



Private Enterprise Development in Low-Income Countries

A CEPR / FCDO Research Initiative

EXPLORATORY RESEARCH GRANT BUDGET GUIDELINES

2025 – 2029



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1. Introduction

This document summarises the PEDL Budget Guidelines for Exploratory Research Grants ('the Guidelines'). The current version of the Guidelines is applicable to all open Exploratory Research Grants.

Applicants for Exploratory Grants are required to submit a detailed budget together with their project proposal. The Exploratory Grant budget template is available on the [PEDL website](#).

The PEDL Selection Committee reviews the scientific proposals as a whole. The budget included in the proposal is reviewed by the Selection Committee as part of its value for money consideration. However, **the final budget is subject to negotiation with the PEDL Grants Coordination Team**, once the proposal is recommended for funding. During this process, the grantee may be required to make changes to the budget to submit a more detailed overview of projected expenditures and to remove items that are not considered as eligible costs. The budgets will again be evaluated on the basis of value for money. Applicants are advised to be mindful when preparing their budget of how to demonstrate value for money. Some brief guidance on this issue is provided in Section 9.

The formal approval of the budget proposal by the PEDL Grants Coordination Team is a prerequisite for the preparation and signature of the Funding Agreement between PEDL and the Applicant.

2. General Rules

- The examples in the budget justification template are for guidance only. Item descriptions and justifications should be specifically tailored to your project and the examples given should be deleted from the final budget version.
- Please ensure you only fill in those categories that are relevant to your project.
- All expenditure should be listed in GB Pound Sterling (£). For the submission of financial reports, you will be required to use the exchange rate of the day the cost was incurred, i.e. the date on your receipts. Alternatively, the exchange rate of the last day of the reporting period could be applied to the entire report. Grantees should be consistent in their choice of exchange rate method. If an item requires a currency conversion, please apply the appropriate rate based on data obtainable from bankofengland.co.uk or [OANDA](#).
- No administrative charges or institutional overheads may be included in the budget. This includes management and administration costs including admin and management personnel costs; costs of office space, including rent, depreciation of buildings, equipment, electricity, water, gas, maintenance, insurance; communication costs such as postage, and network connection charges; and any costs for an audit of project expenditure that your institution may be required to carry out to comply with its own auditing regulations.
- All costs must be broken down (i.e. per day/month, per item). Details must be included in the 'Justification' section, as well as in the budget narrative section of the proposal.
- Transfers of funds between budget headings are permitted. For deviations, up to 20% of the original funds allocated within a budget heading no approval is needed. For deviations over 20% from the approved budget, a formal request must be submitted.

This formal request must include a narrative description and justification for the proposed changes.

- Unless specified in the call you are applying for, budgets should be in the range of £10,000 - £40,000.
- No additional funds will be made available to grantees to cover currency exchange losses over the course of the grant.
- When submitting financial reports, grantees will be required to submit all documents and receipts proving expenditure. Any costs found to be ineligible will be rejected.
- Applicants are advised to be mindful when preparing their budget of how to demonstrate value for money. Some brief guidance on this issue is provided in Section 9.
- CEPR reserves the right to request changes to or seek further clarification of the project budget after the grantee's proposal has been accepted by the PEDL Scientific Committee.
- Reverse-VAT is only eligible in exceptional cases and upon prior approval by CEPR Staff.

3. Category: Data Acquisition/Field Work

The items included in this category should relate only to expenditure that is directly linked to the scientific process of data acquisition.

Eligible costs:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data purchase • Survey running costs (e.g. materials, communication tools, etc.) - survey costs should be justified and the method of selecting the firm conducting the survey should be described in the 'Justification' section of the budget. CEPR reserves the right to request copies of any institutional policy on procurement of any such services • Data entry • Data analysis tools (e.g. software) (note: software costs can only be covered if they are directly related to the project. Software used for purposes outside the project will not be eligible). • Salaries for field staff (should be able to demonstrate that staff are directly involved in the acquisition of data) • Subscription costs for databases • Training costs (note: training costs can only be covered if the training is directly related to the project. General trainings are not eligible).
Non-eligible costs:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travel, accommodation and subsistence costs should not be included in this category even if the expenditure is incurred while collecting data. These items should instead be listed under the 'Travel' section. • Equipment costs (e.g. phones, laptops, etc.). • Salaries for PI and Co-Is and Research Assistants

4. Category: Travel

This category should contain all items that relate to travel, accommodation and meals. These can be linked to different parts of the project and should be split accordingly (e.g. travel to the field location, travel to conferences and workshops, etc.). Travel, accommodation and subsistence costs should be listed as separate entries in the budget justification template and the total cost for each figure should be broken down i.e. cost per night x number of nights etc.

Applicants should actively seek value for money where it is practical and feasible, or if appropriate, the lowest price. All travel, accommodation and subsistence claims must be supported by receipts and/or tickets.

Eligible costs:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Travel (e.g. flights, trains, taxis, car rental, fuel)• Meals and accommodation• Note: Conference-related travel costs can only be included if the PIs are selected to present their PEDL project at the conference and the expenditure for the conference is incurred within the contract dates.• Visa costs directly related to travel for the project.
Non-eligible costs:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Please see below

Please note that CEPR will only reimburse economy class flights and second class train travel. CEPR requests that participants electing to travel by train must take advantage of early booking fares where this is cheaper than purchasing tickets near to departure. Where travel by public transport is impossible or impractical, applicants may request funding for travelling by car. Note that funding is limited to renting costs of the vehicle, expenses for fuel and parking. Please note that PEDL does not fund flights between developed countries that do not have to do directly with the project (for example, if the project is being presented at a conference).

Expenses should be recorded including the start and end points of the journey (addresses or landmarks) and the number of miles travelled. Miles can be reimbursed at 45p per mile up to 10,000 miles. Above 10,000 miles are reimbursed at 25p a mile. More information on mileage allowance can be found [here](#).

When overnight accommodation is required it is expected that applicants will obtain accommodation at the most economical rate available. Applicants may claim the cost of meals when it is necessary for them to stay in overnight accommodation provided they are of a reasonable cost.

Please note that the prices entered for accommodation and subsistence should not exceed reasonable values. Use [UK Gov Subsistence rates](#) to see what such reasonable values are in each country.

5. Category: Research Stipend

This category should include research stipends to be paid directly to the Principal Investigator (PI) and Co-Investigators (Co-I). The daily rate and number of days to be charged for the research stipend must be supplied for each researcher.

Eligible costs:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daily rate for the Principal Investigator’s research stipend • Daily rate for the Co-Investigator’s research stipend
Non-eligible costs:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fees paid to Research Assistants and support staff • Expenses for the PI and Co-I (i.e. travel, meals, etc.) • Recruitment costs

Research Stipends are eligible costs under PEDL to the extent that PI’s and Co-I’s are directly involved in providing services to the project. Stipends for senior researchers working in upper-middle and high-income countries are not funded under the ERG program. Stipends for PhD students are capped at £12,000 for students in programs located in high-income countries. We allow stipends for up to 9 months of time for PhD students and researchers in LICs if the stipends allow them to reduce teaching / administrative duties and therefore free up time for research. All research stipend costs will be evaluated for its value for money and may require further justification or amendments before being approved by CEPR.

If difficult to acquire for reporting purposes, receipts for the research stipend can come in the form of a signed and dated letter stating the hours worked and the rate of pay.

6. Category: Research Assistance

This category relates to the costs incurred for employing Research Assistants and academic support staff. The daily rate for each Research Assistant and the number of days to be spent on the project must be supplied.

Eligible costs:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daily rate for Research Assistants and support staff
Non-eligible costs:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Principal Investigator’s research stipend • The Co-Investigator’s research stipend • Costs for field staff • Recruitment costs

Research personnel are eligible costs under PEDL to the extent that the research staff are directly involved in providing services to the project. All research personnel costs will be evaluated for value for money and may require further justification or amendments before being approved by CEPR.

For both Research Stipend and Research Assistance categories, only actual hours/days worked by the personnel exclusively on the project may be charged. If the person does not work exclusively on the project, is working part-time or working only part of the year on the project, a *pro rata* calculation must be made based on the hours/days worked on the project.

Research stipend and assistance costs should be recorded through timesheets for all employees working on the project. Once declared, the personnel costs cannot be adjusted/changed due to a re-calculation of the daily rate. CEPR reserves the right to ask for proof of expenditure in the form of payslips and payroll data, or other means of tracking personnel costs such as signed statements from personnel confirming receipt of money.

7. Category: Other

This category should contain all project-related costs that do not fit into the other categories. They must be clearly defined and described.

It is expected that researchers and institutions will provide their own IT equipment such as tablets, mobile phones, laptops and computers for the duration of the project. In exceptional circumstances, these can be included in the budget, but strong justification will be required and there is a purchase limit.

Eligible costs:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Equipment (e.g. notebooks, online storage, support software) – laptop and tablet purchase costs are limited to £500. Tablet rental costs may be eligible if the rate is reasonable and if the tablet(s) are necessary to carry out the project.• Dissemination activities (including venue hire, catering, speakers' honoraria (where applicable), travel and accommodation of participants (when absolutely necessary), conference fees for conferences where PIs are accepted to present)• Publication costs (including printing workshop/conference materials, costs related to the publication of research results, costs associated with open access of outputs)
Non-eligible costs:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Indirect costs (overheads, institutional fees etc.)• Contingency costs

8. Non-eligible costs

The following costs cannot be reimbursed by PEDL:

- Administrative charges or institutional overheads. Please see above for more information
- Any identifiable taxes, such as reverse VAT (unless prior approval is granted by CEPR)
- Interest owed
- Provisions for potential future losses
- Exchange losses
- Excessive expenditure
- Transaction fees/international transfer fees
- Recruitment costs
- Fringe benefits which are not mandated by law in the hiring country

9. Value for Money

Value for money (VFM) in this programme means that we maximise the impact of each pound spent to improve poor people's lives. VFM does not simply mean minimising the cost of the project but also involves making judgements about the results we expect to achieve. In this regard, the 3Es framework may be helpful:

- **Economy** Does the proposal plan to buy inputs of the appropriate quality at the right price? (i.e. cost-minimisation)
- **Efficiency:** How well does the proposal plan to convert inputs into outputs? (i.e. is the value of the final research output high relative to the cost)
- **Effectiveness:** How well are the outputs from an intervention achieving the desired policy outcome and, ultimately, poverty reduction? (i.e. is the value of the final outcome high relative to the cost)

The VFM of proposals will be assessed on these three criteria. It is important to note that while the research output is substantially under the control of the research team, it is recognised that the policy outcome and its ultimate impact on poverty reduction are subject to many other factors. Nevertheless, evaluators will assess the quality and credibility of the policy impact plan to judge whether the project is likely to be effective in the sense of achieving policy change.

10. Conflict of Interest

Applicants must take all measures to prevent any situation where the impartial and objective implementation of the project is compromised for reasons involving economic interest, political or national affinity, family or emotional ties or any other shared interest ('conflict of interests').

A 'conflict of interests' exists if shared interests:

- influenced the consultants/subcontractor/partner organisation's selection/award procedure
- influenced the consultants/subcontractor price and this does not correspond to the market price or
- affected the project's performance, as measured by the appropriate quality standards.

If there is a (risk of) a conflict of interests, the applicant must inform CEPR so that steps can be taken to resolve or avoid it.

If you have any queries when completing your Exploratory Grants budget, please contact pedl@cepr.org.