USAID Youth Excel: Our Knowledge Leading Change Program Grant Competition

**Using 'Research-to-Change' (Implementation Research)
to Strengthen Menstrual Health and Hygiene Management for Girl's Education in Malawi
and Zambia**

Request for Concept Notes
Deadline: April 1st, 2022 at 11:59 pm Central Africa Time (CAT)

Key Grant Competition Information and Dates	
Request Number	FY22-Youth Excel-Grant Competition-02 Issued under USAID Youth Excel Cooperative Agreement Number 7200AA20CA00024
Issue Date	**March 7th, 2022**
Website	Access all grant competition information and updates posted regularly here.
Email	excelyouth@irex.org
Questions	Ask questions at webinars (see information below) or submit questions by email on an ongoing basis by **March 23rd, 2022.** **To:** excelyouth@irex.org **Subject:** FY22-Youth Excel-Grant Competition-02 Questions Check for responses posted by **March 18th and 25th, 2022.**
Webinars	Attend optional webinars on concept note design open to all applicants. **Date: March 15th, 2022 at 2:30pm – 4 pm CAT** **Topic:** What is "Research-to-Change" (Implementation Research)? **At:** https://irexorg.zoom.us/j/98363191541 Webinar slides, recording, and questions and answers will be posted online by **March 18th, 2022.** **Date: March 22nd, 2022 at 2:30pm – 4 pm CAT** **Topic:** Strengthening menstrual health and hygiene management for Girl's Education **At:** https://irexorg.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJUodO6przotEtN_ybFL0afYPz435UE5-UHb Webinar slides, recording, and questions and answers will be posted online by **March 25th, 2022.**
Grant Competition Deadline	Submit Concept Note online. **Deadline: April 1st, 2022 at 11:59 pm CAT** **At:** https://irexorg.formstack.com/forms/fy22_youth_excel_grant_competition_02
Participatory Selection	Eligible applicants will be invited to attend an optional participatory selection workshop. **Date: April 12th, 2022 at 2:30-4 pm CAT** **At:** link to be provided to eligible applicants

	Eligible applicants participating in the optional workshop will be invited to provide feedback on 3 concept notes by **April 19th, 2022 at 11:59 pm East African Time.** Shortlisted applicants will be invited to submit a full application in **May 2022.**
Grant Start Date	July 2022

About Youth Excel: The USAID Youth Excel: Our Knowledge Leading Change program implemented by IREX and its consortium supports young leaders and youth-led and youth-serving organizations around the globe to conduct quality "research-to-change" (implementation research); use data and learnings to improve their own cross-sectoral, positive youth development programs; synthesize data and learning; and engage in intergenerational dialogue with adult decision-makers so that together youth and adults can shape and advance data-informed development policies, agendas, and programs.

About the USAID Office for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GenDev):
USAID works to improve the lives of people around the world by addressing the distinct and intersectional needs of women and girls, men and boys, in all their diversity, in our development and humanitarian work, as well as the norms and systems that hinder optimal outcomes. Identifying and addressing restrictive gender norms and inequalities helps to foster the sustainability of results. USAID has a long-standing commitment to prevent and respond to gender-based violence (GBV), promote women's economic empowerment, promote gender equity in climate change mitigation, empower adolescent girls, engage men and boys and address gender norms, and support underserved and marginalized populations. For societies to thrive, all people must have equal rights, exercise their own voice, and live free from intimidation, harassment, discrimination and violence.

What is "research-to-change" (implementation research)?
Information is a powerful resource that can be used to help organizations grow and make their programs work better. "Research-to-Change" (implementation research) allows for organizations to gather data as they implement a program, take what they learn, and turn it into what they do as they adjust and adapt their program in real-time.[1]

What is positive youth development?
Positive youth development engages youth along with their families, communities, and/or governments so that youth are empowered to reach their full potential. Youth Excel works from the assumption that to contribute to healthy, productive, and engaged youth, positive youth development programs must focus on strengthening youth assets, youth agency, youth contribution, and the surrounding enabling environment.

What is GESI?
Gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) is an approach that helps us to understand the importance of equal rights and opportunities for all individuals regardless of their social identity. This concept addresses unequal power relations between different social groups that cause exclusion.

What is protection?
The protection approach helps us to understand and prepare for protection concerns related to Youth Excel, which can be digital, physical and psychosocial. Considering protection helps us to take local protection measures to prevent, mitigate and respond to risks and threats that Youth Excel can unintentionally exacerbate (risks associated with programs, operations, and people). Youth Excel aims to

---

[1] WHO Implementation Research Toolkit.

understand the specific risks, but also the protection capacities, the available resources and the right to protection of participants.

What is knowledge mobilization?
Knowledge mobilization is the strategic dissemination of knowledge products with a focus in driving change through the dissemination of information and data that are the result of different research and learning activities and are made openly available to the public for further use, re-use or re-distribution.

About the grant competition: As a [USAID New Partnerships Initiative](#) award, Youth Excel conducts grant competitions to offer funding opportunities for local organizations **to test and adapt solutions for a problem in a regional context through youth-led "research-to-change" (implementation research) approaches** for positive youth development.

Through this grant competition, Youth Excel seeks concepts to strengthen menstrual health and hygiene management for girl's education in Malawi and Zambia. Menstrual health and hygiene management (MHH) is a critical aspect of addressing gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment, as it alleviates barriers to full and equal participation in education and public life. USAID has a long history of investing in MHH at schools as a water and sanitation (WASH) sector activity, in line with the Water for the World Act and the U.S. Global Water Strategy. Access to appropriate MHH as part of WASH facilities and services is also reflected in the USAID Education Policy and the U.S. Government Basic Education Strategy.

This grant competition will fund youth-led and youth-serving organizations who have existing school-based MHH programs within schools that serve adolescent girls and have existing WASH/latrine infrastructure. Grantees will self-identify implementation research questions that align with the linkages between MHH and educational outcomes.

Activities must focus on school-based interventions and/or school-based interventions complemented with community-based interventions, and may include education/awareness raising, services provision for students and teachers, product provision, or a combination thereof. Educational outcomes explored may include but are not limited to school attendance, retention, and/or intended persistence; student achievement; parental support for education; teacher capacity to support girls' education; socio-emotional learning; etc.

Youth Excel will fund organizations currently implementing a donor-funded project or program that addresses menstrual health hygiene and management for girl's education. Applicants are encouraged to leverage other ongoing investments in girls' education, such as schools supported by USAID's Secondary Education Expansion for Development (SEED) program in Malawi or schools supported by USAID/PEPFAR DREAMS programming in Zambia. Youth Excel funding will enable you to add research and learning activities to your existing program to make the program better.

Youth Excel is interested in funding local youth-led and youth-serving organizations to better understand and address youth priorities for this problem in this region.

Issuance of this request for concept notes does not constitute an award commitment on the part of Youth Excel, nor does it commit Youth Excel, IREX, or USAID to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of an application. The application is submitted at the risk of the applicant. All preparation and submission costs are at the applicant's expense.

1. **What kind of grants are available?**

- **Purpose:** using "research-to-change" (implementation research) to strengthen menstrual health hygiene and management for girl's education in East and Southern Africa
- **Locations:** Malawi and Zambia.
- **Number:** 4-5. *Subject to the availability of funds, Youth Excel reserves the right to fund any or none of the applications submitted.*
- **Type:** Fixed amount subaward. Payments based on the negotiated budget will be made upon successful completion of project milestones. *ADS Reference 303mat Mandatory Standard Provisions for Fixed Amount Awards to Nongovernmental Organizations apply.*
- **Amount:** USD $40,000 - $50,000. Applicants can propose the amount required for project implementation within this range. *Cost share is not required.*
- **Start:** July 2022.
- **Length:** 8 months.

2. Who can apply to the grant competition?

Local youth-led and youth-serving organizations serving youth aged 10-24 who meet the following minimum criteria and share Youth Excel objectives are eligible to apply. Organizations led by or serving marginalized groups, which may include age, gender, disability, ethnicity, and other identities, are encouraged to apply. The grant competition is not restricted to certain technical sectors or to research organizations.

Eligible	Not Eligible
✓ Registered Organizations	✗ Individual or Group
✓ Local	✗ International
✓ Nongovernmental Organizations or Private Companies	✗ Government Institutions or Political Parties
✓ Youth-led and/or youth-serving	
✓ Eligible to receive USAID funding: o Has or willing to register for DUNS Number o Able to sign ADS 303mav Certifications, Assurances, Representations, and Other Statements of the Recipient	✗ Not eligible due to any of the following reasons: o Appears on Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control list o Has active exclusions in the System for Award Management o Appears on United Nations Security Designation list
	✗ Has received Youth Excel funding or has conflict of interest

3. **How can eligible organizations apply to the grant competition?**

Complete responses in English to the questions in Annex I. Concept Note Template. Submit concept notes online by **April 1ˢᵗ, 2022 at 11:59 pm Central Africa Time.**

At: https://irexorg.formstack.com/forms/fy22_youth_excel_grant_competition_02

4. **How will applicants be selected to receive funding?**

1. **Eligibility screening:** IREX will conduct an initial review of the concept note, based on the following criteria for responses to Parts A and D, and disqualify applicants and concept notes that are not eligible for consideration.
   - ✓ Does concept note satisfy the basic parameters? [Refer to Section 1]
   - ✓ Does applicant meet the minimum eligibility criteria? [Refer to Section 2]
   - ✓ Is concept note complete and submitted on time? [Refer to Section 3]

2. *Participatory selection:* Youth Excel seeks partners interested in collaborating and sharing knowledge with each other and stakeholders through learning events and data summits during project implementation. Youth Excel is also committed to participatory grant-making in which those people who are most impacted participate in decision-making. In order to build the foundation for open exchange during the grant competition phase, eligible applicants will provide feedback on each other's concept notes.

   Eligible applicants will be invited to an optional participatory selection workshop on **April 12ᵗʰ, 2022 at 2:30-4 pm CAT** to give input on the grant competition process and criteria. *Participating applicants will be required to submit a signed consent to share concept note, confidentiality, and conflict of interest statement and complete a conflict of interest declaration if any arise during participatory selection.*

   Eligible applicants participating in the workshop will be invited to review 3 concept notes by **April 19ᵗʰ, 2022 at 11:59 pm CAT** based on the following criteria for responses to Part B. Questions 1-9 related to concept design:
   - ✓ Does applicant clearly identify and demonstrate understanding of the problem that the concept will address? [Question 4]
   - ✓ To what extent does the proposed solution address the problem in a realistic, meaningful, and innovative way? [Question 5]
   - ✓ Does applicant articulate its motivation and priority for the concept? [Question 6]
   - ✓ Does applicant demonstrate clear understanding of the context, informed by preliminary gender equality and social inclusion analysis? Does applicant describe how it will adapt the concept to be effective in the context? Will the applicant leverage any ongoing investments in girls' education in the context? [Question 7]
   - ✓ Is the concept inclusive of youth and marginalized group(s)? Is the concept and approach responsive to youth priorities? Does applicant display understanding of risks and demonstrate safeguarding measures to ensure the concept does no more harm? [Question 8]
   - ✓ Are applicants aware of potential risks for participants and are they considering of mitigation strategies? [Question 9]

   Participating applicants will provide an overall assessment of each concept note with brief comments that will be shared with the applicant.

☐ Strongly Recommended
☐ Recommended
☐ Not recommended

Concept notes that are "strongly recommended" or "recommended" will receive an extra round of review by Youth Excel taking into account participatory selection feedback. However, concept note scoring will not be negatively impacted by optional participation or feedback from the participatory selection process in any way. Youth Excel reserves the right to make final decisions based on the selection criteria about which applicants will advance in the grant competition.

3. **Youth Excel review:** The shortlisting and review panel, comprised of selected Youth Excel consortium, Global Youth Advisory Council, and USAID members, will use the same criteria for responses to Part B, Questions 1-9 to assess the concept design, as well as the following criteria for Part B, Question 10 and Part C to assess capacity:
   ✓ Is the concept feasible for the applicant to implement within the proposed timeframe and funding amount? Does the applicant display the technical expertise needed for the proposed approach? Does the applicant demonstrate fundamental technical and financial management systems and capacity through a track record of successful implementation of projects of similar size and scope? [Part B, Question 10 and Part C]

The panel will rate concept notes on the following criteria:
   ✓ **Responsiveness:** concept's approach and value for youth priorities related to the grant competition theme and region. [Part B, Questions 1-9; informed by participatory selection review]
   ✓ **Feasibility:** applicant's understanding of requirements and proven capacity to successfully implement the concept. [Part B, Question 10 and Part C]
   ✓ **Impact:** concept's potential to advance positive youth development outcomes and learning. [Overall]
   ✓ **Protection:** applicant's awareness of potential risks for participating youth and consideration of mitigation strategies [Question 9]
   ✓ **Inclusion:** applicant's commitment to diversity and inclusion (especially regarding work with and/or support to vulnerable or marginalized groups such as girls and women, youth with disabilities, youth from ethnic or religious minorities, and other identities)[Overall]

Semifinalists selected by the panel will be invited to submit a full application.

Annex 1. Concept Note Template

USAID Youth Excel: Our Knowledge Leading Change Program Grant Competition

**Using 'Research-to-Change' (Implementation Research)
to Strengthen Menstrual Health and Hygiene Management for Girl's Education
in Malawi and Zambia**

Concept Note Template
https://irexorg.formstack.com/forms/fy22_youth_excel_grant_competition_02

Deadline: April 1st, 2022 at 11:59 pm Central Africa Time (CAT)
*Please note: questions marked with * are mandatory; others are optional.*

A. Key Information

Proposed Activity Title*	
Proposed Activity Start Date* (Anticipated start date in July 2022.)	
Proposed Activity End Date* (Anticipated duration is 8 months with anticipated end date in February 2023.)	
Proposed Funding Amount in Local Currency*	
Local Currency*	
Proposed Funding Amount in US Dollar Equivalent* (Funding may be requested in the range of USD $40,000 to $50,000.)	
Organization Legal Name*	
Organization Address	
Organization Country* (Please select if your organization is locally based and registered in Malawi or Zambia.)	❑ Malawi ❑ Zambia
Organization DUNS Number (Please provide DUNS Number if available.)	

Signatory Name*	
Signatory Title*	
Signatory Phone*	
Signatory Email*	

B. Technical Questions

1. **Activities:** Select the activities that best represent your current programming to which you would like to apply research-to-change.* (Please select all applicable options.)
   - ☐ Community-based interventions to complement school-based interventions
   - ☐ Education/awareness raising
   - ☐ Services provision for students and teachers
   - ☐ Product provision
   - ☐ Other: please explain:

2. **Outcomes of interest:** Select the educational outcomes that you are passionate about exploring using research-to-change.* (Please select all applicable options)
   - ☐ School attendance, retention, and/or intended persistence
   - ☐ Student achievement
   - ☐ Parental support for education
   - ☐ Teacher capacity to support girls' education
   - ☐ Socio-emotional learning
   - ☐ Other: please explain:

3. **a. Country:** specify the country where you will implement your concept.*
   - ☐ Malawi
   - ☐ Zambia

   b. Please list the communities and districts where you will implement your concept:*

4. **Problem:** describe the need for your current menstrual health and hygiene activity. What specific menstrual health and hygiene management problems and educational challenges does your current activity address? What is the context for this problem and why does it matter for advancing girl's education? What are the current barriers to addressing this problem within this context?* *(1500 characters)*

5. **Program (current activity):** describe your program, approach, objectives, and expected results for your current menstrual health and hygiene activity. How will adding implementation research to this current activity strengthen your ability to address the problems stated above and advance girl's education?* *(1500 characters)*

6. **Context:** describe the geographic context (districts/regions) where you are implementing your current activities. What are key power dynamics, norms, social customs, and policies in the context, and how will your activities be sensitive to them? What factors may enable or disable the implementation and impact of your activities in the context? How will you leverage other ongoing investments in girls' education in the context (i.e. SEED communities)?* *(1500 characters)*

7. **People and inclusion:** describe whom your current activities engage and impact. What are the characteristics of the marginalized or vulnerable youth (e.g., age, gender, youth with disabilities, ethnic or religious marginalized groups, rural/urban areas, socioeconomic background, level of education, other identities etc.)? Which groups of stakeholders do your current activities engage to support youth and their priorities? How will you engage diverse perspectives in your proposed implementation research? How will adding implementation research to your current activity strengthen inclusion?* *(1500 characters)*

8. **Learning Priorities:** What are you passionate about learning from your program through the addition of implementation research? Select one primary learning priority and explain why it is important to your current activity and organization. How will your implementation research contribute to the regional knowledge base?* *(1500 characters)*

9. **Youth Protection:** what are some of the risks that diverse participants may face while engaging with your current activities and proposed implementation research? Explain how your organization will ensure that participants do not experience additional harms from participation in your current activities and proposed implementation research through any mitigation strategies (e.g., what strategies, policies, approaches, trainings, and/or other processes).* *(1500 characters)*

10. **Capacity:** describe your organization's technical and financial capacity to implement your concept. What structures and systems does your organization have for project management? What relevant experiences and skills does your organization have from implementing similar projects?* *(1500 characters)*

C. **Past Performance:** list 3-5 donor-funded projects of similar size and scope that demonstrate your organization's capacity to successfully implement the proposed concept.

Project Name* Project Number* Donor* Prime Recipient* *(Please list the prime recipient organization that received funding directly from the donor. The prime recipient could be your organization or another organization if your organization was a sub-recipient.)* Funding Amount (USD)* *(Please list the amount of funding in USD that your organization received for this project.)* Project Start Date* Project End Date* Reference Name* *(Please provide the name of a reference from the donor or prime recipient who can speak to your organization's performance on this project.)* Reference Title* Reference Email Address* Reference Phone Number* Project Description* *(500 characters)*	

Key Results and Accomplishments* *(500 characters)*	

D. Certifications

I certify that the applicant organization is a local entity organization that:

- ❑ Is legally organized under the laws of Malawi or Zambia (as previously specified);*
- ❑ Has its principal place of business or operations in Malawi or Zambia (as previously specified);*
- ❑ Is majority-owned by individuals who are citizens or lawful permanent residents of Malawi or Zambia (as previously specified);*
- ❑ Is managed by a governing body, the majority of whom are citizens or lawful permanent residents of Malawi or Zambia (as previously specified);*

And is:*

- ❑ Youth-led organization whose Chief Executive Officer or other leaders are under the age of 35, and whose Board of Directors are predominantly under the age of 35, and who has a mission, mandate, or programs with an expressed priority of serving or support youth under age 35.
- ❑ Youth-serving organization that has a mission, mandate, or programs with an expressed priority of serving or supporting youth under age 35.
- ❑ Both a youth-led and youth-serving organization.
- ❑ Neither a youth-led nor a youth-serving organization.

And is: *(please select all applicable options)*

- ❑ A female-led organization whose Chief Executive Officer or other leaders are female, and whose Board of Directors are predominantly female.
- ❑ An organization with a specific mission to work with marginalized groups (e.g., youth with disabilities, etc.
- ❑ An organization with a specific mission to work with vulnerable youth (e.g., youth in conflict areas, youth living with HIV/AIDS or orphaned as a result of HIV/AIDS, etc.)

E. Attachments

Required: Please provide a letter of support from donor on the current activity to which you are proposing to add implementation research using the template provided with this application. The purpose of the letter of support is to confirm that the current donor will permit Youth Excel to contribute funding for implementation research. Please do not provide reference letters from other donors; they will not be taken into account for concept note review.*

Optional: please share up to three materials (up to 25 MB each; may be attachments in any format or a link provided in a document) that demonstrate your organization's commitment, impact, and learning related to menstrual health and hygiene management, girl's education, and positive youth development.