

African Researchers' Small Grants Program

A. Overview

Call Budget:	USD 100,000
Maximum no. of awards:	Seven
Maximum funding per award:	USD 25,000
Call Opening date:	January 09, 2017, 08:00 GMT
Call closing date:	February 14, 2017, 17:00 GMT
Announcement of awards:	March 10, 2017, 17:00 GMT

Introduction

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) is supporting the African Research Network for Neglected Tropical Diseases (ARNTD) through the Coalition for Operational Research on Neglected Tropical Diseases (COR-NTD) with 100,000 USD to initiate the first African Researchers' Small Grants Program (SGP). Collaboration between COR-NTD and ARNTD, which were both formed in 2013, provides a unique opportunity for a synergistic effort to address emerging challenges facing program implementation in Africa in line with the goals established in the London Declaration. SGP is comprised of two small grant funding tracks:

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

Who are the target group?

This first call for proposals is targeted at outstanding researchers and academics based at 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 researchers at the Masters or PhD level will provide up to four 1-year grants, each ranging from USD 5,000-15,000. Three small 1-year grants for mid-career and/or senior researchers will be provided, each ranging from USD 15,000-25,000.

Objectives of the call

1. To increase African involvement and visibility in NTD operational research including through direct engagement with national NTD programs;
2. 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 translational or operational research on NTDs that is locally originated and African-led; either by junior researchers or experienced researchers ready to take on larger research programmes;
3. To improve South-South communication and collaboration among researchers, policymakers and implementers, and for community participation in research and agenda-setting; and
4. To encourage a model of North-South collaboration that promotes engagement between researchers in the South and their control programs, and improves local ownership of initiatives and activities.

What's in Scope?

Priority funding will be directed to projects involving the [five preventive chemotherapy \(PC\) NTDs](#). Other diseases of poverty will be considered on a case-by-case basis only if they are clearly integrated into the treatment or monitoring of the five PC-NTDs. SGP aims to fund rigorous, high quality research that will lead to a better understanding of how to maximize impact of interventions aimed at controlling and eliminating the NTDs. Examples of priority focal areas include but will not be limited to the following:

1. Addressing prevailing program implementation problems in terms of underlying causes in a way which can lead to a solution with increased coverage and reduced morbidity as examples of outcomes
2. Improving field or community-centred drug (e.g. MDA), diagnostic, and other intervention delivery mechanisms to meet control and elimination targets and increase access to interventions for communities
3. Application of modelling and cost-effectiveness studies for improvement of forecasting and supply chain management, particularly for MDA.

The proposed research must be informed by existing evidence and identified gaps to be considered for funding, and proposals must demonstrate significant potential to inform or develop further research programs. One aim of the small grants for junior researchers is for young upcoming researchers not only to gain experience in research but also in preparation of grant applications and management. A key feature of the small grants targeted at mid-career/senior researchers is that they can be used to supplement a clearly defined aspect of ongoing research or to answer a new question linked to ongoing research.

What's out of Scope?

SGP 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 or enrolled as a student by 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
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.

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.

C. Application

How to apply

1. Access the online application form [here](#), complete all required sections and submit ahead of the deadlineⁱ
2. Email a copy of your budget in Microsoft Excel format to secretariat@arntd.org with both the file name and subject heading: "SURNAME_Budget_SGP". Where "SURNAME" is the surname of the applicant

Review of the application will take the following into consideration:

1. The eligibility of the applicant
2. The scientific merit of the proposed project
3. The significance of the research
4. The potential for scaling up the researchⁱⁱ
5. The overall quality of the application

A panel will review all applications and budgets submitted and make a preliminary award to up to four Junior and three Senior grant applicants. The final award and disbursement of funds will be conditional 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 mentor who will serve as their "research quality guarantor".

You may contact the ARNTD at any point during the period when the call is open by sending an email with the subject line "Inquiry_SGP" to secretariat@arntd.org

ⁱ All applications submitted after the deadline of February 14, 2016 at 17:00 GMT will not be reviewed, and all unsolicited attachments will not be considered

ⁱⁱ 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.