



EDCTP

European & Developing Countries  
Clinical Trials Partnership

## EDCTP-AREF Preparatory Fellowships Joint call with the Africa Research Excellence Fund (AREF)

Type of action	TMA
Call budget	€800,000
Maximum funding	€70,000
Funding level	Up to 100% of eligible costs
Stage 1 Opening date	14 July 2017, 17:00 CET
Stage 1 Deadline	13 October 2017, 17:00 CET
Stage 2 Opening date	12 January 2018, 17:00 CET
Stage 2 Deadline	14 March 2018, 17:00 CET
Call identifier	TMA2017PF

### Description

#### Background

Many aspiring African researchers lack the mentorship, intellectual challenge and rigour that well-funded established institutions in the North can offer to their early postdoctoral researchers. Africa accounts for 15-20% of the world's population and a disproportionately large share of disease burden, yet scientific publications by African researchers account for less than 2% of the total academic journal output. The challenge is therefore to enable African researchers to enhance their competitiveness for international funding opportunities early in their careers while retaining them in Africa, working on Africa's health challenges and priorities.

Capacity strengthening needs for health research in Africa have been documented by EDCTP, the World Bank and others. Lack of funding and systematic career development for researchers are two significant gaps. In general, health research capacity building programmes in Africa and other low-income regions are more tailored to PhD candidates than to early-career postdoctoral scientists. Furthermore, international fellowship programmes typically focus on people showing exceptional talent and promise. The experience of global health research funders is that Africans are under-represented and less competitive in their funding schemes: their science may be promising but the framing of research questions; the research design; the proposed analyses and mentoring are often not well developed.

The Africa Research Excellence Fund (AREF) aims to bridge the critical gap early in the career path from research experience to research leadership. AREF is an independent charity, legally registered in the UK under the umbrella of the Medical Research Foundation. The Medical Research Foundation is a company limited by guarantee and a charity registered in UK whose registered office is at MRC Head office (Swindon), Polaris House, North Star Avenue, Swindon SN2 1FL.

#### Scope

The purpose of the EDCTP-AREF Preparatory Fellowships is to enhance the competitiveness of up and coming post-doctoral African scientists and clinicians aspiring to win international /regional /national fellowships or grant support, such as the EDCTP Career Development Fellowships, through short-term placements at a host organisation in EU Members States, in countries

associated to Horizon 2020 or in Sub-Saharan Africa which will be contracted by the home organisation to host the fellow.

The objectives of this call are to:

1. Enable outstanding African researchers (0 to 3-year post-PhD or MD) to (a) Further advance their research skills, through short-course(s) and hands-on training, especially using biological samples and/or data they or their home organisations have generated; (b) strengthen their competencies in project and proposal design; and (c) enhance essential "generic/transferable researcher skills" that have the outcomes of secure research relationships, and effective use of fellowship/grant opportunities and funding; and (d) contribute to creating a critical mass of researchers optimally equipped with knowledge and skills to address local research needs
2. Enable individuals to deploy their own resourcefulness and research relationships to best effect in competing for early/mid-career Fellowships, such as (but not only) the EDCTP Career Development Fellowships
3. Enhance career development and early retention of postdoctoral researchers and postgraduate medical researchers in research in and for sub-Saharan Africa
4. To provide a firm foundation and increase the quality, efficiency and impact of fellowship projects funded by organisations such as EDCTP.

Application for an EDCTP-AREF Preparatory Fellowship must be submitted by an organisation with an established legal entity in sub-Saharan Africa ('the applicant legal entity') on behalf of the prospective fellow employed by that organisation. The Joint Call will include a joint evaluation by independent experts selected by both EDCTP and AREF, and a selection process in compliance with the provisions set in the Rules for Participation of Horizon 2020 and the EDCTP2 basic act. However, grant awarding and budget management will remain separate under the management of each organisation.

The grants will be awarded to the applicant legal entity employing the fellow (the home organisation in sub-Saharan Africa) with the explicit commitment that this organisation offers appropriate conditions for the fellow to direct and manage its funding for the duration of the fellowship.

Successful applicants must use the funding for a 3 to 9 months placement at a host organisation legally established in an EU Member State, a country associated to Horizon 2020 or in a Sub-Saharan African country which will be contracted by the home organisation to host the fellow. The fellow will spend a re-entry period of up to 3-months at their home organisation, making a total training period of up to 12 months.**(1)**

The fellow's host organisation will have to sign a good practice charter prepared by EDCTP for EDCTP-funded fellows and by AREF for AREF-funded fellows. Host organisations need to meet a set of minimum requirements in order to qualify as prospective hosts: they should have some clinical research capacity, including staff who are GCP qualified or experienced, demonstrable ability to follow-up community involvement in clinical research, availability of institutional review board or national guidelines for conducting clinical research, GCLP compliant laboratories, adequate facilities with qualified staff, sufficient biostatistics capacity including its relevant computer technologies, experienced data management staff, ability to store some or all of samples locally and excellent IT platform. AREF requirements will be similar and appropriate to its remit, which includes non-clinical trial methods e.g. in laboratory and in social and behavioural sciences. EDCTP and AREF will

publish and update the list of available placements in organisations that qualify as prospective hosts. Fellows can only be funded once under this grant scheme.

### **Expected impact**

The Action will specifically:

1. Enhance the ability of fellows to design, plan and execute clinical biomedical and/or social science/ethics research proposals, and manage research relationships, within the scope of the EDCTP2 programme; and to generate competitive proposals into effective projects;
2. Promote and enhance competitiveness for the next tier of fellowships and grants, such as (but not limited to) the EDCTP Career Development Fellowships;
3. Lead to high impact research outputs by junior African scientists who have not been supported by major funders previously;
4. Foster new collaborations and mentorship;
5. Equip the next generation of African researchers to sustain excellent and relevant research in sub-Saharan Africa, and engage as African citizens with African leaders, policy-makers and industries to drive forward evidence-based health improvement.

### **Eligibility**

1. The applicant must be an organisation with an established legal entity in sub-Saharan Africa (the applicant legal entity).**(2)**
2. The fellow must be employed or have guaranteed employment by the applicant legal entity (the home organisation) where they intend to remain working for a minimum of two years after the expiration of the grant.**(2)**
3. Fellows must:**(2)**
  - be a post-doctoral scientist;
  - have been awarded their doctorate within 3 years before submission deadline of the AREF-EDCTP Preparatory Fellowship application;
  - have been either a PhD student or MD, and have been active researchers for up to three years following award of their doctorate;
  - be resident of or be willing to relocate to a sub-Saharan African country;
  - not have been funded under this fellowship scheme before.**(3)**
4. The requested EDCTP contribution per action shall not exceed €70, 000
5. Placements sought shall be for a period of at least 3 and up to 9 months, following which there will be a re-integration period of up to 3 months. The maximum fellowship duration shall be 12 months.

### **Notes:**

1. The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation will support the EDCTP2 programme with a total contribution of up to € 265,000 to this Call for Proposals. This cash contribution is restricted in use by the EDCTP Association for funding participants in actions resulting from this Call for Proposals, which are legally established in Portuguese-speaking sub-Saharan African countries. The call evaluation and grant management is centrally managed by the EDCTP Association in line with the Rules for Participation of Horizon 2020.
2. Explanatory note: This additional condition for participation according to RfP Art. 9.5 is required due to the objectives of this Training & Mobility Action. It aims to support junior fellows in sub-Saharan Africa in line with the activities called for by the EU legislator (EDCTP2 basic act, Annex II, activity 1c). It contributes to the specific objectives of the EDCTP2 programme which calls, e.g., for cooperation with sub-Saharan Africa on building their capacity for conducting clinical trials in compliance with fundamental ethical

principles, relevant legislations and international standards, and for extended cooperation with private partners (EDCTP2 basic act, Annex I, objectives 2b).

3. Explanatory note: This additional condition for participation according to RfP Art. 9.5 is required due to the objectives of the EDCTP2 programme which requires that the capacity for conducting clinical trials in sub-Saharan Africa are built and strengthened (EDCTP2 basic act, Annex II). Allowing fellows in sub-Saharan Africa to only receive once a specific EDCTP2 fellowship will increase the number of different fellows supported and promoted under the EDCTP2 programme, and in turn strengthen more broadly the corresponding clinical research capacity in sub-Saharan Africa.

## Procedure and application process

### Submission and evaluation procedure

This is a two-stage application procedure. For the first stage, a letter of intent must be submitted by the fellow with a letter of support from the applicant legal entity (home organisation employing the fellow) by **13 October 2017** via [EDCTPgrants](#).

The letters of intent will be reviewed by an independent evaluation committee comprising experts jointly identified by the EDCTP and AREF. Up to 36 successful candidate fellows will be shortlisted in the first stage and invited to a preparatory workshop led, organised and financed by AREF. Evaluation results of the first stage are expected to be made available by **12 January 2018**.

For the second stage, the fellow and his/her home organisation (applicant legal entity) must submit a comprehensive training and development plan (including a draft re-integration plan) by **14 March 2018**, taking into account guidance provided in the workshop that will be evaluated by a panel of independent experts to select the 12 best proposals. Evaluation results of the second stage are expected to be made available by **4 August 2018**.

### Evaluation, scoring and thresholds

Following an admissibility and eligibility check, letters of intent and full proposals are evaluated by external, independent experts. Proposals are evaluated according to the criteria Excellence, Impact and Implementation. Each criterion is scored between 0 and 5.

The following aspects are considered under the evaluation criteria:

#### 1. Excellence

- **Fit with the scope and objectives of the EDCTP2 Programme, the EDCTP strategic research agenda and the call topic description.**
- **Importance, relevance/pertinence and clarity of the objectives.**
- **Soundness of the concept and credibility of the proposed approach/methodology.**
- Suitability of the candidate, considering their track record, degree of independence and/or potential, and how the fellowship will further the individual's career.
- Quality of the project and its fit with the fellow's expertise and career development plan, including acquired competencies and skills to be developed further.

#### 2. Impact

- **The extent to which the outputs of the proposed work would contribute, at the European, African and/or International level, to each of the expected impacts listed in the work plan under the relevant topic.**

- **Likelihood to result in major advances in the field.**
- Contribution of the fellowship to the fellow's clinical research skills and career development.
- Contribution to strengthening clinical research capacity at the home or host organisation.
- Effectiveness of the proposed measures to exploit and disseminate results generated during the fellowship (including management of IPR), to communicate the fellowship activities, and, where relevant, to manage clinical data.
- Sustainability and retention of capacity post-award.

### 3. Quality and efficiency of the implementation

- Quality and effectiveness of the work plan, including extent to which the resources assigned to work packages are in line with their objectives and deliverables;
- Appropriateness of the management structures and procedures, including risk and innovation management, and how responsibilities for research data quality and sharing, and security will be met.
- Complementarity of the participants within the consortium, and the extent to which the consortium as whole brings together the necessary expertise.
- Appropriateness of the allocation of tasks and resources, ensuring that all participants have a valid role and adequate resources in the project to fulfil that role.
- Feasibility and appropriateness of the methods and project management to achieve the objectives within the timeframe of the grant.
- Compliance with national and international standards of research, Good Clinical Practice, ethics and safety related issues.
- Participants have the operational capacity, to carry out the proposed work, based on the competence and experience of the individual participant(s).
- Suitability of the fellow's home organisation to support the fellowship project.
- Intention of the fellow's home organisation to develop and commit to a career post-fellowship or re-integration plan.

### Financial provisions

The call budget is €800,000.

The requested EDCTP contribution per project should not exceed €70,000. The funding level is up to 100% of eligible costs.

### Grant agreement

The legal entity employing the successful fellow ('host organisation') is required to sign a grant agreement with EDCTP ([EDCTP2 mono-beneficiary grant agreement with options for fellowships](#)) or with AREF within three months of receipt of the evaluation outcome letter.

### Application process

- The application must be submitted online via [EDCTPgrants](#)
- Only registered users of [EDCTPgrants](#) system can apply for grants and therefore you are advised to register on the system as soon as possible

## Documents and more information

### Documents

- [Template of application form – Letter of Intent](#) (Word)

**More information**

- For questions related to this call for proposals, please contact: Dr Michelle Singh at [singh@edctp.org](mailto:singh@edctp.org)
- For questions and issues about [EDCTPgrants](#) and the online application submission please contact EDCTP via [edctpgrants@edctp.org](mailto:edctpgrants@edctp.org) or +31 (0) 70 344 08 80
- For guidance on online application procedure, please refer to the [Guidelines for applicants](#)
- For more information about EDCTP2 procedures, please refer to the [EDCTP2 Grants Manual](#) and [EDCTP2 FAQs](#)