation for its ability to enhance the effectiveness, sustainability and scalability of a nutrition intervention. ECF considers any process, tool, guideline, method, technology or delivery mechanism that shows potential to add significant value to program effectiveness an "innovation". The three-and-a-half-year time period is flexible but is designed to allow for an expected six-to-eight month start-up phase at minimum, understanding that delays in receiving ethical approval are common, as are other start-up complications.

## A. TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

All concept notes under this RFA should test the contribution of a specific innovation on overall project or service effectiveness, with regard to both cost and impact. Innovations may be nutrition-specific or nutrition-sensitive and should focus on the key evidence-based interventions highlighted in the 2013 Lancet Series on Maternal and Child Nutrition<sup>27</sup> and can take into account the research gaps highlighted in ECF's report 'Minding the Undernutrition Evidence Gap: Findings of the Key Expert Consultation'<sup>28</sup> conducted in 2018 (see Review of Identified Evidence-based Practices section above). Applicants can apply for innovations at any Phase, depending on how far innovations have been tested and what evidence has been generated to date. Guidance on what stage your innovation may be at can be found in the 'ECF Grantee Guidance Series: Theory of Sustainability and Theory of Scale'.<sup>29</sup> Applicants can submit more than one concept note.

Applicants should propose an innovation that they think will enhance the effectiveness of their selected intervention based on an evidence-based hypothesis. Applicants' projects should seek to leverage existing government capacities and/or existing systems and structures in the countries in which they propose activities, while building sustainable (and potentially scalable/replicable) government capacity. Applicants' proposals should incorporate adequate measurement of cost-effectiveness of their innovation and outline the appropriate methods to capture the requisite data that will enable an understanding of cost-effectiveness and hence sustainability in the longer term.

## B. GEOGRAPHIC PRIORITIES

Proposals should focus on one or more of the following East African countries: Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya, Rwanda, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Sudan and Somalia. ECF will accept multi-country proposals, as long as the proposed project implementation and research activities can be feasibly undertaken within the timeline and budget parameters of this RFA. ECF will give strong preference to these countries but is willing to consider other African countries if there is a solid justification for the project implementation and research activities to occur in a non-East African country.

Applicants' proposals should focus on activities in a country or countries where applicants have demonstrable comparative advantages and a record of clear past performance. Geographic targets within applicants' selected country/countries of intervention should be based on demonstrated need or opportunity relative to alternative locations (i.e. clear justification why the applicant selected District X over other Districts). Consideration of need should be balanced with consideration of the applicant's capacity to quickly ramp up and effectively execute implementation research activities in selected geographies.

## V. CONCEPT NOTE TECHNICAL CONTENT AND FORMAT

Applicants should present their concept notes in MS Word format using 12pt Times New Roman font. Concept notes should be a **maximum of five pages long** and applicant should refer to the 'ECF Grantee Guidance Series: Theory of Sustainability and Theory of Scale'<sup>30</sup> for detailed guidance on what information needs to be provided in the concept note. Please provide the following specific key content:

<sup>27</sup> Bhutta et al. "Evidence-based interventions for improvement of maternal and child nutrition: what can be done and at what cost?" Lancet; 382: 452-77, 2013.

<sup>28</sup> ECF, Minding the Undernutrition Evidence Gap: Findings of the Key Expert Consultation. 2018, found at: [www.eleanorcrookfoundation.org](http://www.eleanorcrookfoundation.org)

<sup>29</sup> ECF Grantee Series: Theory of Sustainability and Theory of Scale. 2018, found at: [www.eleanorcrookfoundation.org](http://www.eleanorcrookfoundation.org)

<sup>30</sup> ECF Grantee Series: Theory of Sustainability and Theory of Scale. 2018, found at: [www.eleanorcrookfoundation.org](http://www.eleanorcrookfoundation.org)



<b>Lead agency &amp; focal point:</b>	<i>Include the name of your organization and the lead individual to contact regarding project implementation, as well as this concept note.</i>
<b>Implementing partners:</b>	<i>Include any research or implementation partners (both local and international) with whom you plan to work for this research.</i>
<b>Location of the research:</b>	<i>Include country and sub-national area if known. Please also indicate why you have selected this location (e.g. burden of malnutrition, political landscape, other nutrition programs in the area, and/or lack thereof).</i>
<b>Description of the challenge:</b>	<i>Provide evidence-based analysis of the major direct and underlying causes of malnutrition in the country and proposed target geographic area. Include detail on the specific locations where the proposed project will be implemented.</i>
<b>Description of the proposed innovation:</b>	<i>State whether your project is at Phase One, Phase Two or Phase Three stage. Describe the hypothesis for the innovation that the research will test. Justify selection of the innovation based on a review of available literature or other evidence. Describe the way the selected innovation will fill a gap, add value or enhance the effectiveness of an existing intervention.</i>
<b>Proposed methodology:</b>	<i>State the primary and secondary research questions. Describe the study design to be used to test the proposed innovation's impact on the effectiveness of an existing intervention. The study design can be non-experimental, quasi-experimental or experimental.</i>
<b>Participant targeting and sampling:</b>	<i>Describe the target population with clear inclusion/exclusion criteria. Include number of people and overall proportion of each population (e.g. CU2) targeted directly through the project and how the calculation was made. Clearly describe the sampling methodology to be used to determine participation (e.g. probability or non-probability), the sample estimation for the study and the justification for that estimation.</i>
<b>Scalability and sustainability:</b> (Please refer to the 'ECF Grantee Guidance Series: Theory of Sustainability <sup>31</sup> and Theory of Scale' for detailed guidance on what information needs to be provided through this concept note, depending on the Phase of the innovation being applied for)	<i>Provide detail on the preliminary strategy for scaling, preliminary sustainability strategy, scalability assessment plans and overall scaling plans as relevant for the proposed Phase (including the size and composition of population the intervention will serve if it is brought to scale; who would provide such services at scale; the greatest challenges to overcome in providing the innovation at scale; how to achieve financial sustainability). Outline what you understand can help/facilitate future scalability and how you will go about laying the groundwork for scalability in this project, assuming the innovation is successful in this phase.</i>
<b>Implementation plan (Gantt chart):</b>	<i>Include a high-level Gantt chart that shows the sequencing of major activities for each year of the project implementation by quarter.</i>
<b>Coordination:</b>	<i>Describe how activities will be coordinated with government, NGOs or other actors, as well as how the approach will leverage government systems and build government capacity. Describe intended global/national partnerships with academic or research institutions and qualified researchers.</i>

<sup>31</sup> ECF Grantee Series: Theory of Sustainability and Theory of Scale. 2018, found at: [www.eleanorcrookfoundation.org](http://www.eleanorcrookfoundation.org)

<b>Monitoring, evaluation and dissemination:</b>	<i>Describe methods to be used to measure output, outcome and impact indicators. Describe what data will be collected to calculate cost-effectiveness. Describe the key processes to conduct ongoing implementation monitoring and ensure high-quality project outputs. Describe any necessary evaluations or studies to be conducted during the project. Describe intentions to publish and disseminate the results of the study.</i>
<b>Organizational capacity:</b>	<i>Describe the experience, expertise and strengths that differentiate the applicant from others and uniquely qualify them to implement the proposed project. Highlight key past evidence-based outcomes and high-level achievements that show competitive advantage and ability of the organization to complete the project.</i>
<b>Budget:<sup>32</sup></b>	<i>Provide a budget summary within the concept note page limit. Budgets should include the following major line items: Staff (salaries and benefits); Implementation Costs (materials, equipment, trainings, services, etc.); M&amp;E; Travel; Direct Operational Costs; and Indirect Operational Costs. Describe project activities that will be funded in whole or in part by other funding sources. Cost-effectiveness and “reasonableness” will be major considerations during concept note review. Budgets that appear to be inflated to meet the budget ceiling will be less likely to receive funding than those that reflect realistic and “reasonable” costs.</i>
<b>Co-creation process:</b>	<i>Indicate willingness to undertake a co-creation process for proposal development, including in-person attendance of workshops (funded) and undergoing a capacity assessment.</i>

## VI. TIMELINE AND PROCESS FOR CONCEPT NOTE SUBMISSION, CO-CREATION PROCESS, PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT, REVIEW AND DECISION-MAKING

EVENT	RESPONSIBLE PARTY	TIMELINE
Launch RFA	ECF	October 15, 2018
Questions sent to ECF	Applicants	October 31, 2018
Q&A published by ECF	ECF	November 5, 2018
Concept notes received by ECF	Applicants	November 25, 2018
Selection of successful concept notes (Semi-Finalists)	ECF and Expert Advisory Board	December 20, 2018
Co-creation process to develop concepts	Semi-Finalists, ECF and Expert Advisory Board	January 1, 2019 - February 8, 2019
Proposals received by ECF	Semi-Finalists	March 8, 2019
Review proposals and selection of Finalists	ECF and Expert Advisory Board	March 31, 2019
Negotiation of contracts	ECF and Finalists	By April 15, 2019

<sup>32</sup>ECF does not impose a ceiling for staffing costs. ECF will fund all essential staff positions to ensure effective project implementation. Projects will require a Research Manager in addition to any other necessary full-time management and technical positions. ECF will consider “reasonable” equipment costs if they are directly associated with, and essential for, achieving outcomes; e.g. motorbikes. ECF will not consider the purchase of large capital equipment items such as cars. Other capital equipment items, such as computers, printers, etc., will be considered on a case-by-case basis and according to demonstrated need. Applicants should set aside at least 15% of the total project budget for monitoring and evaluation efforts. ECF will consider indirect costs within the budget proposal at a maximum of 15% of the full project cost. If applicants expect to leverage the funds of other ongoing (non-ECF) activities to support achievement of results described in this concept note, they must clearly show how the costs of those complementary activities contribute to ECF objectives within the proposed budget. These costs should be highlighted clearly within the proposed budget by including additional rows that clearly label the funding source and indicate leveraged funding amounts.

Please email any questions on this RFA to [RFA@eleanorcrookfoundation.org](mailto:RFA@eleanorcrookfoundation.org) by October 31, 2018. In the interests of transparency, ECF will compile questions, draft responses and publish these as Q&A on ECF's website on November 5, 2018. These will be publicly available and applicants are strongly encouraged to refer to the Q&A when published. To ensure transparency, ECF will not accept any questions on the RFA process or be party to any discussions outside this formal Q&A process.

Attention should be given to the 'ECF Grantee Guidance Series: Theory of Sustainability and Theory of Scale'<sup>33</sup>, which outlines what grantees should consider at each phase of their implementation research with regard to sustainability and scaling. Concept notes will be critically evaluated by ECF and ECF's Expert Advisory Board (EAB), a team of experts who are experienced in their fields of implementation, research and grant-making. The concept notes that best match the selection criteria (see section VII: Project Selection Criteria) will be selected, and those selected applicants will become Semi-Finalists. There is no set number of Semi-Finalists; rather applicants will be selected based on the merit of their concept note.

Subsequently, the co-creation process will begin. This is a period during which ECF and the EAB works closely with each Semi-Finalist to further develop their innovation. A series of workshops will be held, including a Scaling and Sustainability Workshop, led by experts in their relevant fields. These will be designed to help Semi-Finalists critically consider their innovations and further improve the intended approach to increase the likely impact the project will have. ECF will act as a thought partner throughout this process. Each Semi-Finalist will be awarded \$10,000 to facilitate participation from the necessary individuals in the co-creation process, in addition to any travel costs. Semi-Finalists should expect to commit to attending workshops as attendance is a criterion for becoming a Semi-Finalist. Semi-Finalists may also undergo a capacity assessment led by ECF, which may include an in-country visit to the project team. This will assess the ability of the Semi-Finalist to undertake the implementation research and, if the innovation is successful, support scaling efforts in the future. Following the co-creation process, Semi-Finalists will finalize their full proposals for submission to ECF. This will include development of a three-page document outlining the project for presentation to ECF's Board of Directors. The document should present the project in concise language that is appealing and accessible to lay readers. Full guidance on proposal development will be given to Semi-Finalists at the start of the co-creation process. Proposals will be critically evaluated by ECF and the EAB, who will select Finalists in conjunction with ECF's Board of Directors. Each Finalist will enter the contract negotiation phase to receive funding from ECF for their project.

Throughout the process, many individuals will be involved in reviewing concept notes and proposals. ECF considers conflicts of interest very seriously and defines this as: "Neither the individual, nor any member of their family, have any direct financial or employment interest in any of the organizations submitting applications for their consideration and review which conflicts substantially, or appears to conflict substantially, with their duty as a member of the Review Committee." Substantial efforts will be made to ensure conflicts of interest are managed.

ECF appreciates and values the expertise of its partners. Nonetheless, ECF also views its grant investments as highly collaborative processes and expects to participate actively in awarded projects. Following selection of Semi-Finalists, ECF will support finalization/refinement of project design and measurement standards. ECF will require final approval, at its discretion, of final measurement tools and standards and will engage with partners actively on all aspects of the grant during implementation of the grant. ECF will interact with selected grantee partners based on principles of mutual respect at all times in the interest of developing and nurturing mutually beneficial long-term partnerships.

<sup>33</sup> ECF Grantee Series: Theory of Sustainability and Theory of Scale. 2018, found at: [www.eleanorcrookfoundation.org](http://www.eleanorcrookfoundation.org)

## VII. PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA

To make the final selection of proposals, ECF will establish a Review Committee consisting of members of internal ECF staff and the Expert Advisory Board. The selection decisions will focus on scalability, sustainability, exceptional creativity and innovation which manifest promise for impactful and cost-effective advances in the field of global nutrition. Successful applicants will have a proven track record of excellence and impact. The Review Committee will use a standardized scorecard to assign points to each concept note according to the following criteria:

1. **Strength of project design: 30%**

The clarity and strength of the evidence-based description of need in the target area; the rigor and soundness of the proposed hypothesis, study design and methodology; the clarity in participant targeting and sampling; the effectiveness of efforts to leverage existing government systems and staff; the strength of proposed monitoring and evaluation efforts.

2. **Impact: 30%**

The relevance, creativity and novelty of the proposed innovation and how well it addresses an existing gap or challenge; the likely feasibility and achievability of positive results and the likelihood that the implementation research will generate substantial, scalable and sustainable impact on the issues existing in the global nutrition space.

3. **Scale and sustainability: 20%**

The extent to which realistic scaling and sustainability of the proposed innovation is considered according to the 'ECF Grantee Guidance Series: Theory of Sustainability and Theory of Scale'<sup>34</sup>.

4. **Partner capacity and past experience: 20%**

The demonstrated capacity of the partner to effectively manage and implement the proposed project; the ability to leverage high-capacity academic research or other institutional partners; clear demonstrated past performance in nutrition-specific projects and institutional research capacity; the likelihood of ECF being able to work alongside the applicant as an equal thought partner.

## VIII. HOW TO APPLY

Please email any questions to [RFA@eleanorcrookfoundation.org](mailto:RFA@eleanorcrookfoundation.org) by Oct 31, 2018.

Please email your application to [RFA@eleanorcrookfoundation.org](mailto:RFA@eleanorcrookfoundation.org) by November 25, 2018.

<sup>34</sup> ECF Grantee Series: Theory of Sustainability and Theory of Scale. 2018, found at: [www.eleanorcrookfoundation.org](http://www.eleanorcrookfoundation.org)