



## NOTICE OF A CALL FOR PARTNERS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE IMPACT EVALUATION INITIATIVE FOR LABOR MARKET POLICIES & PROGRAMS<sup>1</sup>

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### 1. Background of the Initiative

The Government of the Kingdom of Morocco and the Government of the United States of America, acting through the Millennium Challenge Corporation ("MCC") signed, on November 30, 2015, a second Compact with the objective of improving the quality of human capital and land productivity.

Compact II includes two main projects: 1) "Education and Training for Employability" aimed at improving youth employability through activities directly related to the fields of secondary education, vocational training, and employment and 2) "Land Productivity" aimed at improving rural and industrial land productivity and governance of land to better respond to the needs of investors and to further attract investment.

The implementation of the Compact projects is entrusted to the Millennium Challenge Account Morocco (MCA-Morocco), a Moroccan public institution with legal and financial autonomy. MCA-Morocco is administered by a Board which is chaired by the Head of Government and which includes the ministers and representatives of other public institutions with a stake in the Compact's activities, in addition to representatives of the private sector and civil society. MCA-Morocco will be dissolved one hundred and twenty (120) days after the expiration date of the Compact in June 2022.

MCA-Morocco seeks to implement, in collaboration with the key institutional actors of the labor market, an initiative to support the rigorous evaluation of employment and labor market policies (elsewhere referred to as the "Impact Evaluation Initiative" or IEI), in order to promote innovation and constant improvement of labor market policies and practices. This initiative is part of the employment-related activities of the "Education and Training for Employability" project.

### 2. Description of the Initiative

The main objectives of the Impact Evaluation Initiative are:

- **Conducting Impact Evaluations:** Although the IEI addresses broader capacity and institutional constraints, one of the main objectives of this initiative, as defined in the Compact agreement, is to conduct a number (to be defined) of impact evaluation studies. These studies will address the issues most relevant to Moroccan policymakers, while demonstrating a high level of scientific rigor and credibility. In addition, the co-production of evaluations by Moroccan and international researchers will facilitate knowledge transfer and learning.
- **Capacity Building:** The IEI's second objective is to strengthen national capacity for evidence-based policymaking. Evidence-based policymaking, which is often limited by available techniques and tools, information systems, dissemination of knowledge about experimental and non-experimental methods, and other factors.

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<sup>1</sup> The present document aims to present a summary of the content included in the *Appel a Partenariat*, but in case of any ambiguity or conflict between the documents, the full French version of the *Appel a Partenariat* will prevail.

- **Ownership and Awareness:** The IEI's third objective is to engage key labor market institutions and policymaker to promote ownership of and buy-in to the mission of program evaluation among with a view toward sustainable evaluation practices. This objective can be fulfilled by assisting in the accumulation of practical knowledge and tools to be developed during IEI implementation, and by raising awareness of the importance of evaluations for improving overall effectiveness of employment and labor market policies.

This Initiative's general focus is the evaluation of employment and labor market policies. Emphasis will also be given to the direct and indirect impacts that public policies have on employment and the labor market, including both macroeconomic reforms and social sector policies, including in education, training, and social protection. A list of research topics will be agreed upon with stakeholders, based on a number of criteria, including the specific needs expressed by key institutional partners, their eventual evaluability, timeliness, the available resources, the engagement and mobilization of institutional actors, the availability of data, etc.

The Initiative will finance the work of specific research studies as well as national capacity-building for labor market policy evaluation, based around the current partnership being proposed with an international policy research organization.

The key operational stakeholders for the IEI are:

- i) **MCA-Morocco:** MCA is the entity responsible for implementing the Impact Evaluation Initiative. It will designate the roles of stakeholders to ensure technical and scientific oversight (by the technical and scientific committees, respectively) and will oversee the implementation of the IEI's given activities.
- ii) **Institutional partners:** Given the cross-cutting nature of the evaluation of public policy in the domains of employment and labor markets, MCA-Morocco will work with key institutional partners in the labor market to integrate them into the process of operationalizing the IEI. A primary institutional partner with the required capacities and skills will be designated to work directly with the Research Partner in the shared management of this Initiative.
- iii) **A research partner specialized in policy evaluation:** The research partner will be selected through the present call for partners, and will be responsible for scientific supervision, technical and financial management, planning, and monitoring and evaluation of this initiative. This research organization will identify and select the most appropriate experts/researchers for the identified themes that align with the government's current strategic priorities. The mobilized experts will use sophisticated methodologies and platforms to conduct research and capacity building efforts which address the issues of greatest relevance to policymakers.

### 3. Purpose of the Call for Partners

MCA-Morocco is launching the present call in order to develop a partnership with a research partner with significant previous experience in program and policy evaluation, particularly in the areas of employment and labor market policies. The partner organization will work together with MCA-Morocco to achieve the shared objectives of the Impact Evaluation Initiative.

Through the partnership, MCA-Morocco, its key institutional partners, and one or more policy research organizations, will work together to achieve the initiative's objectives via shared implementation plans including but not limited to the following management and governance, rules governing allocation of the Initiative's budget, a system of monitoring (reporting), access to necessary data, the relevant evaluation concepts, tools, techniques, and more.

### 4. Eligibility of Organizations

Any qualified policy research organizations with demonstrated capacity to achieve the objectives of the IEI are eligible to partner with MCA-Morocco. Specifically, the list of eligible organizations includes university research centers, think-tanks, and research associations at the international or national level. Consulting firms or other for-profit organizations are not eligible as a lead partner, but may participate in a partnership or grouping with the aforementioned eligible bodies.

## **5. Budget and Timeline**

The budget for the implementation of this Initiative is approximately USD \$5 million. This includes the management and oversight budgets of the research organization(s) as well as research execution budgets including data collection costs.

The expected duration of MCA's Contribution to the Initiative ranges from the signing date of the partnership agreement until Compact closure.

## **6. Process of Establishing the Partnership**

The process of establishing a partnership with a policy research organization will be done in three stages: (i) call for partnerships; (ii) co-creation sessions; and (iii) final selection of proposals.

### **i. Call for Partners**

Evaluation research organizations responding to the Call for Partners will be required to submit concept notes that provide preliminary proposals for the proposed approach and methodology, the activities planned for each step, the key members of the proposed team, and a synthesis of best practices, lessons learned, success factors, and difficulties encountered in past policy research initiatives performed in other countries. Concept notes must not exceed a maximum of ten (10) pages and must be written in French and English.

The concept notes will be evaluated based on the recommended evaluation methods, previous experiences promoting culture and practice of public policy evaluation, the notes' technical and institutional dimensions, and the professional skills and qualifications of the members of the proposed team. One or more selected organizations will be eligible for the co-creation sessions described below.

The results of the evaluation of the concept notes submitted by the applicants to the partnership call will be posted on MCA-Morocco's website ([mcamorocco.ma](http://mcamorocco.ma)).

The deadline to respond to the Call for Partners is set at thirty (30) calendar days from the date of its publication. Interested research organizations should prepare their concept notes and submit them electronically via MCA-Morocco's website <[iae@mcamorocco.ma](mailto:iae@mcamorocco.ma)>. If necessary, MCA-Morocco may extend the deadline for submission of concept notes and issue a new notice.

There will be a Question and Answer period, during which research organizations may request clarifications and/or informational meetings, no later than fifteen (15) calendar days after the date of publication of the partnership call. MCA-Morocco will post answers to all questions (in French) on the MCA-Morocco website within five (5) calendar days.

A selection committee will be set up to evaluate the concept notes submitted by the applicants in response to the Call for Partners.

### **ii. Co-creation Session**

The co-creation sessions, which will be held with the selected evaluation research organizations, have the following objectives:

- Discuss how MCA-Morocco, the lead institutional partner, and the evaluation research body could work together to achieve the objectives set out in the Call for Partners;
- Develop, detail, and refine the concept note to arrive at a detailed research project which is ready for implementation, taking into account stakeholder interests in relation to the programs or policies to be evaluated, as well as requirements in terms of approaches and deadlines;
- Identify ideas, risks, and methods that can lead to better a partnership design and better results in the implementation of the Initiative's evaluation efforts.

The co-creation sessions with the selected policy research organizations will be conducted through individual interviews with at least one representative per organization. These sessions will be held on the premises of MCA-Morocco or WebEx, according to a schedule (day and time) agreed upon by each of the relevant organizations, currently planned for the second or third week of December 2019. Costs related to participation in co-creation sessions are the responsibility of the relevant organizations. Selected organizations that do not participate in the co-creation sessions will not be allowed to submit a final proposal (see 6.iii, below).

### iii. **Final Selection of Proposals**

Policy research organizations having participated in co-creation sessions must submit, within thirty (30) calendar days after completion of co-creation sessions, a technical document detailing their proposals for carrying out this assignment. This document should include, but not be limited to, methodological, technical, organizational, functional and budgetary aspects, as well as gender and social inclusion issues. The details of the elements that should be included in the technical document, as well as the criteria on which the evaluation panel will be based, will be defined at the end of the co-creation process. This will include:

- Design of the Initiative, as well as the approach and proposed activities for both the research design and research implementation phases;
- An outline of the intervention, the scoping and relevance of research topics in the domain of employment and labor market programs/policies, the potential rigorous qualitative and quantitative evaluation methods, components and structure of the program budget (operating budget of the research organization and the lead institutional partner, including capacity-building and awareness-raising actions, research and data collection, etc.);
- The composition of the proposed team and the skills and professional qualification of the team's key members;
- Any other relevant element identified during co-creation sessions with the selected research organization(s)

This technical document should be concise (20 pages maximum), easy to read, and present information in a practical way. The technical document may be written in French or English. However, the summary of the document must be provided in both French and English.

The conclusion of this final phase will focus on negotiation, with one or more selected policy research organizations and possibly their partners, leading to the development and signing of one or more partnership agreements with MCA-Morocco.