



Innovative Methods and Metrics for  
Agriculture and Nutrition Actions

## Call for Applications 2<sup>nd</sup> Round

### Competitive Research Grants to Develop Innovative Methods and Metrics for Agriculture and Nutrition Actions

Led by London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (LSHTM)



Funded by:



## Contents

|   |    |
|---|----|
| 1. Funding Opportunity.....   | 3  |
| 1.1 Background.....   | 3  |
| 1.2 About Innovative Methods and Metrics for Agriculture and Nutrition<br>Actions (IMMANA)..... | 4  |
| 1.3 How to Get Involved .....   | 5  |
| 2. IMMANA Grant Funding.....  | 6  |
| 2.1 Objectives and Scope .....  | 6  |
| 2.2 Indicative Research Topics and Approaches.....  | 7  |
| 2.3 Budget and Duration of IMMANA Grants.....   | 8  |
| 3. Application Process .....  | 9  |
| 3.1 Eligibility .....   | 9  |
| 3.2 Eligible Costs .....  | 10 |
| 3.3 Timelines.....  | 10 |
| 4. Proposal Submission .....  | 11 |
| 5. Selection process .....  | 11 |
| 6. Dissemination, Data Sharing and Intellectual Property .....                                  | 14 |

## 1. Funding Opportunity

### 1.1 Background

Donors, national governments, civil society and private sector entities around the world have all expressed growing interest in changing agriculture and food systems to optimise nutrition outcomes. Many publications have noted the potential for agriculture-food systems to influence nutrition on a large scale, while acknowledging uncertainty about how best to fulfil that potential. Linkages between agriculture-food systems, health and nutrition outcomes are multiple, complex, direct and indirect, and also difficult to document.

Recent and current research investigating these linkages demonstrates important methodological limitations leading to major gaps in the state of knowledge about nutritional improvements attributable to agricultural policy and interventions. A mapping of research on agricultural interventions for improved nutrition<sup>1</sup> found that only a small fraction of over 150 current and planned research projects have rigorous methods and metrics to further understand this relationship. Widespread confusion and lack of common standards for rigorous research limit our understanding of the inherent complexity of agriculture and nutrition interactions, and hampers the development of metrics, methods and tools for design and evaluation of the range of possible cost-effective policy and programmatic actions.

Demand is high for innovative metrics and methods with which to assess causal mechanisms, and to evaluate policy and programme impacts and estimate their cost-effectiveness to guide agricultural intervention designs for nutrition improvement.

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<sup>1</sup> Report on “Current and planned research on agriculture for improved nutrition: a mapping and a gap analysis” on DFID’s website: <http://r4d.dfid.gov.uk/Output/190847/>

## 1.2 About Innovative Methods and Metrics for Agriculture and Nutrition Actions (IMMANA)

IMMANA, a five-year research partnership funded with UK aid from the UK government through the Department for International Development (DFID), aims to accelerate the development of a robust and coherent scientific evidence base which will support effective policy and investments in agriculture-food systems for improved nutrition.

IMMANA is led by the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) in partnership with SOAS, University of London; and the Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts University in Boston, MA (USA). The IMMANA partnership is brought together and coordinated by the Leverhulme Centre for Integrative Research on Agriculture and Health (LCIRAH).

The IMMANA programme will deliver its aims through:

- **Competitive Research Grants to Develop Innovative Methods and Metrics for Agriculture and Nutrition Actions (IMMANA Grants):** A research grants programme directed at accelerating the development of innovative and interdisciplinary metrics and methods filling the key knowledge gaps including theory-driven impact evaluation. It is expected that this work-stream will consist of around 15 research grants, awarded in two rounds.
- **Post-Doctoral Fellowships for Emerging Leaders in Agriculture, Nutrition, and Health Research (IMMANA Fellowships):** A fellowship programme directed at building a cadre of early career researchers who are using and developing or adapting these new methodological approaches with mentors in ongoing research programmes in low and middle income countries (LMICs). Twenty four fellowships of one year in duration are expected to be awarded in four rounds.
- **Agriculture, Nutrition and Health Academy:** A global research network connecting researchers and research groups, to ensure rapid sharing, development and use of the best approaches emerging from their work and from the grants and fellowships proposed in this project. The Academy will hold an annual meeting as well as specific technical and policy working groups.

You can find more information about IMMANA on: <http://immana.lcirah.ac.uk/>

### 1.3 How to Get Involved

We encourage researchers to participate in all aspects of IMMANA, and provide the following guidance on how IMMANA can best support your research interests:

- If you are a researcher in an institution engaged in and committed to linking research in agriculture, nutrition and health, your institution can join the Agriculture, Nutrition and Health Academy, and you can participate in its conferences, meetings and working groups. To find out more please go to: <http://immana.lcirah.ac.uk/agriculture-nutrition-health-academy>.
- If you are an early career researcher who wants to improve skills in working across agriculture, nutrition and health programmes in a development context at another institution, then you might consider applying for an IMMANA Fellowship, for which you will need the support of your home institution and the institution that will host you. To find out more about IMMANA Fellowships work stream please visit: <http://immana.lcirah.ac.uk/immana-fellowships>.
- If you are a researcher who would like to develop innovative methods and metrics or adapt existing ones in diverse contexts, then you may wish, through your institution, to apply for an IMMANA Grant.

All Fellows and Grant holders will be expected to participate in the Agriculture, Nutrition and Health Academy and its meetings for the duration of their funded programme. We will not normally provide IMMANA Fellowships to researchers to join IMMANA Grants, but it would be acceptable in principle for an institution to be hosting both an IMMANA grant and an IMMANA Fellowship, as long as they are clearly separate activities. For further information, please contact: [immana@lshtm.ac.uk](mailto:immana@lshtm.ac.uk).

The present call for the applications refers to the **second round of IMMANA grants only**.

## 2. IMMANA Grant Funding

### 2.1 Objectives and Scope

The IMMANA Competitive Research Grants are aimed to accelerate the development of innovative and interdisciplinary methods, metrics and tools to advance the scientific understanding of the linkages between **agriculture and food systems** and **health and nutrition outcomes**, in order to better inform policy and programmatic actions to improve nutrition outcomes in low and middle income countries (LMICs).

IMMANA will fund innovative research initiatives to develop and validate methods and metrics for measuring agriculture or food system, nutrition and health interactions of importance in a development context. We are particularly interested in proposals to develop new methodologies and construct new metrics and tools that bring together ideas and resources from different relevant disciplines. However, innovative proposals for applying existing methods, metrics and tools in novel contexts to generate new insights are also welcome. For the purpose of this call, **agriculture and food systems** include the production, distribution, processing, marketing and consumption of food and people, resources and institutions involved in these processes. **Nutrition and health outcomes** include impacts on malnutrition in its broadest sense, including undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies, and diet-related overweight, obesity and associated non-communicable diseases, as well as other impacts on human health with implications for nutrition outcomes e.g. food borne diseases or toxins.

By **methods** we mean the processes and approaches involved in a systematic inquiry of relationships between agriculture, nutrition and health and generally refer to study design (for example, impact evaluations using various types of counterfactuals, pathway analyses). **Metrics** refer to parameters or indicators used for measurement, comparison or tracking performance (for example, disability adjusted life years; household dietary diversity score and women's empowerment in agriculture index - WEAI). A **tool** is a vehicle or aid to collect information and data to arrive at the metric (for example, the survey module to collect data required to compute an index). As well as being **innovative** and of **excellent scientific quality**, research supported through these Grants must demonstrate clear **development relevance**. Specifically, applicants should make a convincing argument for the **potential of the new methods proposed to make a meaningful impact on nutrition and health in LMICs**, for instance through their use to improve the design, monitoring or evaluation of important nutrition- and health-enhancing interventions or policy change. Proposals

which build links to programmes in LMICs and which will make use of the methods developed are encouraged, but more general methods research will also be considered as long as it has development relevance. Applicants are also encouraged to identify how the proposal will mainstream gender issues in the research activity and outputs. Funded projects will normally be expected to deliver outcomes that are likely to make a practical impact - either directly, or through further, more applied research - within five years.

## 2.2 Indicative Research Topics and Approaches

The IMMANA partnership will consider a wide range of proposals that address the objectives outlined above, based on selection criteria explained in the section below. In order to give an indication of the kinds of projects that IMMANA will support, we present a list of example topics. Please consider these only as indicative as we welcome other topics that meet IMMANA's objectives.

- Develop a suite of indicators or a composite indicator to measure the impact of different interventions on agriculture *and* nutrition outcomes in a standardised way in different settings.
- Design and test nutrition metrics (such as indicators for diet quality, dietary transition in rapidly changing contexts and field-based low-cost diagnostic tools to assess status of various micronutrients) which can be used effectively across a range of target groups.
- Design and test appropriate methods and tools to measure the indirect effects of agriculture on health and nutrition outcomes, e.g. through effects on income, time allocation, environment.
- Develop innovative metrics to measure sustainable agriculture and sustainable food systems
- Develop analytical methods to measure and compare the contribution of different agriculture-to-nutrition pathways to health and nutrition outcomes in different settings.
- Develop a market-based indicator to measure and monitor access to and affordability of a diverse, safe, and nutritious diet, taking into account seasonality.
- Develop innovative metrics and tools to measure and monitor different aspects of food systems including metrics for long-value chains and development of market-based indicators to examine nutritional/health aspects of food systems in rapidly transitioning environments.
- Develop innovative tools for food system surveillance, e.g. measures of access, preference and diet quality, to improve understanding of evolving food environment and its health and nutrition impacts.

- Evaluate or develop methods to analyse the impact of agricultural programmes on nutrition and health in emergency situations, as well as in fragile states and post-conflict or emergency situations.
- Link diverse sources of data through new tools to measure the effect of changes in agriculture or food systems on agriculture, health and nutrition outcomes.
- Develop or apply novel methods to examine the impact of policy interventions along the agriculture-nutrition pathways.
- Develop a methodology to measure the contribution of agriculture to nutrition outcomes.

IMMANA places particular importance on research which brings together expertise across sectors, including agriculture, food systems, water, sanitation, nutrition and health, and between disciplines relevant to development of novel methods, metrics and tools, including, for instance, economics, sociology, agricultural science, psychology, physiology, gender studies, and political science. We are interested in applications proposing innovative use of quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods development as long as they can demonstrate practical potential to address programmatic and development needs.

### 2.3 Budget and Duration of IMMANA Grants

Each IMMANA grant in the second and final round of funding will be a maximum of **£250,000** and up to **10 grants** are expected to be awarded through a competitive selection process. Because the nature and scope of the proposed research will vary from application to application, it is anticipated that the size and duration of each award will also vary. **All budgets should be submitted in pound sterling (£).**

**The maximum duration for the second round of grants is two years** with an estimated starting date on 1 November 2016. All awarded IMMANA grants must be completed by 1 November 2018.



## 3. Application Process

### 3.1 Eligibility

Applicants must demonstrate the ability to conduct research of international standards of excellence in the topic proposed. Researchers and institutions from both developed and low and middle income countries (LMICs) are eligible. The panel will particularly welcome proposals that demonstrate strong partnerships, the added value that would be created by the proposed partnership, and the contribution it would make to enhance the scientific capacity of Southern partners. The roles and responsibilities of all named applicants should be defined accordingly, together with a description of the added value arising from the bringing together of complementary expertise.

Applicants may submit more than one application, provided each application is scientifically distinct.

The **case for support** asks applicants to describe the proposed research and how it would address the aims of the programme, comprising the following elements:

- A description of the specific metric, tool or methodology the proposed project aims to develop, including how it builds on, or is distinct from, existing metrics, tools and methodologies
- A description of the way in which the proposed metric, tool or methodology will improve understanding of the complex linkages between agriculture, nutrition and health
- Its developmental relevance, how the development and application of the metric, tool or methodology will be of interest and direct relevance to LMICs
- Collaborative approaches and partnership mechanisms to support the development or use of innovative methods and metrics cutting across disciplines and sectors and to strengthening the research capacity in LMICs
- A brief description of the scientific significance of the research and rationale
- A summary of the research to be carried out, its scope, objectives and a brief summary methods to be employed.

An indicative timeline and a summary of the funding required, in British pounds sterling, by the participating institutions, should be provided and should include estimates of each institution's costs under the following headings:

- Direct costs of the research - staff (salary and salary-related costs), consumables, travel, equipment etc.
- Associated indirect and estates costs or overheads.

### 3.2 Eligible Costs

Funding may be requested for all research costs that are attributable to the project, including, for example:

- Salary costs for research staff
- Data collection
- Standard class travel related to implementation of the proposed research
- Publication costs (see end of document for information about open access costs)
- Equipment
- Attendance at the Agriculture, Nutrition and Health Academy annual conference (**mandatory** for one representative from each IMMANA Grant for the duration of the grant – this should therefore be included in the budget)
- Overhead costs - these will be evaluated for value for money on a case-by-case basis at the full proposal stage and overheads cannot exceed 15% of the total grant budget.
- Inflation is permitted for salaries only and this is capped at a maximum of 3% per year.

***All applications will be scrutinised for value for money.***

### 3.3 Timelines

|                                      |                  |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|
| Submission of concept memos          | 15 February 2016 |
| Invitations to submit full proposals | 28 March 2016    |
| Submission of full proposals         | 28 June 2016     |
| Notification of awards               | 3 October 2016   |
| Grants start                         | 1 November 2016  |

## 4. Proposal Submission

The application and assessment process will comprise the following stages:

- Open call for concept memos
- Invitations to short-listed applicants to submit full applications
- Selection of successful proposals by an interdisciplinary and inter-sectoral Independent Panel of Experts (<http://immana.lcirah.ac.uk/about/panel-experts>) and approved by IMMANA Steering Committee (<http://immana.lcirah.ac.uk/about/steering-committee>)

In order to successfully complete the proposal submission the following steps will be required:

1. Download a concept memo template which includes a case for support and indicative budget available here: <http://immana.lcirah.ac.uk/grants> . Please keep to within the word limits for each question. Proposals that are not submitted in the correct format will not be accepted.
2. Complete the template offline.
3. Complete the online form (applicants to complete basic questions about the proposed project and individuals involved) available here: <http://immana.lcirah.ac.uk/grants>
4. Upload the completed concept memo in the online form.

**Concept memos must be submitted by 15 February 2016 by 23.59 GMT** and late submissions will not be accepted. Applicants must submit their application using the online form, email submissions will not be accepted.

## 5. Selection process

The potential of the research and its overall impact will be an important criterion in the assessment of proposals. The proposed research is expected to generate *innovative and high quality methods, metrics and tools for application in the short to medium term for improving agriculture and food systems' contributions to nutrition and health in LMICs*. The research is expected to generate global public goods and publications in high quality scientific journals. The applicants and co-applicants are expected to have a demonstrable capacity to deliver high quality research in the relevant areas.

*Applications considering areas that are not currently represented in the portfolio of IMMANA grants will be given preference during the selection process. Applications will still be welcome in all thematic areas, but if the application addresses a similar area to an existing IMMANA grant, attention should be paid to how the proposed metric or method is distinct from and complementary to the existing project. Details on grants that have been awarded under the first round of IMMANA grants can be found here: [immana.lcirah.ac.uk/grants/grants-round-1](http://immana.lcirah.ac.uk/grants/grants-round-1).*

## 5.1 Review of concept memo

At the concept memo stage, the applications will be assessed in two steps. The first step will involve an eligibility check to be followed by an assessment using the criteria described below. Concept memos that successfully pass both stages will be invited to submit a full application. During the eligibility stage of the assessment, the concept memos will be assessed against the following criteria in yes or no manner whereby all the criteria have to be met for a concept note to be evaluated further:

- The proposed research project contributes to improved understanding of the linkages between agriculture, food systems and nutrition in LMICs.
- The proposed research project focuses on developing a new/improved metric, tool or methodology.
- The proposed research project demonstrates strong partnerships, and the added value that would be created by the proposed partnership.
- The proposed research project demonstrates the ability to conduct research at an international standard of excellence in the topic proposed.

The concept memos that pass the eligibility check will be evaluated against the following criteria:

| Criteria  |
|---|
| <b>1. Innovation</b>  |
| Does the proposed research represent a new and imaginative approach to measuring and understanding how agriculture and food systems affect nutrition and health? Does the research involve the development of new methods, the integration of existing methods into new tools, or the application of existing methods in a novel way that improves and extends their utility? Proposals which simply apply existing methods in conventional contexts will not be considered innovative. |
| <b>2. Scientific excellence</b>   |
| Is the proposed research potentially of very high quality in relation to the highest international standards of scientific excellence in all of the sectors and disciplines that it includes? Would the project add value   |

to existing research on the topic of the proposal? Are the methods proposed sound and is the proposed research feasible?

**3. Development relevance**

Does the proposed research address issues that present significant challenges to agriculture and food systems for improved nutrition and health in LMICs? Are the anticipated development outcomes and possible pathways to impact clearly and convincingly argued? Have gender issues been mainstreamed in project design and objectives?

**4. Translational value**

Translational value of the metrics, tools and methodologies to the research community: Will the proposed metric, tool or methodology be of immediate relevance and interest to the scientific community? Will the proposed metric, tool or methodology be validated and in a format that is readily available to other researchers or practitioners? Will the proposed metric, tool or methodology be simple and cost-efficient enough to allow a range of researchers and practitioners in LMICs to use it in research and/or programme evaluation?

**5. Collaborative approaches**

The collaborative, inter-sectoral and / or interdisciplinary nature of the research proposed: Does the proposed research convincingly bridge the gap between the measurement of agriculture and food system processes and the measurement of nutrition and health outcomes? Does the research make a convincing argument for its selection of methods and approaches and how they will be integrated? Are there satisfactory partnership mechanisms to support inter-sectorial or interdisciplinary understanding and collaboration?

Assessment of concept memos will be undertaken by IMMANA project management with oversight by the Chair of the Independent Panel of Experts. Each criterion is equally important and will receive a score between 1 (not competitive) and 5 (outstanding). Only concept memos with scores which are both high overall and well balanced between criteria will be invited to submit the full proposal. Due to the volume of applications we receive we will not be in a position to provide individual feedback to the unsuccessful applicants at the concept memo stage.

## 5.2 Review of Full Applications

The assessment criteria for the full application will be provided to the applicant invited to submit full applications. The full applications will be subject to a peer-review process. The Independent Panel of Experts will assess the full proposals and the peer-review reports and recommend applications for

funding. The review process will be overseen by the IMMANA Steering Committee, which is also responsible for approving the Panel's recommendations for funding.

## 6. Dissemination, Data Sharing and Intellectual Property

Information about research funded through IMMANA Grants will be made available on the public IMMANA website ([immana.lcirah.ac.uk](http://immana.lcirah.ac.uk)). Recipients of grants will also be required to provide information about their projects for DFID's Research for Development portal ([r4d.dfid.gov.uk](http://r4d.dfid.gov.uk)). Grant holders will be asked to collaborate with the funders and IMMANA project partners on research uptake and dissemination activities, which may include, among others, presentations at seminars and conferences, blogs, interviews and opinion pieces (format to be agreed).

Grant holders will be expected to promote the dissemination of the results of their research as widely as possible, based on the premise that publicly-funded research data are a public good, produced in the public interest, and should be made openly available to other researchers in a timely manner to the maximum extent possible. As well as scientific communication, emphasis is placed by the funder on engagement with potential users and beneficiaries of research, and the route to application of its outcomes. Consideration of possible pathways to impact will form an important element of the assessment of proposals.

All intellectual property rights for all material (including but not limited to reports, data, designs, whether or not electronically stored, and technologies) produced by the investigator(s) or the investigators' personnel, and arising from research funded through the Grant, will be the property of the investigators' institution(s). The investigators' institution(s) will grant to the funders of the programme, if requested, a world-wide, non-exclusive, irrevocable, royalty-free license to use all such material. However, if investigator(s) wish to apply for a patent for a particular application arising out of the information, they may request that publication of data is withheld until the patent has been granted. After that time, the data must be made freely available. The funders should be consulted about any request of this kind at an early stage, and any license(s) granted must be managed in a way that is consistent with the core principles of Global Access, i.e. that the findings of the research would be disseminated promptly and broadly, and that products and technologies arising from the knowledge gained would be made available and accessible at a reasonable cost to people most in need in developing countries.

All projects will be required to comply with DFID's [Open and Enhanced Access Policy](#). Applicants are required to include an Access and Data plan in their proposal. Where appropriate, the costs of complying with DFID's open access policy should be clearly identified within the proposed budget. DFID is also a signatory to the [Global Open Data for Agriculture and Nutrition](#) (GODAN) initiative that seeks to support global efforts to make agricultural and nutritional data available, accessible, and usable for unrestricted use worldwide.