

## About Y-RISE

### Why Y-RISE?

The [Yale Research Initiative on Innovation and Scale \(Y-RISE\)](#) aims to advance the science of scaling development programs. Y-RISE fills a critical gap in improving the impact of such programs: at the pilot stage, these programs are often rigorously evaluated (through randomized controlled trials and other methods) but when they enter a scaling stage the focus shifts to solving implementation issues. The more foundational question of whether the exciting pilot results will hold and what the risks might be to scaling the program are often overlooked.

Programs often run into complexities that emerge only at scale. The implementation complexities around seasonal migration are [well-documented](#). Complexities of scale go beyond implementation issues, however. Programs may have [spillover and broader welfare effects](#). In the migration example above, overall welfare effects may be negative, if, for example, the same families are at risk for divorce, domestic violence or non-communicable diseases brought back from the city. Political risks may emerge as new and powerful players engage with a program at scale: when a soft-skills (personal initiative) entrepreneur training is scaled up, it may make recipients more politically active leading to reactions from political actors that could not be predicted in the pilot program. Long-run consequences may not be fully examined in a pilot intervention, as in the case of a successful [mass-media family planning campaign](#) that reduced total births by 10% when implemented but did not seem to shift total fertility. Spillovers such as men's fertility preferences or general equilibrium effects and unintended consequences such as intra-household bargaining, women's labor force participation and marriage markets needed to be examined to determine the cost-effectiveness of this program more fully at scale.

Simply repeating and evaluating pilot studies, therefore, is not enough: systematic, informative study of the complexities of scale requires different methodological tools.

### The Y-RISE Model

Y-RISE takes a multi-disciplinary approach, bringing together academics from different disciplines - economics (micro-economists, macroeconomists, political economists, econometricians), implementation sciences, public health - to unpack the complexities of scale using new methods.

Y-RISE teams work through *research projects* in collaboration with implementing organizations to outline scaling complexities. In the migration example, above, Y-RISE [affiliated researchers](#) may estimate the harm of family separation by mathematically modelling disutility and calibrating the model to experimental data to estimate effects. At Y-RISE however, we believe that scaling research should not involve a trade-off between rigorous research and a delay in implementation: accordingly, we are focused on forming *long-term partnerships with institutions* and implementing

organizations to iterate on and continuously improve programs as they scale. Finally, we engage in **network building** as we believe that there is a need to build the field of scaling research as an area of scientific inquiry, both for researchers and for practitioners, to ensure the right collaborations and skill sets.

Details on each of these workstreams is given in the next few paragraphs.

### a. Research projects

Projects involve examining complexities of scale around promising interventions. These projects are typically multi-year, multi-site projects and bring together a diverse group of researchers with a variety of analytical tools to synthesize evidence on whether and how a program should scale. Y-RISE centrally coordinates this work. The advantage of this model is that it generates economies of scale by establishing research infrastructure, harmonized data collection and research coordination across multiple sites. Research projects provide rigorous evidence to policy makers about potential risks, benefits, cost-effectiveness and implementation considerations as programs scale.

The Y-RISE team is currently working on a variety of projects: entrepreneur training, seasonal poverty alleviation, counseling for mental health, improving health services such as vaccination in remote, hard-to-reach areas, and encouraging healthy behaviors in schools.

### b. Institutional Partnerships

Partnerships ensure that scaling research can help to iterate and expand programs in real time. Currently, we are setting up two such partnerships:

- *BRAC Science of Scaling Lab* builds on successes and failures of scaling initiatives in the Global South by leveraging BRAC's implementation capabilities and Y-RISE research capacity. The lab will identify, co-create, evaluate, iterate and scale effective programs. While the program will initially be anchored in Bangladesh, we are planning for the model to be tested across BRAC's operations in sub-Saharan Africa and ultimately, through advocacy by governments around the world.
- *WHO Partnership*: Y-RISE and the World Health Organization (WHO) Behavioral Insights (BI) Unit will partner with governments of various countries to design, test and scale programs for improving health behaviors and the uptake of health technologies. WHO BI Team has had promising discussions with the local governments to design and scale programs around improving health behaviors in schools e.g., choosing healthy options, increasing water intake, increasing exercise and movement and improving mental health. We hope to extend this partnership to more health behaviors in other countries, focusing on the [barriers to scaling behavioral interventions](#) for health.

### c. Network Building

Network building helps advance the field and build new collaborations.

- *Y-RISE Annual Conference*: Our annual conference brings together network affiliates and policymakers to discuss research on topics of scaling complexity: spillovers and general equilibrium, external validity and evidence aggregation, political economy and macro-

economic effects. We will also have policy discussions around workforce development, seasonal poverty alleviation, behavioral interventions for public health and electrification.

- Y-RISE is a key member of the [Structural Research and Economic Growth \(STEG\)](#) initiative funded by FCDO. We will be conducting a policy makers workshop around topics of workforce development and electrification in 2022-2023.
- *Science of Scaling Training*: Sep 2022 marked our second successful training with members of the Inter-American Development Bank, following positive feedback of a similar training program for more than fifty employees in September 2021. We hope to conduct many more such training programs for organizations and funders in future.

## Budget Narrative

The complete Y-RISE budget includes both core/ongoing and project activities. For this narrative, we have included *only core funding* i.e., funding that is not allocated to a particular research project. While in general, there is some overlap (e.g., most of our research staff time may go towards a particular project), in general, core or ongoing funding enables us to undertake activities that are important but neglected in pursuit of project-based funding. For example, the institutional partnerships or the network building activities require ongoing investment as most of the project funding goes to sub-grants to partners.

Y-RISE was established in 2018 as a program housed within the [MacMillan Center](#) at Yale University. Since then (and given COVID interruptions) we have worked with an extremely lean team comprising the Faculty Director, a program manager, 1-2 post-docs and 2-3 research associates to test the model. We started work on multi-site research projects, built a network affiliate of 60+ academics, generated strong interest in partnerships with leading players and hosted a Y-RISE conference. In addition, during COVID-19, we re-directed our attention and resources to support a few governments with COVID-19 response strategies, [including the large project around improving community mask wearing](#), and a conference on addressing vaccine inequity. In 2022, we hired an Executive Director, Neela Saldanha, who had worked closely with the team on the mask-wearing program to guide our expansion, and we are now poised to expand our resources to achieve our ambitious vision of building the field of scaling.

## Five Year Plan and GiveWell ask

Our ask from GiveWell is a total of \$4.18 MM for five years, but critically for a total of \$1.23 MM over the next two years: approximately \$307,000 FY 2024 (Jul 23 - Jun 24) and \$921,000 for FY 25 (Jul 24- Jun 26).

Our reasoning is as follows:

- We estimate our core budget over five years to be around \$11.54 MM. This budget includes planned expansions on the assumption of increased funding.
- Currently we have guaranteed funding of approximately \$3.18 MM, leaving us with a funding gap of around \$8.36 MM over five years.
- We believe there is a high likelihood of closing this funding gap by around 50-60% given conversations with existing donors. Given that, we would be looking for additional funding of around \$4.18 MM over five years (assuming we have 50% funding from other donors).
- We have planned for conservative additions- e.g., we would undertake new commitments such as hiring of research and program staff and increasing seed grant travel only once we have secured adequate funding for these positions.

With our current budget of approximately \$1.28 MM each year, we estimate that we will have results of around 2-3 projects examining the complexities of scale within 3-5 years. In addition, we would have disseminated the message around Y-RISE through the Annual Conference.

With the increased funding support that we have budgeted for, we can significantly expand our output. We will have results from 3-5 major projects across a variety of areas to have cross-cutting lessons on complexities of scale. We will increase seed funding to affiliates to develop innovations around new sources of data and ways to examine complexities of scale. We will be able to develop the BRAC and WHO partnerships more quickly with focused support and seed funding. Finally, we will be able to reach a critical audience of policy makers with focused funding. As we saw with support for outreach on the mask-wearing project, the “no strings” funding for communication & policy work enabled us to quickly move forward with partnership opportunities, widely disseminate findings and ensure the impact of increasing mask-wearing at a critical time.

## Overall budget assumptions

- Y-RISE financial year is July - June; accordingly, FY 23 refers to the year beginning July 2022 and ending June 2023.
- We have assumed a 5% inflation rate on all expenses year on year.
- All numbers in the budget are in USD.

## Budget Details

Key budget categories are given below with details following:

### Staff

This includes salaries and benefits for full-time staff at Y-RISE to oversee research, programs and communication. Staff costs also included some summer support for the Faculty Director, Prof. Mushfiq Mobarak, which is not covered by Yale University.

Currently Y-RISE has an Executive Director, Program Manager, two post-doctoral researchers, and five pre-doctoral researchers on the team. Over five years, ideally, we would like to expand this team including

- *Research team:* expanding our post-doc team from current two to five over five years, pre-doc research associates from current five to ten, adding a research manager. Postdocs are critical to lead an initiative (e.g., seasonal poverty alleviation, vaccination coverage) as they can synthesize existing academic literature, understand gaps and potential scaling complexities, tap into the right affiliate academic networks, conduct studies and coordinate with other researchers. Pre-doctoral researchers would support the post-docs in these tasks. Given the scope and complexity of the research projects, we would add two research managers by FY27 to manage field teams, ensure data quality and build research infrastructure including partnerships (as we plan to continue our partnerships model rather than building our own field teams).
- *Partnerships team:* we would add two partnerships managers - one each for the BRAC and WHO teams. These managers would be based in the locations in which these partnerships operate (e.g., Bangladesh in the case of BRAC) and would help coordinate the studies with the Y-RISE and partner teams.
- *Program team:* we would add a communication specialist to lead outreach on projects, particularly to policy makers, working closely with the Executive Director and Faculty Director to create materials. We would expand our program team to add one more program manager.

## Project development seed grants

Seed Grants enable our research affiliates and post-doctoral researchers to scope our promising interventions to study at scale and identify data sources to analyze.

Currently we have some seed funding (\$4,000) for postdoctoral associates but do not give out seed grants to our affiliates. Starting FY-23 we plan to award seed grants of around \$15,000 each to 2-5 affiliates each year and continue funding for postdocs. We believe this investment will yield returns on identifying promising interventions and approaches.

## Conferences

We host an annual Y-RISE Annual conference. Building on the success of our current conference, we plan to host a conference annually (our 2022 one is planned for Dec 15-20 in Jamaica). In addition, we expect to have a variety of self-funded activities such as participation in consortia and training programs (not included here).

## Administrative

These costs cover office, technology and travel costs. Office costs are currently low as they are subsidized by Yale MacMillan Center where Y-RISE is housed. In addition, we have budgeted for travel and technology costs for the team. We estimate that the MacMillan Center will continue to support our administrative costs in the future.

## Outreach/Marketing

So far, we have done largely organic outreach through newsletters and conferences. We plan to expand our marketing and outreach in a systematic way by creating engaging content and dedicating time to reach stakeholders, particularly policy makers. The design specialist would help us design appropriate and engaging materials by channel for audiences.