هيئـــــة أبوظــــــبي للطفـــــولة المبكــــرة
Abu Dhabi Early Childhood Authority

Call for Proposals

Accepting Proposals From:

Tuesday, Sep 17 – Tuesday, Nov 26, 2024
8:00 am GST

Call for Research Proposals

Background

This is an invitation for research proposals from academics based in the UAE to undertake Early Childhood Development (ECD) research. Early Childhood Development is defined by UNESCO's International Bureau of Education as "an integrated concept that cuts across multiple sectors – including health and nutrition, education, and social protection – and refers to the physical, cognitive, linguistic, and socio-emotional development of young children." This research will enable the Abu Dhabi Early Childhood Authority (ECA) and its partner government stakeholders to gain an understanding of issues related to young children (defined as the period from prenatal to 8 years old) and their families while contributing to a strong scientific evidence base.

This call has been released in September 2024 and we will be accepting proposal submissions from Tuesday, 17 Sep 2024. This call targets proposals focused on applied ECD research that will result in insights for policymakers, practitioners, service providers, and other stakeholders in Abu Dhabi to take action for early childhood development. This call for proposals aims to support the ECA's research team's vision which aims to create and enable a thriving research ecosystem producing **actionable** knowledge to inform policies and practices and have a positive impact on the lives of children and families in Abu Dhabi. Through this call, ECA will fund high-quality research that will be submitted to peer-reviewed publications upon completion. Research-practice-policy partnerships are highly encouraged and proposals which show a strategy for the development of Emirati researchers at all levels will have a significant advantage.

Research Areas

There are two research areas for the 2024-2025 annual grant cycle. These research areas were sourced from 204 stakeholders across government, academia, practitioners, parents and ECA's Anjal Z teams. They represent gaps in the Abu Dhabi ECD evidence landscape, and are aligned with Abu Dhabi's ECD sector strategic priorities.

1. Exploring the attitudes of children, parents and caregivers toward teachers and schools

This research area specifically aims to better understand the attitudes, beliefs and practices of school aged children (up to age 8) and their parents towards educators and education. Research proposals in this area could take a number of different approaches to this topic, for example:

- How do the attitudes of children and parents towards teachers, school, and early education influence children's academic performance and social development?

Research topics in this area should aim to provide actionable policy and practice recommendations that support a culture of respect and understanding of the importance of early education and educators.

2. Emirati culture and traditions in a modern society in the early years in Abu Dhabi.

This research area specifically focuses on how Emirati culture and traditions are being transferred, shaped, and developed in the early years. Research proposals in this area could explore, for example:

- Intergenerational transfer of knowledge and culture between grandparents, parents, siblings, and other family members to young children;

- In what ways are Emirati customs and traditions being instilled and/or transferred to young children in modern society? For example, what are examples of games, storytelling, experiences of the UAE's natural resources and history, and more being used in cultural transfer and early learning?

- How can or does modern technology such as social media and artificial intelligence support cultural development?

- How do cultural beliefs and practices in Abu Dhabi influence early childhood development, and how can ECD programs be tailored to respect and incorporate these values?

- What role does cultural competence play in the effectiveness of ECD educators and caregivers

Proposal Submission Guidelines and Information

Award Values and Timeline

For this call for proposals, the grant period has increased from one year to 18 months, based on feedback from our previous grantees. Each grant application will be evaluated by ECD experts through a rigorous review process. The maximum funding amount accepted for this call for proposals is AED500,000 per proposal, including VAT (5%) and a maximum of 10% institutional indirect costs (IDC).

Proposal Submission

Proposals should be submitted electronically through ECA's grant management system at www.eca.gov.ae/research/grants. All documents should be submitted in English and should be formatted with one-inch margins all around, single spacing, and Arial 12-point font. Tables and figures may use a smaller font but must be legible.

As the review of the main proposal is a blind review, the proposal submission includes three separate documents.

- File 1 – the main proposal;

- File 2 – the budget proposal excel sheet;

- File 3 – appendices; research team and partnerships; capacity building and early career researcher training plan; and institutional qualifications of the lead institution(s) (i.e. the institution(s) of the PIs/Co-PIs).

File 1: Proposal (5-7 pages only)

The proposals will go through a blind review, therefore please do not include any identifiable information in any of the *File 1: Main Proposal* content, including institutional logos. The proposal should be submitted as a PDF and should include the following content:

1) Executive Summary

2) Research questions, goals of the project, and significance to Abu Dhabi:

   1. Including the alignment of the research questions to this call for proposals and the importance of this research to Abu Dhabi.

3) Study design:

    1. A description of the study design

    2. Methodology

    3. Sampling and data collection strategy

    4. Participant recruitment strategy

    5. Data analysis methods

    6. Deployment team:
       o The qualifications (i.e. background, resources, facilities, years of experience, years in UAE if an expat, academic discipline, title) and roles on the project of the Principal Investigator and other key personnel, such as Co-PIs, Co-Is, collaborators, research assistants, etc.
       o This should be a summary of the project roles and qualifications with ==NO identifying information of personnel or institutions== - CVs and institutional qualifications are to be included in the appendices (File 3).

4) Detailed proposed project timeline
5) The expected study deliverables
6) References (references do not count towards the total page count and should be in APA citation format).

File 2: Budget excel sheet

- Download the budget template <u>here (</u>save a copy in order to edit).

- Please note that there are two sheets (budget template and budget justification) – **both of these sheets need to be completed.**

- ECA is accepting proposals up to AED 500,000 for this call for proposals, including VAT and indirect costs.

       o ECA accepts a maximum of 10% institutional indirect costs, budgets should also include VAT (5%), these should be included in the maximum AED 500,000.

File 3: Appendices

Appendix 1 – Research team, recruitment and partnerships:

1. Participant Recruitment strategy:
   o Research teams need to provide an overview of how they will recruit their targeted sample size and provide evidence of their ability to do so, for example through partnerships with collaborators, Co-PIs, professional networks etc. Research teams are required to provide evidence of their ability to conduct this research throughout the Emirate of Abu Dhabi (Abu Dhabi, Al Ain and Al Dhafra).
   o Please do not include ECA in your recruitment strategy. The ECA teams often provide support with recruitment, however, research teams need to have well throughout recruitment strategies, outside of any support that may be provided by ECA.
2. A description of any research partners and the nature of the partnership (e.g. Co-PI, Co-I, subcontractors, consultants, established collaborations etc.)
3. CVs of key personnel in research team

Appendix 2: Capacity building and training:

A core priority of ECA's grant funding is to provide enablers to researchers at all levels of the research workforce, particularly but not exclusively, regarding early career Emirati researchers.

We therefore require all research teams to submit, along with their proposals, an outline of their capacity building plan. This should include:

1. The capacity building and training of early career researchers based in the UAE.
   o This could include hiring research assistants, opportunities for presenting at conferences, trainings, their involvement in proposal writing and all elements of the research process, and others. We encourage creativity and a commitment to meaningful opportunities for early career researchers.
   o This could include undergraduate, masters, PhD students or even post-docs.

2. A capacity building workshop or training for other ECA grantees/ ECD researchers:
   o Our grantees are a core element of our active and sustainable research ecosystem in Abu Dhabi. We are requesting that each proposal includes the description of a workshop or meeting that will be organized by the PI and offered to other ECD academics and ECA grantees across the UAE. The topic, audience size, objectives,

etc are to be defined by the PI themselves. A template for the outline of this workshop can be found [here](#).

Appendix 3: Institutional qualifications of the PI/Co-PIs' institution(s):

An overview of how the lead institution(s) i.e. the institution(s) of the PI/Co-PIs have a proven track record of managing research grants.

- o Applications are ONLY accepted from academic institutions, no applications from consultant companies etc. will be accepted.

==Please note: any proposals which do not follow this format will be deemed ineligible.==

Selection Criteria

Applications will be reviewed by a scientific committee based on the following criteria:

- The importance of the research question(s) and relevance to Abu Dhabi/UAE for the purpose of the funding opportunity (noted above)

- The rigor of the proposed methods and the feasibility of addressing the research questions with the proposed design, the project time frame, and the requested budget

- The ability of the research team to meet the sampling needs stated

- The experience and qualifications of the proposed Principal Investigator and the other key members of the research team

- The institutional qualifications of the applicant organization, including the fiscal and management capacity

- The research team involves one or more UAE-based students with a high preference for the involvement of Emirati students. Students should have meaningful roles on the project as research assistants/trainees in order to further their research experience and interests in this field.

- Inclusion of the voice of the young child (0-8 years old) as part of the study (optional but highly preferred), if relevant.

- The inclusion of research-practice or research-policy partnerships in the design of the research.

- We strongly encouraging the use of innovative methods, including cross-over techniques from other fields (e.g., big data or AI).

- This is not mandatory, but we prefer to include a researcher with a policy background in the team as all research grants funded by ECA must focus on producing actionable

evidence to inform Early Childhood Development (ECD) programs and policies across the Emirate of Abu Dhabi.

Application Guidelines

Please review all of the below guidelines. These guidelines give an overview of some requirements of each proposal as well as insights into the some of the requirements that need to be meet if your funding application is successful. Any proposals which do not follow mandatory guidelines below will be disqualified from this grant application process.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Either the Principal Investigator (PI) or the Co-Principal Investigator (Co-PI) /Co-Investigator (Co-I) must be a faculty member in good standing at a UAE-based academic institution for IRB submission and data collection and storage purposes.

- *Principal Investigator*

The PI can be based in the UAE or in another country (if the Co-PI/Co-I is based in the UAE) and is a faculty or adjunct faculty member in good standing, employed at a higher education institution at the time of submission and must hold a PhD.

- *Co-Principal Investigator (Co-PI)/ Co-Investigator (Co-I)*

Co-PIs and Co-Is can be based in the UAE or in another country (if the PI is based in the UAE) and must be a faculty or adjunct faculty member in good standing employed at a higher education institution at the time of submission and must hold a PhD.

- *Collaborator(s)*

A research partner who does not have a PhD and/or is not based at a higher education institution may be listed on the proposal as a Collaborator. The proposal should demonstrate that the Collaborator(s) has/have significant relevant professional experience, ties to the Abu Dhabi community, specific assets that will benefit the research project, etc.

- *Early Career Research Co-Investigator*

A graduate or post-doctoral research assistant, who is not eligible to be a Principal or Co-Investigator, but will be closely involved with the project, may be identified as an Early Career Research Co-Investigator.

An Early Career Research Co-Investigator must be:

- a named researcher on the project and seek their salary as a directly incurred cost

- employed by the same higher education institution as either the Principal Investigator or one of the Co-Investigators

A Research Co-Investigator may not assume the responsibilities of the Principal Investigator or the Co-Investigator.

DATA

ECA will grant access to relevant statistics, open data resources, and aggregate data to the grantee, and work with the grantee to facilitate data access. ECA is partnering with other government entities concerned with these research topics and additional data sets are likely to be available as well. For data that is unavailable, the grantee will need to collect their own data.

SAMPLING & METHODOLOGY

It is important that the research undertaken incorporates young children aged prenatal to age 8 and their families and/or caregivers across Abu Dhabi Emirate (Al Ain, Al Dhafra, and Abu Dhabi). This sampling should include both nationals and expatriates living in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi as well as People/Children of Determination. The sampling strategy will need to be discussed and approved in consultation with the ECA. The ECA is open to various methodologies and approaches with a preference for mixed methods. However, methodologies must be rigorous and use validated tools and instruments or novel tools and instruments that can be subject to validation.

USE OF GRANT FUNDS

Grant funds must contribute towards the direct costs of the research for which the funds were awarded, and the benefits should be directly attributable to the grant. The ECA pays for the indirect or overhead costs associated with managing the funded research project to a maximum of 15% of the full grant budget. The funds must be used effectively and economically, and the expenses must be essential for the research for which the funds were awarded.

Eligible expenses

- salary and fringe benefits of the PI, co-PI, or other investigators
- research related costs
- research supplies
- equipment/computers
- student and independent contractor salaries
- reference materials

- printing/copying
- overheads (maximum of 15% of the full budget)
- meals, accommodation, and transportation related to travel for research purposes and costs related to research dissemination such as journal publication fees, conference fees, etc. (this should not exceed a maximum of 15% of the total amount requested).

Ineligible expenses

- non-research related expenses
- expenses which are recoverable from a third party
- late payment fees or interest on credit cards or overdraft interest charges
- parking, traffic or other fines and penalties
- furniture and furnishings
- commuting costs of grantees and associated research personnel between their residence and place of employment, or between two places of employment

Grant requirements and deliverables

Key performance indicators will consist of measuring progress toward achieving the study deliverables and the final completion of the deliverables. The ECA will require awardees, as a condition of their grant, to:

- Obtain approval from an Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the treatment of human subjects in research, either at the investigator's home institution or through another institution;
- Prepare monthly progress reports that describe work conducted during the month, any issues encountered and their resolution, work to be conducted in the next month; and a summary of grant expenditures during the month and cumulative expenditures to date;
- Develop a midterm report (submission date to be agreed with ECA) to update ECA leadership on progress-to-date;
- Prepare a four to six-page policy brief (in consultation with ECA and other key stakeholders) suitable for non-technical audiences that summarizes key findings from the study and implications for policy and practice; (please be sure to budget for this)
- Share the research findings at ECA-organized discussions with various stakeholders (public, policy, media...etc.). This can be through various media i.e. meetings, roundtables, videos, etc.

- If primary data is collected, create a de-identified public-use dataset and related materials (e.g., survey instruments, code used to clean, data set with a variable guide, transcriptions, etc.). The primary data will be provided in a format and analysis code agreed upon with ECA and made available upon submission of the final grant report. The ECA will have access to data collected.
- Prepare a final grant report (submission date to be agreed with ECA) which details all grant activities and the status of all final deliverables, including the draft journal article(s) and the policy brief. A final report on grant expenditures will also be required.
- Produce one or more articles for submission to a peer-review journal for publication.

Other research-related requirements may be included in the grant agreement.

Research Grant Application Timeline

The following table indicates the timeline for grant submissions and awards:

Activity	Date
Call for proposals released	Tuesday, September 17, 2024
Proposal documents due	Tuesday, November 19, 2024
Anticipated notification of award status	March 2025

Grant proposals and budget should be submitted electronically on the ECA website at www.eca.gov.ae/research/grants (this will only open on September 17, 2024) and will close by Tuesday, November 19, 2024 at 8am (Abu Dhabi time). You will receive a confirmation email once proposals have been submitted online. NO late submissions will be accepted.

If technical issues arise, please email us at research@eca.gov.ae.

Proposals received after this deadline will be designated as late and will not be considered. Please note that this is a highly competitive call for proposals.

This request and any subsequent response do not commit the ECA to making one or more awards under this mechanism.

Frequently Asked Questions

How can I learn about future grants or research opportunities with ECA?

If you join our mailing list at www.eca.gov.ae/research you will receive emails regarding any new opportunities, grants, and initiatives related to research in ECD.

How do I apply for a grant?

To apply for a grant you can sign up or log in at **www.eca.gov.ae/grants** to start the process, then fill out the form by clicking "Apply for Grant". Please find a detailed guide with visuals of the steps to applying for a grant here www.eca.gov.ae/research/grants/applicant-handbook.

What do I do if I have a problem creating a login or a technical issue when applying?

If you have any technical issues when applying, please email research@eca.gov.ae, make sure to email before the grant deadline.

What are the ethical and IRB regulations in the UAE that is requirement of ECA?

Research funded by ECA must go through the PIs institution at a minimum and should go through the Department of Health IRB for research related to health. And in accordance with these regulations data related to research must be collected and stored within the UAE. In cases that international researchers or universities are involved, the research must go through the DOH IRB and abide by regulations related to data privacy.

The ECA Research Team will help support funded research through this process and communicate with local entities when needed.

Who can I contact regarding other questions?

If you have other question regarding research, grants or other opportunities at ECA please contact research@eca.gov.ae and you will receive a reply within 3-5 business days.

About the Abu Dhabi Early Childhood Authority

The Abu Dhabi Early Childhood Authority (ECA) is an independent legal entity that follows the Abu Dhabi Executive Council and has the full legal capacity to practice its activities. The ECA is assigned responsibility for Early Childhood Development (ECD) in the Emirate across its 4 main sectors: Health and Nutrition, Child Protection, Family Support, and Early Care and Education. 'Early childhood' is defined as the period from conception to eight years of age.

The responsibilities of the Authority include:

1) Developing and implementing a comprehensive strategy for ECD in Abu Dhabi.

2)   Reviewing and evaluating policies and programs related to ECD in coordination with the relevant entities.

3)   Proposing legislation, policies, and regulations related to ECD.

4)   Managing and implementing all matters related to ECD.

5)   Coordinating and collaborating with the relevant entities to create and implement plans to develop programs and provide services for children in their first years of life.

6)   Entering into agreements with entities and companies related to ECD inside and outside the Emirate to enhance Abu Dhabi's standing in ECD and supporting the delivery of EC programs.

7)   Conducting research and specialized studies in the field of ECD, reviewing best practices locally, regionally and internationally and proposing strategic solutions and recommendations.

The ECA is atypical relative to other public sector entities due to its core focus on policy development and the promotion of multi-sectoral collaboration and coordination. The ECA is not intended to provide direct services to either young children or their families.