



هيئة أبوظبي للطفولة المبكرة  
Abu Dhabi Early Childhood Authority

# Call for Proposals

Deadline:

**Monday, September 26, 2022**

**8:00 am**

(Abu Dhabi time)

## CALL FOR PROPOSALS

### BACKGROUND

This is an invitation for proposals from academic researchers 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 (prenatal to 8 years old) and their families while contributing to a strong evidence base in Abu Dhabi emirate.

This call targets proposals focused on applied ECD research that will result in insights for policymakers, service providers, and other stakeholders in Abu Dhabi to take action for early childhood development. The grants aim to fund high-quality research that will be submitted to peer-reviewed publications upon completion. Research-practice-policy partnerships are encouraged.

### PURPOSE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

There are three research themes for 2022-23 which aim to address gaps in the Abu Dhabi ECD evidence landscape, as identified by the ECA and our strategic partners.

- 1. Assessing the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors of children aged 0-8 and their caregivers regarding healthy habits (nutrition, sleep, physical activity, etc.). Using results to inform evidence-based health and nutrition policies tailored to the needs of young children and their families living in Abu Dhabi Emirate.**

Research shows that significant health concerns for children in Abu Dhabi include obesity (Al-Shehhi, E. et al, 2017) and dental caries (Elamin, A., 2018). In the UAE, obesity tends to start when children are toddlers and rises linearly with age (Al Blooshi et al., 2016) and between 2018 and 2020, UAE childhood obesity rates rose from 12% to 17.4% (Sheikh Shakhbout Medical City, 2022). Some of the socioeconomic costs of obesity and overweight are increased direct medical costs, school absenteeism, and loss of workforce productivity of parents as well as for obese children in later life (Lehnert et al., 2013).

Proposals in this research area should aim to better understand the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors of children ages 0-8 and their caregivers in Abu Dhabi, in order to inform current and future evidence-based health and nutrition policies for Abu Dhabi and the UAE. Proposals in this area should also aim to identify the underlying causes of adverse health outcomes among children. The awarded research project will include a systemic review of existing health and nutrition policies/initiatives/programs in Abu Dhabi as part of the research process both to inform the research as well as to relate to the findings of the study.

Possible research questions and areas of interest to the ECA and our strategic partners in this area may include, but are not limited to: What are parental expectations in regarding school policies and practices concerning children's health and fitness?; What are parental attitudes towards screen time and childhood obesity?; How can Abu Dhabi public policy best address the

increased use of digital education methods, increased screen use among children, and childhood obesity?; Have changing home environments in Abu Dhabi had an impact on childhood obesity, if so how?; What effect has the COVID-19 pandemic had on childhood obesity in Abu Dhabi?; Self-efficacy and healthy habits among children; Microplastics and obesity; Child empowerment and behavior; How do health and nutrition habits at school/nursery and home effect and/or influence each other?; What are the correlations, if any, between caregiver-child interactions, self-regulation, and healthy habits in Abu Dhabi households? What are the eating habits of households with children in Abu Dhabi?; What do children eat in schools in Abu Dhabi?

**2. Investigating the quality of the Abu Dhabi ECD workforce including their skills, preparation/qualifications, training and employment conditions and requirements, focusing on the fields of Early Care and Education, Health and Nutrition, Family Support, and Child Protection.**

In 2020, the Abu Dhabi Early Childhood Authority (ECA) mapped out 100 ECD-related occupations which work with children aged 0-8 in Abu Dhabi. Approximately 45 occupations have been prioritized across four segments (Early Childhood Care and Education, Child Protection, Family Support, and Health and Nutrition) to be included in the ECA's ECD Human Capital strategy. Understanding the knowledge, skills, and working conditions of those who work with young children and their families is crucial to providing a clear picture of the ECD workforce, their level of training and qualifications, how they experience their roles, their specific needs, etc. The objective of this research is to better understand the ECD workforce that serves children aged 0-8 and their families, and specifically the 45 occupations across four segments. Research proposals in this area are needed for a comprehensive understanding of a wide range of topics related to the Abu Dhabi ECD workforce which includes, but is not limited to, the skills, salaries, fringe benefits, preparation/qualifications, continued training and professional development, employment conditions, as well as their working environments and working hours, etc. Proposals in this area should focus on understanding the current situation as well as outlining areas of improvement needed to support the professionalization of the Abu Dhabi ECD workforce as well as evidence-based strategies for improvements to the ECD workforce.

Research of this nature would strengthen Abu Dhabi's policies and strategies around enhancing the capacities and satisfaction, as well as supporting the development of a quality ECD workforce.

**3. Exploring the influence of fathers on the development and well-being of their children aged 0-8 in Abu Dhabi.**

In 2021, the Abu Dhabi Early Childhood Authority (ECA) with the support of government entities, non-governmental organizations, third party partners and stakeholders, as well as parents, worked on the development of the Abu Dhabi Early Childhood Parenting Support Strategy with the vision that every parent living in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi feels confident, competent, and capable to support and promote the optimal development of their children. The strategy incorporated 37 actions including the development of a 'Fathers' Academy' to enhance fathers' involvement in their children's lives.

A body of evidence shows the positive influence that fathers have on the development and well-being of their young children. Helping fathers to be more confident and competent in taking care of and engaging with their children is beneficial to their children's socioemotional development from conception and throughout their lifetimes (Sarkadi, A. et al., 2008). Despite the growing involvement of fathers in their children's lives, most support to parents, including perinatal and postnatal contact largely focuses on the mother-child relationship, and that attention to fathers is limited with regards to their parenting role and skills, their attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors, their vulnerability to post-natal depression, and more.

Proposals in this research area should aim to provide a deeper understanding of the role Abu Dhabi fathers play in parenting, their attitudes, beliefs, priorities, and needs. Research proposals in this area should be designed to provide the evidence to influence the development of evidence-based services, programs, policies, and resources offered to fathers in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi. These resources and policies will support fathers in positively engaging in their young children's lives from conception through age 8. That is to improve children's quality of life but also to enhance the emotional, psychosocial, and physical well-being of fathers. A major focus of proposals in this research area should be on how to develop fathers' competencies and confidence, thus building their capacity for parenting and supporting the family unit as well as their personal well-being. Proposals in this area should focus on the collection of new quantitative and/or qualitative data to measure the nature of Abu Dhabi fathers' involvement in parenting as well as their priorities and needs. Possible research questions/focus areas could include, but are not limited to: Cultural perceptions surrounding the father's role in parenting in Abu Dhabi society, including children's perceptions; a literature review of proven evidence-based models to increase fathers' engagement in parenting; an evidence-based pilot Abu Dhabi-specific fathers' engagement program and impact evaluation; What is the impact of parenthood and parenting support on the mental and physical well-being of fathers in Abu Dhabi?

## References

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- Antenatal and postnatal depression: Fathers and all non-birthing parents. Raising Children Network. (2022, March 11). Retrieved August 3, 2022, from <https://raisingchildren.net.au/grown-ups/fathers/mental-health-wellbeing/antenatal-postnatal-depression-men-non-birthing-parents>
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# Proposal Submission Guidelines and Information

## 1. 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.

## 2. SAMPLING & METHODOLOGY

It is important that the research undertaken incorporates young children aged 0-8 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.

## 3. AWARD VALUES

In 2022, the research grants will be for projects between six months to one year in length. Each grant application will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis to award funding. Grants will be funded on a spectrum of AED 40,000 up to AED 500,000 per grant.

## 4. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Either the Principal Investigator (PI) or the Co-Principal Investigator (Co-PI) /Co-Investigator (Co-I) must reside in the UAE for IRB submission and data collection and storage purposes.

### i. 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.

### ii. 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.

### iii. 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 a Research Co-Investigator.

A 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.

## **5. SELECTION CRITERIA**

Applications will be reviewed by a selection 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.

## **6. 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
- costs related to research dissemination such as journal publication fees, conference fees, etc.

## 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

## 7. GRANT REQUIREMENTS & 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 (please refer to FAQs at [www.eca.gov.ae/research/grants](http://www.eca.gov.ae/research/grants) related to local IRB requirements and procedures);
- Prepare monthly progress reports (due on the 25th of each month) 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.

## 8. APPLICATION PROCESS AND TIMELINE

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



Activity	Date
<b>Proposal submissions &amp; Budget form A due</b>	<b>Monday, September 26, 2022 8:00 am (Abu Dhabi time)</b>
Anticipated notification of award status	Monday, November 21, 2022
Award start date	Monday, January 2, 2023
Award end date (dependent on project length)	Latest December 31, 2023

Proposals should be submitted electronically in English and formatted using A4 size paper with one-inch margins all around. Text must be single spaced using a 12-point font. Tables and figures may use a smaller font but must be legible. The maximum length is 5-7 pages, inclusive of the items listed below.

The proposal should include the following content (within the 5-7-page limit):

- A one-page executive summary
- A statement of the research question(s) to be addressed and the alignment with the purpose of this funding opportunity
- A description of the study design, including expected data sources (and data collection methods if primary data will be used) and analysis methods
- The expected study deliverables
- A study timeline
- The qualifications and roles of the principal investigator and other key personnel
- The institutional qualifications, including the lead organization’s background, resources, and facilities
- A management plan including the approach to research quality assurance and fiscal management
- A description of any research partners and the nature of the partnership (e.g., subcontractors, consultants, established collaboration)
- An explanation of how the principal investigator will involve 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.

The following materials should be included in an appendix and do not count toward the page limit:

- Resumes for key personnel (up to a maximum of five pages for each resume)
- The amount of funding requested, with budget detail provided using Form A, and a narrative justification for the budget request.
- Reference list

Grant proposals and budget should be submitted electronically on the ECA website at [www.eca.gov.ae/research/grants](http://www.eca.gov.ae/research/grants) by **Monday, September 26, 2022 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](mailto:research@eca.gov.ae) **before** the deadline.

Proposals received after this deadline will be designated as late and considered only at the discretion of the ECA.

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

## **9. FOR FURTHER INFORMATION**

For inquiries or clarifications related to the call for proposal, please contact [research@eca.gov.ae](mailto:research@eca.gov.ae).

## **10. 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](http://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](http://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](http://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](mailto: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](mailto:research@eca.gov.ae) and you will receive a reply within 3-5 business days.

## **11. 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.

**Appendix A: Budget Form A**

Submit the budget for the period from 2 January 2023 – 31 December 2023 using the following format.

**Labor**

*Indicate the name, proposed hours, rate (in AED), and total cost for each proposed personnel.*

<b>Name / Role</b>	<b>Total Hours</b>	<b>Hourly Rate</b>	<b>Total Cost</b>

**Other Direct Costs**

*Itemize other direct costs such as equipment and supplies, data acquisition, data collection, consultants, subcontractors, and so on.*

<b>Cost Item</b>	<b>Total Cost</b>

**Indirect Costs (Institutional Overhead and VAT)**

*Indicate the indirect cost percentage (maximum of 15%) and the total indirect cost.*

<b>Indirect Cost</b>	<b>Total Cost</b>

**Total Costs**

*Sum the cost elements to show the total cost requested.*

<b>Total Cost</b>	<b>Total Cost</b>

**Contribution from Other Sources**

*Indicate if there are other sources of funds that will contribute toward the cost of the project and the amount of other funding available.*