Background

The Eleanor Crook Foundation (ECF) was founded in 1997 with a single goal: to eradicate global malnutrition. The Foundation invests in research that proves what methods work, policy analysis to drive systems reform, and advocacy that makes the case for urgent action to address this global crisis. Through this research, policy and advocacy, ECF aspires to support the scale up of high impact nutrition interventions in priority geographies including (but not limited to) the “Power 4” interventions: wasting treatment, prenatal supplementation, vitamin A supplementation, and breastfeeding support.

Over the last 15 years, multiple Lancet series have identified priority interventions for increased investment, but progress on scaling has been slow.¹ The Eleanor Crook Foundation believes that in order to truly win the fight against global malnutrition, the global health and development community should focus on scaling cost-effective, high-impact interventions that are proven to save lives, and that experience suggests have a plausible path to scale.² As noted above, ECF has focused in recent years on the Power 4 interventions. This is a difference in strategy as compared to many other stakeholders in global nutrition, who favor broader multisectoral programs to address multiple underlying factors associated with risk of malnutrition.³

In previous assessments of the evidence base, the Eleanor Crook Foundation has not found sufficient evidence of life-saving impact, cost-effectiveness and scalability of multisectoral programs to justify investments in these programs, when it comes with the opportunity cost of not being able to scale up high-priority malnutrition interventions such as those identified in the Lancet series. However, while many stakeholders would agree with the principle of doing as much good as possible with the limited resources available for malnutrition programming, the global nutrition community has not reached consensus on how this can best be achieved.

Given the lack of consensus, the Eleanor Crook Foundation is interested in funding primary or secondary research that can strengthen the evidence base, and help clarify the tradeoffs between different approaches to saving lives through addressing malnutrition.⁴ While some secondary research exists, it has not been sufficient to drive consensus; and there is limited high quality primary research directly comparing the impact, cost-effectiveness and scalability of multisectoral programs vs. more focused approaches.

¹ See, e.g., Lancet 2008, 2013 and 2021 updates
² See https://pages.devex.com/scalingnutrition.html for resources discussing scalability in nutrition
³ For example, programs featuring some combination of nutrition-sensitive agriculture and food systems, WASH, social protection, livelihood programming, school feeding, early childhood development, women and girls education; sometimes but not always in combination with nutrition-specific programming.
⁴ Note that ECF’s primary consideration for cost-effectiveness is: cost per life saved
Call for expressions of interest

The Foundation recognizes that designing a full proposal for complex research or trials of malnutrition programs is challenging and time- and resource-intensive. For this reason, we are seeking brief expressions of interest from interested partners at this time for the first stage of the process. Depending on the ideas expressed, the Foundation will then decide whether to issue an open-RFP, closed-RFP around one or more concepts to participants from the EOI, or work directly with one or more partners to develop sole-source project(s). While the Foundation reserves the right to not issue any solicitations for longer proposals if the EOIs do not suggest that there is a compelling opportunity at this time, the reform agenda is a critical ongoing workstream for the Foundation.

The goal of the research is to generate evidence that can drive greater consensus on the answer to the question: how can governments, donors and implementers save as many lives as possible through nutrition interventions? Compelling EOIs will provide a clear justification for how novel primary or secondary research approaches will meaningfully advance the debate, and make a difference compared with current evidence in this space.

Structure of expression of interest

Please submit a proposal of no more than 1000 words, covering the following aspects:

● Research design and justification
  ○ High level approach to the research (high level design, programs to be analyzed, data and metrics to be captured, any relevant details on setting for the research, any dependencies on other activities/actors, etc)
  ○ How the research would make a difference compared with the research that has been conducted to date in this space
  ○ For secondary research: brief description of data sources

● Capacity to conduct work [no more than 200 words]
  ○ Experience of institution or team conducting similar work
  ○ Proposed principal investigator (may include CV as an attachment, exempt from word count)

● High level budget envelope and timeline required for the work [exempt from word count]
  ○ Total budget range anticipated (e.g. $175k-$225k, $2.75M-$3.25M, etc).
  ○ Anticipated length of study
  ○ For primary research:
    ■ rough breakdown between costs of research vs cost of implementing the program(s) to be researched
    ■ Any funding or programming expected to be leveraged from other sources
  ○ More detailed budgets are not required at this time.
At this time, the Foundation welcomes expressions of interest for novel secondary research, and particularly welcomes expressions of interest for primary research.

Please send your expression of interest to info@eleanorcrookfoundation.org with the subject line "EOI: Evidence for Reform", by end of day Thursday, August 31st.

Please feel free to submit any clarifying questions you may have about this work to info@eleanorcrookfoundation.org by end of day on Thursday August 17th. Any questions submitted by August 17th will have responses no later than August 24th. Questions submitted earlier will be responded to on a rolling basis. Questions submitted after August 17th may or may not be responded to in time to inform an EOI submission.

At ECF’s discretion, answers to submitted questions may be shared publicly in a document hyperlinked here.