

GRAND CHALLENGES AFRICA

Inspiring innovation to address Africa's health and developmental challenges

Grand Challenges Africa Innovation Seed Grant Round 1

Rules & Guidelines

Proposals due by January 30th 2017 18.00 GMT

I Overview

Grand Challenges Africa (GC Africa) is a scheme of the Africa Academy of Sciences' Alliance for Accelerating Excellence in Science in Africa (AESA) 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.

AESA implements GC Africa in partnership with the [New Partnership for Africa's Development Agency \(NEPAD\)](#) and the [Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation](#). Round 1 is a joint initiative of GC Africa partners and the Paris based, [Institut Pasteur](#)

The challenge being launched will focus on innovations that will help Africa achieve the ambitious SDG targets set out for Maternal, New-born, and Child Health (MNCH). The overall objective will be to focus African scientists to work in local and global partnerships to accelerate the development and deployment of interventions and innovations targeting communicable and non-communicable diseases that affect mothers, new-born babies and children. We want to develop an ecosystem that will accelerate research and innovation on the continent, by encouraging collaboration between international networks and partner organizations hosting the grand challenges projects; and facilitate sustainable multidisciplinary partnerships between research groups in Africa.

Eligibility Criteria

The call will be open to African investigators working in African based, domestic organizations, including non-profit organizations, for-profit companies, international organizations, government agencies, research and academic institutions. The call is also open to non-African investigators with an appointment/affiliation with any of the nine Institut Pasteur institutes in Africa, who are resident in Africa, with at least 18 months left on their tenure of service/affiliation by the time of receiving the award.

Funding levels

Phase I Funding: Funded up to \$100,000 USD per two-year project. 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.

Phase II funding: Winners of Phase I grants will have an opportunity to apply for follow-on, phase II funding in future but please note that support for phase II funding is NOT part of this call. We expect that successful projects funded at Phase I by GC Africa, and by our partners BMGF and Grand Challenges Canada (GCC), and which demonstrate promising results, will have the opportunity to apply for Phase II funding either to GC Africa or directly to the other partners. .

GC Africa will also provide a platform for partnering with other funders through the Grand Challenges Innovation Network (GCAiN). To register please visit our online [Ishango Grants Management system](#).

Key features of the GC Africa initiative are:

- ❖ A short application form to lower the burden of entry
- ❖ Rapid turnaround time: We select projects within approximately five months of the proposal submission.

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- ❖ **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 applicants 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 organization 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 lead to prevention and treatment solutions with substantial **impact**.

II. Application Instructions

Schedule

Key dates and deadlines for Round 1

Key Dates	Event
October 24, 2016	Application period opens
January 30, 2017	Application deadline
March 2017	Applications review completed
April 2017	Decision Committee meeting
June 2017	Selections completed and notifications sent
August-October 2017	Grant-making and awards announcement

How to Apply

We require you to use the provided application form [insert ishango link](#) to submit your application. For a sample application form please [click here](#)

Changes to the Rules and Guidelines will be posted on the [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQ\)](#) page of the Grand Challenges Africa website [Insert microsite](#), including any changes to the dates listed above. Please read the current FAQ before submitting any questions or concerns.

Application Format

Subject to the AAS [Data Protection Statement and Undertakings](#), 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.

GC Africa initiative publishes its calls and requests for proposals once a year. An applicant may submit multiple ideas in partnership with collaborators, but an individual Principal Investigator may lead the submission of only one proposal. [Click here to view the current detailed challenge description](#). 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. Do not include personal or Institutional information and do not refer to potential project partners by names

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or other identifying information in the section describing your project. Proposals that do not adhere to these restrictions will be removed from consideration.

Proposals for Round 1 funding must be submitted prior to the submission deadline of 30 January 2017 18:00 GMT.

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.

III. 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 Protection statement](#) sets out what 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.ac.ke.

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.

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The review process for Phase I is executed in six steps:

1. **Triage:** Alliance for Accelerating Excellence in Science in Africa (AESA) 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 a pre-defined criteria designed by AESA 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. Applicants with proposals removed from consideration during triage will be notified that their proposals were declined but will not typically receive specific or detailed feedback
2. **Internal/external 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 Phase II. The aim is to have each application reviewed by at least 2 independent reviewers. AAS will therefore build a pool of reviewers large enough to provide for this approach. Funding partners will be given an opportunity to nominate reviewers to the committee. 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. An in-person meeting of the decision making committee will be held in March/April of every year.
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:** AESA will initiate the process of required due diligence and legal review, as appropriate and before issuing grant award letters to winners. While the first few steps of the review are largely blind to the institution and investigator, 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 AESA 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](#)

IV.Key Elements of GC Africa Phase I Agreements

1. Phase I projects have a term of 24 months beginning on the project start date. The amount awarded is up to \$100,000 USD.
2. For-profit companies will be paid in arrears for work performed under the terms of Agreement.
3. Grant funds may not be used to reimburse expenses incurred prior to the project start date.
4. 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 Phase I award. Funds will be disbursed upon the GC Africa teams' receipt of a fully executed agreement.
5. 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.
6. 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.
7. Phase I project funds may be used to cover the full direct costs of the project, but no awardee will be entitled to use funds to cover indirect costs. Please read the [AAS policy on indirect costs](#) or contact the GCA team for clarifications on allowable and non-allowable costs

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8. 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. Please refer to our policy on [use of humans in research](#) for guidance.
9. 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](#).

VI. Phase I 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, [and/or downloaded from 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.

VI. Phase II GC Africa Awards

Letters of intent will be invited from phase I grantees (GC Africa, BMGF and GCC) 24 months post award. Grantees funded from this programme will be eligible to apply for Phase II support from GC Africa as well as from other Phase II grants from B&MGF.

VII. Frequently Asked Questions

Answers to any application questions can be found on the [FAQ](#) section of our website at [insert microsite](#)

IX. Inquiries

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