

GRAND CHALLENGES PALOP

Request for Proposals

1/2023

The Grand Challenges Brazil program announces the launch of a public Request for Proposals (RFP) and invites all interested parties from Portuguese-speaking African countries (PALOPs) institutions to apply for proposals based on what is hereby established. The program is supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and will fund health-related research proposals. Please note that the deadline for submission of expressions of interest (first selection phase) is **July 31st, 23:59 (Brasilia time, Brasil GMT-3)**.

The final result will be informed at <https://portal.fiocruz.br/programa-inova-fiocruz> and by email to each of the applicants on September 15th, 23:59 (Brasilia time, Brasil GMT-3)

Background:

The power of science and innovation can improve global health and development outcomes and dramatically reduce global inequality. This call for proposals aims to harness the potential of secondary data available in African Portuguese-speaking countries (PALOP) to help improve the lives and well-being of women, children, and vulnerable communities. Moreover, this call aims to strengthen the cooperation between PALOP-based investigators with Brazilian researchers experienced in research with secondary data.

There are key knowledge gaps in understanding how nutrition, prenatal and antenatal care, maternal support, and environmental and social factors contribute to an elevated risk of poor maternal and childhood health outcomes. Such an understanding is required to determine what interventions, including health policies, should be delivered to which group of individuals at what point in their lifecycle to ensure optimal outcomes. Additionally, the use of large databases to address global challenges in health can improve equitable access to evidence-based tools that can foster surveillance and decision-making processes.

The Grand Challenges (GC) Partners, particularly GC Africa and GC Brazil, have jointly discussed the need to partner with research from PALOPs to foster research capacity on secondary health data. This RFP represents a first step towards identifying, nurturing, and catalyzing the creativity, energy, and skills that researchers, implementers, governments, and technical partners have

demonstrated in solving specific challenges in their countries and regions. In this context, the network of researchers from the GC Brazil, which includes several experts in data science, will be a resource to support the funded investigators through collaboration and mentorship. Mentorship will be defined according to the needs of the selected projects.

1. OBJECTIVE

This RFP fosters the innovative use of secondary data to address the challenges of maternal and child health in PALOP countries. Our goal is to support research projects that are locally driven and implemented, with the aim of significantly contributing to public health contexts in the PALOP countries. We hope to build a local capacity in data science, epidemiology, and public health and look forward to receiving proposals that meet these criteria.

1.1. What we are looking for

We are seeking proposals that address scientific inquiries concerning women's and maternal-child health and the impact of infectious diseases. These proposals should utilize existing datasets and innovative methods of data analysis and modeling. The goal is to generate impactful insights for improving public health in the country. We are particularly interested in proposals that aim to:

- Work on a specific problem that has been identified as a priority in a PALOP country or region.
- Foster innovation with secondary data in the interest of supporting decision-makers and affected communities.
- Address scientific inquiries concerning women's and maternal-child health.
- Proposals that consider the impact of infectious diseases on women's and maternal-child health are also eligible.
- Proposals that outline a clear, feasible, and reproducible methodology.
- Proposals that clearly identify the schedule for execution of activities outlined and budget up to 12 months.
- Proposals that have timely access to data.
- Proposals that demonstrate engagement with local and regional decision-makers.
- Proposals that are driven by a shared commitment to open science, data sharing, and building collaboration and analysis infrastructure to enable discoveries that will benefit people everywhere.

1.2. Examples of what we are NOT looking for:

- Proposals submitted by applicants from outside the PALOP.
- Proposals that do not focus on health outcomes in the PALOP.
- Proposals for studies that depend on the collection of primary data.
- Development of new primary data collection tools.
- Proposals not related to maternal and child health challenges or transmissible diseases.
- Applications proposing data science algorithm development without clear relevance to answering the types of questions described in this call for proposals.
- Ideas without a clear hypothesis that can be tested and articulated with metrics of success.
- Proposals that do not describe the innovation's potential effects on health policymaking.
- Methodological analysis without an innovative approach.

2. ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Submissions for this RFP are open only to principal investigators with permanent or long-term contracts at a research institution or university in any of the PALOP countries, namely Angola, Cabo Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, and São Tome and Principe. Researchers from other countries can participate as collaborators if the proposal is focused on the PALOPs challenges. South-South collaboration will be prioritized in this RFP.

3. FINANCIAL RESOURCES

A maximum of five proposals will be selected, with a limit of one for each PALOP, with a funding limit up to USD \$20,000. The Foundation for Scientific and Technological Development in Health - FIOTEC, which is linked to the Fundação Oswaldo Cruz (FIOCRUZ), will directly transfer the funds to the institutions of the Principal Investigators. FIOTEC will also be responsible for paying the researchers' stipends/ scholarships. Procurement of equipment will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Please note that indirect cost expenses such as day-to-day operational costs (office rental, utilities such as electricity or internet, post office, telephones, accounting fees, decorations, etc.), dinners, cocktails, salaries, administrative fees are not permitted. Also, the procuring or

renting of any type of automotive vehicle and fuel expenses are excluded of this funding opportunity.

4. PROJECT DURATION

Proposals eligible for support through this RFP must be completed within a maximum of 12 months, starting from the initial release of resources.

5. SELECTION PROCESS

Proposals must be submitted to the INOVA website exclusively via the Internet, available at <https://portal.fiocruz.br/programa-inova-fiocruz>. **The deadline for the submission of proposals for the first phase is due to July 31st, Brasília time 23:59 Brasília time, Brazil (GMT-3)** For each PALOP, it corresponds to:

Angola GMT+1, deadline July 31st, 00:59 AM

Cabo Verde GMT-1, deadline July 31st, 01:59 AM

Guinea-Bissau GMT+0, deadline July 31st, 02:59 AM

Mozambique GMT+2, deadline July 31st, 01:59 AM

São Tomé and Príncipe GMT+0, deadline July 31st, 02:59 AM

The submission process will be conducted in two eliminatory stages according to the timeline established in item 5.3 and detailed below.

5.1. Stage 1 - Letter of Interest

In this first stage, applicants who wish to participate in this Request for Proposal (RFP) must complete a form that includes the following details:

5.5.1. Project title:

5.5.2. Identification:

- a. Principal investigator name (PI)
- b. PI's institution and position
- c. E-mail
- d. Institutional phone
- e. Mobile phone number

5.5.3. A brief idea description of no more than 200 words

5.5.4. Overview of available databases and their intended use (200 words)

- 5.5.5. Would you like to grant permission for the sharing of your email address with potential collaborators among proposal candidates? If you agree, a list of email addresses will be provided to all approved applicants in the first stage to facilitate the connection between the applicants.

A webinar will be hosted to provide information on the objectives, evaluation criteria, timeline, and budget for RFP applicants. The webinar also aims to encourage interaction between candidates and facilitate the formation of potential partnerships among PALOP researchers.

The webinar will be held on Zoom platform and the link to the meeting will be available at <https://portal.fiocruz.br/programa-inova-fiocruz>. An invite calendar will be sent to each participant selected in the first phase of this selection process.

5.2. Stage 2 - Detailed project

In this phase, applicants who have been approved in the previous stages are required to submit a proposal containing the following items:

5.2.1. Project title.

5.2.2. PI Identification

5.2.3. What is your research idea? (200 words)

Describe your research proposal's aims, including any new technologies or tools to be developed. Please also include a brief description of the relevance of the proposal, as well as what makes your idea unique and innovative.

5.2.4. keywords

Select up to 4 words related to your proposal that help classify it.

5.2.5. How will you execute your idea? (1000 words)

Describe (be straightforward and brief) your execution plan over the 12 months of the project, including data science methods or tools you intend to apply.

5.2.6. What datasets do you intend to use?

Please describe them and explain how you plan to access them or if you already have access. We encourage you to develop a data management plan that is equitable, ethical, and efficient in line with FAIR principles. To learn about FAIR, click [here](#).

5.2.7. What do you hope to achieve at the end of the Project cycle?

Describe the main products/outputs resulting from your idea. Indicate how your product/results can be used by the target audience of your project.

5.2.8. Describe briefly the capacity of the team involved in the project, what are the partnerships/collaborations involved in your Project, and how they will participate in the development of your project.

Give a summary of the capacities of your team and their responsibilities in the project. We will prioritize the projects that involve teams among the PALOP.

5.2.9. Budget.

Describe how you intend to invest the received funds to achieve your results, considering the budget (US\$20,000.00) and timeline (12 months).

5.2.10. Regulations: to inform if the project will need ethical committee approval, stressing if this stage will adjust to the project timeline.

Timeline

| Activity | Start date | End date (23:59h GMT-3) |
|--|--------------------|----------------------------|
| RFP launch | July 14th | |
| Step 1: Submission of the expression of interest | July 19th | July 31st |
| Result of step 1 | August 4th | |
| Step 2: Webinar | August 7th, 1 hour | |
| Step 3: submission of the complete project | August 8th | September 1st |
| Final result | September 15th | |

6. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

The eligibility criteria noted below are mandatory, and the absence of any one of them shall result in the proposal being disqualified.

6.1. We will exclusively consider proposals submitted by principal investigators (PIs) affiliated with institutions located in one of the PALOP countries.

- 6.2. Only one proposal per applicant will be accepted. Applicants can participate in other proposals as team members or co-PIs, but not take leadership on more than one proposal.
- 6.3. Collaborations from institutions in any country (particularly African countries and Brazil, preferably PALOP) are encouraged. However, the leadership of the proposals must be undertaken by a PALOP institution.
- 6.4. Please fill out all fields in the submission form for a successful submission process.
- 6.5. Before submitting a proposal for this RFP, it is essential to ensure compliance with all relevant legislation and norms related to activity execution, both before and after proposal submission.

7. EVALUATION CRITERIA

At least two experts chosen by the Evaluation Committee (EC) will review the proposals. The Evaluation Committee comprises representatives from Mozambique National Institute of Health, ill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Science for Africa Foundation, Brazilian Ministry of Health, including Fiocruz, and National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq). Any member of the EC or *ad hoc* consultants cannot be involved in any of the submitted projects.

The proposals will be assessed based on various criteria below, and the EC will decide which projects will receive funding. The recommended projects will be prioritized according to the points mentioned in the table below and will be selected within the budget constraints of this RFP.

| Evaluation criteria | Rating/Notes |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| STEP 1 -EXPRESSION OF INTEREST | Any negative answer eliminates the proposal |
| Alignment with call objectives | <input type="checkbox"/> No (out of scope) <input type="checkbox"/> Yes |
| Data availability and accessibility | <input type="checkbox"/> No (unavailable/inaccessible) <input type="checkbox"/> Yes |
| STEP 2 –DETAILED PROJECT | |
| A. IMPACT AND INNOVATION | GRADE 01 |

| | |
|---|--|
| Innovative nature and potential impact of research results to society | |
| Socioeconomic potential impact, taking into consideration the solution of problems related to the project theme | <input type="checkbox"/> No (no compliance)– grade 01 <input type="checkbox"/> Partially (low)– grade 02 <input type="checkbox"/> Partially (medium)– grade 03 <input type="checkbox"/> Yes (meet expectations)– grade 04 <input type="checkbox"/> Yes (exceed expectations)– grade 05 |
| Potential to generate knowledge and/or technological development or opening up new fields | <input type="checkbox"/> No (no compliance)– grade 01 <input type="checkbox"/> Partially (low)– grade 02 <input type="checkbox"/> Partially (medium)– grade 03 <input type="checkbox"/> Yes (meet expectations)– grade 04 <input type="checkbox"/> Yes (exceed expectations)– grade 05 |
| B. SCIENTIFIC APPROACH | GRADE 02 (20) |
| Merit and Originality | <input type="checkbox"/> No (no compliance)– grade 01 <input type="checkbox"/> Partially (low)– grade 02 <input type="checkbox"/> Partially (medium)– grade 03 <input type="checkbox"/> Yes (meet expectations)– grade 04 <input type="checkbox"/> Yes (exceed expectations)– grade 05 |
| Scientific basis of proposal thematic | <input type="checkbox"/> No (no compliance)– grade 01 <input type="checkbox"/> Partially (low)– grade 02 <input type="checkbox"/> Partially (medium)– grade 03 <input type="checkbox"/> Yes (meet expectations)– grade 04 <input type="checkbox"/> Yes (exceed expectations)– grade 05 |
| C. FEASIBILITY | GRADE 01 (10) |
| Budget, infrastructure and timeline | |
| Infrastructure availability and accessibility | <input type="checkbox"/> No – grade 01 <input type="checkbox"/> Partially– grade 03 <input type="checkbox"/> Yes– grade 05 |
| Realistic timeline for the activities planned | <input type="checkbox"/> No – grade 01 <input type="checkbox"/> Partially– grade 03 <input type="checkbox"/> Yes –grade 05 |
| D. TEAM | GRADE 01 (10) |
| Technical and scientific qualification of the team | |
| Team skills/experience to achieve the goals set the project | <input type="checkbox"/> No – grade 01 <input type="checkbox"/> Partially– grade 03 |

| | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Collaborations and partnerships | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes –grade 05 |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> No – grade 01 |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Partially– grade 03 |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes –grade 05 |

The grading system employed for classification purposes ranges from a minimum score of 30 to a maximum score of 50. The final grade for each proposal will be determined by calculating the weighted average of all the itemized scores. In the event of a tie, the EC will take into consideration the highest score achieved in the sum of criteria A and B.

8. PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

Proposals must be submitted by the Principal Investigator through the INOVA platform at <https://editaisinova.fiocruz.br/inscricao-grand-challenges-palop-carta> during the specified dates and hours stated in this RFP. Proposals sent after the submission deadline or through other channels will not be considered.

9. IMPLEMENTATION AND EXECUTION OF APPROVED PROPOSALS

The release of resources is subject to the principal investigator signing the TERMS OF ACCEPTANCE and obtaining formal consent from the host institution.

10. GRANT CANCELLING

The granting of financial support can be canceled at any time, in case of:

- 10.1. Deviation from the original technical objectives of the project.
- 10.2. Misuse of resources.
- 10.3. Research ethical violations.
- 10.4. Failure to provide clear explanations for deviations from the proposed outcome.
- 10.5. A serious occurrence that warrants cancelation or if there has been a breach of any terms, conditions, or obligations agreed upon in relation to the participation in this RFP.

11. SCIENTIFIC PUBLICATIONS

Any publication resulting from the project must follow the Open Access policy that enables the unrestricted access and reuse of all peer-reviewed published research funded, in whole or in part, by the foundation, including any underlying data sets.

To learn more about the Open Access Policy, click [here](#).

12. LEGAL COMPLIANCE

Participants involved in the projects must ensure compliance with all relevant legislation and norms related to activity execution, both before and after proposal submission. All must be responsible to zeal for the principles of scientific integrity established in the [Singapore Declaration](#).

13. ACCOUNTABILITY AND RESULTS PRESENTATION

During execution, the project shall be monitored and evaluated every 4 months by members of the EC and/or designated by members of the Commission. If the project is found not to be executed as expected, the EC shall take the necessary measures, considering that specific case. If requirements are still not met, the grant shall be canceled, notwithstanding the adoption of other relevant measures, as the case might require.

For monitoring and evaluation purposes, at the end of the project, the applicant/PI shall present to the INOVA platform (<https://portal.fiocruz.br/programa-inova-fiocruz>) a technical report containing information about the achieved results and lessons learned.

14. GENERAL PROVISIONS

Any inquiries related to this RFP should be sent to the email grandesdesafios.palops@fiocruz.br. You can expect to receive a reply within 48 hours.

15. RESERVE

The Fiotec, with the approval of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and partners of this RFP, reserves the right to resolve cases not covered and circumstances not anticipated by this Request for Proposals.