

Request for Proposals

International Pathogen Surveillance Network: Catalytic grant fund

Award range: USD 50,000 – 250,000

Award length: Up to 12 months

Funders: The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, The Rockefeller Foundation and Wellcome, in cooperation with the International Pathogen Surveillance Network (IPSN), a WHO-hosted network.

Important dates:

Opening date: Friday 23 February 2024

Webinars:

- Tuesday 5 March 2024, 10:00-11:00 CET
https://who.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_7LJWWdRrRhul_BU6-X_SoQ#/registration
- Tuesday 5 March 2024, 17:00- 18:00 CET
https://who.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_zhauWcQbRA-r976l4rwOtg#/registration

Closing date to submit questions for webinars: Monday 4 March 2024

Closing date for submission of concept notes: Friday 22 March 2024

Submission of full proposals: By invitation after evaluation of concept notes

Funding decision: Q2, 2024

The International Pathogen Surveillance Network: catalytic grant fund

The IPSN catalytic grant fund is dedicated to supporting member organisations to pilot innovation and create an evidence base for the rapid scale-up of pathogen genomic surveillance. The fund, which is housed within the UN Foundation on behalf of the IPSN, supports projects globally, particularly in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs).

Eligibility criteria

Through this call, awards between USD 50,000 and 250,000 are available for IPSN member organisations from low- or middle-income countries (LMIC) as per the [World Bank's classification](#) or for consortia in which the lead applicant is an IPSN member domiciled in a LMIC. Projects are expected to be completed within 12 months, but longer projects can be considered if justified.

The catalytic grant fund will *not* support projects under the following conditions:

- The lead applicant is not an IPSN member. Eligible organisations who are not yet members will be given the opportunity to join the IPSN during the proposal process. For more information on the IPSN membership terms and application please refer to the IPSN website.
- The lead applicant organisation is not domiciled in a LMIC. IPSN member organisations from high-income countries (HIC) may be included as partners in the application but cannot be the lead applicant.

- Any organisation that does not meet the UN Foundation's (UNF) due diligence requirements will be excluded; applicants are required to ensure that they comply with these requirements as part of the application process.
- Organisations that are not in a position to receive funds based on financial, legal and/or governance capabilities.
- Organisations may be excluded from further grants based on financial, governance or performance inadequacy in previously awarded grants.

Scope

The catalytic grant fund will support projects in pathogen genomic surveillance that will contribute to achieving the IPSN's objectives and theory of change and that will:

- Contribute to create knowledge, research, or a research-enabling environment
- Produce outputs and evidence that can be applied in different countries
- Leverage international partnership and cooperation, with a preference for South-South partnership

The catalytic grant fund will *not* support projects that:

- Use funds for procurement of equipment or reagents for routine surveillance activities
- Use funds for procurement of hardware for mass data storage, hosting of tech tools or data that extend beyond the proposed project timeline
- Involve research with human or animal subjects, e.g., through clinical study without additional ethical review

The catalytic grants are not designed to be academic and will prioritize direct impact on public health systems from the start. Examples of projects that may be conducted include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Operationalizing the Country Capacity Framework being developed by the IPSN
- Developing country or regional investment cases for pathogen genomic surveillance to generate evidence of impact for specific use cases for decision-making
- Piloting new approaches to pathogen genomics within environmental, wastewater or vector public health surveillance
- Developing harmonized workforce competencies for pathogen genomic surveillance
- Developing harmonized workflows or pipelines for pathogen genomic surveillance
- Piloting approaches to improving trust, quality or volume of data-sharing including identifying key barriers to data-sharing in different country contexts
- Improving the sustainability or public-health relevance of data tools for pathogen genomics
- Piloting approaches for better integration of genomic surveillance into public health decision-making
- Piloting approaches for integration of laboratory and sequencing data with epidemiological and clinical data
- Testing approaches to sharing of best practices and lessons learned across the IPSN, including across geographies and sectors.

Application process

The application process will consist of two stages. In the first stage, the lead applicant submits a concept note including applicant(s) information, an overview of the project proposal, and estimates of the budget required and the duration of the project. Concept notes will be accepted for four weeks following the publication of this Request for Proposal. The deadline to submit concept notes is Friday 22 March 2024.

The IPSN Secretariat will then review the concept notes in consultation with independent technical advisors. In the second stage, shortlisted applications will be invited to submit a full application. The invitation may include requests for clarification and/or suggestions formulated by the IPSN Secretariat. Full applications will be evaluated by the IPSN Secretariat and technical advisors. A funding decision will be communicated following completion of full due diligence by UNF.

Concept notes and full applications must be submitted by email to IPSN-fund@who.int in English and using the concept note template provided. For group applications, the lead applicant will be responsible for submitting the concept note and, if shortlisted, the full application. Applications received after the deadline, submitted through other channels, or by a partner who is not the lead applicant will not be considered.

Subject to due diligence as per the UNF's [policy](#), successful applicants will be sent a grant agreement from UNF to sign. Awarded grants will be publicly communicated by the IPSN Secretariat, including but not limited to, on the IPSN website [funding page](#).

Following publication of this Request for Proposal, the IPSN Secretariat will hold two webinars on Tuesday 5 March 2024 to provide answers to questions from potential applicants. The webinars will cover the same information and are catering to multiple time zones. Applicants need only attend one webinar if desired. Organisations can submit questions for clarification on the scope, eligibility, and application process ahead of the webinar via IPSN-fund@who.int. Please submit questions by Monday 4 March 2024. Questions will be addressed by UNF the IPSN Secretariat staff during the webinar, which will be recorded and made available for applicants.

Criteria for Assessment

In addition to the inclusion and exclusion criteria described in the eligibility section above, applications will be assessed according to the following sets of criteria.

Prioritization criteria:

- Projects that fit the priorities articulated by the Communities of Practice and the Country Scale-Up Accelerator as recorded within their workplans. Please refer to the IPSN section of this document for further details of these workplans and priorities
- Organisations with a proven track record and with demonstrable capacity to implement the proposed project

- Proposals with a well-defined path from activities through to measurable outputs and outcomes that link to the IPSN theory of change
- Projects that contribute to the overall equity and diversity of the grant portfolio
- Projects with a reasonable chance of success, while ensuring that there is space for risk taking (i.e., success need not be guaranteed but should be plausible)
- Projects likely to be able to demonstrate measurable impact within twelve months of the grant award
- Projects where the proposal can demonstrate that without the IPSN funding, the proposed activities are unlikely to be possible (i.e., there is no other source of financial, material or human resources to carry out the project)
- Projects that build more effective capacity through South-South collaboration

Technical criteria:

Full proposals will be assessed on their demonstration of technical expertise in the following areas, as applicable depending on the topic of the project proposal:

- Pathogen genomic surveillance country capacity building, including decision-making, governance, and funding mechanisms in different geographical contexts; multi-pathogen and pathogen-specific capacity requirements for pathogen genomic surveillance systems; supply chain components and private-public sector interfaces; challenges and opportunities in country-level capacity building in different geographical contexts
- Pathogen genomic surveillance data, including knowledge of challenges and opportunities, stakeholders, and technical requirements in the areas of data quality and standards, data analysis platforms, pipelines and products, and data and benefit sharing
- Pathogen genomic use cases in specific areas of surveillance and public health, including environmental surveillance, wastewater surveillance, vector surveillance, and multisectoral collaboration
- Current research, knowledge, and evidence-gaps within the above areas of technical expertise

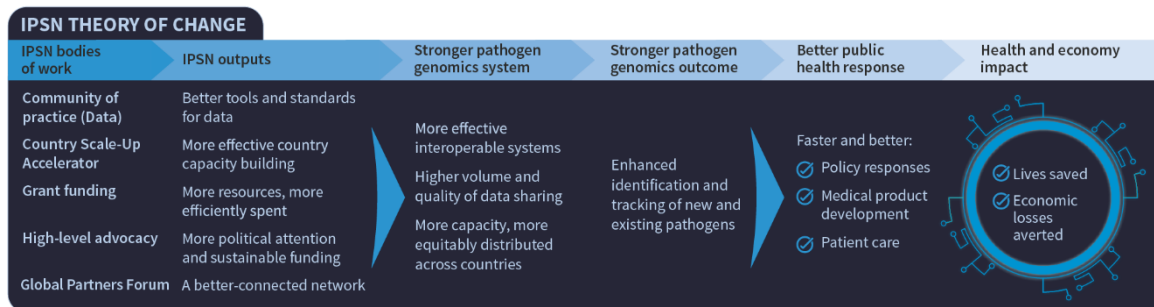
Application documents and resources

- Concept note template

The International Pathogen Surveillance Network

The International Pathogen Surveillance Network (IPSN) is a global network of pathogen genomic actors, brought together by the WHO Hub for Pandemic and Epidemic Intelligence, to accelerate progress in pathogen genomics, and improve public health decision-making.

Objectives and theory of change



Operational bodies and areas of work of the IPSN

The IPSN comprises five core areas of work, detailed below. The first three of these are coordinated through the operational bodies of the IPSN, while the final two are supported by the IPSN Leadership Committee and the Secretariat.

1. Communities of practice to solve common challenges

At the heart of the IPSN's work is a set of communities of practice that enable exchange between partners working on pathogen genomics. The first of these is the IPSN Community of Practice on pathogen genomics data. Its projects and deliverables aim to harmonize data standards and protocols, ensure pathogen genomics data tools are fit for purpose, and that data and benefits sharing are enhanced. The second Community of Practice will be on environmental, wastewater and vector surveillance, and could include work focused on areas such as: wastewater surveillance, the impact of climate change on vector surveillance, environmental surveillance and the integration of pathogen genomics into One Health approaches as part of the health system.

2. Country Scale-up Accelerator to align efforts and foster South-South exchange

The IPSN has established a Country Scale-Up Accelerator (CSUA) to accelerate and amplify the efforts of IPSN members to rapidly increase country capacity for pathogen genomic surveillance. The CSUA's projects and deliverables aim to create a set of capacity-building tools as global goods, and to empower increased South-South bilateral and subregional partnerships for capacity development. The Country Capacity Framework (CCF), developed by members of the CSUA and WHO working groups, provides illustrative capacity models as a planning tool for countries.

3. Funding to improve equity and to empower IPSN projects

To ensure improved coordination and harmonization of donor efforts, the IPSN has established a Funders Forum, which works with the Secretariat to support the IPSN activities and members.

4. High-level advocacy and communications to keep genomic surveillance on the agenda

With active engagement of countries, partners, regional organisations and WHO, the IPSN keeps pathogen genomic surveillance on the global agenda and ensures strategic buy-in.

5. Global Partners Forum for pathogen genomics to bring partners together

The annual forum brings together key players from all IPSN entities involved in pathogen genomic surveillance, providing a high-profile stage to build partnerships, introduce innovations, socialize ideas and advocate for political and financial commitments.