



**Energy and Economic Growth**  
Applied Research Programme

# Call for Applications

September 2018

*The issuance of this Call for Application does not commit OPM to make an award to any prospective recipient responding to this solicitation. Prospective recipients will not be reimbursed for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of an application. OPM reserves the right to reject any and all applications, or to make an award without further discussion or negotiations. Limited standardised feedback will be provided.*



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# 1 Summary

## Key information overview

- EEG funds applied research on large-scale electricity infrastructure in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.
- This call for applications specifically welcomes research proposals that explore the implications of the declining costs of solar, wind and storage technologies on regional power trade in South Asia.
- A total of 350,000 GBP has been allocated to this call and proposal should last for a maximum of 2 years
- The proposal package needs to be submitted to [eeg@opml.co.uk](mailto:eeg@opml.co.uk) by the 6 November 2018

The **Applied Research Programme on Energy and Economic Growth (EEG)** aims to address pressing policy questions in low-income countries to help shift energy systems towards a more sustainable, efficient, reliable and equitable paradigm. EEG is a five-year programme, led by **Oxford Policy Management (OPM)** and funded by the **UK Department for International Development**.

EEG's objective is to build a body of evidence around how power sector reforms, innovative technologies and practicable actions can enhance the economic impacts of large-scale electricity infrastructure in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

This call for applications specifically welcomes research proposals that explore the implications of the declining costs of solar, wind and storage technologies on regional power trade in South Asia. Proposals should aim to guide negotiations and build confidence around the implications of technology change for regional energy trade. The thematic scope of this call is discussed in more detail in Section 3.1.

**EEG aims to deliver research that is relevant, accessible and actionable** by decision makers and influencers, whether in the public or private sector domain. To this end, researchers will be required to demonstrate their 'pathway to impact' and how 'research uptake' is embedded in their project design. Our approach to research uptake is further explained in Section 3.3.

The remainder of this Call for Applications is organised as follows:

- **Section 2** outlines the funding and time frame for the call.
- **Section 3** provide the call details, including:
  - Thematic scope
  - Methodological specifications
  - Research uptake requirements: Stakeholder engagement, local partners, capacity development and dissemination
- **Section 4** details the process for applying
- **Section 5** outlines the review process and selection criteria

## 2 Funding and time frame

We are pleased to invite proposals for new research projects that qualify for DFID funding. This call aims to fund a portfolio of innovative research projects focusing on energy and economic growth.

Funding is available for applications which are eligible to receive funding from DFID<sup>1</sup>.

A total budget of £350,000 has been allocated for this call, although EEG reserve the right to adjust this figure up or down depending on the quality and quantity of proposals received. We anticipate making 1 award.

Successful proposals will demonstrate strong value for money; selection committee members will evaluate each proposal based on this guiding principle (for details, review the Evaluation Criteria beginning on page 8 of this RFA).

Proposals are invited for research funds of durations up to a **maximum of 2 years** with an **end date of December 2020**. Proposals must be led by a researcher at an eligible research organisation and should be submitted through the email address [eeg@opml.co.uk](mailto:eeg@opml.co.uk).

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<sup>1</sup> OPML has a formal Due Diligence (DD) process in place which must be satisfactorily completed prior to engaging any subcontractor. This process is an integral and fundamental element of our business relationships and is critical in ensuring the suitability of a supplier to operate on OPML's behalf. The due diligence process covers subcontractors' legal and financial standing, conflicts of interest, counter terrorism checks, insurance levels, and confirmation of subcontractors' compliance with OPML's policies and procedures, or their own equivalent (e.g. anti-bribery, code of conduct, data security, equality). OPML's approach is rigorous in examining the suitability of our suppliers, however, we also believe in the importance of an enabling, supportive approach to allow us to work with the many small and informal partners based in the countries in which we work, and with whom we have built relationships over many years. Where necessary, we therefore provide administrative support and capacity building to ensure that the correct procedures are followed. Additionally, graduate students cannot be Principle Investigators.

## 3 Call details

### 3.1 Thematic and geographical scope

**EEG funds rigorous applied research projects that aim to shed light on the most pressing challenges facing electricity systems in low-income countries in Sub-Saharan African and South Asian.** By supporting cutting-edge applied research, harnessing best practice and strengthening institutional capacity in low-income countries, EEG aims to promote evidence-based programming, and ultimately, help bring the benefits of modern electricity services to poorer people.

EEG aims to fill an important niche by focusing on **larger scale electricity infrastructure**, particularly renewable generation and urban infrastructure. This focus complements other on-going DFID research programme that are more focussed on smaller-scale, decentralised systems.

EEG also aims to be demand-led, funding research into open questions that are deemed particularly important by policymakers. We have led a systematic policy engagement process to define our research agenda in South Asia:

- Our Policy Workshop, held in Kathmandu in October 2016, and numerous bilateral discussions with key decision-makers, identified regional power trade as a key area for research.
- An EEG scoping study [found here](#) into the opportunities and barriers to regional power trade, examined how the key research areas through which EEG can most strategically inform policy discussions.
- On behalf of EEG, DFID's Regional Hub pitched the identified research areas to the quarterly South Asia Power Secretaries Forum.

Through this systematic policy engagement process, we have chosen to fund research proposals that explore the implications of declining cost of solar, on-shore wind and storage technologies on regional electricity cooperation

The implications of the rapidly falling costs of wind and solar have not yet been adequately considered on a regional scale. On the one hand, lower-cost domestic sources of renewable energy may reduce the need for cross-border power trade. On the other, South Asia's abundant but variable solar and wind resources may be harnessed more easily in regional power grids that have flexible hydropower capacity.

The density and cost of power storage are also expected to improve. Storage improvements will have implications for the power trade: not only for supply and trade volume, but also for regulation, dispatching and transmission infrastructure.

EEG warmly welcomes research proposals that explore the implications of the declining costs of solar, wind and storage technologies on regional power trade. We anticipate that the project will involve a modelling approach, but leave it open to researchers to propose the specific methodology.

Proposals should be designed to guide negotiations and build confidence around the implications of technology change for regional energy trade. **As the policy relevance and impact of our work is of utmost importance to EEG, we strongly support the co-creation of research with key public and private sector partners in our focus countries.**

### 3.2 Methodological specifications

**Applicants are required to describe the proposed research design and methodological approach.** Note that the methodological design will be reviewed by a panel including leading experts in the field (see Section 5).

We anticipate that this project will involve energy systems modelling. Nonetheless, our intention is for those who respond to calls for proposals to specify which methods they think would be most appropriate for answering the specific questions.

### 3.3 Research uptake: Stakeholder engagement, local partners, capacity development, dissemination

EEG seeks to generate evidence for the specific purpose of informing energy-related policy and decision-making in low-income countries. Research uptake, the link between the research and policy outcomes, forms the basis by which the overall effectiveness of EEG is measured and understood.

**Our emphasis on research uptake will have bearing on how we evaluate research proposals and what we expect from successful applicants. This section explains how.**

Research uptake and policy engagement is fully mainstreamed into all aspects of EEG programme design, delivery and communications. They are not treated as standalone activities. Our research uptake strategy includes:

1. **Co-creating the research agenda** with policymakers, donors and industry practitioners to ensure that research questions are timely and relevant;
2. **Collaborating and co-delivering** research in such a way that it engages and gets buy-in from end users;
3. **Conducting capacity development and training** to improve the knowledge, skills and capacity of local research communities and national practitioners and policymakers to find, interpret and apply evidence from current best practice and research;
4. **Analysing the political economy** to ensure research is framed clearly within political challenges and to identify potential pathways to overcoming barriers;
5. **Managing knowledge**, disseminating findings and identifying and supporting the mechanisms through which current best practices and new research findings will be adopted into energy programming.

Within the **proposal**, all applicants will be required to identify their project's anticipated impact and propose research uptake activities required to realise that impact.

Within the **fully developed proposals**, each applicant will be required to provide details on the following:

1. **Describe the anticipated impact of the research project (e.g. technological innovation, improved evidence for policymaking, etc.).**

At an impact level, EEG research processes seek to improve economic/social outcomes for energy users. To this end, EEG research can improve the quality and availability of evidence that feeds into a range of impact. These include, but are not limited to:

- Supporting development and implementation of better energy policy
- Mobilising and scaling investments in energy systems
- Creating the context for change by influencing opinion and building consensus
- Improving the quality and understanding of energy research

Research proposals should identify the specific pathway(s) through which their research is likely to have impact. The identified pathway(s) will then form the core focus of the research uptake and policy engagement process.

**2. Identify the end-users of the knowledge generated by the research and any additional stakeholders whose participation is required to carry out the research, and describe the engagement with these end-users and key stakeholders thus far.**

To encourage uptake of research, research proposals should be able to demonstrate that they:

- Have engaged with the anticipated end-users of the evidence that their project will generate.
- Address evidence gaps that currently impede effective policy making or investment
- Are responding to evidence demanded by key decision makers and/or other stakeholders. Proposals will be strengthened by providing evidence that the research is in demand (e.g. data sets acquired, memorandums of understanding, etc.).
- Have identified all stakeholders whose participation is required to carry out the research (government officials, utilities, development banks, private companies, consumers, etc.), and secured their buy-in and cooperation for the project.

**3. Describe your research uptake plan, i.e. the steps that should be taken before, during and after the research to ensure that the knowledge generated will lead to impact.**

Note that researchers will not necessarily be required to deliver all components of the research uptake plan themselves. They may lead the process throughout, or they may choose to feed findings into research uptake activities delivered by others. OPM is particularly adept at providing support in liaising with both policymakers and academics to help translate the research into the specific needs of the policymaker, thereby ensuring rigorous research is implemented into positive policy change. We would also welcome applications delivered in partnership with a technical assistance provider, where the research will inform the assistance provided.

Whatever the research uptake strategy, all applicants should demonstrate:

- That they have allocated sufficient resources to ensure stakeholder engagement and inclusion throughout the project;
- A plan to engage with key constituencies through implementation, and co-deliver the project with local partners where appropriate.
- Outputs that are suitable for the intended audiences in form and content (open access academic papers; conference presentations; capacity development workshops or training programmes; etc.)

Where appropriate, applicants should also demonstrate how their research uptake plan will:

- Build sufficient local research capacity
- Build capacity of the users of the research to interpret the evidence and apply in practice
- Identify and overcome the political economy challenges associated with achieving desired impacts.

## 4 How to apply

### 4.1 Dates

If you are interested in applying please email [eeg@opml.co.uk](mailto:eeg@opml.co.uk) and the full proposal package templates will be emailed to you.

The proposal package must be submitted by email to [eeg@opml.co.uk](mailto:eeg@opml.co.uk) by **17:00 on 6 November 2018 (UK time)**. Detailed guidance about how to apply is provided in the section below.

If successful in the proposal submission, EEG will contact the applicant with the next steps.

If not successful in the proposal submission stage, EEG will make sure to contact the applicant with an official notification.

### 4.2 Templates

The following templates will need to be filled and submitted to [eeg@opml.co.uk](mailto:eeg@opml.co.uk) by 17:00 on the 6 November 2018:

The proposal package consists of:

- a) Narrative proposal template
- b) Budget template
- c) Work plan template
- d) VFM questionnaire

Additionally you will be provided with:

- A) Terms and conditions of the contracts (for your information, in the event that you were successful)
- B) EEG branding guidelines
- C) The due diligence package (which will need to be completed together with your application)

## 5 Review process

### 5.1 Dates

The following presents key dates in the procurement process:

- Deadline for submitting a proposal package – **17.00 on 6 November 2018**
- Decisions to applicants – **14 December 2018**
- Official start of the research project – no earlier than the **1 January 2019**

### 5.2 Process

OPM will organize and convene an evaluation committee that will conduct an impartial evaluation of all applications and make the final recommendation for issuing the contract. The committee will consist of an additional 3 individuals to the Programme Directorate and will possess the requisite technical knowledge or expertise to evaluate the technical merit of the applications. The same individuals will review all applications and experts chosen will come from different institutions. The evaluation committee will consider all applications received using the stated evaluation criteria.

### 5.3 Criteria

Technical reviewers will be asked to score proposals based on a clearly defined set of criteria outlined in Table 2. Requirements for EEG research were outlined in EEG’s Terms of Reference: “Emphasis will be placed on ensuring that research has clear operational relevance, that research will be tractable and high quality, and finally that research will be reasonably conclusive (not just interesting preliminary findings). There will be a strong practical focus on what has and has not worked and where, why and how and on the transferability of those results to low income countries in Africa and South Asia.” These factors are reflected the selection criteria outlined below.

**Table 1: Selection criteria for technical review**

Tier 1 (most important)	Tier 2 (slightly less important)
Relevance to research area specified in Section 3.1	Makes innovative data available, develops new methods of measurement.
Impact: Potential to inform policy decisions, government strategies and/or investments in low-income country on high-cost energy infrastructure.	Strength of research team (empirical research experience, publication record, capacity to perform high-quality work)
Interest/commitment of local partner: e.g. could be demonstrated by letter from by local decision-maker	Involvement of local researchers
Value-for-money: e.g. evidence could include the existence of co-funding, or collaboration with another energy-focused development programme	Novelty
Research uptake and capacity development: Projects must include strategies in their proposal.	External validity and scalability
Quality: Methodological rigor and likely conclusiveness of the research	

**Tier 1 (most important)**

**Tier 2 (slightly less important)**

Relevance for DFID programming and objectives:  
Proposals should be in-line with DFID priorities