INDIA-SOUTH AFRICA COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH PROGRAMME ON HIV/AIDS AND TUBERCULOSIS
CALL FOR PROJECT PROPOSALS
CLOSING DATE: Wednesday, August 31, 2016

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Human Immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and Tuberculosis (TB) are the leading causes of death in adults and children in both India and South Africa, and the impact of the converging dual epidemics is one of the major public health challenges of our time. Development of effective biomedical tools and solutions for diagnosis, prevention and treatment of AIDS and tuberculosis is required to address challenges in disease management and control. Interdisciplinary research in these areas will not only accelerate development of transformational technologies but also help to develop capabilities and solutions for these unconquered diseases.

The Department of Biotechnology in collaboration with Department of Science & Technology, Ministry of Science & Technology, Government of India, and Department of Science & Technology, Government of South Africa, and South African Medical Research Council are planning to embark on a collaborative research program on HIV, TB and TB/HIV. The proposed collaborative programme would be under the framework of a bilateral Science and Technology Cooperation Agreement between the Department of Science and Technology, Ministry of Science and Technology, Governments of India and South Africa. Accordingly, joint proposals are being invited in the following areas:

1. Development of preventive HIV vaccine by designing immunogens that can elicit potent and broadly neutralizing antibodies
2. Isolation and characterization of neutralizing MAbs effective against clade C HIV-1 viruses for use in combination therapies, passive immunization, and/or for designing preventive vaccines
3. Creation of cohorts of TB patients with HIV-1 co-infection and formation of national biorepositories (for breath condensates, blood, tissue etc.) to facilitate immunological studies on HIV and TB
4. Identification of biomarkers and development of novel assays for diagnosis and management of tuberculosis and tuberculosis with HIV co-infection

The proposal should be geared towards product development or have clinically useful applications. It should have intra country linkages and a strong collaborative component utilizing complementary expertise of both countries, and addressing regional needs.

Scientists in either country could also submit proposals in case they have an existing product or a proof of concept and they would like to access facilities in either country for a collaborative framework to help facilitate product development in an accelerated manner (e.g. manufacturing, preclinical testing etc.)

The program is aimed at facilitating partnerships between research institutions in India and South Africa. This program will leverage upon existing scientific capacities, enable technology transfer and catalyze mentorship/training. Thus, this collaboration will synergistically advance discovery efforts towards development of new technologies and products for prevention and management of HIV/AIDS and TB by building scientific leadership capacity, fostering a sustainable environment for translational research and enhancing clinical capability/capacity.

Who may apply?
South Africa: This call is open to researchers residing in South Africa and who are affiliated with a recognized higher educational or research institution such as a university, university of technology or science council. The South African applicant must be in possession of a PhD. Private sector companies are not eligible for this call
India: The lead Indian applicants should be scientists / faculty members working in regular capacity in universities, academic institutes or national research and development laboratories/ institutes. Private sector companies are not eligible for this call

An application must designate two Principal Investigators, one in South Africa and one in India, who will bear the main responsibility for the project, including its technical and administrative coordination as well as scientific and financial reporting.

Duration of projects

The projects will be supported for a period of three years.

How do I apply?

Indian and South African applicants shall write a common application to be submitted to both DBT India and MRC South Africa. The common application must be written in English

India: Indian applicants should submit completed application form and all relevant attachments in a single document (MS-word or PDF) to these email addresses: sundeep@dbt.nic.in and jain.s@nic.in by 5:30 pm, August 31, 2016. 3 Hard copies of the proposal can be sent at following address:

Mr. Sundeep Sarin
Director/Scientist F
Department of Biotechnology
7Th Floor, Block 2
CGO Complex, Lodhi Road
New Delhi 110003

It should be ensured that an application with identical title has been submitted by his/her South African counterpart scientist to the MRC by the due date **(IST)**. **Only applications endorsed by the competent authority will be accepted.**

The onus is on the applicants to find their own research partner. **The proposal must be received in India and South Africa and will not be processed if it is not received by both countries.** Both the MRC and DBT will not be held responsible for non-submission, administration or evaluation of the application in the partner country.

South Africa: South African applicants should submit proposals in the prescribed format (MS-word or PDF) to Dr R Gordon (Richard.gordon@mrc.ac.za) and Dr Michelle Mulder (michelle.mulder@mrc.ac.za) by 5:30 pm South Africa time on August 31, 2016. Late proposals and scanned pdf's will NOT be accepted.

Which activities may I apply for?

Each selected project will be funded for a period of three years subject to the availability of funding. However, projects of both sides must pass the annual evaluation in each country for continuation of funding. To facilitate the objective of the Project, the manpower cost, consumables and minor accessories, research expenses, project related visits of Indian and South African researchers to the counterpart country may be supported. This funding will cover the following expenses in connection with a project:

- **Support for research expenses:** Expenditure by project team in their country would be borne by the respective country, i.e. DBT in India would support expenditure on Indian side of the project whereas the DST, South Africa would meet the expenditure of South Africa side. Participating Indian institutions are responsible for expenses regarding equipment.
- **Support for Exchange visit:** The parent country organization will provide roundtrip economy-class airfare to the relevant entry city of the host country as well as medical insurance. The parent country organization side will also provide accommodation and living expenses, i.e., transportation including pick-up service to and from the airport, food, etc. Two flights per year with a maximum of one month stay at a time will be allowed. Support for this component from the India side will be from DST.
- While the exact nature of expenditure is not fixed, the following may not be funded from this allocation: consultant fees, educational expenses, insurance and medical care, large equipment, project management fees, temporary staff fees, etc.
- It must be clear how the funding applied for is linked to existing projects and where synergies will be optimized.

Researchers will only be allowed to apply for one activity/project. Researchers who are currently being funded under the South Africa/India programme are not eligible to apply.

Please do take note that:

- ❖ Should you be successful you will be funded only for the activities in adherence to the guidelines; and

❖ Scientific and financial reporting on the project is an **OBLIGATORY** condition of funding in subsequent years.

How are applications evaluated?

Following the closing date indicated below, the proposals will be submitted to a panel review. The panel will include recognized experts in the various fields of research. These experts will evaluate each proposal based on the following criteria:

- Scientific and technical merit
- Suitability and feasibility
- International significance
- Possible impact of the research/ national priority
- Potential for promoting equity and redress/ capacity building. Proposals not addressing this will not be considered.
- A budget cap of $100,000 per country per project per year is advised, unless PI's can clearly demonstrate why a higher budget may be justified. Excessive budgets will not be considered and will be deemed out of scope.

Following evaluation in both countries, a shortlist of projects to be funded will be constituted through consultations between the DBT, DST India and MRC, DST South Africa based on the results of the evaluations done in both countries independently.

Please note that, although the Parties undertake to execute the evaluation and selection process as quickly as possible and notify applicants of the results, the nature of the bilateral process requires the alignment of the commencement of each phase of the process with the partnering country, whose schedules may differ significantly.

When is the closing date for applications?

The last date for submission of the concept notes for both South Africa and India is **31st August 2016.** Please note that the DST or DBT will not be held responsible for applications that were not received. Researchers are also advised to ensure that their research partners' have submitted and have also been received in the partner country.

Where can I obtain information?

For South Africa:
Dr Richard Gordon
Executive Director
South African Medical Research Council
Francie van Zyl Rd
Tel: +27 21 938 0458
Email: Richard.gordon@mrc.ac.za

For India

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