

African Researchers' Small Grants Program (SGP IV)

A. Overview

Maximum funding per award:	USD 30, 000
Call Opening date:	July 01, 2020, 14:00 GMT
Call closing date:	August 14, 2020, 17:00 GMT
Announcement of awards:	November 14, 2020, 17:00 GMT



Successful proposals will be facilitated by implementing partner, ARNTD.

Introduction

The African Research Network for Neglected Tropical Diseases (ARNTD) with support from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and UK aid from the UK government, through the Coalition for Operational Research on Neglected Tropical Diseases (COR-NTD), is seeking proposals for both operational and implementation research on “Emerging Challenges facing NTD program implementation in Africa.” This fourth edition of the Small Grants Program (SGP IV) is to support African researchers in both early and mid/late career to undertake operational or implementation research aligned with the goals established in the London Declaration on Neglected Tropical Diseases. SGP IV is comprised of two small grant funding tracks:

- Small grants for junior researchers
- Small grants for mid-career and/or senior researchers.

Who is the target group?

This fourth call for proposals is targeted at outstanding researchers – especially beginning researchers – and academics based in research institutions or universities in Africa. Applicants will have to demonstrate that the proposed research or activity is aligned with country/program interests and has potential institutional/individual capacity-building impact. The small grants targeted at junior and senior researchers at the Masters or PhD level will provide grants ranging from USD 10,000 - 30,000. Applications are accepted in both English and French. Shortlisted applicants will be required submit full proposals and additional documentation in English in order to be eligible for the award.

Objectives of the call

- To increase African leadership, involvement and visibility in neglected tropical disease (NTD) operational and implementation research, including through direct engagement with national NTD programs;
- To contribute to improving the research capacity of an existing cadre 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, either by junior researchers or experienced researchers ready to take on larger research programs;
- To improve South-South communication and collaboration among researchers, policymakers and implementers, and for community participation in research and agenda-setting;
- To provide an opportunity for young upcoming researchers not only to gain experience in research, but also in preparation of grant applications and management;
- To supplement a clearly defined aspect of ongoing research or to answer a new question linked to ongoing research being carried out by mid-career/senior researchers;
- To encourage a model of North-South collaboration which promotes engagement between researchers in the South and their control programs, and improves 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. Proposals must demonstrate significant potential to inform or develop further research activities. Priority funding will be directed to projects focusing on the five preventive chemotherapy (PC) NTDs (i.e., lymphatic filariasis, onchocerciasis, soil-transmitted helminthiasis, schistosomiasis, and trachoma) and projects focusing on improving equitable access to NTD interventions for vulnerable populations (e.g., nomads, groups in conflict zones, and rural/hard-to-reach areas, refugees, and the disabled). Applicants are encouraged to demonstrate how their research can contribute to the fight against COVID-19. All

applications should provide information on how the COVID-19 pandemic would likely influence the execution of the proposed research project. Eligible proposals may focus on:

1. Implementation research that aims to improve the effectiveness of NTD programs. This includes:
 - 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, tools to achieve elimination and control targets.

For implementation research topics, applicants have the option of selecting one or both of the following:

- Conduct a formative study to quantify and describe implementation challenges and make recommendations for program improvements. In this case, applicants should clearly outline research hypotheses, methodology, and variables of interest.
 - Conduct an intervention study, citing evidence from previous research and program dis-aggregated data through a gender, equity, and human rights lens and justifying the research questions, approach, and methodology in the background and significance section of the proposal. In this case, applicants should also clearly outline research hypotheses, methodology, and variables of interest; and document the proposed plan for evaluating the short-term or intermediate effect of the intervention on variables of interest.
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.

What's out of Scope?

SGP IV 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.), and for supporting existing programmatic M&E activities such as, but not limited to, mapping, mass drug administration, 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 surveys, etc.).

B. Eligibility

General criteria:

1. Must be currently employed by or enrolled as a student in an academic, health, or research institution in Africa for the duration of the grant
2. Must demonstrate having a commitment to NTD-related research as well as the skills and experience required to carry out the proposed work
3. Must be able to provide evidence of research output, including publications and/or presentations at scientific conferences

Specific to applicants for the junior researchers' grants:

1. Must be an early career researcher, defined as a basic biomedical scientist, clinically qualified investigator, or public health researcher, who has not previously competed successfully as principal investigator for a major research grant (i.e., \geq USD 200,000)
2. Must hold at least a Master's degree or should be actively enrolled in doctoral studies. Applicants holding a doctoral degree (e.g. PhD, DrPH, DSc) must have graduated no more than seven years ago. Clinicians (e.g. MBChB, MBBS, MD, DVM holders), 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 positions above lecturer/assistant professor level or equivalent
4. Must be able to provide written evidence of commitment to providing mentorship and supervision from a senior researcher with a track record and ongoing commitment to NTD research.

Specific to applicants for the mid-career/senior researchers grants:

1. Must be a mid-career/senior researcher, defined as a basic biomedical scientist, clinically qualified investigator, or public health researcher, who has previously competed successfully as principal investigator for a major research grant, but is no more than fifteen years from their highest degree of study
2. Must hold a doctoral degree (e.g. PhD, DrPH, DSc). Clinicians (e.g. MBChB, MBBS, MD, DVM holders), who have not completed a PhD must have completed specialist training (e.g., Fellowship) or be able to demonstrate relevant training tied to research (e.g., MSc, MPhil), or experience
3. Must hold a position no lower than Senior lecturer/Senior Scientific Officer level or equivalent
4. Must demonstrate that they have a track record and ongoing commitment to NTD research
5. Must demonstrate that the intended project is a clearly defined aspect of ongoing research or aimed at answering a new question linked to ongoing research.

C. Application

How to apply

1. Access the online application form and instructions [here](#), complete all required sections and submit ahead of the deadline¹
2. The application form provides a link [here](#) to download a budget template. Complete all required sections by following the funding rules as outlined in the Review Guide and Instructions page of Budget template. Upon completion, please click [here](#) to upload a copy of your budget. Please note that an application without an accompanying budget using the prescribed template will not be reviewed.

Review of the application will take the following into consideration:

1. The eligibility of the applicant and possession of a qualified team
2. The scientific merit and overall quality of the proposed project
3. The significance of the research and potential impact
4. The potential for scaling up the research²
5. The 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 which do not check all the boxes of the checklist will not advance for review. All shortlisted awardees will be supported through training to write and submit a full proposal based on a template. 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 for the junior researchers' grants 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 where necessary.

Please click [here](#) to find answers to Frequently Asked Questions by previous applicants. For further inquiries, email with the subject line "Inquiry SGP IV" to secretariat@arntd.org

¹ All applications submitted after the deadline of August 14, 2020 at 17:00 GMT will not be reviewed, and all unsolicited attachments will not be considered.

² 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.