

Collaborative Initiative for Paediatric HIV Education and Research

CIPHER Research Grant Programme

Frequently asked questions

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Eligibility concerns

I obtained my last terminal degree (MD, PhD, MBBS or equivalent) over 10 years ago, but have had research training in infectious diseases within the past 10 years. Am I eligible?

No. To be eligible, applicants must be early-stage investigators who have obtained their last MD, PhD, MBBS or equivalent terminal degree within the past 10 years (after 30 September 2015). However, we encourage you to consider approaching a colleague who meets the eligibility criteria and could submit a letter of intent as a principal investigator. They might be interested in applying for the grant and working with you on the research project.

I obtained my MD or PhD over 10 years ago, but obtained an MA or MPH within the past 10 years. Am I eligible?

No. A Master's degree, Master of Public Health or equivalent are not considered to be terminal research degrees. However, we encourage you to consider approaching a colleague who meets the eligibility criteria and could submit a letter of intent as a principal investigator. They might be interested in applying for the grant and working with you on the research project.

I do not have an MD or PhD. Am I eligible?

No. To be eligible, applicants must have an MD, PhD, MBBS or equivalent. However, we encourage you to consider approaching a colleague who meets the eligibility criteria and could submit a letter of intent as a principal investigator. They might be interested in applying for the grant and working with you on the research project.

I received my PhD two months ago and I will start my postdoctoral fellowship at an academic institution in January 2026. Am I eligible?

No. Applicants are eligible only if they have a qualifying position at the time of the submission deadline for the letter of intent (30 September 2025).

I have previously received grants and served as a principal investigator for a non-training research project. Am I eligible?

No. To be eligible, applicants must serve for the first time as a principal investigator for a non-training research grant. Principal investigators who have previously received a non-training research grant NOT exceeding USD 30,000 are eligible to apply.

I have previously received a fellowship grant to conduct a small study. Am I eligible?

Yes. Fellowships will be considered as training grants and do not conflict with the eligibility of the applicant.

I am serving as a co-principal investigator for a research project. Am I eligible?

Yes. Applicants who are or have been co-principal investigators are allowed to apply.

I received a doctoral degree more than 10 years ago, but I have never served as principal investigator for a research project. Am I eligible?

No. Applicants must have received their terminal research degree within the past 10 years (after 30 September 2015).

I am a medical doctor with research experience, but I have never received formal research training. Am I eligible?

Yes. Applicants with a medical doctor degree (such as MD, MBBS) are eligible if they obtained their terminal research degree within the past 10 years and if they can show in their letter of intent an adequate understanding of the research methodology necessary to conduct the proposed project.

I am not working at an academic institution, but for a non-governmental organization providing healthcare for children and/or adolescents living with HIV. Am I eligible?

Yes. Applicants with an established position at an organization with adequate infrastructure to undertake the proposed research activities are eligible.

I do not hold a passport or a national identity document from a low- or middle-income country. Am I eligible?

No. Available funds in any given year will be awarded to applicants from low- and middle-income countries (they must hold a passport or a national identity document from a low- or middle-income country) according to the [World Bank classification](#).

I would like to propose a small study, which would only take a few months to complete. Is this possible?

Yes. 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 vary.

Research project scope

I am planning to conduct a study in a high-income country, which could lead to improved treatment for children in resource-limited settings. Would my research project be considered for funding, even though the funds will be spent in a high-income country?

No. At least 80% of the direct grant expenses must be spent in low- and/or middle-income countries.

Is every study in the field of paediatric and adolescent HIV research eligible?

No. Each round of research grants has a focus area. For this round, research that contributes to an HIV cure for children or focuses on strategies to strengthen the paediatric HIV cascade, encompassing case identification, continuity of care and re-engagement in care, will be prioritized.

Application requirements

Must I have a mentor to submit the letter of intent?

Yes. The mentor's contact details and a letter of commitment are required for the letter of intent submission phase. A mentorship plan is required only for the full proposal submission phase.

Are there any restrictions regarding the choice of mentor?

Mentors must have a track record in the field relevant to the proposed area of research and must be able to provide time to support the investigator. Long-distance mentorship is allowed if the mentorship plan demonstrates that the mentor can provide sufficient guidance and support. CIPHER will request detailed information about the expertise of the mentor (CV and list of publications) and the planned mentorship (mentorship plan) in the full proposal and will assess this information during the review process.

Can an institution submit a letter of intent?

No. The letter of intent must be submitted by the principal investigator, who will be solely responsible for planning, directing and executing the proposed project of the study. However, the principal investigator must be affiliated with a qualifying institution and is encouraged to work with a mentor and their institution and its partners to develop the research plan.

Am I allowed to submit more than one application?

Yes. Principal investigators are allowed to submit more than one application, but under no circumstances will the principal investigator receive more than one grant.

Should I follow a specific format while writing my letter of intent?

Letters of intent can be submitted only electronically in the format provided, which contains specific sections and word limits, through the online submission system. The system will be open until 30 September 2025 at 18:00 Central European Summer Time (CEST).

Funding scope and grant benefits

Will the CIPHER Grant Programme provide funding for meta-analyses and systematic reviews?

Yes. Besides original clinical and operational research studies, the CIPHER Research Grant Programme will consider meta-analyses and systematic reviews if they have the potential to make a unique contribution to eligible research questions. In addition, the CIPHER Grant Programme will fund the generation of important preliminary data that can help secure more substantial research funding for paediatric and adolescent HIV research.

What does the CIPHER Grant include?

Awards will be funded for up to two years and up to USD 70,000 per year (including direct research costs, two IAS-organized conferences and applicable indirect costs). Second-year funding is contingent upon demonstrating 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 must be spent in low- and/or middle-income countries. Award funds may be used for salaries, technical support, small laboratory supplies, small equipment or other research-related costs. An institution's indirect cost is limited to a maximum of 10%.

Can part of the funds be used for salary costs or training?

Yes. Award funds may be used for salaries and training. The funds used to pay for staff must be consistent with the time the staff spend on the research project.

Budget requirements

Applicants invited to submit a full proposal will have to provide a detailed copy of their budget, including a detailed justification and a breakdown of all costs for years one and two. Please note that we will not consider proposals that do not respect the following budget requirements:

- Awards will be funded for up to two years and for up to USD 140,000 (including direct research costs, two IAS-organized conferences and applicable indirect costs).

- The budget must reflect that at least 80% of the direct grant expenses will be spent in low- and/or middle-income countries.
- The indirect cost rate must be limited to a maximum of 10%.
- The budget must include estimated travel costs to attend two IAS-organized conferences in 2027 and 2028 of up to USD 3,000 per year.
- For other travel, including costs to support training, the maximum allowable amount is USD 3,000 per year.
- Award funds may be used for salaries, technical support, laboratory supplies, equipment or other direct research-related costs.
- The purchase of equipment and technology must be fully justified, with a clear connection to the scientific aspects of the project and not for general use.