



Call for Expressions of Interest

Scaling Quality Teacher Professional Development Grant Program

Released by the Foundation for Information Technology Education and Development

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1. Summary

There is a need for more research, knowledge sharing and learning among governments and other key education stakeholders (e.g., donors and implementation partners such as multilateral organizations, nongovernmental organizations, teachers' associations, community organizations, academic and training institutions, the private sector, etc.) in the Global South on new models, innovations and approaches to large-scale teacher professional development (TPD) to contribute to improvements in the quality of classroom teaching.

Through the **Scaling Quality Teacher Professional Development Grant Program**, the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) will support research teams working in [eligible Global South countries](#) to conceptualize and undertake **research in support of effectively and sustainably scaling quality TPD relevant to national or sub-national needs**. By doing so, this Grant Program aims to expand the evidence base on how to design, implement and improve quality TPD at scale in developing countries. Grants of up to CAD 500,000 are available through this Call for research projects of up to 30 months involving one to two eligible Global South countries.

Eligible organizations are invited to submit an Expression of Interest (EOI)—Stage 1 of this two-stage solicitation process—to address this need under the scope, themes and considerations outlined in the Call. The EOI submission will consist of 1) a General Information Form, 2) a preliminary proposal and 3) required supporting documents. Those whose EOIs are approved will be invited to complete a full proposal in Stage 2. Mentorship and technical support will be provided by the [TPD@Scale Coalition for the Global South](#) through its Secretariat, the Foundation for Information Technology Education and Development (FIT-ED) in the Philippines, during the full proposal development stage including a facilitated course on TPD@Scale and other learning events as well as a proposal development toolkit. Research teams may also apply for financial assistance for full proposal development if shortlisted for Stage 2.

EOIs must be submitted by 18 January 2023, 5:00 PM GMT+8 (Philippines time). Late and/or incomplete submissions will not be considered.

About the funder: [IDRC](#) is a Crown corporation created in 1970 by the Parliament of Canada. It supports and strengthens the capacity of people and institutions in developing countries to undertake the research that they identify as most urgent. It works with researchers and research users as they confront contemporary challenges within their own countries and contributes to global advances in their fields.

2. Background

Progress towards Sustainable Development Goal 4 is heavily reliant on the quality of teaching that learners experience. Currently, this is limited by a number of issues linked to teachers: teacher shortages, the status and working conditions of teachers, and the **professional education (both pre-service and in-service) of teachers**. In many countries, teachers have received little professional education for their role and the quality of professional development opportunities available to them is highly variable. School closures during the COVID-19 pandemic revealed that many teachers had neither the pedagogic skills nor the digital skills to adapt to different modes of teaching. In the post-COVID reconstruction of education, there is an urgent need to equip teachers with the capabilities to ensure their teaching is effective, inclusive, and gender and culturally responsive, harnessing digital tools and resources where appropriate.

Contemporary scholarship presents a strong consensus on the core elements of effective TPD programs: participatory and collaborative, with teachers recognized as capable of critiquing, adapting and developing their professional practice in service of improvements in the quality of teaching (Popova et al., 2018). Such an approach to TPD offers teachers access to new ideas, opportunities for dialogic interactions with experts—to challenge entrenched thinking and embedded practice—and spaces through which they can develop new knowledge on education practice in their context with their peers. Quality is achieved through meeting specific professional learning needs associated with quality teaching in a particular context. This position challenges policy discourse that sees education as an enterprise of standardized efficient delivery.

But scaling quality TPD to make it available to all teachers poses a considerable challenge. It is a highly complicated process. Teacher education systems are complex, and they are only one part of a much larger, highly complex and dynamic interdependent education ecosystem with multiple actors and priorities. In education systems in the Global South, too frequently particular groups of teachers not only have fewer opportunities for TPD but also find that the TPD available to them is not relevant to their professional needs or appropriate to their teaching context. These groups may

include female teachers, those living or working in remote areas, teachers in small schools, teachers working in different languages, contract teachers, uncertified teachers, teachers working with indigenous/pastoral populations, teachers with disabilities, teachers working in fragile or conflict-affected contexts, and teachers of minority subjects at secondary level. Effectively addressing the marginalization of these teachers necessitates a conception of scaling that goes beyond tallying training numbers.

Scale is both dynamic—the conceptualization of scale may shift over time as a program or innovation is implemented—and multi-dimensional (Coburn, 2003). Apart from reach or breadth (typically measured by quantitative indicators such as the number of teachers involved), the operationalization of scaling must consider issues of **depth of implementation**, **ownership of the innovation** and **sustainability** (Morel et al, 2019). Recent scholarship from the international development community also points to a shift away from the notion of scaling as mere expansion, i.e., creating larger organizations or structures, towards a sharp focus on scaling **impact** (McLean & Gargani, 2019). Scaling TPD impact is about starting with the desired change—an improvement in the quality of classroom teaching.

The foregrounding of impact, depth, ownership and sustainability prompts the following considerations for scaling TPD:

- *Quality*: How can we ensure that the program meets a range of different professional learning needs? Teachers are not a homogenous group. They have different, and constantly shifting, professional learning needs and resources to bring to their TPD—time, materials and sources of support.
- *Equity*: How can we ensure that all teachers have access to, and are able to participate in, the professional learning experiences, and that the program supports them to orchestrate equity in learning in their own classrooms?
- *Sustainability*: Does the program or initiative support teachers to develop a career-long professional learning approach? Are the social structures of the TPD program (communities of practice, social networking, and so on) able to grow and evolve over time?
- *Efficiency*: Does the TPD program achieve an optimal balance between cost, participation and quality? Is there flexibility to enable variations in efficiency in different circumstances to maximize equity? Efficiency in education programs is the optimization of inputs to achieve desired outputs and outcomes in any one context. It is not about comparisons across contexts (Walls et al., 2020).

As yet, the global community has few examples of successfully operationalizing large-scale TPD programs in ways which address these questions. Current TPD programs are typically characterized by their lack of variation to help different groups of teachers address their own contextually specific problems of practice. Furthermore, there are rarely adjustments within TPD programs to recognize teachers’ diverse characteristics, past experiences and current capabilities.

3. General research question

Research funded through this Grant Program must explore how a TPD program delivered at scale might be modified to include different adaptations to better meet criteria of quality, equity, efficiency and sustainability. For purposes of this Call, “at scale” or “large scale” refers to implementation across a country, state, province, or district.

The general research question is:

*How can quality TPD be made available **at scale** in ways which allow the core elements to be preserved while simultaneously localizing for teacher diversity to achieve equity in access and participation?*

This conception of large-scale TPD moves notions of quality away from the “what works” approach and the implementation of “best practice” across contexts towards approaches that center teachers and their in-depth understanding of local problems and the contexts of their schools. It implies an “interweaving” (Yurkofsky et al., 2020) of formal, technical rational knowledge (Schon, 2017) with the local contextual knowledge of education practitioners (teachers and teacher educators) in adaptations that respond to local needs. This recognition and valuing of different types of knowledge in the complex activity of teaching (and by extension, the education of teachers) is not new; Dewey (2011) was arguing from this position nearly 100 years ago, in 1929.

Adaptation in large-scale TPD programs to ensure quality and equity for all teachers can take multiple forms and be driven from different points in the teacher education system—from the center, at the district or department level or at the level of teachers working collaboratively. It is likely that multiple forms of adaptation will be needed to accommodate diversity in any one system. The types of adaptation possible will depend on features of the context such as individual and collective capacities, organizational conditions and current practices.

Information and communications technologies (ICTs) play a role in enabling adaptation. For example, ICTs afford teachers choice in how they communicate with peers or experts or how to store and share adaptations of ideas for new classroom practices. Forms of professional learning such as communities of practice are also highly relevant, and these can thrive and be supported online. They enable the documentation, systematization and sharing of knowledge for education practice. Open practices, in particular, open educational resources (OER), allow for the creation of multiple derivatives that draw on and evolve through the geography, culture and language of their contexts of use and the learning needs of those using them (Wiley, 2014). Central to success of all these adaptation methods is recognition of the agency of teachers and teacher educators, and the centering of teacher learning in teacher identity.

Research teams responding to this Call are strongly advised to read the following outputs from the TPD@Scale Coalition that provide a framework for thinking about the design, implementation and continuous improvement of large-scale TPD, and offer selected examples from across the Global South:

1. Wolfenden, F. (2022). [*TPD@Scale: Designing teacher professional development with ICTs to support system-wide improvement in teaching*](#). Foundation for Information Technology Education and Development.
2. TPD@Scale Coalition for the Global South. (2022). [*TPD@Scale Compendium*](#). Foundation for Information Technology Education and Development.

4. Research themes

Research funded under this Grant Program must be related to one or more of the following research themes.

Theme 1: Adaptations in modality to increase equity in access and participation in large scale TPD programs. In many contexts, teachers have a choice between in-person and online TPD; there are rarely hybrid offerings or there is only one hybrid offering for all teachers. This risks widening inequalities between teachers—those teachers with digital skills and connectivity have access to increasing opportunities for participating in diverse TPD programs while teachers lacking skills, connectivity or confidence to engage with digital TPD can be excluded from social learning with their peers, from access to new ideas, etc. This theme asks: How can different blends of hybrid provision be made available for different subgroups of teachers and in different contexts? What resources are needed? What changes are needed in the practices of experts (teacher educators) working with teachers for the different blends?

Theme 2: Adaptations in the form of quality mentorship, coaching and tutoring within large-scale TPD programs. Currently, very few large-scale TPD programs provide quality mentoring, coaching or tutoring for teachers. This theme explores how quality tutoring (external experts usually with novice teachers), mentorship or coaching can be undertaken at scale in ways which are contextually appropriate for different subgroups of teachers. Quality mentoring, coaching or tutoring needs to be offered in a manner that is sensitive and equitable, and that supports teachers to link what they have read, observed and discussed with their daily practice in a two-way relationship. It will support teachers to make decisions in their own classrooms through developing cognitive tools to analyze and begin to resolve dilemmas of practice, rather than requiring teachers to conform to pre-set models of behavior. Research questions under this theme might look at how ICTs (including video) could be used to adapt quality support for different subgroups of teachers (across diverse geographies or in schools of varying sizes or at different stages of their careers).

Theme 3: Personalizing assessment of teacher learning in large-scale TPD programs with a focus on peer and self-assessment. Sustainable improvement in practice requires teachers to become proficient in evaluating their own practice and identifying their own professional learning needs. But current assessment in many large-scale TPD programs fails to address this and is not customized for teachers' own problems of practice and classroom needs. Is it possible to move away from centrally designed assessment, which is often primarily about accountability, to assessment that focuses on supporting the learning of all teachers and is valued by teachers? How might peer or self-assessment be used to address this? What mechanisms would help school leaders or peers to provide quality feedback reliably at scale? What might be the role for ICTs?

Theme 4: Scaling and sustaining teacher-driven models of professional collaboration. During the pandemic, as teaching and learning shifted to distance and online modes, there was tremendous pressure for improved TPD. In response, a number of different forms of TPD emerged including a large number of self-organized communities of teachers across diverse geographies and contexts (Minea-Pic, 2020). Such collaborations are diverse in their structures and forms of collaboration. When working effectively, they enable teachers to strengthen their pedagogic knowledge and skills, and develop innovative practice, both individually and collectively, in ways which are appropriate to their circumstances and the needs of their learners. How can these communities be harnessed to support sustainable teacher-driven professional learning at scale? What resources, such as a micro-improvement portal or access to contemporary scholarship on teaching and learning, might be helpful to extend and deepen teachers' engagement in these communities?

Theme 5: Understanding localizations in large-scale TPD programs. There are large-scale TPD programs in operation where the original design included adaptation or localization at different levels or where those involved in the implementation have created variations of the initial model to improve equity and quality. This Call is interested in learning more about the form of these

adaptations or variations. What conditions enabled, prompted or drove the adaptations? Who had agency to initiate and sustain the adaptations? To what extent did these adaptations enhance teachers' TPD experiences? Are these adaptations subject to review and continuous improvement? How and to what extent?

5. Research methodology

Research teams are expected to indicate in their preliminary proposal their proposed methodology. A diversity of methodologies is encouraged; there is no expectation that teams will use any specific approach. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches are welcome. The choice of research methodology will depend on the research questions and on feasibility. However, all research proposals are expected to undertake empirical field work that is rigorous and appropriate to answering the proposed research questions.

6. Types of scaling research to be funded

Grants under this Call will support applied research that investigates adaptations in models or components of models for large-scale quality TPD. Note that the grants will **not fund the implementation of large-scale TPD nor the expanded coverage of existing programs without localizations or variations to improve equity and quality**. The Grant Program will fund **scaling research** such as:

- Investigations of adaptations within existing or planned large-scale TPD programs to improve equity for all teachers;
- Designing a new model for large-scale TPD that includes adaptations for different subgroups of teachers and contexts, and piloting of the model; and
- Explorations of the conditions and support required to enable local actors to exercise agency in strengthening ownership, sustainability and teachers' depth of engagement with an informal or formal TPD program either at scale or with potential to be scaled.

This is not an exhaustive list. Research teams may propose other approaches to the general research question and one or more of the themes described in this Call.

7. Funding scope and duration

Grants of up to CAD 500,000 are available through this Call. Research projects must not exceed 30 months, including all research activities and final reporting.

Teams whose EOIs are accepted will be invited to develop a full proposal. They may apply for funding of up to CAD 13,000 for full proposal development, specifically for conducting background research and stakeholder engagement activities to inform the full proposal (*see Section 13 for details*).

All grants are subject to sufficient funds made available to IDRC by the Parliament of Canada. IDRC reserves the right to cancel this Call at any time without prior notice and to award or not award grants under this Call at its discretion.

8. Cross-cutting considerations

Research projects under this Call are expected to recognize the following cross-cutting considerations for designing and implementing quality TPD at scale.

School-based TPD: Key to successful TPD is situating teachers' professional learning at the site of their practice—the classroom—and to center their professional learning on the process of classroom inquiry. Conceptualizing TPD in this way removes the barrier or gap between theory and practice, noted as a major challenge in a large number of country education sector plans and reports.

Use of data: The advent of large-scale online platforms has made data analytics available. Where appropriate, proposals are expected to show use of such data for identifying teacher needs, for monitoring and improving equity and gender equality, and for use in improvement cycles.

Open content: In line with IDRC policy, all outputs need to be made available under open licences for adaptation and sharing with the global community. This includes resources created to support teacher learning.

Cost efficient: Resources for TPD are limited in many contexts and proposals need to show that their innovations are cost efficient (in terms of outputs relative to input of resources) to increase the likelihood that they will be scaled and sustained. Researchers should consider the long-term viability of their proposal and possible sources of resources to sustain the work.

Gender, equity and social inclusion (GESI) should be considered in all aspects of project working including the composition of research teams, the research design, etc. All proposals should draw on existing data concerning teacher demographics and their TPD experiences in the proposed research sites. If such data are not available, proposals should outline how projects will ensure their research is appropriate for different groups (female teachers, those living or working in remote areas, those in small schools, those using local languages/dialects, contract teachers, teachers with disabilities, etc.). This includes consideration of the composition of research teams and allocation of responsibilities within these teams.

9. Eligibilities

- This Grant Program is open to organizations only; individuals may not apply. Organizations may be public, private non-profit or private for-profit.
- Research projects may be proposed in up to two countries on the [List of Eligible Countries](#) in the same or different regions.
- Research projects may be proposed by one lead organization or by a consortium of up to three organizations with a designated lead organization. If the grant application is successful, the lead organization will be the grantee and therefore must be an independent legal entity that has the ability to enter into contracts in their own right and name, and to administer and transfer foreign funds. The lead organization must be based in the region (for a single-country project) or one of the regions (in a two-country project in different regions) where the research will take place. If the lead organization is not based in the target country, it must have a partner organization based in that country.
- The research team must include members based in the target country or countries.
- Research must be related to at least one of the themes listed in Section 4.
- The TPD program to be studied may or may not involve the use of ICTs.

10. Selection criteria

EOIs will be assessed against criteria described below.

No.	Review criteria	Detailed criteria	Weight
1	Relevance and priorities of research and research questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides a justification for the research focus (i.e., adds to research evidence for developing countries) Aligns with the relevant in-country priorities Speaks to the themes of the Grant Program Relevant to at scale TPD programs (i.e., has potential scalable impact) Relevant to appropriate stakeholders Supports relevant development outcomes 	25%
2	Research design and methodology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality of the research design as related to the research questions Appropriate methodology Identifies data management and ethical issues and ways to address them (including knowledge of relevant ethical approvals) Identifies risk and strategies for mitigation 	15%
3	Organizational and individual capabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capacity, experience and track record of the lead organization and partners (if any) relevant to the proposed research project and in managing complex research projects Composition of the research team including local researchers based in the target country/countries Capacity, experience and track record of the Principal Investigator/s in education research generally, in the areas relevant to the proposed research project, and in leading research in developing country contexts; their understanding of the education ecosystem in the target country/countries Capacity, experience and track record of other key personnel in education research generally and in the areas relevant to the proposed research project; their understanding of the education ecosystem in the target country/countries 	30%
4	Gender, equity and social inclusion (GESI) considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GESI issues considered in all aspects of the project design including data collection, analysis, knowledge mobilization, etc. Contributes to addressing identified issues of inequity within teacher education 	10%
5	Engagement, impact and learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategies for stakeholder engagement/dialogue to deepen implementation, foster local ownership and sustainability, and encourage meaningful uptake of project results 	20%
TOTAL			100%

11. Selection process

EOIs will be screened for eligibility based on the criteria listed in Section 9. Only submissions that meet all eligibility requirements will be evaluated. Eligible submissions will be reviewed and assessed by a panel of technical specialists according to the selection criteria in Section 10. Results of the technical review will be assessed and EOIs will be shortlisted by IDRC and FIT-ED.

Research teams whose EOIs are shortlisted will be invited to develop a full proposal. Teams will be provided with mentoring and technical support during full proposal development. This full proposal development stage is expected to take 3.5 months.

Full proposals will be reviewed and assessed by a technical panel and final funding decisions based on the recommendations of the panel will be made by IDRC. Teams will be provided the evaluation criteria at the appropriate time.

12. Application requirements

Applicants are required to submit the following: a) General Information Form, b) preliminary proposal and c) required supporting documents, as described below. Applicants are not expected to submit a detailed cost proposal at this stage but they must provide an estimate of the total cost of the proposed research project.

- a. The General Information Form is to be completed online at <https://form.jotform.com/tpdatSCALECOALITION/EOI2023>.
- b. The preliminary proposal is to be completed online. It should include the following:
 1. Project title
 2. Thematic area/s
 3. Country/countries of focus
 4. Estimated total cost of the proposed research project (up to CAD 500,000)
 5. A short narrative addressing the five selection criteria in Section 10 under these four headings:

Problem identification and background (max. 1,000 words)

- State the research problem to be addressed and the justification for addressing this problem in the target country/countries (or localities). Link to relevant national/sub-national priorities or plans indicating the demand for addressing the problem.
- Explain how the research links to one or more of the themes of the Grant Program.
- Discuss how the research builds on existing research evidence and addresses gaps.
- Explain how the research will contribute to development outcomes.

Research design and methodology (max. 750 words). While these may shift during the full proposal development stage, research teams should outline their initial thinking and where they see gaps that will need to be addressed in the full proposal.

- Clearly state the research questions and sub-questions at this stage of proposal development.
- Outline the research design, methodology and methods of analysis to be used.
- Indicate how gender, equity, and social inclusion (GESI) issues will be considered.

- Identify ethical issues, how these will be addressed and relevant ethical approvals.
- Identify possible risks and mitigation strategies.

Project team capabilities (max. 750 words)

- If a consortium, provide a justification for the partnership. Describe the role of each partner and their expected contribution to the successful implementation of the proposed project.
- Describe the roles, responsibilities and time commitment of key personnel:
 1. Project Manager. If it is a two-country project, explain who will manage implementation in the second country.
 2. Principal Investigator/s
 3. Specialists/Experts (up to three)
- Describe how the project will be managed and how team members will work together. If a two-country project and/or if implemented by a consortium, address how the work will be directed, coordinated and monitored to ensure success.
- Discuss existing relationships and past and present cooperation between the lead organization (and consortium partners, if any) and key education stakeholders in the target country/countries.

Engagement, impact and learning (max. 300 words)

- Outline strategies for engagement and dialogue with key education stakeholders (including teachers) and how these strategies will contribute to achieving depth of implementation, local ownership, sustainability and meaningful uptake of project results.

c. Required supporting documents

- A profile of the lead organization including at least two projects within the past five years that are related to the research project being proposed. Download [template](#).
- A profile of up to two consortium partners (if any). Download [template](#).
- An organizational chart of the project team. Include in this chart all key personnel, other specialists/experts (if any), research support staff, field researchers and project management staff. For each team member, indicate if national (N) = based in the target country; regional (R) = based outside the target country but within the region; or international (I) = based outside the region.
- CVs of all key personnel (maximum of five). Download the [template](#).
- Registration certificate/articles of incorporation of the lead organization
- Latest audited financial statements of the lead organization (if available)
- If applying as a consortium, a letter signed by the authorized representative of each consortium member attesting that they have agreed to their roles and commitments to the proposed project

13. Application for small grants for full proposal development

Funding of up to CAD 13,000 is made available to shortlisted lead organizations for background or scoping research and for stakeholder engagement or consultation activities in support of full proposal development. Applicants are asked to articulate what gaps in knowledge or relationships

have been identified in the development of the proposal thus far and how these will be tackled using the proposal development grant: who will be involved, what activities will be undertaken (including the research questions and methodology for any research activity) and how these activities strengthen the full proposal. The suggested duration of the funded proposal development activities is no more than 1.5 months of the 3.5-month full proposal development period. Applicants should plan to start funded activities in March 2023 (one month after the announcement of the shortlist) to allow time for the grant agreement to be finalized and signed.

Lead organizations who wish to avail of the full proposal development grant in the event that they are shortlisted should complete this [online application form](#) and submit a budget. Download the [budget template](#).

Applications will be reviewed in parallel with the review of the EOI. A final assessment and decision to award will be made only for shortlisted applicants. Legal, financial and administrative requirements and processes as well as ethical clearance to conduct research (if necessary) will be discussed with the shortlisted applicant and a final decision will be made by FIT-ED. Applications will be either accepted or rejected. The accepted application may receive specific comments from FIT-ED that the applicant is required to satisfactorily address before the grant is awarded and a grant agreement signed.

All small grants are subject to sufficient funds made available to FIT-ED by IDRC. FIT-ED reserves the right to cancel this small grant application process at any time without prior notice and to award or not award grants under this process at its discretion.

14. Selection timeline

- Release of Call for Expressions of Interest – 6 December 2022
- Question period – Applicants can email their questions to tpdatyscalecoalition@fit-ed.org until 14 December 2022. Responses will be given at the Information Session.
- Information Session – [19 December 2022, 9:00 pm GMT+8 \(Register through this link\)](#)
- Deadline for submission of Expressions of Interest – 18 January 2023, 5:00 PM GMT+8 (Philippine time),
- Review of Expressions of Interest by the technical panel and IDRC/FIT-ED – 19 to 31 January 2023
- Decision communicated to shortlisted applicants – 3 February 2023

15. Submission process, inquiries and Information Session

All application requirements must be submitted [online](#) on or before **18 January 2023, 5:00 PM GMT+8 (Philippine time)**. Incomplete EOIs or EOIs received after this deadline will not be considered. Applications will be accepted in English, Spanish and French.

Questions about this Call and the application process may be emailed to tpdatyscalecoalition@fit-ed.org until 14 December 2022. Responses will be provided at an [Information Session](#) on [19 December 2022, 9:00 pm GMT+8 \(register through this link\)](#).

Further details on the Information Session and other updates on the Call will be posted on the [Call page](#) of the TPD@Scale Coalition website. The Information Session will be recorded and posted after the session. Responses to queries will be collated in an FAQ section.

16. Permission for use and disclosure of information

By submitting an EOI under this Call, the applicant consents to the disclosure of all submitted documents to the technical panel and others from IDRC, FIT-ED and third parties who are involved in the review and selection process.

The applicant is responsible for obtaining informed consent from individuals whose personal information are being shared in any of the submitted documents. The applicant further consents to the disclosure of the name of the applicant, the name of the Project Manager and Principal Investigator/s and the name of the proposed project in any announcement related to the Grant Program.

17. References

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