

Implementation Research on Integrated Care Pathways to Address NCDs and Mental Health Conditions

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

Call for Proposals

The World Health Organization (WHO) Global Noncommunicable Disease Platform, in collaboration with the Alliance for Health Policy and Systems Research, and the World Medical Association, is pleased to invite proposals from individual researchers who are enrolled in accredited academic institutions and conduct research projects as part of their graduate degree requirements.

The goal of this call is to provide incentive grants to build the capacity of young researchers working on, and ideally based in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) to carry out implementation research to investigate integrated care pathways for the prevention and control of NCDs and mental health conditions, encompassing actions by the health sector and beyond for the whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches to generate knowledge and support the scaling-up of proven cost-effective interventions.

Priority will be given to researchers enrolled in LMIC institutions. The proposed projects should be completed within 12 months from the date the grant is awarded. Proposals beyond the scope of this call will not be reviewed.

Deadline for submission: 31 January 2025 (23:59 CET)

The proposals should be submitted in English.

The World Health Organization gratefully acknowledges the supporters of this initiative, including the Alliance for Health Policy and Systems Research, the World Medical Association, and Hoffmann-La Roche and Co., Ltd.

Background and Rationale

Noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), including cardiovascular diseases, cancer, chronic respiratory diseases, and diabetes, as well as mental health conditions, are now the dominant cause of death and disability across the world. The global burden of NCDs in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) is substantial. In 2023, 78% of the 41 million global NCD deaths occurred in LMICs. Over 17 million of NCD mortality is premature affecting people before the age of 70, and 86% of these premature deaths take 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.

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. Cost-effective, evidence-based interventions to prevent and control NCDs have long been established, however, 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 in collaboration with the Alliance for Health Policy and Systems Research (WHO), and the World Medical Association is rolling 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.

The programme will build on the successfully implemented pilot phase, focusing on advancing the multisectoral and multistakeholder action for NCD prevention and control.

Scope and Themes

This call is for project proposals that will use the tools of implementation science to explore the pathways of integrated care to prevent and control NCDs. The following thematic areas can be investigated to generate evidence-based context-specific solutions and expand the knowledge base:

1. Integrated services for NCD prevention and control (integrating preventive and curative care, combining clinical and population health approaches):

- i. Reducing exposure to risk factors through health promotion and primary prevention;
 - ii. Early detection and management;
 - iii. Surveillance to monitor trends in risk factors and diseases.
2. Integrated NCD and mental health agenda
 3. Integrated NCD, mental health, and other programmatic areas (e.g. MNCH, reproductive health, HIV/AIDS, TB)
 4. Integrated care across the delivery platforms (community, primary, secondary, tertiary)
 5. Integrated NCD and mental health care across the life course

Outputs

The following outputs are expected from the selected research projects:

- Comprehensive research reports detailing findings and recommendations: These reports will provide an in-depth analysis of the research conducted, including the methodologies used, data collected, and the analyses performed. They will offer clear, actionable recommendations based on the findings, aimed at policymakers, healthcare providers, and other stakeholders. These recommendations will be tailored to the specific needs and contexts of LMICs, ensuring they are practical and implementable.
- Policy briefs summarizing the research outcomes and policy implications.

Outcome

The programme aims to build the capacity of young researchers from LMICs to conduct implementation research, allowing them to act as catalysts for institutional change in NCD prevention and mental health promotion.

Eligibility

This funding opportunity is aimed at individual young researchers who are currently enrolled in accredited academic institutions and will be carrying out research projects as part of their master's degree requirements. If the research is for a doctoral degree, it will only be

considered if it 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, regardless of where researchers are based, the focus of the research itself must be on LMICs.

Please take note of the following eligibility criteria for applicants:

- Applicants must be under 35 years of age. A copy of a national passport or other valid identification may be requested for reference purposes only.
- Applicants must be a national of LMIC and conduct research related to LMICs. Priority will be given to researchers enrolled in LMIC institutions. The list of countries by income group is available for reference at <https://datahelpdesk.worldbank.org/knowledgebase/articles/906519-world-bankcountry>.
- Applicants must be enrolled in a graduate degree program (master's in health or a related discipline) at an accredited university at the time of application. Doctoral degree candidates will be considered if they complete the project within 12 months from the date of the award. (Applicants may refer to the World Higher Education Database <http://www.whed.net/>).
- Applicants must conduct research as part of their academic study.
- Applicants must be fluent in English, as only submissions in English will be accepted at this time.
- Applicants should be prepared to submit their ethical research review committee 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 for the incentive grant.

- Applicants must show that they have other funding available for the project, as this grant is meant to be complementary, not the sole source of support. Proof of other funding may be needed.

Evaluation Process and Criteria

All proposals will be reviewed to ensure they are complete and aligned with the scope of this Call for Proposals. Proposals meeting these criteria will move on to the next stage. A dedicated Selection Committee, consisting 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 are 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 and promotion of mental health and well-being at national/regional/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 fully or partially 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 Ms Amanda Karapici at karapicia@who.int

Application process

Deadline: Friday, 31 January 2025, 23:59 CET

Applications submitted after this deadline will not be considered.

Proposals will be reviewed on a rolling basis. Therefore, early submissions are strongly encouraged.

Submissions should be directed to GNPgrants@who.int

- Please use the following subject line: *Young researcher programme proposal: Implementation research on NCD integrated care*. Size limit per email: 7MB.
- Submissions should be made in English by filling out the **application form** (font size no smaller than 11, single line-spacing, font Calibri or Times New Roman, normal margins, A4 paper).
- The ethical research review committee 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.

The finalists will be informed in May 2025.

Other Matters:

WHO and its partners are acting in good faith by issuing this Call for Proposals. However, this does not obligate WHO to issue any grant award, funding, or other commitment.

In that respect, WHO reserves 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 to evaluate and assess the proposals per the terms of this Call for Proposals unless otherwise agreed by the submitting party. WHO 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. Please state clearly which aspect of the integrated care (refer to the section on the Scope and Themes) the proposed research will address. 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 the development a policy brief.