
Collaborative Initiative for Paediatric HIV Education and Research (CIPHER)

Paediatric Research Grant Programme

Call for Letter of Intent

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I. Award Information

The Collaborative Initiative for Paediatric HIV Education and Research ([CIPHER](#)) Grant Programme is designed for mentored early-stage investigators to advance paediatric HIV research and to fill critical knowledge gaps that impede paediatric HIV diagnosis, prevention, treatment and care in resource-limited settings by promoting and encouraging HIV research related to infants, children and adolescents, thereby contributing to scientific progress in the field. Scientific areas of interest include both clinical and operational research.

The purpose of the CIPHER Grant Programme is to fund research projects with the potential to address critical questions related to emerging issues of growing up with HIV infection, or to address consequences of HIV or antiretroviral (ARV) perinatal exposure in HIV-uninfected children. In addition, the programme intends to attract early-stage investigators from inside and outside the field of HIV to paediatric HIV research. Supporting and attracting investigators to the field of paediatric HIV research can help encourage innovative ideas and fundamental research to gain a better understanding of some of the key obstacles related to HIV diagnosis, treatment and care of infants, children and adolescents in resource-limited settings. This will lead to the design of evidence-based approaches and interventions to overcome major obstacles in the field.

The CIPHER Grant Programme is intended to support research that can contribute to broader scientific efforts by answering parts of larger questions within the identified research gaps (see Annex I), e.g., sub-studies or generation of important preliminary data that can help secure more substantial research funding for paediatric HIV research.

II. Eligibility Criteria

Any individual with the skills, formal education and access to resources necessary to carry out the proposed research is welcome to submit an application for the CIPHER Grant Programme. The applicant must be the principal investigator (PI) of the proposed project. The PI is encouraged to work with a mentor and his/her institutional colleagues and partners to develop the research plan.

Eligibility criteria:

- The PI must be an early-stage investigator, i.e., individual who obtained her/his final research degree (e.g., PhD or MD followed by research training) less than 10 years before the application deadline.
- The PI must serve for the first time as primary PI for a non-training research grant.
- The PI must fulfil one of the following criteria prior to the submission deadline for the Letter of Intent:
 - He/she is a clinical/research trainee (e.g., fellow, senior resident) at an academic institute or an institute whose primary mission is research.



- He/she has a faculty or comparable position (e.g., assistant professor, lecturer) at an academic institute or an institute whose primary mission is research.
- He/she has an established position at an organization with adequate research infrastructure to undertake the proposed research activities.
- The research project should demonstrate the potential to contribute to the optimization of HIV diagnosis, prevention, treatment and care for infants, children and adolescents affected by HIV in resource-limited settings by responding to identified research gaps [see Annex I].
- Applications are encouraged from any country, but preference will be given to applicants from low- and middle-income countries ([LMICs](#)) according to the World Bank classification.
- The PI must choose a mentor with relevant expertise in paediatric HIV research. (A mentorship plan and letter of commitment from the mentor will be requested from shortlisted applicants invited to submit a Full Proposal.)
- The budget should reflect that at least 80% of the direct grant expenses will be spent in LMICs.

For questions regarding the eligibility criteria, applicants are encouraged to read the frequently asked questions on the CIPHER website. For other questions, contact the programme administrator at cipher@iasociety.org.

III. Funding Information

A total of \$1,000,000 will be awarded to up to 10 research projects. The nature and scope of the proposed research will vary from application to application, and therefore, it is anticipated that the size and duration of each award will also vary. Awards will be funded for up to two years and for up to \$75,000 per year (including direct research costs and applicable indirect costs). Second-year funding is contingent upon demonstration of satisfactory progress during year one. The CIPHER Grant Programme encourages collaborations between different study sites and institutions; at least 80% of the direct grant expenses have to be spent in LMICs. Additional support will be provided for grantees to attend the 7th IAS Conference on HIV Pathogenesis, Treatment and Prevention (IAS 2013), which will be held from 30 June to 3 July 2013 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, where they will present their research projects.

The applicant must be the PI who will be solely responsible for planning, directing and executing the proposed project. Award funds may be used for salaries, technical support, laboratory supplies, equipment or other research-related costs. The institution of the applicant is requested to provide the research infrastructure necessary to carry out the proposed research project. Requested support for additional equipment and technology must be fully explained in the budget justification with clear relevance to the scientific aspects of the project, and not merely for general use. An institution's indirect cost is limited to a maximum of 10%.



IV. Overview and Timeline

The application process for the CIPHER Grant Programme will be a two-stage process. All stages of the application must be completed by the PI.

Activity	Key dates
Letter of Intent announcement	September 2012
Letter of Intent deadline	26 November 2012 (23:59 CET)
Invitation for Full Proposal (only invited applicants)	15 December 2012
Full Proposal deadline	16 February 2013 (23:59 CET)
Notification of awardees	End of April 2013
Public announcement and award ceremony	30 June – 3 July 2013

V. Instructions for the Submission of the Letter of Intent

Letters of Intent must be submitted no later than 23:59 CET, 26 November 2012.

Applicants will be asked to provide Letters of Intent that briefly outline their proposed projects, including background, specific aims, preliminary data (if any) and research methodology. The research project must respond to one of the identified research priorities [see Annex I].

Please read the following instructions carefully. Only applications that fully adhere to these requirements will be considered to be eligible.

- The Letter of Intent must be submitted electronically in a pdf file, in the format and order outlined above, to cipher@iasociety.org no later than 23:59 CET, 26 November 2012.
- The Letter of Intent must include (download [Pdf](#)):
 - Section 1: Cover page, including relevant information (name, highest research degree, position, institution, contact information, project title, project summary, topic area)
 - Section 2: Biographical information of PI (e.g., institution, degrees obtained, field of study, employment history, publications)
 - Section 3: Research proposal outlining the background and hypotheses, specific aims, brief preliminary data (if any), research methodology, and potential impact
 - Section 4: Letter(s) of support from the investigator's institution/organization signed by an authorized official indicating the commitment of the institute/organization to facilitating the proposed project.
- Only applications in English will be accepted.

Eligible Letters of Intent will be reviewed by a Scientific Review Committee. Applications will be prioritized on their ability to demonstrate maximum impact on the optimization of paediatric HIV diagnosis, prevention, treatment and care in resource-limited settings, as well as on collective capacity building in the grantee's home country and/or research performance sites. Short-listed candidates will



be notified by December 2012 and will be invited to submit a Full Proposal. Candidates will have nine weeks to prepare and submit the Full Proposal. Details and instructions for the preparation of the Full Proposal will be provided upon notification.



Annex I: Eligible research priorities

The research funded by the CIPHER Grant Programme must address crucial gaps in paediatric HIV research that impede optimal HIV diagnosis, prevention, treatment and care for infants, children and adolescents affected by HIV in resource-limited settings. Based on the Consensus Statement, [*Asking the right questions: Advancing an HIV Research Agenda for Women and Children*](#), which was published by the IAS and its partners in 2010, a rigorous review of paediatric HIV-related scientific literature and conference abstracts and structured interviews with technical experts were conducted in 2012. Through this, priority research gaps have been identified. Eligible research projects include original research that falls within defined priority clinical and operational research questions. Meta-analyses and systematic reviews, if making a unique contribution to the outlined questions, will be considered.

Clinical Research

- Pharmacokinetic and pharmacodynamic studies of paediatric antiretrovirals and drugs for co-morbid conditions (particularly for TB, malaria, other common childhood illnesses and nutritional interventions for malnutrition).
- Studies evaluating optimal antiretroviral therapy (ART) initiation, long-term management and complications in children (especially children over two years of age) and adolescents.
- Studies evaluating the short-term and long-term impact of in utero exposure to maternal antiretroviral therapy and the short-term and long-term impact of paediatric antiretroviral therapy on physical and cognitive development of HIV-infected infants, children and adolescents. Key areas include neonatal outcomes, metabolism, bone mineral density, and other clinically-relevant laboratory and biological markers.
- Studies evaluating the short-term and long-term impact of in utero exposure to maternal antiretroviral therapy on physical and cognitive development of HIV-uninfected children and adolescents.
- Studies evaluating and/or validating diagnostic assays to assess neurocognitive and physical development among HIV-infected and HIV-exposed uninfected infants and children in resource-limited settings.
- Evaluations of the most effective interventions to treat HIV co-infections and co-morbidities among children including TB, malaria, other common opportunistic infections and malnutrition.

Operational Research and Implementation Science

- Evaluations of interventions to improve access to reliable early infant diagnostics, including rapid test protocols.
- Evaluations and /or validation of simplified, standardized diagnostic tools to assess neurocognitive and physical development in HIV-exposed infected or uninfected infants, children and adolescents in resource-limited settings.
- Studies evaluating interventions and optimal models for integrating paediatric HIV services with maternal, newborn and child health and other health services.



- Studies evaluating interventions and optimal models for promoting early post-natal and long-term programme retention and reducing loss to follow up.
- Studies evaluating optimal approaches to support childhood and adolescent adherence and transition to adult ART programmes.
- Studies evaluating the most effective interventions to support disclosure, access to psychosocial and sexual and reproductive health services, delivery of biomedical HIV and STI prevention interventions for adolescents.

