

31 October 2013

MESA CALL FOR PROPOSALS
Application instructions & evaluation criteria

Deadline
Wednesday, 11 December 2013

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1. DESCRIPTION OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

A. BACKGROUND

Researchers are invited to apply for operational research grants from the Malaria Eradication Scientific Alliance (MESA). The aim of these MESA grants is to fund scientific investigation in operational research pertinent to the science of malaria elimination and eradication. These projects will contribute to MESA's objective of catalysing needed research in malaria eradication science.

This funding opportunity has been informed by work led by the WHO Global Malaria Programme (GMP) in collaboration with MESA. GMP performed a landscape analysis of operational research and convened a meeting of representatives from malaria endemic countries as well as international stakeholders in Geneva, 17th -18th October, to identify priority operational research areas that are relevant to malaria elimination.

As it is often recognised that research and programme partners (e.g. the national malaria control programme (NMCP), local operator, etc.) do not always interact on research projects; that both the public health services and the private sector have important roles in malaria elimination; and that coordination within and between neighbouring countries is important in malaria elimination, we encourage applicants to this MESA call to consider these elements in their proposals.

B. KEY AIMS

These MESA grants will support operational research on preventing the spread or reintroduction of malaria transmission between neighboring areas or from hotspots/pockets of transmission.

Proposals **must** address:

Innovative approaches to reach zero malaria transmission, or to prevent the reintroduction of malaria, in a specific zone which has neighboring areas where transmission still occurs; e.g. within district, at subnational level, between island and mainland, or at cross-border areas.

It is expected that part of the approach will include preventing, identifying, responding to, and clearing up pockets of transmission/hotspots.

C. MESA GRANT INFORMATION

Up to four grants are available up to 200,000 USD. The expected project period is between 12 – 18 months. Projects must be finalised no later than August 2015.

2. APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

The complete proposal should include:

- A. Project summary (1 page, Word, Ariel font, size 11)
- B. Project narrative (<8 pages Word, Ariel font, size 11)
- C. Budget (1 page, Excel, template available to download)
- D. PI's curriculum vitae (CV) (<2 pages)
- E. Co-PI's CV (<2 pages)
- F. PI's conflict of interest statement (available to download)

A. PROJECT SUMMARY

The summary is a stand-alone, one page description of the project, which must include the project objectives. By submitting a proposal, the principle investigator (PI) agrees that the project summary may be posted online by MESA.

B. PROJECT NARRATIVE

The project narrative should not exceed 8 pages in a Word document, Ariel font, size 11 (figures, tables, budget, CVs, and conflict of interest statement are not included in these 8 pages), and should include the following information:

- Rationale

Describe the rationale for the project and why it is necessary. Summarize the evidence base for the hypothesis and objectives. Explain how the proposal is innovative and differs from past work or builds upon it. Describe the importance of the project in relation to the key aims in this call for proposals and the significance of the country(ies) setting where the project will be implemented.

- Project goals and objectives

State the long-term, overarching goal(s) of the project. Describe the objectives, i.e. the specific outcomes that will be accomplished in order to reach the stated goal(s) and milestones. Provide a project timetable to indicate activities and milestones during the project (e.g. per quarter). The objectives must be attainable within the project period and should be specific, measurable, and realistic.

- Project methods and study design

Describe the proposed project activities, the methodology and the analysis plan. Describe the limitations of the project, potential risks to achieving the project objectives and handling of such risks.

As appropriate to the research project, methodological descriptions may include:

- o Experimental plans, technical aspects

The MESA Secretariat is hosted by:

- o Ethical considerations
 - o The importance of the study setting and participants
 - o Specificity, sensitivity
 - o Data collection, data management
 - o Statistical considerations including pertinent sample size calculation and analysis plan
 - o Whether the project proposal is a pilot or proof of concept study, include a description of how the work will be developed.
- Project partners

Describe the role and responsibilities of each team member in the project, including the PI and co-PI, and describe the project coordination. Personnel should be clearly identified and should correspond with the budget request (section 2C).

- Budget narrative

Provide a justification to support the requested budget and demonstrate a clear connection to project activities and objectives. The budget narrative must correspond with the budget request (section 2C).

- Significance

Describe the significance of the project to malaria eradication efforts, its relevance beyond the MESA grant, and possible next steps. Include any plans for future funding.

- Peer reviewers

You may list up to 3 individuals who should be considered as potential peer reviewers; please also provide their contact information.

C. BUDGET

MESA grants may be used to cover expenditures which are directly relevant to the project. Categories include personnel, travel, equipment, supplies and sub-contracts. A maximum of 10% of personnel, travel and supplies is automatically calculated as an indirect cost. The project's budget spreadsheet should follow the MESA grant budget template (available to download). Requests for salary for personnel must include full time equivalent costs, the % dedication to be directly charged to the project and, where possible, the name of the person. Sub-contracts must also be detailed in the budget, according to the template. All amounts must be shown in US Dollars.

The proposed project may or may not use complimentary funds. Where the project objectives cannot be accomplished without the use of additional funding, evidence of the complimentary funding award, or complimentary funding request, must be provided.

D & E. PI AND CO-PI'S CURRICULUM VITAE

The PI's (and where applicable co-PI's) CV must describe the qualifications, scientific publications and projects relevant to the proposal, must be current, accurate, and not more than two pages in length each, including references. Only one co-PI CV can be sent.

F. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The conflict of interest statement is available to download and must be duly completed and signed by the PI. Acknowledgement of a conflict of interest does not disqualify you from applying to this call, but will be taken into account in the review.

3. REVIEW

A. REVIEW PROCESS

All proposals will follow the same review process.

- The MESA Secretariat performs a preliminary check that the proposal is complete according to the application instructions (section 2) and submission information (section 5), and adheres to the eligibility criteria (section 3B).
- The MESA Steering Committee reviews the eligible proposals against the preliminary evaluation criteria (section 3C) and votes on which proposals are sent for independent peer review. When a Steering Committee member has a potential conflict of interest, s/he will not review the specific proposal.
- Independent peer reviewers appraise the proposals using evaluation criteria (section 3D).
- The independent peer reviewers are convened to discuss and collectively rank the proposals, and make a recommendation to the MESA Steering Committee.
- The MESA Steering Committee takes the final decision on projects to be funded. When a MESA Steering Committee member has a potential conflict of interest, s/he will not take part in decision-making.
- Clarifications and/or amendments to the proposal may be requested from the PI before funding.
- The MESA Secretariat informs the PI that his/her project was successful. PIs whose projects are not selected for funding will not receive email notification. PIs may contact the MESA Secretariat for feedback after the project selection has been announced.
- The MESA Secretariat administers the grants for the approved projects (section 4).
- The outcome of the call will be notified by April 2014 and the list of funded projects will be published online.

B. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

- The PI must have a PhD; an MD and master's degree; or 5 years of research experience.

The MESA Secretariat is hosted by:

- The host institution (legal entity hosting the PI) may be either a public or private institution or a public–private partnership.
- The proposal must follow the application instructions (section 2) and submission information (section 5).

C. PRELIMINARY REVIEW

The proposals will be reviewed by the MESA Steering Committee against the criteria below. If a Steering Committee member has a conflict of interest, s/he will not review the specific proposal.

- The proposal must describe an operational research project.
- The proposal must be pertinent to malaria elimination/prevention of reintroduction.
- The proposal must address this call and its key aims (section 1B).

D. INDEPENDENT PEER REVIEW

The proposals selected by the Steering Committee will be sent to independent peer review for appraisal including the following criteria:

- The project responds to this call and its key aims (section 1B) and makes an important contribution to the understanding of the science of malaria eradication.
- The rationale and project design are based on the best available evidence.
- The methods, setting and analysis plan are suitable to address the project objectives.
- The project proposal demonstrates reasonable indications of feasibility and objectives are achievable.
- Ethical issues are adequately addressed.
- The project team includes active participation of scientists and/or scientific institutions from malaria endemic countries.
- The project team, resources and budget are well-suited to the accomplishment of the project objectives in the project period.

4. AWARD ADMINISTRATION

- ISGlobal, on behalf of the MESA Secretariat, will sign a Grant Agreement with the PI's institution. Any sub-contracted institutions will sign directly with the PI's institution.
- The start date will be agreed upon signature of the Grant Agreement and will take into account that the project must be finalised no later than August 2015.
- PIs are required to submit periodic technical and financial reports to the MESA Secretariat based on project milestones, including a final report within 30 days of the end of the scheduled project period.
- Fund transfers will be linked to the approval of the technical and financial reports.

5. SUBMISSION INFORMATION

Only proposals adhering to the following submission procedure will be considered.

- Notify your intention to apply for a MESA grant by emailing mesa@isglobal.org by **November 15 2013**. Please use the subject heading 'Intention to apply, MESA 2013 call for proposals', and include only your name, affiliation and email address in the body of the email.
- E-mail your complete proposal to mesa@isglobal.org with the subject heading 'Submission to MESA 2013 call for proposals'.
- The submission deadline is: **Wednesday, 11 December 2013, 23:59, Central European Time**. Any proposal submitted after this time will not be considered.
- Your complete proposal must be submitted in English.
- Please submit your complete proposal as one single PDF file AND as individual standalone files. Save the all files as: 'Last name_First name_Proposal', 'Last name_First name_Summary', 'Last name_First name_Narrative', etc.
- By submitting a proposal to the call, the PI agrees to the MESA transparency criteria (section 6).

6. TRANSPARENCY

PIs awarded MESA grants commit and agree:

- That the project summary is posted online;
- To present their work during a research conference;
- To publish the results of the project irrespective of the findings (as far as possible in an open access journal);
- To provide access to the raw, anonymised data for secondary analysis once the study is complete;
- To not use the results or data generated from the project for profit;
- To declare sources of co-funding.

7. CONTACT

For further information, and to view MESA's current grant portfolio, please consult www.isglobal.org or contact the MESA Secretariat at:

mesa@isglobal.org

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