African Researchers' Small Grants Program (SGP VII) Early-Career Grant Request for Applications

Call opening date: November 08, 2024, 17:00 GMT
Call closing date: December 13, 2024, 17:00 GMT
Maximum funding per grant: USD 30,000

Introduction

The African Research Network for Neglected Tropical Diseases (ARNTD), in partnership with the Coalition for Operational Research on Neglected Tropical Diseases (COR-NTD), is seeking for applications for both operational and implementation research for the seventh edition of the Small Grants Program (SGP VII). Through the Ending Tropical Diseases through Operational Research cooperative agreement funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the early-career grants component of SGP VII aims to provide support to young African research scientists who are building a career in neglected tropical disease (NTD) research to address operational challenges, improve NTD diagnostics, and other programmatic challenges.

Who are the target groups?

This request for applications is targeted at outstanding early-career researchers, PhD students, and academics based in research institutions or universities in Africa. Applicants will have to demonstrate that the proposed research or activity is aligned with their country's NTD program and has potential institutional and individual capacity-building impact. Applicants, particularly females, who are delving into NTD research and have senior NTD researchers as mentors with commitment to support in building their competence are encouraged to apply. Applications are accepted in English, French, and Portuguese. However, shortlisted applicants will be required to submit full proposals and additional documentation in **English** in order to be eligible for the award.

Objectives of the call

1. To increase African leadership, involvement, and visibility in NTD operational and implementation research, including through direct engagement with national NTD programs;
2. To contribute to improving the research capacity of African NTD researchers and strengthening African research institutions in the process by supporting operational and implementation research on NTDs that is locally originated and African-led;
3. To provide an opportunity for young upcoming researchers not only to gain experience in research, but also in preparation of grant applications and management;
4. To supplement a clearly defined aspect of ongoing research or to answer a new question linked to ongoing research being carried out by early-career researchers;
5. To improve South-South communication and collaboration among researchers, policymakers and implementers, and for community participation in research and agenda-setting;
6. To encourage a North-South collaboration model that facilitates productive engagement between researchers and control programs, while promoting local leadership and ownership of initiatives and activities.

What's in Scope?

In order to be considered for funding, the proposed research must be informed by existing evidence and identified gaps. Applications must demonstrate significant potential to inform or develop further research activities. The maximum number of awards is eight (8) and the program duration is 12 months. Applicants must define clear milestones that will ensure the completion of the projects within the project timeline. This current call primarily targets projects focusing on the five preventive chemotherapy (PC) NTDs (i.e. lymphatic filariasis, onchocerciasis, soil transmitted helminthiasis, schistosomiasis, and trachoma), skin NTDs, and those that aim at improving equitable access to NTD interventions for vulnerable populations (e.g. nomads/migrants, displaced populations, rural/hard-to-reach areas, populations who refuse treatment, and the disabled). Projects focusing on the

integration of One Health and Artificial Intelligence (AI) approaches to combating PC and skin NTDs will also be considered. Eligible proposals may focus on:

1. Implementation research that aims to improve the effectiveness of NTD programs. This may include:
   a. Identifying factors that hinder equitable delivery of NTD program interventions to vulnerable groups.
   b. Developing, testing, and scaling practical solutions that are evidence-based, adaptive, and context-specific.
   c. Identifying ways to improve uptake, adaptation, and adoption of existing evidence-based strategies and tools to achieve elimination and control targets.

2. Operational research with potential for generating knowledge that can directly inform programmatic decisions around program monitoring, stopping, and surveillance. Studies to develop or validate innovative/new diagnostic technologies to support monitoring and evaluation of NTD programs are especially welcomed.

3. Post-validation and integrated surveillance that aims to identify any resurgence and to ensure infection and transmission remains below elimination thresholds. The types of surveillance that could be implemented include, but are not limited to, surveillance of target population groups, xenomonitoring, and cross-sectional surveys.

What's out of Scope?

SGP VII funding cannot be used for paying salaries, participating in meetings/conferences, payment of tuition/course fees, purchase of restricted commodities (e.g., contraception, pesticides, pharmaceuticals, vehicles, etc.), or for supporting existing programmatic monitoring & evaluation (M&E) activities such as, but not limited to: mapping, mass drug administration (MDA), transmission assessment surveys (TAS), Kato-Katz impact evaluations, trachoma impact surveys/surveillance surveys, data quality assessments, onchocerciasis impact evaluations, onchocerciasis Stop MDA surveys, coverage surveys, knowledge attitude perception (KAP) surveys, etc.

Eligibility criteria

1. Must be an early-career researcher, defined as a basic biomedical scientist, clinically qualified investigator, or public health researcher, who has not previously successfully completed an SGP research grant as principal investigator for a grant worth at least USD 100,000.
2. Must hold at least a Master's degree or should be actively enrolled in doctoral studies. Applicants holding a doctoral degree (e.g. Doctor of Philosophy, Doctor of Public Health, Doctor of Sciences) must have graduated within the last five years. Doctoral degree holders who have taken career breaks due to health or family responsibilities will have this period of absence from research considered during the 5 years' eligibility criteria. Clinicians (e.g. Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery; Doctor of Medicine; Doctor of Veterinary Medicine) who have not completed a Master's degree must have some specialist training (e.g., Membership, Fellowship) or be able to demonstrate relevant research training/experience.
3. Must not currently hold a position as an associate Professor, its equivalent, or higher.
4. Must be able to provide written evidence of commitment for mentorship and supervision from a senior researcher with a track record and ongoing commitment to NTD research.
5. All applications submitted after the deadline of December 13, 2024, 17:00 GMT will not be reviewed, and all unsolicited attachments will not be considered.

Applications from all qualified researchers who have had to take career breaks due to health conditions and/or family demands are encouraged.

How to apply

1. Access the online application form and instructions here, complete all required sections and submit on or before the deadline

2. The application form provides a link to download a budget template. This can be accessed here. Complete all required sections by following the funding rules as outlined in the Review Guide and Instructions page of the budget template. You will be required to upload the budget during the application process. **Please note that an application without an accompanying budget using the prescribed template will be rejected.**

Review of the application will take the following into consideration:
1. Eligibility of the applicant and the strength of their research team
2. Scientific merit and overall quality of the proposed project
3. Significance of the research and potential impact
4. Potential for scaling up the research[1]
5. Feasibility of the project's successful completion within the 12 months' period of the grant funding
6. Demonstration of reasonable and realistic estimation of costs

An independent panel will review all complete applications submitted, culminating in the preliminary shortlisting of grant awardees. You may download the reviewers' guide here. You are kindly advised to go through the application checklist here to ensure that you meet all the eligibility criteria and conform to all the requirements. Applications who do not check the required boxes of the checklist will be rejected. All shortlisted awardees will be supported to develop and submit a full proposal using a template that will be provided later. The final award and disbursement of funds will be conditioned on the head of department/unit of the host institution in which this award will be based confirming in writing that the research will be supported with appropriate space and facilities and administered in the name of the organization. In addition, successful applicants will be required to submit a letter of support from a senior researcher and mentor who will serve as their "research quality guarantor", and will be equally responsible for the success of the research project. Funded research will be closely monitored via bi-weekly calls with the ARNTD Secretariat, submission of quarterly reports, and field monitoring and evaluation visits by the ARNTD Secretariat where necessary.

Please click here to find answers to Frequently Asked Questions. For further inquiries, email with the subject line "*Inquiry SGP VII*" to secretariat@arntd.org

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[1]*We encourage proof-of concept projects which demonstrate potential for scale-up to benefit program implementation (control and elimination of NTDs) as proximally as possible and which could be attractive for later funding from other sources.*