

BRIGHT GRANT CALL FOR PROPOSAL 2026/2027

TIMELINE

Call for proposals opens	27 April 2026
Deadline for submission of proposals	31 May 2026
Grant notification	26 June 2026

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The BRIGHT Grant funding opportunity looks to support locally-led research projects that 1) generate context-specific evidence on how public health challenges affect populations in LMICs; and 2) explore or assess approaches that may help individuals, communities, and health systems respond to these challenges. Proposals are expected to demonstrate clear research questions, appropriate study design, and relevance to policy or practice.

In the 2026/27 application cycle, the BRIGHT Grant will support proposals addressing the following 5 priority areas. Each area includes indicative directions to guide proposal development, while allowing flexibility for context-specific research design.

1. Toward Context-Specific Solutions in Maternal and Infant Nutrition

Maternal and infant malnutrition remains one of the most pressing public health challenges in low- and middle-income countries, with consequences extending across the life course and affecting long-term societal development. While a range of evidence-based interventions have been developed worldwide—including multiple micronutrient supplements (e.g., Yingyangbao in China), dietary guidelines, and complementary feeding strategies—their effectiveness is often shaped by local cultural practices, dietary habits, and socio-ecological contexts, requiring systematic local adaptation. Moreover, growing external uncertainties, including climate change and geopolitical instability, have heightened the urgency for context-specific innovations in nutrition promotion strategies. With a particular focus on locally sourced, nutrient-fortified complementary foods and the optimization of micronutrient supplement compositions in response to endemic infectious diseases, this area seeks to support research that:

- identifies and analyses context-specific nutritional challenges and their determinants
- explores innovative nutrition strategies utilizing local resources
- examines the implementation and adaptation of nutrition interventions in local settings

2. Building Climate-Resilient Maternal and Child Health Systems

Climate change has become a major public health challenge of the 21st century. Maternal and child populations are among the earliest and most vulnerable groups affected by climate-related health risks, highlighting the urgent need to develop climate-resilient maternal and child health systems.

This area seeks to support research that advances understanding of how climate change impacts maternal and child health and related health systems, identifies current system responses and their limitations, and examines the barriers and needs in building climate-adaptive health systems. The aim is to generate evidence to inform policymakers, health system managers, and other stakeholders, and to support actionable responses to protect vulnerable populations.

Recent field-based research, including studies conducted in China, has identified system vulnerabilities, key barriers, and context-specific needs in responding to climate-related health risks. Building on this emerging evidence base, this area encourages research that incorporates comparative or cross-country perspectives. Proposals may explore:

- whether maternal and child health systems facing similar climate risks exhibit comparable patterns of vulnerability
- how adaptation strategies differ across contexts and health system settings
- what lessons can be drawn from international experiences to inform context-specific system strengthening

3. Mobile Phone Use and Domestic Violence: Evidence and Mechanisms

With the rapid expansion of mobile communication technologies, mobile phones have become deeply embedded in everyday life and may play an important yet underexplored role in shaping domestic violence dynamics. According to the *Technology Affordance Theory*, beyond their function as communication tools, mobile phones may introduce context-specific affordances—such as communication, visibility, and reporting—that influence behaviour when perceived and utilized. In the context of domestic violence, access to mobile phones may affect help-seeking, reporting, and the visibility of abusive behaviours, thereby shaping the responses of victims, perpetrators, and bystanders. Through these mechanisms, mobile phone use has the potential to reshape the social environment in which violence occurs and reduce the likelihood of abuse. This area seeks to support research that:

- explores how digital access interacts with social norms and institutional contexts, and examines the relationship between mobile phone use and domestic violence
- investigates underlying mechanisms, including communication, reporting, and visibility, to inform evidence-based policy interventions in the digital era.

4. Strengthening Community Health Worker Capacity for Elderly Care in LMICs

Low- and middle-income countries are experiencing rapid population aging, yet their primary health care systems often lack adequate capacity to respond to the growing needs of older adults. Many of these settings have established community health worker (CHW) networks, which may represent an important but underutilized resource for improving elderly care access. There is a need to better understand the current capacity of CHWs in elderly care and to identify feasible approaches to strengthening their role within primary health care systems. This area supports research that:

- assesses CHW knowledge, skills, and practices related to elderly care; identifies capacity gaps and system-level constraints
- develops or evaluates context-appropriate capacity-building approaches to produce scalable tools and policy recommendations.

5. Improving Access to Innovative Point-of-Care Diagnostics for Tuberculosis in Primary Health Care

In many low- and middle-income countries, most patients receive care in primary health care settings, yet access to molecular diagnostics for priority conditions such as tuberculosis is severely limited. This contributes to delays in diagnosis, loss to follow-up, and increased costs for both patients and health systems. Expanding access to affordable and accessible point-of-care diagnostic tools has the potential to improve early detection and strengthen primary health care services. With a focus on Tuberculosis, this area seeks to support research that:

- examines barriers to access and use of diagnostic tools in primary health care settings
- explores implementation challenges and enabling factors for point-of-care diagnostics
- identifies strategies to improve affordability, accessibility, and system integration

APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY

Eligible applicants must:

- Be registered BRIGHT Network members;
- Be living and working in the country in which they are proposing to conduct research projects;
- Have experience and/or substantial potential in conducting public health research in developing countries;
- Be willing to work with and be mentored by Tsinghua VSPH faculty members;
- Have the support of their host academic or work institutions that would allow them the time to participate in the proposed research program and to travel as required to key BRIGHT Network meetings; and

- Communicate effectively in English via speech, reading, and writing.

The BRIGHT Grant funds are issued only to institutions or organizations, not to individuals. Individuals who have no institutional affiliation or whose institutions are unwilling or unable to accept and manage a grant for them are not eligible to apply. Since the BRIGHT network is a scientific research network, we are especially interested in supporting applicants based at higher education or research institutions in developing countries.

Individual applicants may not submit more than one proposal in any one application cycle of the BRIGHT Grant.

GRANTS

Applicants may request up to **USD \$28,000** for their projects, which are **not to exceed 12 months in duration**. Although critical equipment purchases are allowed, applicants should justify all expenses in the context of their proposed research. The emphasis of the BRIGHT grants is on the generation of solutions to pressing public health issues and not on improvement of research infrastructure.

Types of Research Activities Supported

Projects may cover diverse types of research activities, including but not limited to the following:

- Design and conduct of baseline surveys, modelling and simulation, implementation/operational research.
- Primary data collection and analysis.
- Proof of concept studies and formative investigations.
- Systems research and policy studies.
- Primary research or data collection for understanding underlying social, political, and economic context of public health challenges.
- Working visits to share and analyze data and write papers with collaborators.
- Dissemination events and stakeholder meetings to translate research results to policy-makers and the community.
- Identification of social barriers to the uptake of proven public health interventions.

In addition to research, the BRIGHT Grant funds may also be used to support capacity building activities that contribute to research objectives, including education and training support for BRIGHT Network members; international travel; conference and workshop attendance; communications; and equipment, materials, and supplies for implementing the study and developing research networks.

There are some categories of research that the BRIGHT Grant will **NOT** support:

- Implementation projects that lack a strong research component.
- Secondary data analysis of publicly available or other readily available datasets.
- Dissertation work of the proposed Principal Investigator (PI).
- Training programs, workshops, or conferences that are not tied to the proposed research project.
- Randomized control trials (RCTs) for biomedical interventions such as vaccines, drugs, etc.
- Projects that are not likely to yield any impact in developing countries.
- Basic research not directly linked to potential development impact.
- Approaches that present unacceptable ethical or safety risks as determined by the technical reviewers.

Offerings of the BRIGHT Funded Projects

1. Participation in a series of activities designed for further career development together with assigned Tsinghua mentors, including monthly conference calls to discuss ongoing research projects, new funding sources for career development, and opportunities for wider collaboration as well as additional training activities.
2. Travel to one BRIGHT Network annual meeting and to one national or international scientific meetings, during the project period. International travel is approvable only if affordable and if a BRIGHT Network member is presenting work. Attendance at the BRIGHT Network annual meetings is required and must be included in the budget.
3. Proposed 10% to 30% salary support for PI, Co-investigators, and temporary project staff who might need to be hired to collect data or support field work, depending upon the nature of the proposal and resources available.

REVIEW PROCESS AND CRITERIA

The proposal application and review process will be managed by the BRIGHT Network Operating Office. Applications will be evaluated by a team assembled by the BRIGHT Network Scientific Committee according to the review criteria below.

1. **Scientific merit and study design:** The reviewers will evaluate (1) whether the background information clearly identifies a gap in evidence that informs the rationale and the study objectives; (2) whether the overall study design, outcome measures, study population, intervention, and analyses are clear, well-reasoned, and appropriate to accomplish the objectives of the project. Adequate citations and references to pertinent literature are essential.
2. **Protection of human subject:** Are there clear plans for safeguarding the welfare of participants, and minimizing potential risks?
3. **Investigators:** Are the PI, Co-investigators and other key personnel qualified to achieve the research goals of the project by having the relevant education, experience, training, and/or accomplishments?

4. **Innovation:** Does the project propose novel application, utilization, and/or generation of scientific methodologies or practices; challenge existing paradigms or programmatic practice; or address an innovative hypothesis? Does the research include the development of a new solution or intervention, or does it apply technology in a new way?
5. **Dissemination plan:** Does the plan discuss how the research findings will be disseminated to key stakeholders and utilized to improve scientific capacity, public health policies and programs?
6. **Timeline:** Is the project timeline reasonable? Is there a clear strategy for achieving program goal within the project period?
7. **Budget:** Is the project budget requested reasonable and adequate to support the proposed scope of work? Are all budget justifications appropriate?

HOW TO APPLY

All proposals must be submitted online, in English, via the [BRIGHT program website](#). Please note that applicants must register as BRIGHT members before applying. If you have not yet registered, please click [here](#) to complete your registration and wait up to 3 days for approval.

Paper and e-mail submissions are not accepted. After the proposals are reviewed, applicants will receive notification from the BRIGHT Network operating office indicating the review results.

Applications must be completed in full, including the following sections:

1. **Principal Investigator (PI)'s General Information**

Please answer the set of questions in the indicated spaces.

2. **Curriculum Vitae (CV) for PI**

Please upload the latest CV of the proposed PI. CV should be no more than two pages in length (single spaced, 11 font Arial type) and include citations for no more than ten recent relevant publications. A CV template is available for your reference. Please do not submit electronic copies of publications or other background materials, as they will not be forwarded to reviewers.

3. **Application Focus**

Please select the primary topic area that best describes the content of your application.

4. **Project Title**

5. **Project Summary** (Word limit: 500)

Please briefly and clearly state the goals of the project and the associated proposed activities, and describe the anticipated outcomes of the project.

6. **Application Package**

The following is required to be contained in the package:

- A. **Project proposal.** Please provide a maximum five-page project proposal (single spaced, 11 font Arial type) describing the research you wish to accomplish in the 12-month funding period. A proposal template is available for your reference.
- B. **Budget form.** Each project may receive up to USD \$28,000 which is intended to support project lasting for 12 months. Please provide an itemized budget for the project using the budget template provided to you, encompassing:
- Salary support for PI, Co-investigators, and other project staff of 10%-30%;
 - Travel to one BRIGHT Network annual meeting (3-day meeting; tentative location: Beijing/China)
 - Travel to one other professional meeting;
 - Research-related expenses that may include publication, books, software, communication, photocopying, and/or a computer or related hardware;
 - Indirect costs. If requested, indirect costs (costs supporting overall institutional operations and management) should be kept to a minimum.
- C. **Budget request justification.** These justifications should be detailed and thorough:
- Salaries. If applicants requesting salary coverage in their project, budget justification must include a list of personnel to be supported, an explanation of their roles, and the percentage of their time that would be devoted to the project.
 - Travel costs. Please provide the number of travelers, duration, location, and purpose for any project-related trips for which funds are requested.
 - Equipment. Where possible, projects should leverage existing equipment. Requests for equipment should be justified in terms of importance to successfully completing the research project. Please provide an explanation, justification, and estimated cost for proposed purchases of any items (instruments and devices costing more than USD \$1,500 each) in this category.
 - Other Direct Costs. This section should include items such as materials and supplies (including small instruments and devices costing less than USD \$1,500 each), computer services, publication costs, workshops and conferences, or other specific costs that are not covered elsewhere in the budget justification section.
 - Indirect Costs. If requested, indirect costs (costs supporting overall institutional operations and management) should be kept to a minimum and must be fully explained and justified, with details provided on what specific institutional infrastructure elements or support services are covered.
- D. A copy of your institution/organization's **registration certificate issued by any government entity.**
- E. **Letter of support** from an official at the PI's institution who is legally authorized to make commitments on the institution's behalf. The letter must be signed and written on official institutional letterhead and must include the following elements:

- Confirmation that the institution supports the participation of its staff in the proposed project, would be willing to receive and administer any funds awarded, and would be permitted under local regulations to receive funds from a foreign sponsor.
- A brief description of the institution's structures and practices for project management and financial oversight, as well as a description of the process by which the institution could receive funds from a foreign sponsor.
- A brief description of resources that the institution would be making available (if any) to facilitate the project, whether in cash or in kind, for example, providing laboratory or office space, access to equipment, or office support staff.

QUESTIONS?

For inquiries regarding this funding opportunity, please contact Ms. Wange Li, Program Coordinator, at liwg@mail.tsinghua.edu.cn.