



**The Alliance for Health Policy and Systems Research (HSS/AHPSR)  
The Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases (TDR)  
Special Programme of Research, Development and Research Training in Human Reproduction (HRP)  
Child and Adolescent Health and Development (FCH/CAH)**

**Call for Letters of Intent  
Grants Programme for Implementation Research**

Deadline: 31 July 2010

WHO (The Alliance HPSR, TDR, HRP, and CAH) is pleased to announce the *Call for Letters of intents of the Grants Programme related to the Implementation Research Platform* for the years 2010-2011.

**The international implementation research platform**

Despite the increased support at both national and international levels, three health-related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs 4, 5 and 6) are unlikely to be reached. Recognizing the role of implementation research, within the broader framework of health systems research, in improving access to efficacious interventions and thus accelerating progress towards the MDGs, an Implementation Research Platform lead by the Alliance for Health Policy and Systems Research and supported by a grant from the Norwegian Government has been established. In this initiative, implementation research is defined as research that:

- a. Identifies common implementation problems and their main determinants which hinder effective access to interventions;
- b. Develops and tests practical solutions to these problems that are either specific to particular health systems and environments, or that addresses a problem common to several countries in a region; and
- c. Determines the best way of introducing these practical solutions into the health system and facilitates their full scale implementation, evaluation and modification as required.

**Objectives of the Grants Programme**

- Supporting new and ongoing research that contributes to the scaling-up of effective health interventions relevant to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 4, 5 and 6 in a manner that synergises with health system needs;
- Strengthening institutional research capacity with an emphasis on low- and middle-income countries;

- Disseminating research results for their effective use in the strengthening of health systems;
- Promoting evidence-informed policy formulation and implementation towards MDGs 4, 5 and 6.

### **Purpose of the Call**

Through this call, we are inviting letters of intent for conducting implementation research studies that would assist the scaling-up of health interventions to accelerate progress on MDGs 4, 5 and 6, and promote sustainability in the strengthening of health systems. The following three types of research studies will be considered:

- a. New implementation research studies;
- b. Additional implementation research within ongoing studies;
- c. Analyses of relevant existing datasets and policy analyses from completed qualitative and quantitative studies or datasets collected as part of routine reporting systems, such as M&E.

### **Intended recipients of this call**

Research institutions and Ministries of Health (or underlying institutions) involved or interested in implementation research and working towards the strengthening of health systems for the achievement of MDGs 4, 5 and 6

### **Prerequisites for application**

1. The lead investigator shall be from a low- or middle-income country (LMIC);
2. The composition of the research team must be multidisciplinary in two aspects:
  - a. mix of expertise (e.g. social sciences, epidemiology, health economics; etc.); and
  - b. mix of roles and responsibilities within the health system of the country (e.g. researchers, policy-makers, programme managers, members of NGOs/civil society; as well other development partners including UN agencies not involved in the reviewing applications; etc.);
3. Each research team must include at least one policy-maker who should be part of the core decision-making team of the research project;
4. Each research study shall have an integral component on strengthening capacity of researchers, as well as research users;
5. Each research study shall emphasize the potential to replicate the findings of the study in other settings within the country and in other countries of the Region;
6. Each letter of intent shall describe the potential policy change that is foreseen out of the study to improve the scaling-up of a given health intervention and how it will help progress towards the achievement of the MDGs;
7. Each letter of intent shall describe the roles and responsibilities of each team member – in particular the policy-maker – in the planning, conduct and successful development of the study, as well as in the utilization of the study-findings.

### **Potential budget for each Grant**

The size of the budget for each grant will be based on the scope and focus of research proposals. The maximum budget for any individual country proposal supported from this initiative shall not exceed US \$500,000. However, additional funding from other sources can be sought by the research team for

larger studies. The final proposal would have to be accompanied by a very detailed budget justification.

### **Research topics for the letters of intent**

In order to encourage innovative thinking by research teams, this call will consider all letters of intent for implementation research studies that would assist the scaling-up of health interventions to accelerate progress on MDGs 4, 5 and 6, and promote sustainability in the strengthening of health systems. However, a few examples of relevant topics are listed in the box below.

#### **Possible examples of potential research topics**

- i. Identification of barriers and facilitating factors in scaling-up of programs/interventions for MDGs 4, 5 and 6;
- ii. Evaluation of economic strategies (e.g. costing, budgeting, fundraising and financing mechanisms) to overcome bottlenecks in improving access to interventions to achieve MDGs 4, 5 and 6;
- iii. Evaluation of different modalities for capacity building, supervision, training, skill and performance enhancement of health care providers to deliver interventions to achieve MDGs 4, 5 and 6;
- iv. Evaluation of strategies to strengthen community capacity and/or integrated interventions delivered within the community to achieve MDGs 4, 5 and 6;
- v. Scaling-up of interventions to achieve reduction in maternal and/or child mortality.

### **Review and selection process (please see attached appendix also)**

Letters of intents will be reviewed on a competitive basis by a panel of independent experts identified by the Implementation Research Platform and will be evaluated according to the scientific merit and relevance to the Call.

The call competition will be assessed on the following criteria:

- i. Relevance of the projects to address the issues raised in the Call, particularly under the prerequisites of applications, and for accelerating progress towards MDG 4, 5 and 6, and feasibility of the approaches proposed to achieve results within three years;
- ii. Appropriateness of methods for achieving the objectives of the proposal;
- iii. Proposals which focus on all the three MDGs (4, 5 and 6) and/or those which have multi-country study sites would be given preference;
- iv. Feasibility of completing the study or the additional analysis in the proposed time;
- v. Capacity of the team: multi-disciplinary expertise, research experience, experience of working with both public and private sectors;

The short listed research teams will be notified and invited to participate to a proposal development workshop, which will be organized in September 2010 (tentatively). Finally, the developed proposals will be reviewed by an external panel of experts and, based on recommendations, research funding will be awarded by the end of October 2010 (tentatively).

## **How to apply?**

The deadline for the submission of letters of intent is 31 July 2010. Letters of intent may be sent by e-mail in English and should include the following (maximum four A4 size pages with font size of at least 10):

- i. Project Name;
- ii. Name, affiliation, and complete address (including e-mail, phone and fax numbers) of the principal investigator;
- iii. Team composition;
- iv. Justification of the study including a logic model, and a very brief summary of the related work from the literature, and an assessment of the feasibility of the proposed activity;
- v. Objectives;
- vi. Brief description of the proposed methodologies (study area, target population, study design, sample size and sampling, data collection, data analysis, etc.);
- vii. Ethical issues;
- viii. Expected results, challenges, and potential contribution of the project in scaling-up the health intervention;
- ix. Timetable;
- x. Budget;
- xi. Curriculum vitae of the key investigators and list of key partners (maximum 1 page for each investigator; these are not included in the 4-page limit of the letter of intent).

## **Address for additional information and where to send the letter of intent**

Secretariat  
The Alliance for Health Policy and Systems Research  
Avenue Appia 20  
CH-1211 Geneva  
Switzerland

Tel.: +41 (0) 22 791 2973  
Fax: +41 (0) 22 791 4817  
E-mail: [alliancehpsr@who.int](mailto:alliancehpsr@who.int)

**IMPORTANT:** Please make sure to include the following wording in the subject line of the e-mail:  
Letter of Intent, Implementation Research Platform

### Process that will be followed after receiving the letters of intent

- 1. Short-listing of Letters of Intent by an external review panel:** An external review panel will be appointed by the Secretariat consisting of two experts each in the following areas (i) reproductive and maternal health, (ii) neonatal and child health (iii) infectious disease, (iv) health systems and (v) social sciences. This external review panel will short-list the Letters of Intent based on a set of pre-defined review criteria. If the number of Letters on Intent received is large, the panel will divide into two sub-panels, each sub-panel with five experts one in each area mentioned above.
- 2. Proposal development workshops:** Country teams responsible for the selected Letters of Intent, consisting of researchers and policy makers and programme managers, will be invited to attend proposal development workshops. These workshops will be organized by the WHO Secretariat and facilitated by renowned experts in research methods, statistics, social sciences and health systems. The workshops will have a purpose-designed agenda. One member of the external review panel will be invited to attend each of the proposal development workshops as an observer.
- 3. Selection of proposals for funding by an external review panel:** The proposals will be assessed by the external review panel at a meeting organized by the WHO Secretariat. Each proposal will have two primary reviewers from within the panel. Reviewers will be asked to provide detailed written comments to the panel. Final selection of proposals will be by a ranking system developed by the panel.
- 4. Technical support and monitoring:** The selected proposals will be managed by one of the partners in the WHO Secretariat, based on the primary area of focus of the proposal and staff availability. However, given that preference will be given to cross-cutting proposals, the management team will include staff members from two or more Departments. The external review panel will review technical and financial reports of all funded proposals on a yearly basis.