

Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF)

Announcement

Regulations for funding a preparatory phase of African-German Research Networks for Health Innovations in Sub-Saharan Africa

of 16 February 2021

1 Aim and purpose of funding, legal basis

1.1 Aim and purpose of funding

Access to secure health care and protection against diseases are essential prerequisites for improving living conditions in Sub-Saharan Africa. Many people in this region do not have sufficient access to basic health services. Vaccines, medicines and other medical assistance are often unavailable or unaffordable for the affected population. Research and development in cooperation with partners in the affected countries can contribute substantially to building research infrastructures and translating results into practical applications in order to directly improve the health situation for local people. Joint action and innovative approaches are urgently required to foster economic development and political stability. They can be essential to achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development goals, in particular Goal 3 "Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages".

These funding regulations apply in conjunction with the Health Research Framework Programme (https://www.gesundheitsforschung-bmbf.de/files/Rahmenprogramm_Gesundheitsforschung_barrierefrei.pdf) and form part of the Federal Government's Strategy for the Internationalization of Education, Science and Research (<https://www.bmbf.de/de/internationalisierungsstrategie-269.html>). In addition, the BMBF's current Africa Strategy (<https://www.bmbf.de/de/afrika-strategie-des-bmbf-310.html>) aims to strengthen cooperation with African partners in tackling global challenges, establishing lasting high-quality infrastructures for scientific work, strengthening regional and continental collaboration, developing innovation potential and new markets and in enhancing Germany's profile as a key partner for Africa in the fields of education and research. The funding measure is also part of the BMBF's "Global Health in the Focus of Research" funding scheme (https://www.gesundheitsforschung-bmbf.de/files/Globale_Gesundheit.pdf) and based on the Federal Government's Global Health Strategy. The funding measure contributes to the implementation of the African Union's Agenda 2063 (https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/36204-doc-agenda2063_popular_version_en.pdf) and its Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa 2024 (STISA 2024).

The present call follows up on the ongoing funding measure "Research Networks for Health Innovations in Sub-Saharan Africa" (<https://www.gesundheitsforschung-bmbf.de/de/forschungsnetzwerke-fur-gesundheitsinnovationen-in-subsahara-afrika-3422.php>),

under which five African-German research networks have been receiving funding since 2016. It gives additional innovative networks an opportunity to apply for funding.

The overall objective of the funding measure is to contribute to the lasting improvement of health care in Sub-Saharan Africa by supporting excellent application-oriented research. It focusses on health research as a special means of realizing the human right of access to health services and thereby strengthening fragile health and research systems.

The present call sets out the regulations for the preparatory phase of the second phase of the funding measure "Research Networks for Health Innovations in Sub-Saharan Africa". The aim of the preparatory phase is to ensure the sustainable establishment and development of intensive and long-term cooperation between researchers from Germany and Sub-Saharan Africa. The networking and exploratory measures will not only develop existing collaborations but also establish new contacts and initiate new collaborations.

For this purpose, German and African partners will jointly elaborate schemes for the implementation of the main phase which meet regional needs in the African partner countries.

1.2 Legal basis

The Federal Government will award grants in accordance with these funding regulations, sections 23 and 44 of the Federal Budget Code (BHO) and the administrative regulations adopted thereunder as well as the BMBF's regulations governing applications for expenditure-based grants (AZA) and/or cost-based grants (AZK). There is no legal entitlement to a grant. The granting authority will decide freely after due assessment of the circumstances within the framework of the budget funds available.

2 Object of funding

Under this call, funding will be provided for the elaboration of schemes for the establishment or development of health research networks. Consortia will be given the opportunity to develop their ideas in thematic, structural and administrative terms and draw up a full proposal as part of a six-month preparatory phase (starting around October 2021).

Funding will be provided in two successive phases:

- a preparatory phase (of six months, as set out in the present call) and
- a main phase (of an envisaged five years).

The basic idea behind this funding measure is to enable joint action by African and German partners from the outset. Major topical research issues will be studied and care will be taken to ensure the integration of the results of this work into the African partner countries' science and health systems by involving relevant ministries and elected representatives.

The networks must primarily deal with research topics which meet the regional needs of the African partner countries. Furthermore, they should build on existing structures and involve the national and/or regional health and research strategies or agendas of the participating African countries already in their foundation phase. Relevant decision-makers of the African partner

countries such as research and health ministries must be listed in the proposal together with their contact details in order to ensure their involvement at an early stage.

All areas of health research may be addressed, that is, biomedical research including all steps of the translation chain, public health research and health system research.

Funding will be provided for schemes that pursue clear and sound application objectives (e.g. development of products, treatments, guidelines, advisory strategies for decision-makers) whose realization is addressed during the project period.

The proposed schemes should deal with one or several of the following areas:

- Public health and systems research to improve prevention and accelerate the transfer of new therapeutic approaches into health care (including e.g. social sciences) or to adapt existing approaches to local conditions
- Research to treat and prevent diseases which place a particularly high burden on the African partner countries (e.g. poverty-related and neglected infectious diseases, antimicrobial resistance and non-infectious diseases) or which have a special impact on the health system
- Holistic research approaches (e.g. One Health)
- Epidemiological research to collect and process health data

The projects should pursue realistic and sustainable capacity development goals in their idea outlines and make verifiable contributions to the initial and advanced training of scientific and medical staff as well as research management staff (e.g. project managers, funding managers).

Proposed schemes which exclusively pursue basic research approaches or whose application aspects can either not be addressed at all or only to a minor extent during the project period are not eligible for funding.

The elaboration of full proposals for existing research networks does not form part of this call. Separate funding regulations will be published for the submission of proposals for the main phase.

The preparatory phase serves to elaborate schemes and prepare for the main phase. Among others, expenditure for the following activities is eligible for funding:

- Background studies on local need for action and the demand for research and development in the selected field
- Documentation of lessons learned from previous commitments in the health sector
- On-site missions providing orientation
- Travel and the organization of events that serve to establish the network for the main phase
- Needs assessment for necessary steps to secure an auditable use of funds
- Involvement of (establishing contact and further arrangements with) the African institutions responsible for networking at government level and in regional administrative units as well as supranational African organizations

Expenditure on research work (e.g. to collect data needed for application in the main phase) is not eligible for funding.

3 Funding recipients

Applications may be submitted by universities, research institutions, local, *Länder* and federal institutions as well as associations and other societal organizations. Applicants are required to have an entity in Germany conducting the non-commercial activities of the funding recipient at the time of payment of the grant.

Research institutions which receive basic funding from the Federal Government and/or the *Länder* can only be granted project funding on top of their institutional funding to cover additional project-related expenditure or costs under certain conditions.

Concerning the conditions for when state aid is or is not deemed to be involved and the extent to which funding can be provided without constituting aid, please consult the Community Framework for State Aid for R&D&I.¹

4 Special prerequisites for funding

The consortium of a research network will comprise at least one but no more than two German partners and at least two but no more than eight partners from Sub-Saharan Africa. The constellation of partners can be modified for the main phase.

African administrations and research institutions/organizations outside Sub-Saharan Africa and Germany can participate in networks with their own funds.

African and German partners must plan project implementation jointly in every respect. An African institution will assume the role of network director in the main phase with a German institution serving as co-director. Together with their network partners, they will draft the documents to be submitted on behalf of a German applicant institution. When submitting the idea outline, all partners must submit a Letter of Intent (LoI) signed by the project leader confirming their interest in participating in the project.

The applicants must check whether (in the main phase) the proposed project includes specific European components which make it eligible for exclusive EU funding, for example under the European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership (EDCTP) funding programme.

4.1 Previous work

The network partners must have published previous research and development work on specific topics related to their project proposals or in the areas of disease addressed therein.

It would be desirable for the German project managers to be members of the German Alliance for Global Health Research (<https://globalhealth.de/>).

4.2 Cooperation

¹ Commission communication (2014/C 198/01) of 27 June 2014 (OJ C 198 of 27 June 2014 p. 1 ff.) as amended by Commission communication C(2020) 4355 final of 2 July 2020 (OJ C 224 of 8 July 2020, p. 2), in particular Section 2.

All the partners required for addressing the chosen topic must be involved in the networks by the time of application for the main phase at the latest. The involvement of representatives from politics and/or civil society is desirable.

It is absolutely imperative that the network partners conclude a written agreement governing their cooperation in the main phase. The cooperation agreement will be drafted in the preparatory phase and become an integral part of the application for the main phase.

All the collaboration partners including those which are research institutions within the meaning of Article 2 (83) GBER must ensure that companies do not receive any form of indirect aid as part of the collaboration. The provisions of Section 2.2 of the Commission communication concerning the Community Framework for State Aid for Research and Development and Innovation (OJ C 198 of 27 June 2014, p. 1) must be observed.

5 Type, scope and rates of funding

Funding will be awarded in the form of non-repayable project grants of up to EUR 70,000 per network and usually for a period of six months.

The basis for calculating the grants for higher education institutions, research and science institutions and similar establishments which do not fall into the category of economic activities is the eligible project-related expenditure (in the case of the Helmholtz centres and Fraunhofer, eligible project-related costs), which can receive up to 100% coverage in individual cases, taking into account state aid legislation.

As applications are not made for genuine research projects within the meaning of the *Richtlinien für Zuwendungsanträge auf Ausgabenbasis* (regulations governing expenditure-based grants), flat-rate project grants **cannot** be awarded to universities and university hospitals.

The following is eligible for funding:

- a. Staff resources required for the project
- b. In duly substantiated cases, funding for contracts awarded to third parties (e.g. translations or preparation of topics). If funding is awarded to African partners through subcontracts, care must be taken to ensure that intellectual property rights comply with the principle of equitable use and that partners can make independent use of the project results locally.
- c. Travel and stays (of up to two weeks) by German and African project partners and experts to and within Sub-Saharan Africa and to and within Germany
Air tickets: Reasonably priced return flights (economy class) from place of departure to location of partner, including reimbursement for necessary visas and vaccinations required by law.

The following applies to funding for travel by German project partners:

The costs/expenditure for travel to and from the location in the partner country, including the necessary visas (if by air: economy class), and the expenditure/costs for the stays as well as travel within Germany will be covered in accordance with the applicable rules of the institution or company.

The following applies to funding for travel and stays by foreign project partners: The costs/expenditure for travel (if by air: economy class) to and from the project partner's location in Germany are covered. Stays in Germany will be funded at a fixed rate of EUR 104 per day or EUR 2,300 per month and EUR 77 for any individual days in a subsequent month. The day of arrival and the day of departure are counted as one day each. Contributions to health insurance and, if applicable, other types of insurance are included in this allowance and must be paid by the foreign partner. The costs of travel and stays by German project participants in Germany will be reimbursed in accordance with the Federal Travel Expenses Act.

- d. In duly substantiated cases, funds can be awarded for travel to international events, e.g. for attendance at international, project-relevant conferences held in the home country or abroad.
- e. Workshops with existing partners or aimed at opening up new potential for cooperation may receive the following support in Germany and/or in African partner countries: Various types of expenditure and/or costs related to the organization of workshops may be covered. Funding will be provided towards expenses such as guest accommodation, transfers, provision of workshop documents, adequate hospitality and rental of premises and technical equipment (as necessary). The exact volume of the allowance depends on the size of the event and the number of foreign guests. In such cases, per diem allowances (see c. above) will not be paid.

Possible alternative measures must be planned for all envisaged activities which may be adversely affected by the coronavirus pandemic, such as travel and workshops, so as to ensure that the objectives of the project can still be achieved. For relevant guidance and support, please visit the COVID-19 websites hosted by the Federal Foreign Office (<https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/de/ReiseUndSicherheit/10.2.8Reisewarnungen>), the Federal Ministry of Health (<https://www.bundesgesundheitsministerium.de/coronavirus.html>), the BMBF (<https://www.bmbf.de/de/informationen-fuer-zuwendungsempfaenger-11389.html>) and the Federal Government (<https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/themen/coronavirus/coronapandemie-1744502>).

As a rule, no funding will be provided to cover any of the costs of the participating institutions' normal basic equipment.

6 Other terms and conditions

The *Nebenbestimmungen für Zuwendungen auf Kostenbasis des Bundesministeriums für Bildung und Forschung an gewerbliche Unternehmen für Forschungs- und Entwicklungsvorhaben* (NKBF 2017) (Auxiliary Terms and Conditions for Funds Provided by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research to Commercial Companies for Research and Development Projects on a Cost Basis) will be part of the notification of award for grants on a cost basis.

The *Nebenbestimmungen für Zuwendungen auf Ausgabenbasis des Bundesministeriums für Bildung und Forschung zur Projektförderung* (NABF) (Auxiliary Terms and Conditions for Funds Provided by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research for the Promotion of Projects on an Expenditure Basis) will be part of the notification of award for grants on an expenditure basis.

The *Allgemeine Nebenbestimmungen für Zuwendungen zur Projektförderung an Gebietskörperschaften und Zusammenschlüsse von Gebietskörperschaften* (General Auxiliary Conditions for Project Grants Awarded to Territorial Authorities and Associations of Territorial Authorities – ANBest-GK) will be part of the notification of award for funds granted to territorial authorities.

Further auxiliary terms and conditions and information of the BMBF regarding this funding measure may also form part of the notification of award of funds.

For the purpose of conducting progress reviews within the meaning of administrative regulation (VV) 11a pertaining to section 44 of the Federal Budget Code (BHO), funding recipients are required to provide the BMBF or reviewing institutions with the data necessary for the progress review without delay. The information will be used exclusively for the purposes of supporting research and any subsequent evaluation; it will be treated confidentially and published in anonymized form so that it is not possible to trace it back to individual persons or organizations.

Funding recipients are expected to ensure open electronic access if they publish the results of the research project in a scientific journal. This can be done through publication in an electronic journal which is accessible to the public free of charge. If the results are not initially published in a journal which is electronically accessible to the public free of charge, they must be made publicly available free of charge by electronic means, following a suitable embargo period where appropriate (secondary publication). Embargo periods for secondary publication should not exceed 12 months. The BMBF expressly welcomes secondary open access publication of scientific monographs resulting from the project.

7 Procedure

7.1 Involvement of a project management organization, application documents, other documents and use of the electronic application system

The BMBF has currently entrusted the following project management organization with implementing the funding measure:

DLR Project Management Agency (DLR-PT)
European and International Cooperation
Heinrich-Konen-Straße 1
53227 Bonn
Germany
Website: <http://www.internationales-buero.de>

For subject-related information, please contact:

Dr Jeannette Endres-Becker, Dr Katrin Michel, Dr Anne Pflug
phone: +49 228 3821-2491, email: HealthNets@dlr.de

Applicants are recommended to contact the project management organization for advice on applications. The organization will provide further information and details.

Any modifications will be announced in the *Bundesanzeiger* (Federal Gazette) or in another suitable form.

Application forms, guidelines, information for applicants and the auxiliary terms and conditions are available online at

https://foerderportal.bund.de/easy/easy_index.php?auswahl=formularschrank_foerderportal&formularschrank=bmbf

or can be obtained directly from the above-mentioned project management organization.

Applicants must use the "PT-Online" electronic tool for drafting project outlines ([PTOUTLINE-LINK](#)) and the "easy-Online" electronic application system for drafting formal proposals (<https://foerderportal.bund.de/easyonline>).

7.2 Two-phase application procedure

The application procedure consists of two phases.

7.2.1 Submission and selection of project outlines

In the first phase, project outlines must be submitted in electronic form to the responsible project management organization by

15 April 2021

at the latest.

The deadline for submission is not a cut-off deadline. However, it may not be possible to consider project outlines received after the above date.

Project outlines must not exceed 12 pages (including German and English summaries, not including LoI).

The outline should include the following aspects of the project:

- a. An informative summary (goals, research priorities) in German and English
- b. Relevance of the project to the cooperation objectives mentioned in the call and to the strategies of the African partner countries
- c. Presentation of the network and its partners, including the planned governance structure. Description of the envisaged multilateral partnerships
- d. Presentation of the added value of international cooperation and for the target region(s)
- e. Description of the project idea and of the scientific objective
- f. Presentation of the work plan of the network, including milestone planning
- g. Rough description of the capacity development plans for the network, for example to foster young research talent
- h. Estimated expenditure/costs

Project outlines should be submitted in English to facilitate elaboration of the proposal by the African institution acting as network director. Informative summaries must be drafted both in German and in English.

Potential adverse effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on project implementation must be considered and described in the outline, indicating possible alternative options.

The outline must show clearly how all the partners will participate in the project's tasks and results. The protection of intellectual property rights also plays an important role in this context. Relevant decision-makers of the African partner countries such as research and health ministries should become involved at an early stage.

The project outlines received will be evaluated on the basis of the following criteria:

- a. Fulfilment of the formal prerequisites for funding
- b. Compliance with the funding objectives of the call as stated in section 1 above and the object of funding stated in section 2 as well as the strategies of the African partner countries
- c. Establishment or consolidation of multilateral partnerships
- d. Expertise of the applicant and the German and international partners involved
- e. Quality of the cooperation and added value for the partner institutions and the target region(s)
- f. Scientific quality and originality of the project idea
- g. Plausibility and feasibility of the project (financing, milestones)
- h. Support for young researchers

Suitable project outlines will be selected for funding on the basis of the above criteria. Applicants will be informed in writing of the result of the selection.

7.2.2 Submission of formal proposals and decision-making procedure

In the second phase of the procedure, the applicants whose project outlines have been given a positive evaluation will be invited to submit formal proposals.

The "easy-Online" electronic application system must be used for drafting formal proposals (taking into account the requirements set out in the Annex)

(<https://foerderportal.bund.de/easyonline>).

In the case of collaborative projects, proposals must be submitted in consultation with the envisaged collaboration coordinator.

In addition to aspects contained in the project outline, formal proposals must also include the following information:

- a. A detailed (sub-)project description
- b. A comprehensive work plan and time schedule
 - Feasibility of the work plan
 - Plausibility of the time schedule
 - Utilization plan
- c. Detailed information about the financing of the project
 - Appropriateness and necessity of the requested amount of funding
 - Guarantee of overall financing during the entire project period

The work plan and financial plan will be evaluated in accordance with the criteria listed under 7.2.2 b and c.

The formal proposals must observe and fulfil any thematic or funding requirements and/or recommendations from the evaluation of outlines for the implementation of the project.

All formal proposals must include a project description in German. This should not exceed 15 pages.

After final consideration of the application, a funding decision will be taken on the basis of the above criteria and evaluation.

7.3 Relevant regulations:

The approval and payment of and accounting for the funds as well as the proof and examination of the proper use and, if necessary, the revocation of the award and the reclaiming of the funds awarded are governed by sections 48 to 49a of the Administrative Procedure Act (VwVfG), sections 23 and 44 of the Federal Budget Code (BHO) and the related general administrative regulations unless deviation from the general administrative regulations is allowed under the present funding regulations. The *Bundesrechnungshof* (German SAI) is entitled to carry out audits in accordance with section 91 of the BHO.

8 Validity

These funding regulations will enter into force on the day following publication in the *Bundesanzeiger* (Federal Gazette).

They will be valid until 30 June 2024.

Bonn, 16 February 2021

Federal Ministry
of Education and Research (BMBF)

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