

Implementation Research to Scale-up National NCD Responses for Achieving SDG 3.4

Incentive Grants for Young Researchers from Low- and Middle-Income Countries

Background and Rationale

Noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), including cardiovascular diseases, cancer, chronic respiratory diseases, and diabetes, as well as mental health disorders, are now the dominant cause of death and disability across the world. The global burden of NCDs disproportionately affects low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). WHO estimates that in 2016, there were 41 million NCD deaths globally, and more than 78% of them took place in LMICs. In addition to the epidemiological burden, NCDs threaten national economies, jeopardize global health security and hamper the achievement of health and development targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Cost-effective, evidence-based interventions to prevent and control NCDs have long been established, but it is challenging to apply them in practice. Significant progress in NCD prevention and control can be achieved by closing the knowledge-to-action gap. Understanding how to facilitate multisectoral and multistakeholder action and implement interventions effectively is vital in developing ambitious national responses to meet the *SDG target 3.4 on the one-third reduction of premature mortality from NCDs and enhancing mental health and well-being* and other NCD-related targets included in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The three UN General Assembly High-level Meetings on NCD Prevention and Control (in 2011, 2014, and 2018) mobilized political commitments at the global level, but their translation into national efforts has been slow and uneven. There is a lack of evidence on how best to deliver those interventions across a full range of existing health systems and diverse populations.

The WHO Global NCD Platform and the Defeat-NCD Partnership (UNITAR) in collaboration with the Alliance for Health Policy and Systems Research (WHO) intend to roll out an incentive grants programme to strengthen the capacity for implementation research in low- and middle-income countries. The programme will facilitate the development of and demand for locally-generated research to address context-specific problems and propose action-oriented solutions. The programme will also encourage partnerships among implementers, policy-makers, and researchers to identify the barriers to scaling up NCD interventions and improve the uptake of research results for effective policy and programme development.

Scope and Activities

It is intended that the grants will support research projects that address the following:

- Identify gaps, implementation challenges, and national priorities, and propose solutions with the potential to influence policy and practices for NCD prevention and control in LMICs.
- Engage diverse stakeholders across sectors and actors throughout the research process.
- Explore the best strategies to create strong partnerships between governments, NGOs, the private sector, researchers, communities, and individuals (particularly vulnerable populations) to address NCD prevention and control.
- Identify lessons about implementation and propose feasible actionable solutions within the context.

The results of this work may inform further research into this area in the future, including testing such practices and mechanisms in various settings.

Themes

The submitted proposals can address a wide variety of issues aimed at scaling up NCD prevention and control, establishing multisectoral and multistakeholder coordination mechanisms, and understanding innovative integrated delivery models to shift from disease-focused treatment approaches to sustainable person-centered health systems. The goal is to accelerate country-level responses towards NCD target 3.4 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: *By 2030, reduce premature mortality from NCDs through prevention and treatment and promote mental health and well-being.*

Outputs

Completed research reports with findings and recommendations;

Policy brief incorporating the outcomes of research and recommendations;

Dissemination of research findings through WHO and the Defeat-NCD Partnership conferences, webinars, and/or other media;

The Global NCD Platform, the Defeat-NCD Partnership, and the Alliance for Health Policy and Systems Research, may consider a potential publication of research results of selected projects in peer-reviewed, open-access journals.

Outcome

Strengthened capacity of individual young researchers in LMICs to carry out research and act as catalysts for institutional change.

Impact

An increased critical mass of researchers with up-to-date skills to identify needs and develop solutions for scaling up NCD prevention and control interventions in LMICs;

Production of research results with the potential to influence policy and practices for NCD prevention and control at national and global levels.

Eligibility

This call specifically targets individual young researchers, who are enrolled in accredited academic institutions (applicants may refer to the World Higher Education Database (WHED) <http://www.whed.net/>) and will be conducting research projects as part of their master's degree requirements. Projects leading to a doctoral degree will only be considered if the research can be completed within 12 months from the date of the grant award.

Priority will be given to researchers based in LMICs. Proposals from LMIC researchers based in institutions of high-income countries may be considered on a case-by-case basis. In all cases, and regardless of where researchers are based, the focus of the research itself must be on LMICs.

The applicants should meet the following eligibility criteria:

- Be under 35 years of age (a copy of a national passport or other valid identification may be requested for reference purposes only);
- Be a national of LMIC and conduct research related to LMICs. Priority will be given to researchers enrolled in institutions of LMICs. The list of countries by income group is available for reference at <https://datahelpdesk.worldbank.org/knowledgebase/articles/906519-world-bank-country-and-lending-groups>;
- Be enrolled in a course of study at the time of application leading to a graduate degree (master's in health or a related discipline. Doctoral degree candidates will be considered if they complete the project within 12 months from the date of the award) from an accredited university. (Applicants may refer to the World Higher Education Database (WHED) <http://www.whed.net/>);
- Conduct research as part of their academic study;
- Must not be fully dependent on this incentive grant to conduct their research; proof of the availability of other funding may be required;
- Be fluent in English, as only submissions in English will be accepted at this time;
- The researchers should be prepared to submit their Institutional Review Board approval of projects (if required). In addition, the researcher must obtain a letter of permission from the thesis supervisor authorizing the conduct of the study and submission of the proposal to WHO and the Defeat-NCD Partnership for the incentive grant.

- The researchers should demonstrate the availability of funding for the project as this incentive grant is intended to be complementary not a sole source of support for the research project.

Evaluation Process and Criteria

Proposals will be screened for completeness and alignment with the objective of this Call for Proposals. Proposals that satisfy these two requirements will proceed to the next step.

A dedicated Selection Committee comprised of technical experts will evaluate the proposals.

The following evaluation criteria will be applied:

Overarching

- The overall quality of the proposal
- Potential impact of the research

Relevance

- The theme and scope of the proposals well aligned with this call
- Focus on multistakeholder action.

Scientific and technical merit

- Clear and well-defined research questions
- Sound research design and methods
- Qualifications of the proposed team
- Detailed plans of activities concerning expected outputs
- Innovative approaches.

Feasibility

- Feasible context-specific solutions
- Realistic budget
- Feasible implementation timeline
- Risk assessment and management approach to the project
- Proof of ethical and other relevant regulatory approval from an accredited institution(s).

Potential Impact

- Projected research results with the potential to influence policies and practices for NCD prevention and control at national and global levels.

Funding and Awards

Selected proposals will be recommended for funding. Each grant should cover one country only. The incentive grant is intended to complement other funding sources for conducting the project.

Selected proposals will be funded through an agreement (the WHO standard Grant Letter of Agreement) with the applicant(s)' affiliated educational organization (university or otherwise). These Grant Letters of Agreement would be subject to WHO's rules, processes, and procedures, including the WHO Framework of Engagement with Non-State Actors (FENSA).

The WHO standard Grant Letter of Agreement's terms on publication, authorship, intellectual property, and related matters will apply.

The research projects are expected to run for up to 12 months. Therefore, the proposed project timeline should allow for the completion of all activities within one year from the date of the incentive grant award.

Queries related to this call can be sent to GNPgrants@who.int

Application process

Deadline: Thursday, 30 September 2021, 23:59 CEST, size limit per email: 7MB

Applications submitted after this deadline will not be considered.

Only successful candidates will be notified by 15 November 2021.

Only submissions in English will be considered at this time.

Submissions should be directed to GNPgrants@who.int

Please use the following subject line: WHO-DNCD grant proposal: Implementation research against NCDs

Submissions should be made in English by filling out the below application form (font size no smaller than 11, single line-spacing, font Calibri or Times New Roman, normal margins, A4 paper).

The Institutional Review Board approval of projects, proof of funding, and a supervisor's permission to proceed with the study and submit the proposal for the incentive grant should accompany the application package.

Other Matters:

WHO and The Defeat-NCD Partnership at UNITAR are acting in good faith by issuing this Call for Proposals. However, this does not obligate WHO, and the Defeat-NCD Partnership to issue any grant award, funding, or other commitment.

In that respect, WHO and The Defeat-NCD Partnership at UNITAR, reserve the right to award the grant to an applicant of their choice, not award any grants at all, eliminate submissions for technical or other reasons throughout the evaluation/selection process, cancel this entire process, or take any other action relating to the subject matter herein, with no obligation or responsibility to any applicant or other party or any liability attaching thereby.

All applications and materials submitted to WHO in response to this Call for Proposals will be used by WHO only for the purposes of evaluating and assessing the proposals per the terms of this Call for Proposals, unless otherwise agreed by the submitting party. WHO and the Defeat-NCD Partnership shall not reveal, or discuss with any applicant, how a proposal was assessed, or provide any other information relative to the evaluation/selection process or state the reasons for the elimination of any applicant, and shall keep all such matters confidential.

Title of proposal
Country for research
Institution (address)
Supervisor's name and contact email
Submitted by
Contact Email

Description of the Proposal (up to 1500 words excluding annexes)

Please describe your proposal, including background, research questions, methodology, results and solutions, as well as potential impact. The proposal should include the qualifications of the proposed team (if applicable), timeline, and budget (in USD) for up to 12 months, as well as a dissemination plan including at least one peer-reviewed publication and a policy brief.

Please mark the box(es) which best describe your submission

FOCUS AREA(S)

- | | | | |
|---|--------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| Multisectoral action | <input type="checkbox"/> | International cooperation | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| NCDs & engagement with Non-state actors | <input type="checkbox"/> | Digital health | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Health literacy | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |
| Financing to address NCDs | <input type="checkbox"/> | NCDs & gender | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| NCDs & youth | <input type="checkbox"/> | NCDs & the environment | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Tobacco use | <input type="checkbox"/> | Unhealthy diets | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Physical inactivity | <input type="checkbox"/> | Harmful use of alcohol | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Mental health | <input type="checkbox"/> | Air pollution | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Cardiovascular | <input type="checkbox"/> | Cancers | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Chronic respiratory | <input type="checkbox"/> | Diabetes | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Health Policy and Systems | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |

SCALE

- | | | | |
|----------------|--------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| National-level | <input type="checkbox"/> | Community-level | <input type="checkbox"/> |
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