Maternal Neonatal and Child Health (MNCH Call – Round 8) Rules and Guidelines

Overview

Grand Challenges Africa (GC Africa) is a scheme of The African Academy of Sciences (The AAS) initiated to support innovations that address Africa's health and developmental challenges. The scheme seeks to promote Africa-led scientific innovations to help countries better achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by awarding seed and full grants to the continent's most impressive solutions.

The AAS implements GC Africa in partnership with the **New Partnership for Africa's Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD)** and other partners.

This call is a joint initiative of The AAS, the **South African Medical Research Council** (SAMRC), the **Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation** (BMGF) and **the Federal Ministry of Education and Research** (BMBF).

Eligibility Criteria

The call is open to innovators working in African based, domestic organisations, international organisations, government agencies, research and academic institutions. Please note that this call is **open to both non-profit and profit making organisations.**

Funding levels

This call will fund seed grants up to USD $100,000 for a period of 2 years. We expect that projects funded with promising results will have the opportunity to apply for additional funding to build on initial success. In all cases, individual project budgets should be representative of the scope and magnitude of the proposed mandate and carefully designed to get the best possible value out of the award.

Key features of the GC Africa initiative are:

- Rapid turnaround time: We select projects within approximately six months of the proposal submission
- Blinded review process: Proposals are sent to reviewers without an applicant's identifying/personal or organizational information, so proposals are evaluated based on the merit of the idea and not the applicant's resume.

Successful proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- **Scientific and technical excellence**, including a clear and rigorous conceptual framework for research activities
- **Innovation**, including creativity of the project's approach and clear differentiation from existing approaches
- **Unique project resources**, including investigator and organisation capabilities and potential to enhance intra - African collaborations, mentorship and supervision in future.
- **Value** in terms of appropriateness of the budget and timelines relative to project complexity, risk, and potential impact
- Potential to create prevention and treatment solutions with substantial **impact**.

Application Instructions

How to Apply

All applications must be made through our Ishango Grants Management system. Changes to the Rules and Guidelines will be posted on the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) page. Please read the current FAQ before submitting any questions or concerns.

Application Format

Subject to the AAS Data Privacy and Protection Policy GC Africa may share information you provide to us (either orally or in writing) with third parties, including external reviewers, key partners and co-funders.

An applicant may submit multiple ideas in partnership with collaborators, but an individual Principal Investigator may lead the **submission of only one proposal.** You may change your topic and edit your proposal any time before the application deadline.

The review and evaluation of your application are not based on your past history or institutional capabilities.

During the application process, you will be required to confirm that you have read and understood the AAS Data Privacy and Protection Policy and these Rules and Guidelines and acknowledge that any information that you provide to us (either orally or in writing) will be subject to and handled in accordance with such provisions.

Review Process

The review of proposals is a critical element of the GC Africa initiative - its goal is to filter and harness creative ideas. For each round, we advertise a set of challenges carefully defined to elicit innovative responses to critical barriers in global health and development.

Confidentiality

The AAS has put in place policies and procedures intended to restrict public dissemination of application materials. These policies and procedures include confidentiality agreements which external reviewers sign and that require reviewers destroy or return to AAS all copies of information acquired or created during the course of performing a review. In some instances, however, we are unable to put in place confidentiality agreements or to police the use of application materials.

The AAS Data Privacy and Protection Policy sets out what the AAS will do with the information that it collects from you during the grant/award application process and throughout the life of the grant/award (including all information relating to the grant/award application and, as applicable, any subsequent grant/award made).

Information that you supply to the AAS, including in any application and progress or update report, may be used by the AAS to process applications and administer grants/awards, for the purposes of audit and evaluation and to monitor the fairness of and trends in application decisions. Your information may be disclosed for these purposes only to individuals and organisations connected with the AAS, including funding partners, external peer reviewers and external committee members. Your information may also be shared with selected third parties for the purpose of independent audit, evaluation and assessment of activities funded by the grant/award and their outputs and outcomes. All personal data will be stored and used by or on behalf of the AAS in accordance with the AAS Data Privacy and Protection Policy.

The AAS may publish details of successful grants/awards and their outputs, including your name, employing organisation, project title, a summary of the grant/award and its value and, in the case of grants/awards funding research, scientific/academic abstracts and lay summaries of research (e.g. via the internet or via publicly accessible databases or other modes of publicity).

The AAS may amend this Statement from time to time. Any material changes in how The AAS collects, uses or shares your personal data will be posted on the AAS website at: **www.aasciences.africa**

Review of Proposals

Due to the large number of proposals anticipated, applicants with proposals that are not selected for review will receive a notification of decline without specific feedback. Nonetheless, applicants are encouraged to submit ideas in future rounds. We will update our FAQ based on common themes to provide guidance for future applications.

The review process for GC Africa Calls is executed in the following steps:

1. **Triage:** The AAS will constitute a triage team from its in-house pool of program staff and invited external experts. The triage teams will code proposals based on pre-defined criteria designed by the AAS to ensure quick distribution to reviewers as well as remove incomplete proposals or those that are not responsive to the topic or other grant conditions. Based on the volume of applications, we may not be able to give individual feedback, but we will endeavour to give collective feedback to applicants.
2. **Independent review of proposals:** Responsive proposals will be sent to internal and external reviewers who will be given an opportunity to evaluate and identify strong proposals to reflect a merit-based process for subsequent consideration by the decision-making committee. Reviewers will be instructed to review for the responsiveness to the topic, the level of innovation of the approach presented, the quality of the execution plan and potential for building strong collaborations for GC Africa Calls. The aim is to have each application reviewed by at least 3 independent reviewers. To avoid bias and minimize conflicts of interest, proposals will be sent to reviewers without the applicants' personal and organizational information.
3. **Review and portfolio selection:** Once comments and feedback are received from the reviewers, GC Africa will compile and share the final portfolio with the decision-making committee.
4. **Decline emails:** All applicants will be notified of the status of their application, regardless of outcome. All rejected proposals will receive an email declination.
5. **Funder due diligence, legal review and grant-making:** The AAS will initiate the process of required due diligence and legal review, as appropriate and before issuing grant award letters to winner, this due diligence review ensures that the investigator and institution have the basic capacity to receive the award (taking into consideration legal requirements to which the AAS is subject) and perform the work described. Investigators will be contacted as part of the due diligence review.

Management of Conflict of Interest

To identify and avert conflicts of interest among reviewers, reviewers will not be permitted to review proposals from organizations with which the reviewer has self-identified conflicts of interest in accordance with the AAS Conflict of Interest Policy.

Key Elements of GC Africa Agreements

1. Seed grants have a term of 24 months beginning on project start date and the amount awarded is up to USD $100,000.
2. Grant funds may not be used to reimburse expenses incurred prior to the project start date.
3. The applicant must return a fully executed agreement to the GC Africa Team no later than the date and time indicated on the agreement to receive a GC Africa GC Africa

Calls award. Funds will be disbursed upon the GC Africa teams' receipt of a fully executed agreement.

4. No awardee is permitted to make sub-grants, but all awardees will be permitted to contract for services, up to a maximum of $20,000 USD. Please be aware that this limit applies to funds paid by an awardee to any other organization (or an individual employed at another organization) as a subcontractor, including payments to co-PIs working at another organization.

5. All awardees are entitled to purchase equipment, provided that the cost of each item is less than $3,000 USD and the total allocation for purchase of equipment does not exceed $10,000.

6. Project funds may be used to cover the full direct costs of the project. Please read the Guidelines on Indirect Costs or contact the GCA team for clarifications on allowable and non-allowable costs

7. Project funds may not be used to enrol human subjects in any research project subject to Institution Review Board (IRB) or Independent Ethics Committee (IEC) approval until such approval has been obtained for each site.

8. Awardees must agree to conduct and manage the project and the products, services, processes, technologies, materials, software, data other innovations, and intellectual property resulting from the project (including modifications, improvements, and further developments to "Background Technology") in a manner that ensures "Global Access" as defined in The AAS Open Access Policy.

9. In all cases, project budgets should be representative of the scope and, magnitude of the proposed studies and carefully designed to get the best possible value out of the award. The AAS does rigorous budget challenges during the due diligence process. The applicant's recipient institution, organisation or company will also be required to provide assurances on their capacity to manage the grant through detailed letters of support from the appropriate research or innovation support office, previous or current partners. AESA (Alliance for Accelerating Science in Africa) a platform of the AAS and the AUDA-NEPAD Agency from which GC Africa operates reserves the right to undertake due diligence site visits to organisations hosting successful candidates before making final awards. Due diligence will include a request to fill out the Good Financial Grants Practice (GFGP) financial governance assessments to allow AAS to determine an institution's eligibility and capacities for managing the grant.

GC Africa Calls Reporting

All GC Africa awardees must prepare and submit an Annual and Final Financial and Scientific Reports. Awardees must submit the report electronically by the date agreed on the agreement using templates provided, on the Ishango Grants Management System. The report should be a cumulative, stand-alone document that describes the work performed with the project funds during the project term. The scientific section of the report must include any technical data gathered, models developed, and summary conclusions. The financial spend section of the report should include an account of the manner in which you spent the project funds. Annual reports are due 12 months after activation of the grant; final reports are due 6 months after the end of the grant period.

Frequently Asked Questions

Answers to any application questions can be found on the Frequently Asked Questions document on the call page on our website.

Inquiries

Please direct all questions about this initiative, selection criteria, or application instructions by e-mail to the following address: **GCAfrica@aasciences.ac.ke**