



National Research Fund

COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH ON CORONAVIRUS DISEASE (COVID-19)

Call Guidelines

1.0 Background

In light of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and its related consequences in all other sectors of economy, the National Research Fund (NRF) is launching a strategic call for research proposals to support interventions to combat the disease in the Country. The novel zoonotic virus may result in severe respiratory illness that require isolation and care in the intensive care unit (ICU). The first case of COVID-19 in Kenya was reported on 13th March, 2020 and since then infections and deaths are increasing exponentially day by day.

The aim of this Call is to fund the scientific community to contribute to generating of rapid and novel interventions to contain this COVID-19 outbreak. The funding is expected to go into developing innovative solutions to address this pandemic. The scientific solutions could be in areas of detection, prevention, management and, strengthening health systems among others. It is expected that such solutions will contribute to strengthen Government responses and policies to contain COVID - 19.

2.0 Scope

This Call focuses on identified priorities by the Africa Taskforce for Novel Coronavirus (AFTCOR). Research Proposals to be submitted addressing the following areas will be given priorities:

- i) Rapid laboratory testing;
- ii) Infection prevention and control;
- iii) Case management;
- iv) Enhanced surveillance;
- v) Communication and community engagement;
- vi) Rapid response and simulations;
- vii) Developing and evaluating innovative approaches to managing COVID-19;
- viii) Strengthening the evidence based on how to improve public health outcomes.

Demonstration of the feasibility of conducting the proposed research in these areas will be a major consideration. The NRF is committed in promoting collaborative research between Government and Private/Industry. Applying consortia are encouraged to engage with the industry to maximize rapid translational and uptake of potential research findings. This could be in collaboration or partnership, either as research participants or as prospective end users of the results.

3.0 Eligibility

Ethical considerations in conducting the proposed research in the context of COVID-19 outbreak will be of great consideration. Applicants are expected to consult relevant infectious diseases global guidance protocols and ethics tools in the wake of travel/movement restrictions introduced in response to COVID-19 spread.

- i) Eligible applications must include appropriate research partners to ensure the feasibility of conducting research and rapid utilisation of findings to inform the response to COVID-19;
- ii) The proposed research teams will be expected to include research expertise required to deliver high quality and rigorous research findings that are relevant, feasible and ethical;
- iii) The research consortium may include public and private universities, research institutions, departments of R&D and industrial establishments;
- iv) The consortium must have at least three (3) institutions provided above and must include at least one public institution. The consortium should provide a rationale for the formation of the consortium and a description of their respective roles in the proposed research project;
- v) The Consortium must describe the governance and coordination arrangements they will use to produce quality work and support fair and equitable partnerships;
- vi) Any collaboration (local or International) should be disclosed with details on the level of engagement.

- vii) Each institution's responsibility in the management of the grants and the human resources attached to the project should be indicated . An agreement document covering issues of confidentiality, intellectual property rights and publication should be signed by all consortium members at the start of project work and updated at the end of the project;
- viii) The consortium must identify a Principal Investigator (PI);
- ix) Applications to be submitted by the Principal Investigator from universities or a research-based institution (public and private) in Kenya, which will be responsible for the grant or as detailed out in the Consortium Agreement;
- x) The Principal Investigator will assume responsibility for ensuring that the project activities are appropriately coordinated and implemented, and will coordinate any necessary communication between the team and the NRF;
- xi) Application must be endorsed by the Chief Executive Officers of the applying institutions;
- xii) The principal applicant must be able to assemble a qualified research team that can begin work as soon as the grant is awarded.

4.0 Reporting

- i. The funded consortium will report implementation progress on annual basis.
- ii. At the completion of the project, a final report using a template to be provided by the NRF will be used to submit the report. The report must be endorsed by the Head of Institution before submission by the Principal Investigator to NRF.
- iii. Consortium are expected to publish their results in peer-reviewed journals of international repute.
- iv. The publications and/or patents shall be submitted as part of the Final Report/ Completion Report.
- v. National Research Fund shall be acknowledged in all the publications arising from funded projects.
- vi. A full account of all expenses made for a research project shall be due within 30 days of the termination of the grant.
- vii. Unexpended funds remaining at the end of the grant must be returned to NRF.
- viii. Policy briefs are encouraged within or in the course of the implementation period.

5.0 Evaluation process and criteria

NRF will engage subject specialist to evaluate the proposals submitted against the following criteria

| Evaluation Criteria | % |
|--|----|
| <p>Relevance and likelihood of impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposal provides a clear description of how the proposed research project is aimed at dressing COVID-19 challenge in Kenya. • The proposal aligns with one or more of themes identified in section 2 of this guidelines. • The proposal clearly describes the potential effectiveness research project. • The proposal focuses on viable translational research findings that are achievable in the period of the grant. • Aligned with expected impact. • Enhancing integration of new knowledge. | 45 |
| <p>Research design and methodology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project has a clear purpose, research question(s), a conceptual or theoretical framework, appropriate methodology and design to address research question(s) attending to the specifics of political, economic, social, and cultural contexts of Kenya • The proposal articulates the ways in which local stakeholders will be involved in different stages of the project, ranging from planning to analysis, so they can act on findings and recommendations. • The proposal includes a plan that describes how the expected results will be achieved within the (maximum) 12-month funding period and the allocated budget. • The proposal includes clear strategies for mitigating risks related to achieving objectives. • The proposal identifies key ethical issues and ways of addressing them. • Effectiveness of the proposed measures to exploit and disseminate the project results (Including management of IPR), to communicate the project and manage research data where relevant. • Coherence and effectiveness of the work plan including appropriateness of the allocation of tasks and resources. • Complementarity of the consortium partners • Appropriateness of the management structure and procedures (communication flows, assignment of responsibilities, quality controls, conflict resolution strategy etc) including risk management | 25 |

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|---|------------|
| <p><i>Gender, equity, and inclusion considerations</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender, equity, and inclusion are considered at all stages of the project, including design, data collection, and analysis, interpretation, and knowledge mobilization processes. • The proposal clearly explains how the project will contribute to addressing issues of inequity, gender inequality, and exclusion within chosen thematic area(s) and context(s). | 5 |
| <p><i>Team capacity</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The team demonstrates a strong track record that is suitable to the task proposed. • The team demonstrates coherence and effectiveness of the work plan including appropriateness of the allocation of tasks and resources • The proposal includes organizations, individual team member and demonstrates how it will take to ensure fair and equitable research partnerships. • <i>The consortium has a qualified Principal Investigator</i> | 15 |
| <p><i>Monitoring, evaluation and learning</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposal includes a results framework with outputs, outcomes, and intended impact. • The proposal includes a monitoring and evaluation strategy to help the team monitor progress, adapt, achieve results, and report. • The proposal explains the ways through which project stakeholders will participate in the monitoring and evaluation of the project activities. | 10 |
| Total | 100 |

6.0 Budget and Grant duration

The funding is conditional on approval of both the technical and financial aspects of the proposal. Projects will be considered for grants of up to (Ksh 20 million). In awarding, the value for money will be one of key criteria for grant approval.

The expected duration of the projects is a maximum of (1 year). Funding on an individual proposal will depend on the nature and duration of proposed activities and must be justified in term of resources needed to achieve the objectives of the project.

Consortium applying for this grant may request for funds for the following categories of expenditure:-

- i. Direct cost for undertaking research, which shall include but not limited to research equipment; consumables; essential infrastructure/upgrading systems development;

- ii. Research output trials and technology transfer costs;
- iii. Mobility costs (travel, accommodation and subsistence expenses) for project activities for professional and non-professional personnel not exceeding 20% of the total grant;
- iv. Research management costs must not exceed 7.5%;
- v. Costs related to organizing acceptable seminars and workshops within the project;
- vi. Capacity building, Knowledge Sharing and Research uptake and dissemination.

7.0 Application process

Due to the urgency of this pandemic, there will be no submission of concept notes. The proposal application form is provided at www.researchfund.go.ke. The deadline for submission of proposals for this call will close on 28th May, 2020 at 16.00 hrs. Electronic applications should be submitted to kecovid19@researchfund.go.ke and copy to secretariat@researchfund.go.ke. Hard copies of the applications to be submitted to the address below.

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