

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

# Women's Economic Empowerment and Digital Financial Inclusion (WEE-DiFine) Research Initiative

## Application Requirements, Eligibility & Materials:

**Q:** Who can apply for funding?

**A:** Higher education institutes and research institutes.

**Q:** Can graduate students apply?

**A:** Yes. Graduate students working with a research adviser are eligible to apply.

**Q:** What can and cannot be funded through the grant money?

**A:** WEE-DiFine funds are for research purposes. We fund the implementation of programs only under exceptional circumstances. Specifically, we do not support intervention costs that fall under the day-to-day purview of the implementer. Any proposed intervention expenses should be no greater than 10% of the total project budget and must be thoroughly justified in the budget narrative. These requests will be considered on a case by case basis. Relatedly, we only finance principal investigator (PI) salaries under exceptional and thoroughly justified circumstances. Specifically, we will consider PI salaries in the event that the PI's host institution does not cover time spent in the pursuit of research activities. Although we do not fund policy-related activities or the dissemination of research findings, WEE-DiFine plans to disseminate the results of each project through its own platforms and networks.

**Q:** Do we need to have a partner for large-scale greenfield studies?

**A:** While it is not mandatory that a proposal includes an implementation partner, it is very unlikely that a successful proposal with a feasible research question will not have one.

**Q:** Is it required to have at least one co-PI who is from the country of the proposed study?

**A:** While it is not required to have a co-PI from the country of the proposed study, this is highly encouraged and strongly preferred. With that said, there needs to be some partnership or

connection to the country of study to ensure that the research can be accomplished and the proper licenses and approvals can be obtained.

**Q:** Is co-funding required for the large-scale greenfield evaluations?

**A:** No.

**Q:** Will research references count toward the page limit?

**A:** No.

**Q:** Is there a prescribed duration or maximum timeline for any given study?

**A:** At this stage, projects should have duration of no longer than approximately three years. Subsequent publication of results in peer-reviewed journals, as encouraged by the Initiative, may extend beyond this date if necessary.

**Q:** What kinds of institutions should provide letters of support?

**A:** Implementing partners.

**Q:** To whom should the letters of support or reference be addressed?

**A:** BRAC Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD), BRAC University, 66 Mohakhali, Dhaka 1212, Bangladesh.

**Q:** Will proposals written in a language other than English be accepted?

**A:** Unfortunately, proposals will only be accepted in English.

**Q:** Which countries are included in the geographies of interest?

**A:** Sub-Saharan Africa (Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, United Republic of Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zaire, Zambia, and Zimbabwe). South Asia (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, and the Maldives). Southeast Asia (Brunei, Myanmar, Cambodia, Timor-Leste, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.)

**Q:** Will the WEE-DiFine initiative fund natural experiments?

**A:** Yes, if it is included as part of an extension to existing studies.

**Q:** Is it possible to amend any component of the application once it has been submitted?

**A:** Unfortunately, we cannot accept any amendments to your application after the deadline.

**Q:** Can a qualitative research proposal be for a standalone study for an existing implemented program, or does it have to be an existing research or study? Is it possible to apply for both the "measurement experiment" RFP and "qualitative methods as extensions to existing studies" RFP in one application where the "extension qualitative research" is expanding on the first "measurement experiment"?

**A:** Qualitative research will be funded through two sub-categories. The first category, *"qualitative studies as extensions to existing studies"*, is designed to top-up existing projects to encourage the inclusion of talented sociologists, anthropologists, and other social scientists in the research team who employ qualitative research methods, such as ethnography, to advance high-quality, mixed-method research. The second category, *"qualitative studies as formative or standalone research"*, does not need to be attached to an existing project and is designed to allow for pre-pilot qualitative research that may inform subsequent experimental evaluations or measurement studies. Both categories must demonstrate that: (1) they have a skilled qualitative researcher on their team (either as a PI or in another key role) and (2) there is clear potential for a publication-quality paper to emerge from the research. A combined proposal to apply for an extension fund (e.g. a pilot study) along with a measurement experiment is possible so long as the dual purpose is clearly stated. In this case, we can also permit a combined funding cap for both categories.

**Q:** Are you looking specifically for an RCT or would another robust design (e.g., RDD or others) work as long as we could answer your questions on treatment arms, sampling, etc.?

**A:** We consider rigorous impact evaluation (IE) designs including but not limited to the following: experimental designs (randomized controlled trials), natural experiments, and quasi-experimental designs, such as difference-in-difference, regression discontinuity, synthetic control, etc.

**Q:** Can for-profit organizations apply for the grant?

**A:** For-profit institutions are eligible to apply provided they can comply with the requirements implied by our grant agreement. For example, when pursuing engagement with for-profits, if the application is successful, BIGD will include specific binding obligations on the for-profit subaward to ensure that the charitable project objectives and Global Access requirements will be fulfilled. Specifically, the subaward agreement will address ownership of the subaward results and how those results will be made available (e.g., under what license terms, within what timeframe, etc.). Therefore, we encourage you to apply for the grant.

**Q:** Will WEE-DiFine funding cover research costs for a multi-country study in which some of the countries are outside of the WEE-DiFine geographic focus areas?

**A:** You can apply for funding that covers research costs in the focus countries. However, you would need to secure additional funding for the portion not in our geographic focus areas.

## **Application Timeline:**

**Q:** When is the application deadline?

**A:** The deadline for the Round 3 RFP is March 3, 2022.

**Q:** When will funding decisions be made?

**A:** We intend to notify researchers about the outcome within approximately 12 weeks of the submission deadline.

**Q:** How many large-scale greenfield studies will the WEE-DiFine initiative fund?

**A:** The number of studies we seek to finance is contingent upon the relevance and quality of the proposals we receive.

**Q:** What is the estimated time between application to the RFP and implementation?

**A:** Factoring in the approval process, the project should ideally start within three months of countersignature of the award. Alternatively, if the project is scheduled to start later, we can structure the contract such that the grant disbursement takes place shortly before the project is scheduled to start.

## **Budget Instructions:**

**Q:** What level of detail is expected in the budget template?

**A:** Please provide detailed information for each project cost using the columns to show how each cost has been calculated. Researchers should ensure that they provide a justification for

each cost along with a separate one-page budget narrative. BIGD performs a thorough review of all project costs. Budgets may be subject to negotiation.

**Q:** How could we show third-party work in the budget template?

**A:** If researchers plan to use a third party to carry out work on the project, they need to indicate which costs this refers to and the name of the supplier. If researchers have not decided which subcontractor to use, they should write: supplier TBC. Researchers should explain why they have chosen a particular supplier.

**Q:** If we hire a consultant to help us with work on the ground, how should we include it in the budget template?

**A:** Researchers can include the consultant costs under "Other Project Staff" as a line item with a proper explanation of tasks and activities.

## **Contracts, Grants, & Compliance:**

**Q:** How are grant payments made?

**A:** The subagreement will state the process of payment and number of installments. Each installment of payment will be disbursed upon receipt of invoices and approval of associate deliverables stipulated in the subagreement. Subawardees are required to provide a completed W-9 or W-8BEN-E form alongside an invoice.

**Q:** What are the reporting requirements?

**A:** Reporting requirements will be contingent upon the type of award and the timeline of the project. However, awards will require at minimum twice-annual technical and financial reports, documentation of IRB approval, a draft working paper, and a blog post and policy brief. All WEE-DiFine awards also require that projects adhere to BMGF Global Access Requirements including dataset creation and executable code open source.

**Q:** What are the audit requirements for recipients of grants?

**A:** BIGD has the right to review all records of the project being funded.

**Q:** What happens if we run into a challenge and do not meet our goals (due to COVID-19 or another major event)?

**A:** Researchers are encouraged to utilize the designated section in the proposal to highlight any expected challenges along with a summary of how said challenges will be managed. Challenges can also be explained in the progress reports.

**Q:** Can a subagreement be suspended or terminated?

**A:** Subagreements can be terminated by either party. Subagreements will list all terms that each party must abide by as well as the cases that could lead to award termination.

**Q:** Is IRB approval necessary for submitting a proposal for WEE-DiFine? Who is responsible for clearing the IRB process?

**A:** Researchers need to obtain IRB approval from a university and/or a national research permit from the local country where the study will take place before they can conduct any studies on human subjects. If researchers have already received an IRB approval for the study, they should provide the contact information of the IRB from which they received approval. If researchers have not received an IRB approval at the time of submission, they can write “applied/will apply.” However, all researchers must produce this documentation before the study begins. All researchers and their partners are expected to take care of IRB approval and provide the necessary documentation in support of IRB clearance.