



**SAMRC COLLABORATING  
CENTRES FOR  
TB and/or HIV/AIDS**

**Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA)**

**Request for Applications (RFA):**

**SAMRC-RFA-CC: TB/HIV/AIDS-01-2014**

**21 August 2014**

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## Part A. Overview Information

<b>Participating organisation(s)</b>	South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC)
<b>Funding opportunity title</b>	<b>SAMRC TB &amp; HIV/AIDS Collaborating Centres</b>
<b>Activity code</b>	Grant: networking/exploratory/developmental
<b>Announcement type</b>	New
<b>Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) number</b>	<b>MRC-RFA-CC: TB/HIV/AIDS-01-2014</b>
<b>Funding opportunity purpose</b>	The purpose of this Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) is to establish new SAMRC Collaborating Centres in tuberculosis and HIV research in adult and paediatric populations.

## Key Dates

<b>Posted date</b>	21 August 2014
<b>Open date (earliest submission date)</b>	25 August 2014
<b>Letter of Intent</b>	None required
<b>Application due date(s)</b>	21 October, 2014, by 5:00 PM local time of applicant's organisation.  Applicants are encouraged to apply early.
<b>Scientific merit review</b>	November 2014
<b>Award decision letter</b>	December 2014

## **Required application instructions**

It is critical that applicants follow the instructions in this FOA. Conformance to all requirements would be strictly enforced. Applicants must read and follow all application instructions. **Applications that do not comply with these instructions might be delayed or not accepted for review.**

## **Part B. Full text of announcement**

### **1. Funding opportunity description**

#### **1.1 Background**

The South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC), in leading biomedical research and aiming to build a healthy nation through research, supports national collaborative biomedical research to advance science and expand biomedical knowledge. Recognizing that enhanced national collaborative multidisciplinary biomedical research would be critical in addressing the dual epidemics of tuberculosis (TB) and HIV, the President of the SAMRC aims to establish national SAMRC TB and HIV Collaborating Centres.

It is hoped that through these established countrywide HIV/TB collaborative centres, a cohesive program of multidisciplinary research will be undertaken to address some of the key questions that could impact on lowering the burden of disease in South Africa.

#### **1.2. Purpose**

The intent of this FOA is to create a national resource of collaborating TB and HIV centres with investigators and sites in order to foster, stimulate, and/or expand basic, translational, behavioural and applied research that will advance scientific discovery and engage South African researchers working collaboratively in the areas of TB and HIV/AIDS. It is envisioned that implementation of independent investigator-driven research designed to address issues of local importance, but coordinated through the utilisation of common standards and practices will ensure that regional or nationally relevant research questions are addressed while simultaneously increasing the capacity for large, multinational projects of global significance. Such an approach would enable large research projects (as the need arises) that are not addressed by a single group without the resources required to maintain the large international footprint characteristic of such endeavours.

Proposed collaborating centres or research networks should reflect the highest possible scientific standards, as well as shared interests, national and local public health needs and priorities, and

involve mutually advantageous collaborations among institutions, including participating communities and other partners.

South African investigators working independently or in partnership are expected to submit a single application. This FOA encourages applications that include under-resourced sites and/or sites that have access to key populations that are most affected and/or most vulnerable in the respective or combined disease areas of TB and HIV. Capacity development may be included.

## **2. Award information**

TB and/or HIV/AIDS research groups in South Africa are invited to apply to become a SAMRC Collaborating Centre for HIV/AIDS and/or TB and thereby become a member of the Network. The Network will collectively provide a multi-disciplinary approach to TB and HIV/AIDS research, whilst also facilitating scientific collaboration among South Africa's scientists to address some of the key challenges in TB and HIV/AIDS research. Through this Network, the SAMRC Collaborating Centres will transcend customary approaches and silo-organizational structures to conduct research in innovative ways.

SAMRC Collaborating Centres must demonstrate synergistic and complementary expertise in one or more of the following disciplines: clinical science, biomedical, socio-behavioural science, epidemiology and public health and/or computational and imaging science, or who have access to critical cohorts or other research material. Expertise may also include research in basic and discovery science, product development, and translational science and surveillance. The Networks will also, through National Research Forums, inform the SAMRC-funded research strategy for TB and HIV/AIDS.

Successful applicants will receive a core grant for three years and will have designated 'MRC Collaborating Centre for HIV/AIDS and/or TB' status. Note that the Collaborating Centre will be designated for TB only, HIV/AIDS only or for both conditions. Unsuccessful applicants may participate in Network activities including participation in future restricted funding opportunities as they arise. These centres, together with SAMRC units and/or previously funded SAMRC investigators, will be invited to be included in the Network and designated 'co-opted' MRC Collaborating Centres. 'Co-opted centres' will be offered preferential participation in specific SAMRC-funded (or co-funded) large-scale multi-centre studies, as well as preferential participation in SAMRC-funded RFAs that aim to address specific questions with high relevance to the local TB and HIV/AIDS epidemics.

## **3. Networking requirement**

The investigators/and or coordinators of SAMRC Collaborating Centres will be required to attend annual Network meetings and specific sub-group or committee meetings to enhance coordination and collaboration. Further, SAMRC Collaborating Centres will be expected to maintain high publication rates, particularly publications emanating from studies that include SAMRC support. The network will benefit from exclusive funding opportunities as well as participating in defining national strategy and identifying key projects.

#### **4. Eligibility information**

Any institution approved by the Minister of Science and technology for NRF funding is [eligible to apply](#).

Further,

- registered not-for profit research organisations are eligible to apply
- for-profit institutions are **NOT** eligible
- intramural and extramural SAMRC research units are **NOT** eligible for funding, but they may participate in the Network due to their MRC status
- Principal Investigators **must** be South African citizens or permanent residence holders.

**The application must clearly state whether it is for TB, HIV/AIDS or for both diseases.** Two separate applications are not required for applications seeking to collaborate on both TB and HIV/AIDS – a single integrated application must be submitted with a 50% increase in page restrictions for each section. Only groups with very strong track records in both diseases should consider applying to become an SAMRC Collaborating Centre for TB and/or HIV/AIDS.

A possible SAMRC Collaborating Centre will comprise an established group of scientists who have a track record of scientific contributions in the disease(s) being applied for. They will have documented proof of recent prevention and/or treatment research experience in any of the following disciplines: clinical research, biomedical research, socio-behavioural sciences, epidemiology, and public health research and/or implementation science. Expertise and capabilities in basic and discovery science, translational science, product research and development and surveillance would be advantageous.

#### **Eligibility of the applicant**

The application for an SAMRC Collaborating Centre would be led by a well-established Principal Investigator (designated as the coordinator of the Collaborating Centre), who is expected to have a MBChB and/or PHD. The Centre coordinator is expected to be an internationally recognised leader in his/her field of research (equivalent to an 'A' or 'B' NRF rating). Further, (s)he must have strong

scientific leadership skills and an ability to work across disciplines. His/Her 20 most cited publications must be provided in a table in the application – listing each paper using Vancouver-style referencing (authors, title, journal, year, volume and page numbers), with the total number of citations as indicated in Scopus. Further, the full CV, listing a May 2014 Scopus H-index should be included as an appendix to the application.

### **Number of co-applicants**

Since this is a Centre application, the Centre coordinator must be supported by a minimum of **three** other senior scientists, all of whom must provide evidence of a track record of collaboration and joint research. Note that (at least) three senior scientists, comprising the senior team of the SAMRC Collaborating Centre, do not have to be from the same institution and may include non-funded SAMRC investigators.

### **Scientific standing of applicants**

The application for an SAMRC Collaborating Centre must provide detailed evidence of the group's high impact research, including evidence of their research impacting policy and/or practice.

### **Inclusion of under-resourced sites/ targeted relevant study populations**

Applicants are encouraged to include in their application development of an under-resourced site/new study population and identified high disease incidence populations that have been previously under-researched or resourced in order to have appropriate infrastructure to support research, and/or new adult and paediatric populations accessible for research. Applications for an SAMRC Collaborating Centre for both TB and HIV/AIDS should demonstrate, by way of publications and studies conducted, their strength in both diseases.

There are no restrictions in the number of applications an organisation may submit. For example, an organisation may submit separate applications for an SAMRC Collaborating Centre for HIV/AIDS research and an SAMRC Collaborating Centre for TB research by two different investigators. However, the Principal Investigator/Centre coordinator and senior scientists may not participate in more than one application.

## **5. Application schedule**

The timelines for the application process are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1      Application timelines**

<b>Posted date</b>	<b>21 August 2014</b>
<b>Open date (earliest submission date)</b>	<b>25 August 2014</b>
<b>Letter of Intent</b>	<b>None required</b>
<b>Application due date(s) (indicative)</b>	<b>21 October 2014, by 5:00 PM local time of applicant organisation</b> <b>Applicants are encouraged to apply early.</b>
<b>Scientific merit review (indicative)</b>	<b>November 2014</b>

## 6. Funding

The SAMRC plans to fund approximately 10 SAMRC Collaborating Centres. The SAMRC Collaborating Centres will be given three years' worth of core funding in the initial funding cycle. Funds may be used to build research capacity and networking at the Centre and would be inclusive of infra-structure, site-development, capacity development, preliminary studies, networking and travel costs.

Over and above the core funding, the collaborating Centres as well as the 'co-opted Centres' comprising the Network will be eligible to apply for specific funding that addresses TB and HIV/AIDS priority research as set by the SAMRC Network's National Research Forum. It is anticipated that this protocol-specific funding will be available in 2015, for multidisciplinary, large-scale, collaborative projects. Each successful Collaborating Centre will be awarded R350 000 per annum; annually renewable for a period of three years.

## 7. Application guidelines

All applications must be submitted on an [SAMRC Collaborating Centre Application Form](#), available via the SAMRC website or obtainable from the SAMRC President's Office on +27 (21) 938 0631 or via e-mail at [denise.nefdt@mrc.ac.za](mailto:denise.nefdt@mrc.ac.za).

The length of the application should not exceed 20 single-spaced A4 pages, excluding annexures, using Arial 11 font (applications for combined TB and HIV/AIDS Collaborating Centres may increase this page limit by 50%). The application must address the following areas:

- A detailed description of the scientific contributions made by the applying group to date in TB and/or HIV/AIDS. Provide a detailed track record of the publications and the policy/practice impact of the research.



- A description of the Principal Investigator's scientific standing in TB and/or HIV/AIDS. (Include a table of his/her 20 most cited journal articles.) Describe the Principal Investigator's leadership and administrative capabilities that will serve to manage the SAMRC Collaborating Centre successfully.
- Describe the senior scientists (at least three) that will make up the Centre and their scientific contributions to TB and/or HIV/AIDS research.
- Describe access to infrastructure, laboratory resources, patient populations, databases, biobanks and other unique technologies.
- Describe no more than three studies (up to 400 words for each) that the SAMRC Collaborating Centre is considering proposing to the SAMRC Network and would like to lead within the SAMRC Network.
- Do not include a budget in the application as this is core funding – the rules applicable to core funding will be provided to successful applicants. A budget will be requested from successful applicants only. In this application, provide a description of key deliverables that may be achieved with this funding opportunity.

## **8. Conditions of the grant**

Successful SAMRC Collaborating Centre applications will be required to incorporate the SAMRC's logo on the Centre's entrance, letterheads and PowerPoint presentations. All publications attributed to a Collaborating Centre will be required to acknowledge the SAMRC, as well as report outputs to the SAMRC. It is expected that the designated coordinator from each SAMRC Collaborating Centre will participate in the annual SAMRC Network meeting and the National Research Forum to help set a research agenda for the SAMRC.

## **9. Application process**

The call for applications will open on **21 August 2014** and close on **25 October 2014**. All applications must be made via email to [cctbhiv@mrc.ac.za](mailto:cctbhiv@mrc.ac.za).

The [SAMRC Collaborating Centre Application](#) form can be obtained from the SAMRC website. All applications will be submitted electronically through the SAMRC system.

## **10. Review and evaluation process**

There will be a two-step review and evaluation process:

- Internal SAMRC screening for responsiveness to all the specified administrative and procedural provisions required in the RFA.
- National and international peer review to assess the scientific merit (and other review criteria as specified below) of applications found to be responsive to the RFA.

### **10.1 Internal screening**

All applications will be screened by the SAMRC for completeness and responsiveness to Centre requirements, and its administrative requirements/provisions. If the application is found to be incomplete or unresponsive to the provisions described in the RFA, the application will be returned without further review.

### **10.2 Peer-review of qualifying applications**

Each responsive application will be reviewed by local and international reviewers who are experts in the field of TB and HIV/AIDS. These review comments will be collated for each application and provided to an SAMRC panel for ranking of the applications.

### **10.3 Rating of applications**

Reviewers will consider each of the review criteria below in determining scientific and technical merit, and give a separate score for each. Reviewers will also provide an overall impact score.

#### **Overall impact score**

This will reflect on the likelihood that the Centre will exert a sustained, powerful influence on the research fields involved; in consideration of the criteria below.

#### **Significance**

Has the Centre addressed important problems or critical barriers in its past research in TB and/or HIV/AIDS? Has the Centre made a significant scientific contribution to date? Has the Centre generated new scientific knowledge, enhanced South Africa's technical capabilities in research, impacted public health policy and influenced clinical practice? Has its research to date led to changes in the field, methods, technologies, treatments, services, or prevention in TB and/or HIV/AIDS?

#### **Investigator(s)**

Do the lead investigators have international scientific standing including publications and citations? Are the listed senior scientists well qualified and highly productive? Have they demonstrated an ongoing record of accomplishments that have advanced their field(s)? Has this group of scientists (lead investigator plus senior scientists) demonstrated a productive track record of collaboration with each other? Does the application address capacity development and support of new investigators?

## **Innovation**

Are the Centre's proposed three new projects innovative? Does the Centre's proposed studies challenge and seek to shift current research or clinical practice paradigms by utilising novel approaches?

## **Environment**

Will the scientific environment in which the Centre functions contribute to the probability of success? Are the institutional support, equipment and other physical resources available to the investigators adequate for the proposed SAMRC Collaborating Centre? Does the Centre have important patient populations, existing research programmes or biobanks that could enhance the SAMRC Network's research agenda? Does the Centre support the development of new sites of special interest either in type of population or epidemiology of disease?

## **11. Grant payments**

Grants will be paid to the institution where the applicant is employed. The disbursement of funds will be according to the disbursement schedule agreed to by the SAMRC and the institution, and will be set out in the agreement between the parties.

## **12. Responsibilities of the lead investigator**

### **12.1 Reporting**

All SAMRC Collaborating Centre coordinators must submit annual reports from the year of receipt of the grant. Reports must be completed on the template provided by the SAMRC.

### **12.2 Scientific compliance**

#### **12.2.1 Ethics**

All SAMRC Collaborating Centre coordinators are required to maintain the highest ethical and safety standards in conducting research, particularly when human and animal subjects are involved. It is the responsibility of the lead investigator to comply with all relevant regulations in this regard, including those of the institution at which the research is carried out. An ethics approval certificate from a National Health Research Ethics Committee approved Institutional Ethics Committee must be submitted to the SAMRC in respect of successful applications before full funding can be released.

#### **12.2.2 Intellectual Property Rights**

Funding by the SAMRC is subject to the provisions of the [SAMRC intellectual property policy](#) as well as the Intellectual Property Rights from [Publicly Financed Research and Development Act 51 of 2008](#).

The SAMRC may require the applicant/Centre's coordinator in the future, in the event of any intellectual property being developed from the funding obtained as an SAMRC Collaborating Centre, to sign an intellectual property sharing agreement as part of the acceptance of this grant.

### **12.2.3 Change of Centre leadership**

In the event that the SAMRC Collaborating Centre coordinator leaves the institution for whatever reason, the SAMRC must be informed (where possible, prior to the departure of the coordinator from the institution) of proposed alternate arrangements for the continued management and leadership of the Centre, with complete documentation that demonstrates the qualifications of the alternate leadership. After reviewing the proposed change, the SAMRC may decide to terminate the award if there is insufficient continuing expertise to lead the Centre to a successful conclusion. If the new coordinator is approved by the SAMRC, she/he will be required to sign a revised 'Acceptance of conditions of grant award', and submit a CV and attend research forum/Network meetings.

## **13. Important information**

Please take note the following important information:

- i. The SAMRC will utilise the results of the peer-review process to determine which meritorious applications receive funding. The SAMRC may also consider additional factors, such as geographical diversity, inclusion of vulnerable populations and resourcing of sites in making its final determinations.
- ii. Based on the scientific merit of the applications and/or budget limitations, the SAMRC may make an award to fewer or more Centres than set out above; the SAMRC may seek to verify any information provided by applicants through independent research or by third parties approved by the SAMRC.
- iii. An institution may submit any number of applications to become an SAMRC Collaborating Centre. There is no limit to the number of times an institution is listed as a collaborator on submissions by other applicants.
- iv. The SAMRC may use text, video or other visual representation submitted by applicants on the SAMRC website or on SAMRC materials for publicity and/or public awareness.
- v. The SAMRC will provide written summaries of the review findings for those applications found responsive and submitted to the review process. Note that reviewers' names will not be shared with the applicants.

#### **14. Contact details**

Please direct your requests for information and questions/queries **by email** to:

**Administrative queries:**

**Ms Denise Nefdt** [Email: [denise.nefdt@mrc.ac.za](mailto:denise.nefdt@mrc.ac.za)]

**Scientific queries:**

**Dr Roxana Rustomjee** MBChB; FCPHM; MMed; PhD [Email: [roxana.rustomjee@mrc.ac.za](mailto:roxana.rustomjee@mrc.ac.za)]

South African Medical Research Council  
P O Box 19070, Tygerberg 7505  
Francie van Zijl Drive, Parow Valley, Cape Town, South Africa  
Tel. +27 21 938 0911