

GRAND CHALLENGES AFRICA

Inspiring innovation to address Africa's health and developmental challenges

GRAND CHALLENGES AFRICA – INNOVATION SEED GRANTS – Round 1 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

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The **African Academy of Sciences - Alliance for Accelerating Excellence in Science in Africa (AAS-AESA)** is launching two new Grand Challenges: 1) [Providing new impetus and solutions to meet the Sustainable Development Goal 3 targets for maternal neonatal and child health \(MNCH\) in Africa](#) and 2) [Finding cutting-edge approaches to advocacy and communication that will motivate citizens of Africa and African governments to support investments in scientific research development and innovation to achieve targets set for Sustainable Development Goal 9](#).

These new grand challenge innovation grants will be issued and administered under the banner of [Grand Challenges Africa \(GC Africa\)](#), a program implemented in partnership with the [New Partnership for Africa's Development \(NEPAD Agency\)](#) and the [Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation \(BMGF\)](#). Round 1 is a joint initiative of the GC Africa partners and [Institut Pasteur of Paris \(IP\)](#).¹

Focus

Challenge 1: Focuses on key targets of the health SDG3 to stimulate new approaches, interventions, tools and new combinations of existing approaches to ensure that Africa progresses rapidly to address challenges in MNCH and to accelerate the pace of implementing interventions that can reduce maternal, neonatal and child deaths in Africa. GC Africa will build on the successes of other [Grand Challenges global partners](#), which includes a strong base of African Grand Challenges grantees funded by the [Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation](#), [Grand Challenges Canada](#) and [USAID](#).

Challenge 2: Focuses on key targets of SDG 9 to enhance scientific research, upgrade the technological capabilities of industrial sectors in all countries, by 2030, encouraging innovation and substantially increasing the number of research and development workers per 1 million people and public and private research and development spending. The goal of this challenge is to ignite new ways of communicating the importance of investments in scientific research and development to motivate African governments and their citizens to support increased investments in scientific Research, Development & innovation (RD&I) from within the continent to complement, and eventually surpass, global/external investments. Increased investments will lead to innovative home grown solutions to challenges that may prevent African countries from achieving SDG3 targets set for MNCH.

Funding for this call

Through this [GC Africa Innovation Seed Grants \(GCA-ISG\) call](#), we will fund [African Investigators](#) and Africa-resident applicants who qualify based on the eligibility and inclusion criteria outlined in the [GCA Rules & Guidelines](#). We are now accepting proposals for the first round of applications and are seeking innovative global health and development solutions from researchers resident in Africa who have the support of their affiliated/primary organization, and where the major programme of work will be undertaken. Applications **MUST** be submitted through the African Academy of Sciences [Ishango Online Application Portal](#). Grants will go to investigators in African countries, but we encourage partnerships with investigators in other countries, especially where the opportunity exists to build new or strengthen existing collaborations. We particularly

¹ Please visit our website to learn more about GC Africa and its partners.

request proposals that promote intra-African collaborations across geography, language, cultures and other divides, such as those that link the 9 Institut Pasteur organisations in Africa with other African institutions.

Applicants can be at any level of experience and working in any discipline, from any organization, including colleges and universities, government laboratories, research institutions, non-governmental, and non-profit organizations.

Funding levels

The GCA-ISG will fund projects up to USD \$100,000 for 2 years. These awards are meant to provide an opportunity to test particularly bold, proof of concept ideas, including applying approaches from outside the fields indicated for this call. New approaches could be piloted as additions to ongoing projects. Winners of the GCA-ISG will have an opportunity to apply for follow-on, transition to scale funding in future but please note that support for phase II funding is NOT part of this call.

Applicants must provide a comprehensive budget. In all cases, individual 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 successful applicant's institution, organization or company will 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. AESA reserves the right to undertake due diligence site visits to organizations hosting successful candidates before making final awards.

We will give the highest priority to projects that:

- Build on ongoing work in some way, and that addresses well identified barriers and constraints to delivery of interventions and to implementation of locally-relevant programs;
- Incorporate multiple areas of innovation listed above, e.g. developing and/or testing new, single or multiple products or candidates, especially sets of interventions targeting combinations of outcomes spanning the spectrum of objectives outlined for this call;
- Clearly incorporate measures of success reasonable for the timespan of the grant (24 months);
- Have a project plan whereby after two years- the end of phase I grant period- grantees will be in a position to explore how the results from their project could inform the design of a more extensive collaborative package of work that can be submitted for Phase II funding;
- Could contribute to a portfolio of funded projects that addresses a country's key priorities or regional challenges, diversity, including bringing more African women into the sciences, and the need to provide health equity for diverse vulnerable populations as captured by the SDG targets;
- Explain how proposed innovations and interventions will eventually be tested in communities so that they have the highest likelihood of being relevant for implementation more broadly in the country's public health system;

Promoting Intra-African and global collaborations

This request for proposals seeks to encourage scientific collaborations between African researchers, and between different organizations across the continent. We therefore strongly encourage data sharing between individually funded projects. We expect that such sharing will help to ensure that the goals of the innovative approaches in individual projects are ultimately integrated with each other. Furthermore, we expect that sharing experimental methods, data, and resources will ultimately improve the ability to compare and validate local research findings and to develop innovations, interventions and products that can have impact at a greater scale. The reviewers to this call will evaluate how well applications address these requirements. Collaborative efforts include:

- Short visits: between African institutions that are focussed on exploring a new collaboration, strengthening existing ones, executing a new program of work etc. Applicants can request up to \$10,000 additional funds towards this goal but only AFTER they have been awarded a phase I grant.
- Cohort harmonization: when collaborating with projects with existing cohorts or establishing new cohorts, investigators will be expected to participate, whenever possible, in cohort harmonization. Study sites will be expected to develop and follow standard operating procedures and quality control protocols for specimen collections and participate in the establishment of a minimum common set of data and specimens to be collected across the program.
- Data sharing: Projects will submit a data sharing plan that is equitable, ethical, and efficient.

ABOUT GRAND CHALLENGES

Grand Challenges is a family of initiatives fostering innovation to solve key problems in global health and development for those most in need. It seeks to establish a portfolio of projects with complementary approaches that encompass multiple types of innovation, including innovation in biological research, medical health technology and product development, service delivery, and behaviour change. Grand Challenges initiatives therefore seek to engage diverse investigators, including those outside of the areas that might traditionally be associated with the initiative. The challenge also encourages partnerships that bring together investigators from diverse organizations, including non-profit institutions, non-governmental organizations, academic and health research institutions, foundations, and civil society groups. Today, a variety of funding partners use “Grand Challenges” to accelerate research, creating an expanding network of funding and research partnerships spanning diverse topics ([Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation](#), [Grand Challenges Canada](#), [United States Agency for International Development](#), [Grand Challenges Brazil](#), [Grand Challenges India](#), [Grand Challenges South Africa](#)). The latest addition to the Grand Challenges family is Grand Challenges Africa, which was founded by the African Academy of Sciences and NEPAD Agency, encompassing the entire continent, and launched in 2015 to run under AESA.

Please contact GCAfrica@aasciences.ac.ke if you need any clarification or encounter any difficulties as you use the online system.