

The Mercury Project: 2023 Call for Proposals

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OVERVIEW

In Fall 2021, the Social Science Research Council launched the Mercury Project, mobilizing social and behavioral scientists in a search for cost-effective and scalable solutions to build vaccination demand and healthier information environments.

With \$25M in funding from The Rockefeller Foundation, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, Craig Newmark Philanthropies, and the National Science Foundation, the teams in the Mercury Project consortium are evaluating a portfolio of interventions in 17 countries that vary in settings, target populations, and risk/reward

ratios, with the goal of identifying those interventions that most cost-effectively and scalably increase science-based health decision making.

We are excited to announce a new call for proposals with funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The Mercury Project now invites proposals to evaluate the causal impacts of online or offline interventions designed to increase demand for vaccinations consistent with national priorities, including childhood vaccines, HPV, polio, measles, and Covid-19 vaccinations, in low- and lower-middle income countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean.

Applicants are encouraged to consider the Mercury Project's Research Framework in developing proposals. Preference will be given to projects that:

- a. evaluate the effects of interventions on behavioral outcomes, including vaccination uptake;
- b. evaluate interventions that are designed and delivered in collaboration with governmental, NGO, and/or corporate partners;
- c. have demonstrated potential to be cost-effective at scale;
- d. include researchers and research institutions located in the countries in which the study is being conducted.

Proposed projects may have a duration of up to 30 months. Primary applicant organizations must be tax-exempt organizations or the equivalent in the local context (e.g., nonprofit organizations, universities, governmental units). Proposed budgets should be appropriate to cover project costs, with indirect costs not exceeding 15% of direct costs.

Proposals will undergo confidential peer review by a panel of scientific experts. Proposals will be evaluated on the basis of scientific merit, potential to cost-effectively increase vaccination demand at scale, and research team inclusivity. Proposals will be reviewed on a rolling basis; we encourage applicants to submit proposals earlier rather than later. Applications will not be accepted after May 1, 2023.

PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

Applicants will be asked to provide the following information through the Mercury Project application portal.

1. Identities of primary applicant organization and any proposed subaward organizations, including organizations' tax-exempt (or equivalent) status;
2. Identities of principal and co-investigators, including disciplinary and institutional affiliations, links to investigator websites or CVs, and contact information for principal investigator;
3. Project description, including intervention design, proposed strategy to make causal inferences (e.g., randomized controlled trial or quasi-experimental design), potential causal mechanisms, sample size and power analysis, outcomes of interest, evidence for likely cost-effectiveness at scale, project duration and timeline, discussion of ethical considerations (6 pages maximum);
4. Letters of collaboration from implementing partners;
5. Project budget and budget narrative, with indirect costs not exceeding 15%.

MERCURY PROJECT RESEARCH CONSORTIUM

Grantees will be expected to participate in the Mercury Project research consortium, including regular monthly virtual research team meetings, at least one in-person convening of grantees and other invited parties, and the development of research and policy briefs written for policy impact. Additional funding for these activities will be provided by the Mercury Project.

TO APPLY

Applications should be submitted through Social Science Research Council's online application portal. If you have questions, please review the FAQ page. Please note that we cannot review materials in advance of submissions. For further questions not addressed in the FAQs, please contact mercury@ssrc.org.
