

# Evidence Action

## Butler Tobin, Attorneys at Law

### Funding Application

1. Write an explanation of how your organization will provide the most help to the most people.

#### Summary

Evidence Action is building a world where hundreds of millions of people in the poorest places have better opportunities and their lives are measurably improved. We aim to be a world leader in scaling evidence-based and cost-effective programs to reduce the burden of poverty.

Evidence Action will provide the most help to the most people by testing and scaling evidence-based, cost-effective solutions designed to benefit hundreds of millions of people in need. Through rigorously testing solutions that appear to have the potential for scale and cost-effectiveness, our approach fills the gap between research about "what works" and implementing solutions at scale. We operate in ten countries across the globe and improve hundreds of millions of lives each year by delivering our evidence-based interventions where the need and opportunity are greatest. We continuously monitor our programs to continue improving upon our models and expanding our reach. In 2017, our programs reached over 280 million people globally, contributing to improvements in health, education, and income.

#### What We Plan to Do

Our strategy is to search for interventions that hold the promise of cost-effective scalability. We voraciously evaluate, learn and improve the models for scaling with a commitment to transparency on progress, impact, and value for money. We seek to be audacious in changing the way development is done by directing government and donor dollars to interventions that work, as the difference between highly effective programs and those less so is dramatic.

Consider interventions to deworm school-aged children. A 2017 study by MIT's Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL) found deworming to be 5x more cost-effective than the second best intervention for increasing school participation<sup>1</sup>, while four of 16 evaluated interventions had no effect on participation at all. The widespread global distribution of intestinal worms – overall 840

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<sup>1</sup> "Roll Call: Getting Children Into School." J-PAL Policy Bulletin, August 2017.

<https://www.povertyactionlab.org/sites/default/files/publications/roll-call-getting-children-into-school.pdf>

million children are at risk – and the success of using teachers to distribute medication at schools cost-effectively, provided immense opportunity for scaling this intervention. Evidence Action’s Deworm the World Initiative has capitalized on that opportunity, providing support to governments to develop school-based deworming programs that today are reaching 270 million children at a cost of less than \$0.50 per child, per treatment. This is one example of Evidence Action’s ability to develop and hone a model with an existing evidence base, moving from promising concept to real-world impact.

By joining with Evidence Action, Butler Tobin, Attorneys at Law will support our ability to challenge convention through changing the way development is done, multiplying the impact of government and donor dollars to directly improve hundreds of millions of lives. Achievement of our vision requires an ambitious strategy to build the next generation of outstanding programs through our Beta incubator while maintaining support to our current flagship, at-scale programs, which reach hundreds of millions of people with deworming treatments and access to clean water.

[Beta](#), our in-house incubator, identifies highly evidence-based interventions, rapidly iterates on their design to enhance cost-effectiveness and scalability, and rigorously tests them at scale. The resulting programs are - consistent with our current programming - among the most evidence-based and cost-effective programs globally. Importantly, the scale-up of evidence-based development interventions may languish without our engagement; our value-add is taking interventions with a strong evidence base, testing and adapting them to the real-world implementation settings that scale requires, and ultimately scaling the ‘winners’ directly or with partners. This critical function bridges the gap between academia and practice, turning rigorous research into real impact on a global scale. Beta is currently testing multiple interventions, including [No Lean Season](#) and [Winning Start](#).

Our flagship programs:

#### [Dispensers for Safe Water](#)

An estimated 315,000 children under the age of five die from diarrhea each year, often as a result of unsafe water. Childhood diarrhea is still the second-leading cause of childhood mortality. Dispensers for Safe Water helps rural communities install a chlorine dispenser directly allowing users to add exactly half a teaspoon of diluted chlorine to a jerry can before filling the can with water. The water stays clean for two to three days. Community promoters, who are elected by their community, work to educate people about the need for clean water and encourage uptake. At a cost of around \$1.25 per person per year, and adoption rates exceeding comparable interventions by five-fold<sup>2</sup>, Dispensers for Safe Water is a proven, innovative, and cost-effective approach to increase rates of household chlorination.

#### [Deworm the World Initiative](#)

More than 835 million preschool- and school-age children are at risk of parasitic worm infection. The Deworm the World Initiative works with governments around the world to develop and

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<sup>2</sup> Kremer M, Mullainathan S, Zwane A, Miguel E, Null C (2008). Social Engineering: Evidence from a Suite of Take-up Experiments in Kenya

implement national, school-based deworming programs. These result in treatment of over 280 million children a year, costing on average less than USD \$0.50 cents per child per treatment, and resulting in reduced disease prevalence that translates to measurable improvements in health, economic and educational outcomes.

## 2. Explain how long you have been in operation, and describe the processes that you use to evaluate the effectiveness of past campaigns.

Evidence Action spun out of Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA) in 2013 and, based on this ‘DNA’, we remain keenly focused on ensuring our programs are rigorously evaluated and monitored, meet exceedingly high benchmarks for cost-effectiveness, and are grounded in sound evidence. Importantly, we have had success in scaling programs that today reach over 280 million people across 10 countries.

All programs at Evidence Action have a robust monitoring and evaluation framework grounded in a detailed program theory of change. These frameworks include key performance indicators and measurable goals for delivering impact on the path to, and at, scale. Our monitoring and evaluation includes:

1. Data collection design and training: Designs monitoring and evaluation frameworks and research methodologies.
2. Program data management: Designs data collection tools, collects, collates, and cleans data to provide accurate datasets for programs.
3. Data analysis: Conducts analysis on program datasets to ensure that program findings are presented appropriately.
4. Management information systems: Supports programs to conceptualize, design, and implement applications and systems to ensure that programs have timely access to and useful data for day-to-day planning and decision making.
5. Data reporting: Supports programs with timely information in innovative, useful, and clear ways. Translates analyses and research into outputs that can be used by program teams for evidence-based decision making.

In addition, we also undertake costing and cost-effectiveness analyses using actual program costs and results to continuously assess financial performance in light of program impact and use the resulting data to inform programmatic decision making.

Dispensers for Safe Water, for example, employs real-time data to both assess program performance and understand the program’s impact on key outcomes. We conduct rigorous monitoring and evaluation to continuously track program adoption rates, dispenser functionality, chlorine stock levels, and a series of other actionable metrics. This data is fed into both internal and [externally available dashboards](#).

We visit both the physical dispensers as well as households in the catchment area to collect this data. Adoption is measured by collecting actual water samples from households and performing an

objective test on them (we mix a chemical reagent with the water, and if the sample turns pink, it indicates that chlorine is present). Our monitoring and evaluation teams input this data into mobile phones, which simultaneously provide updates on key indicators to our local, regional, and global offices. We use this real-time data to adjust program operations as necessary, hold staff accountable for targets, and track our impact. As a result, we can proactively address issues related to dispenser functionality or decreasing adoption rates as they occur.

We rigorously estimate the impact that our dispensers have on the communities that we serve. Our dispensers avert cases of diarrhea and diarrhea-related deaths in children under the age of 5. Academic studies show that uptake of chlorine for water treatment reduces diarrhea cases by up to 41% in children under the age of 5<sup>3</sup>, and other studies have shown that roughly every 0.8 cases per 1,000 diarrheal episodes are fatal<sup>4</sup>. Our bi-monthly adoption rate and population reach monitoring data, in combination with the above evidence, allows us to calculate the impact and cost-effectiveness of our intervention on a regular basis to quantify our results. In 2018, we expect Dispensers for Safe Water to avert nearly 600,000 cases of diarrhea in young children and prevent the deaths of nearly 500 of these same children.

### 3. Provide link(s) to the evaluation of your organization by GiveWell.org.

In recognizing two of our programs as Top Charities and one as a Standout Charity, [GiveWell](#) has done in-depth reviews of our monitoring systems and notes that the strength and thoughtfulness of such systems is an important factor in its recommendations.

[Evidence Action's Deworm the World Initiative](#)

[Evidence Action's No Lean Season](#)

[Evidence Action's Dispensers for Safe Water](#)

### 4. Create a video explaining why your organization will provide the most help to the most people.

[Introducing Evidence Action](#)

### 5. Attach, or provide links to, your most recent financial statements.

[Evidence Action 2017 Audited Financial Report](#)

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<sup>3</sup> Bhutta et al 2013. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3806844/>; Arnold & Colford, 2007. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/17297049>.

<sup>4</sup> Walker et al 2013. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23582727>.