

# Applying to the 9<sup>th</sup> GACD Funding Call

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

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2. Eligibility and project team requirements
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## 1. GACD funding model

### 1.1 What is the GACD?

The Global Alliance for Chronic Diseases (GACD) is a network of public funding agencies from all over the world. They work together to reduce the burden of non-communicable diseases (NCDs), particularly in low- and middle- income countries and in disadvantaged communities in high-income countries, by supporting sustainable implementation research.

### 1.2 How do the GACD's member funding agencies work together to fund research?

These funding agencies collaborate by:

- Agreeing a common call theme
- Using a common application platform (except EU Commission and NIH)
- Selecting a shared group of international peer reviewers (except EU Commission and NIH)
- Co-funding the same proposal (see Section 5)
- Sustaining the GACD Research Network, a group of researchers and their team members who have received GACD grants.

### 1.3 Does the application process differ depending on which funding agency I decide to apply to?

- There are differences in requirements around target populations, budget, maximum project length, eligibility, and other criteria.
- Several funding agencies will require submission of a letter of intent, or pre-proposal to the agency's specific portal.
- Most GACD funding agencies use a common application form, however, the NIH use different application forms and have different deadlines.
- Requirements of individual funding agencies will be available on the call website in January 2024.

### 1.4 How much money is available for funding?

The GACD funding agencies do not pool their budgets. Each funding agency has its own budget limit. This information will be available on the call website in January 2024.

### 1.5 How does the peer review process work?

The NIH run their own independent review processes.

The GACD run a joint review process with other funders taking part in the call. This will be a two-stage process, as follows:

- Applicants will submit a short first stage proposal (page limit of six pages for the proposal, not

- including additional documents such as CVs, budget forms etc)
- First stage proposals will be peer reviewed and scored by an independent panel.
  - The Call Steering group will decide which applications will be invited to submit a second-stage proposal, based on the recommendations of the peer review panel.
  - Applicants invited to submit a second stage proposal will have the opportunity to make changes to their application, in response to peer review feedback.
  - Second stage proposals will be peer reviewed and scored by an independent panel and a ranking list developed for each funder.
  - At the joint peer review meeting, each application will be assessed independently using the scoring criteria provided in the Call Text. Applications will then be ranked in agency-specific lists. Applicants to one funding agency will not be compared to applicants to other funding agencies. The GACD staff provides these ranked lists to the funding agencies to inform their award decisions.
  - The funding agencies maintain independence in their decision making about which awards are ultimately funded. There is no score cut-off above or below which projects are funded.
  - This joint peer review meeting is scheduled for the first week of December 2024.

## 1.6 Scoring criteria

Scoring criteria can be found in the [Annex of the full call text](#), available to download on the call webpage.

## 1.7 Who will administer and finance my award?

If your application is successful, the funding agency to which you have applied will administer and finance your award.

## 1.8 When will I find out if my application is successful?

Different funding agencies have substantially different timelines for formalising awards after the peer review meeting. Please check the relevant funding agency webpage for more information.

## 1.9 Who will contact me to let me know if my application is successful?

The funding agency to which you submitted your application will inform you of the outcome of your application. The GACD staff team will not communicate awards decisions.

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## 2. Eligibility and project team requirements

### 2.1 How can I determine whether I am eligible to apply?

The funding agency/ies you can apply to will depend on your geographic residency and whether the institution where you work meets the eligibility requirements for that agency. Details about each funding agency's eligibility requirements can be found in the agency-specific information boxes at the bottom of the [call webpage](#).

In general, researchers from high-income countries will be limited to applying to the funding agency in their country or state where their affiliated research institution is based.

The high-income country-based GACD funding agencies participating in this call can provide salary support to research team members based in *most* low- and middle-income countries ([Please refer to the World Bank's designation of HIC and LMIC countries](#)). Individual funding agencies may have some geographic restrictions; please see their agency-specific information document on the [call webpage](#). Some of these funding agencies will allow applicants to apply as Principal investigators, while others require low- and middle-income country

team members to join the team as co-Investigators.

To confirm eligibility, you can contact the funding agency's contact person, available in their 'agency-specific information' document in the boxes on the [call webpage](#).

**2.2 When I apply to the GACD, do I need to choose which funding agency will consider my application, or will the GACD assign me to the most appropriate funding agency?**

You must select the funding agency. There are substantial differences in eligibility requirements between funding agencies, and applicants must ensure that they meet these criteria for the funding agency that they apply to.

**2.2 Can non-researchers apply for this funding call?**

In nearly all cases, the Principal Investigator must be a researcher. However, the project team will ideally include a multidisciplinary team comprising of researchers and non-researcher stakeholders, such as NGO leaders, patient advocates, health care professionals, Ministry of Health officials, *etc.* Both researchers and non-researchers may consider [posting to this tool](#) to help identify potential collaborators.

**2.3 Is it a requirement that I collaborate with researchers from different countries?**

In some cases, funding agencies will require collaborative international teams. Applicants are asked to review the agency specific information provided on the [call webpage](#).

**2.4 Can an early-career investigator apply as a Principal Investigator?**

Yes. The GACD do not restrict applicants based on seniority level. However, applicants should provide evidence that the Principal Investigator has the experience necessary to lead the proposed project, given its complexity and geographical scale.

Please note, even if the Principal Investigator is not an early career researcher, early career researchers should be included among the members of the project team to help facilitate research capacity building.

**2.5 Is it a requirement that the Principal Investigator be an *implementation science* researcher?**

No. However, it is expected that an individual with implementation research expertise be a member of the project team.

**2.6 How can someone with implementation research expertise be identified, and how does the GACD define 'expert'?**

The GACD has created a tool to help applicants find collaborators. Please consider [posting to this tool](#), and letting the community know that you are seeking an implementation research expert.

The GACD does not provide formal criteria for establishing whether someone might be considered an expert. Applicants can justify why someone might be considered an expert in implementation research using evidence of previous research experience, peer-reviewed publications, experience serving on review committees, teaching, and/or any other relevant experience.

**2.7 Is there a requirement that a certain percentage of the project team be from high-income countries versus low- and middle-income countries, or Indigenous versus non-Indigenous groups?**

No. However, there must be evidence of equitable partnership, as described in the proposal review criteria ([found in the Annex of the full call text, available to download on the call webpage](#)).

**2.8 Can I submit the same or similar applications to different funding agencies?**

No, this is not permitted. However, you may be able to apply for one application to be co-funded (*i.e.*, for the costs to be shared) by different funding agencies.

### **2.9 Can one person be a team member on multiple applications?**

Yes. However, individuals can only be listed as a *Principal Investigator* on one application submitted to any of the GACD funding agencies. There is no limit to the number of proposals on which a Principal Investigator on one project, or anyone else on the project team, can appear as a co-Investigator or other collaborator on different applications.

### **2.10 Can an independent researcher apply or does the applicant need to be affiliated with an institution?**

Applicants must be affiliated with an institution, though this does not necessarily need to be an academic institution. Participating funding agencies have different criteria for qualifying institutions, so [please check the agency specific information available on the call webpage](#).

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## **3. Project scope**

### **3.1 Can I include a trial to test the effectiveness of the intervention that our team has adapted to a new cultural and geographical context before launching the implementation research component of the project?**

Yes. A limited period of testing the effectiveness of an intervention that your team has adapted for local implementation is usually appropriate. However, the majority of the project time and budget should be dedicated to conducting implementation research in studies that use hybrid designs. We do not limit applicants to any particular trial design for testing effectiveness of the intervention; however, a *validated* implementation research framework must underpin the proposed trial/intervention, and we encourage the use of mixed methods.

### **3.2 I am planning to conduct my project in multiple countries. Do I need to assess the same evidence-based intervention in each country?**

Typically, multi-country projects focus on the same intervention, and assess the generalisability of the evidence generated through implementation research. The project team will need to adapt this intervention to ensure its appropriateness in the different cultural and geographic contexts in which the project is undertaken. It may be possible to explore different interventions in different countries, but it is recommended that you contact the funding agency that you are applying to beforehand to confirm that they approve of your plan.

### **3.3 How are disadvantaged populations in high-income countries defined?**

Not all funding agencies will support research in populations in high-income countries. Some agencies limit disadvantaged populations to Indigenous communities. Others allow applicants to justify why a particular population might be considered disadvantaged. This information will be available in each funding agency's downloadable 'Agency-specific information' document in the boxes on the [call webpage](#).

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## **4. Application process**

### **4.1 Is a letter of intent required?**

Some agencies require a letter of intent or a version of the proposal to also be submitted to national systems. Please check the [agency specific information on the call website](#) for more information.

While the full application materials are available to all potential applicants, a submitted full application will only be reviewed if applicants have submitted a successful letter of intent. Letters of intent must be submitted to individual funding agencies; details for how to apply are in their agency-specific information.

#### **4.2 Can I make changes to the project as presented in the first stage proposal in my second stage application?**

You cannot change the Principal Investigators or the major project aims without first checking with your funding agency. However, you can make other changes, including, but not limited to, changing other project team members or editing research methods, though the methods must still demonstrate implementation science methodology.

#### **4.3 Where can I find the templates for the materials I must submit as part of my application?**

For all funding agencies except for the NIH (which has a separate application process and requests different application materials), you can access the application templates on the GACD application portal and on the [call webpage](#) (under 'How to apply').

Some funding agencies also have their own 'budget sheet' (distinct from the 'budget form' and 'budget justification' documents within the proposal template). This template can be found in the agency-specific boxes on the call webpage. Where requested, these should be completed and uploaded to the GACD portal.

For applicants to the NIH, please see their agency-specific information on the call webpage.

#### **4.4 Can I submit the same or similar applications to different funding agencies?**

No, this is not permitted. However, you may be able to apply for one application to be co-funded (*i.e.*, for the costs to be shared) by different funding agencies.

#### **4.5 I am working on a project that focuses on digital health. Is it a requirement to submit the [mERA checklist](#)?**

Yes, this is a requirement. The checklist should be uploaded as a part of your proposal form.

#### **4.6 If I am submitting a full application through the GACD portal, do I also need to submit a proposal on the website of the funding agency to which I am applying?**

All applications apart from those to the NIH must submit using the common application portal.

The NIH run a separate application process: for applications to NIH, please visit their call webpage.

The following agencies require that you submit your application through the GACD portal and via national application systems:

- NHMRC require that the application is then download it and submit again through [Sapphire](#), its online platform.
- AMED requires applicants to submit applications both through the GACD portal and [e-RAD](#), its platform.

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## **5. Co-funding**

### **5.1 What is co-funding?**

Co-funding is where two or more GACD funding agencies jointly fund the same application.

## 5.2 What are the benefits of applying for co-funding?

The major opportunities that co-funding presents are that applicants a) can form multinational project teams and request salary support for investigators who would not otherwise be able to collaborate; b) can request certain other expenses for which they would not be eligible if applying to one funding agency; c) can potentially request a larger budget than if applying to just one funding agency.

Co-funding offers an opportunity for investigators from different high-income countries to collaborate. Most high-income country-based funding agencies will not typically fund costs incurred in high-income countries outside of the country where they are based.

In some cases, applying for co-funding may facilitate more equitable partnerships between high-income country and low- and middle-income country researchers on the same project team. Some high-income country funding agencies will only fund research institutions within their respective countries and require the Principal Investigator to be a resident of that country. Co-funding between a high-income country funding agency and a low- and middle-income funding agency, would allow teams to include both high- and low- and middle-income country co-Principal Investigators, and would promote more control of spending in the low- and middle-income country.

Finally, most GACD funding agencies are keen to prioritise co-funded applications because co-funding enables these agencies to fund more applications overall (through cost sharing) and promotes greater international collaboration. If a funding agency has indicated that they will prioritise co-funded applications, their policy for prioritising such applications will be captured in that agency's 'agency-specific information summary' document on the call webpage.

Please note that SAMRC require application to request co-funding from MRC-NIHR. The NIH and AMED do not allow co-funded applications between multiple GACD funding agencies.

## 5.3 What are the disadvantages of applying for co-funding?

Most GACD funding agencies (all except the NIH) participate in a joint peer review process. All applications are reviewed against the same criteria (found in the [Annex of the full call text, available to download on the call webpage](#)) by a common review panel. A score is assigned to each application. Applications are then ranked in groups depending on the funding agency applied to. There is no GACD-wide ranking of applications. Funding agencies will use these rankings to determine which applications are funded, the number of which will depend on available budget.

When you apply for co-funding, your application will need to be among the top scoring applications across each funding agency that you apply to. This means that there is potential for your application to be competitive for an award at one agency, but not at the other, and therefore not be funded. However, in keeping with their policy to encourage co-funded proposals, were this to occur, some funding agencies will look for ways to independently fund your application. In fact, applications for co-funding typically have a higher funding rate than applications to the single agencies.

The best thing to do to understand the benefits and disadvantages of applying for co-funding in your individual case is to contact [funding@gacd.org](mailto:funding@gacd.org).

## 5.4 Can I apply for co-funding from more than two GACD funding agencies?

Yes, this is permitted.

## 5.5 Can I submit my application for consideration for co-funding, as well as a similar application with a slightly modified budget and project team to a single funding agency to avoid the risk of 'double jeopardy' (i.e., where your application is competitive for an award at one agency, but not at the other, and therefore not

**funded)?**

No, this is not permitted.

**5.6 Is applying for co-funding ever required?**

Yes, co-funding is required if you apply to SAMRC.

**5.7 Are there any funding agencies that will not co-fund with other funding agencies?**

NIH and AMED will not co-fund applications with other agencies.

Co-funding is possible between any of the other funding agencies. Applicants interested in applying for a specific combination of funding agencies should contact [funding@gacd.org](mailto:funding@gacd.org) as soon as possible.

**5.8 Can my application be considered for co-funding even if I do not indicate that I am interested in co-funding at the time that I submit my application?**

Yes. If your project team meets the eligibility, scope, budgetary, and geographical requirements of two or more GACD funding agencies, you *may* be considered for co-funding following the joint peer review meeting, even if you have only applied to one GACD funding agency.

There are some advantages to applying for co-funding at the time that you are submitting the letter of intent. Applying at this stage ensure that co-funding will be possible, and may prevent delays in finalising the award, disbursing funds, and participating in the GACD Research Network.

**5.9 If I am interested in applying for co-funding, how should I prepare my application?**

If you have any questions about co-funding, please contact [funding@gacd.org](mailto:funding@gacd.org). The GACD staff team will be liable to help you prepare the budget forms for your full application and to answer any other questions you may have about co-funding.

You will only need to submit one application when applying for co-funding through the GACD portal (though some agencies may ask that you re-submit this application on their individual platforms).

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If your question has not been answered in this document, please contact [funding@gacd.org](mailto:funding@gacd.org), or the relevant funding agency representative listed in the 'agency-specific information' document on the call webpage.