

Collaborative Initiative for Paediatric HIV Education and Research (CIPHER)

Research Grant Programme

CALL FOR LETTER OF INTENT

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I. Grant information

The CIPHER Research Grant Programme awards research grants of up to USD 140,000 over two years to early-stage investigators from low- and middle-income countries (LMIC's). These grants enable recipients to become principal investigators for the first time on research projects addressing critical gaps in paediatric and adolescent HIV, while also advancing their career progression. With a focus on research capacity building, the programme cultivates a diverse and talented cohort of professionals from within low- and middle-income countries who will drive innovation and progress in this field. Notably, this initiative aims to support research that can inform policy change and ensure better outcomes for infants, children and adolescents living with and affected by HIV in resource-limited settings while providing investigators the experience they need to compete for larger funding.

Projects funded by the CIPHER Grant Programme should primarily prioritize implementation-focused research in paediatric and adolescent HIV and address priorities in prevention, testing, treatment, and/or service delivery.

II. Eligibility criteria

Any individual with the skills, formal education and access to resources necessary to carry out the proposed research is welcome to apply to the CIPHER Grant Programme. The applicant must be the principal investigator (PI) of the proposed project. The PI should work with a mentor, their institutional colleagues and their partners to develop the research plan.

Eligibility criteria and mandatory supporting documents:

- The PI must be an early-stage investigator, that is, an individual who obtained their terminal research degree (for example, PhD, MD, MBBS or equivalent) less than 10 years before the application deadline (after 30 September 2014).
- The investigator must serve for the first time as PI. PIs who have previously received a non-training research grant exceeding US 30,000 are not eligible.
- The PI must fulfil one of the following criteria prior to the submission deadline for the letter of intent:
 - They are a clinical/research trainee (such as fellow, senior resident) at an academic institute or institute whose primary mission is research.
 - They have a faculty or comparable position (assistant professor, lecturer) at an academic institute or an institute whose primary mission is research.
 - They have 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 prevention, testing, treatment, and/or service delivery for infants, children and adolescents affected by HIV in resource-limited settings.
- Available funds in any given year will be awarded to applicants from low- and middle-income countries (the applicant should hold a passport or national identity document from one of those countries) according to the [World Bank classification](#).
- The PI must choose a mentor with relevant expertise in paediatric and/or adolescent HIV research (the mentor's contact details and a letter of commitment will be requested from all applicants; a mentorship plan will be requested only from shortlisted applicants who are invited to submit a full proposal).
- The budget should reflect that at least 80% of the direct grant expenses will be spent in low- and middle-income countries.

- A letter of support from the applicant's institution is required, as well as a copy of their terminal research degree or diploma.

Applicants from western and central Africa and Asia are highly encouraged to apply.

If you have questions about eligibility criteria, please consult the [frequently asked questions](#) on the CIPHER [webpage](#) on the IAS – the International AIDS Society. For other questions, contact the programme administrator at cipher@iasociety.org.

III. Funding information

The nature and scope of the proposed research will vary from application to application and, therefore, we anticipate that the size and duration of each award will vary. Awards will be funded for up to USD 140,000 for up to two years (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 must be spent in low- and middle-income countries.

Additional support will be provided for grantees to attend one IAS Conference on HIV Science and one International AIDS Conference during their grant period (generally this represents two consecutive years).

The applicant must be the PI who will be solely responsible for planning, directing and executing the proposed project. The grant 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 project. Requested support for additional equipment and technology must be fully explained in the budget justification (only requested from shortlisted applicants) 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

Application to the CIPHER Grant Programme is a two-stage process. All components of the application must be completed by the PI.

Activity	Key dates
Online letter of intent application system open	2 September 2024
Letter of intent deadline	30 September 2024, 18:00 CEST
Invitation for full proposal (shortlisted applicants only)	Mid-November 2024
Full proposal deadline	10 January 2025, 18:00 CET
Notification of awardees	End of March 2025
Research starting date	Between July and November 2025

V. Instructions for submitting the letter of intent

Letters of intent must be submitted no later than 30 September 2024, 18:00 CEST. Applicants will be asked to provide a letter of intent that briefly outlines their proposed projects, including background, specific aims, preliminary data (if any) and methodology.

The letter of intent can be submitted only through the online submission system and in the format provided. Applications not submitted through the online system will not be accepted. Only applications in French or English will be considered. Please note that, as you complete your letter of intent online, you will be able to save your modifications and go back to the updated version of your form later.

The CIPHER Research Grant Working Group will review eligible letters of intent. Applications will be prioritized based on their ability to demonstrate maximum impact on the optimization of paediatric and adolescent HIV prevention, diagnosis, treatment and/or care and on their potential to inform policy and programmes in resource-limited settings, as well as on collective capacity building in the grantee's home country and/or research performance sites. Shortlisted candidates will be notified in mid-November 2024 and will be invited to submit a full proposal, as well as given details and instructions on how to prepare this proposal. Applications can be submitted in English or French.