

Alive & Thrive Small Grants Program

Request for Letters of Interest

Due: September 14, 2009

BACKGROUND

The Need to Address Infant and Young Child Feeding

An estimated 1.4 million children die each year because of sub-optimal breastfeeding practices. Inadequate complementary feeding also contributes to micronutrient deficiencies, underweight, and stunting, which are linked to an additional 1-2 million child deaths each year. Despite decades of experience, interventions to improve infant and young child feeding (IYCF) have failed to reach their maximum impact. There are multiple reasons: low coverage of effective interventions, incomplete understanding of economic and cultural barriers, incorrect assumptions about causes, absence of private sector strategies to deliver appropriate and affordable products for complementary feeding, lack of well-documented success at scale, and lack of consensus within the global community on the best way to deliver results at scale.

Funding for the Alive & Thrive IYCF Small Grants Program

Alive & Thrive (A&T) is a new initiative dedicated to reducing undernutrition and death caused by sub-optimal infant and young child feeding practices. The A&T Small Grants Program is one part of the larger A&T initiative. A&T is currently funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and is being implemented by a consortium of organizations. AED (Academy for Educational Development) is managing and coordinating the initiative, working in partnership with Save the Children, BRAC, World Vision, IFPRI, GMMB and UC Davis (University of California, Davis). The A&T Small Grants Program, which is managed by UC Davis, was created to test and seed innovative ideas for scaling up effective and sustainable IYCF interventions. The overall goal is to identify new solutions that can be more widely adopted, by linking innovative research to program delivery.

A&T SMALL GRANTS PROGRAM

Program Priorities

The A&T Small Grants Program aims to fund operational research projects that will identify novel approaches and overcome key barriers to improving IYCF at scale in low-income countries. Approaches that can potentially be extended to different countries/settings are of greatest interest.

Examples of potential research topics are listed below. Note that projects are not limited to this list; it is provided merely for illustrative purposes.

A. Development/testing of innovative solutions to promote optimal breastfeeding initiation practices at scale

Examples of potential proposal topics

- Overcoming cultural and institutional barriers to early initiation of breastfeeding (within 1 hour)
- Developing and evaluating sustainable models for monitoring and recertification of Baby-Friendly Hospitals
- Testing newborn/delivery care guidelines that incorporate early initiation of breastfeeding and other evidence-based practices

B. Development/testing of innovative solutions to promote exclusive breastfeeding for 0-6 months postpartum at scale

Examples of potential proposal topics

- Developing and evaluating strategies to provide incentives for worksite support for breastfeeding by women employees
- Combining non-technological approaches with technology to promote, support, and protect exclusive breastfeeding, such as using cell phones to enable scaling up of high quality lactation counseling
- Reaching and supporting at-risk populations (e.g. adolescent mothers, working mothers; mothers of low birth weight infants) and key family members (fathers, grandmothers)

C. Development/testing of innovative solutions to promote optimal complementary feeding practices at scale

Examples of potential proposal topics

- Cost-effective strategies for behavior change communication on complementary feeding
- Creating stable demand for fortified products for complementary feeding using innovative models for private-public partnerships
- Using product-specific vouchers or coupons to enable the ultra poor to access fortified products for complementary feeding
- Coupling educational messages on complementary feeding (and sustained breastfeeding) with the marketing of fortified products
- Training and supporting village level health entrepreneurs to sell products and give advice/nutrition education regarding IYCF

D. Developing/testing strategies applicable to all three types of interventions listed above

Examples of potential proposal topics

- Incorporating IYCF strategies into packages of health/nutrition interventions (e.g. hygiene, water & sanitation), or in other sectors such as agriculture, microcredit, or social protection
- Building monitoring skills and media skills of child nutrition groups
- Developing efficient methods for local adaptation and pre-testing of key IYCF messages
- Increasing political commitment to IYCF
- Improving training and monitoring of skills of health workers delivering IYCF interventions
- Developing and evaluating effective advocacy materials for IYCF
- Developing and testing innovative tools & indicators to monitor IYCF programs

Grants Process and Funds Available

Grants will be awarded to successful applications during a two-step application process that begins with the submission of a Letter of Interest (LOI). Selected applicants will be asked to submit a full proposal. The LOIs and full proposals will be evaluated by the A&T Technical Advisory Group (see Appendix). Not all applicants who are asked to submit full proposals will receive funding. The amount of funding available and the size of each grant will be dependent upon the availability of funds and the number of acceptable applications received.

Awards for small grants will generally be in the range of \$50,000-100,000 USD. A&T anticipates distributing a total of \$675,000 in the first year and \$225,000 in the second year of the small grants program. Grant requests may not exceed \$100,000 (for the total duration of the project). One- or two-year projects may be proposed, but in the latter case the second year of funding will be contingent upon satisfactory progress by the recipient during the first year.

The most successful projects seeded through the small grants program will be eligible to apply for a larger grant (up to \$500,000) to expand the testing of their approaches.

Evaluation Criteria

The following criteria will be used to evaluate the LOIs:

1. Responsiveness to A&T goals and priorities
2. Innovation
3. Feasibility within given budget limits
4. Potential for direct translation into IYCF program delivery
5. Potential for application to different countries/settings
6. Demonstrated understanding of infant and young child feeding practices, programs, policies and infrastructure in the proposed study area
7. Demonstrated ability to manage grants and budgets
8. Demonstrated organizational capacity
9. Estimated cost based on proposed activities
10. Well-defined and realistic approach to measuring project success

What activities are eligible for funding?

Grant activities can include formal research studies, development and evaluation of pilot programs, operational research, testing of novel public-private partnerships, evaluation of various approaches to removing obstacles to improved IYCF at the country level, and related work. Add-ons to ongoing larger projects are allowable. All applications will need to specify how the success of the project will be evaluated.

What activities are NOT eligible for funding?

Applicants who propose to simply *identify* barriers to scaling up IYCF interventions, without attempting to test approaches to *overcome* such barriers, are unlikely to be selected to submit full proposals.

Who may apply for a grant?

Grants can be awarded to any organization with a demonstrated interest and commitment to improving IYCF practices, including research organizations, non-government organizations, public (e.g. government) institutions, and private sector organizations. All recipients must have prior experience conducting relevant IYCF activities and must demonstrate prior experience in efficient and effective fiscal management. In the case of partnerships, a lead organization should be identified that meets these criteria and can submit the LOI as the prime applicant.

What types of costs are covered?

Grant monies may be used to pay for salaries, supplies, equipment and travel that are specifically related to achieving the objectives of the project.

Indirect costs are limited to 10% of direct costs. The total, including both direct and indirect costs, cannot exceed \$100,000.

Grant monies may not be used to cover the following types of costs:

- Purchase of motor vehicles, office furniture
- Construction or physical improvement of offices/facilities

What is the timeline for receiving grants and for project completion?

1. LOIs are due on September 14, 2009
2. Applicants will be notified on or about October 19, 2009 if they have been selected to submit a full proposal
3. Full grant proposals will be due on November 16, 2009
4. Grant proposal submissions will be evaluated by the TAG (see Appendix 1) in December, 2009
5. Grant recipients will be notified in January, 2010
6. Year 1 project activities should be expected to begin within 30 days of receipt of the signed grant funding document. Applicants who progress to the proposal stage will receive further details regarding the funding schedule.

What if I have questions or need clarification regarding the LOI or the Grants Fund?

We are happy to respond to questions submitted in writing. You may email your questions to ATresearch@ucdavis.edu.

LETTER OF INTEREST SUBMISSION PROCEDURES

Basic Application Requirements

- Applications must be written in English and submitted as an MS-Word document in an e-mail attachment sent to: ATresearch@ucdavis.edu

Completion of the Cover Sheet (please see attachment 1)

Completion of the LOI

- The LOI should be no longer than two (2) single-spaced typed pages (not including the cover page)
- There is no need to include your address or UC Davis' address, as in a formal letter, because this information will be on the cover sheet
- Submissions should have one (1) inch margins on all sides of the paper, be printed on A4 or 8½ x 11 inch paper with a minimum font size of 11.
- The following information should be provided in each LOI (it is recommended that you use the headings noted here, in the order shown):
 1. Background and Rationale
 2. Objectives
 3. Project Design and Implementation Plan (including geographic location, name and role of key personnel and/or organizations, and key activities; highlight innovative components; describe which stakeholders are key to future scaling up of the proposed innovation and how they will be involved in the project)
 4. Evaluation (indicate how you will measure whether your project is successful)
 5. Organizational Capacity (brief overview of your organization's past success in carrying out similar projects)

Submission of the LOI

You should email your cover letter and LOI application to ATresearch@ucdavis.edu no later than **5pm PDT, September 14, 2009.**

Attachment 1: A&T Small Grants Program LOI Cover Sheet

Date of submission: _____

Full Name of Organization submitting LOI: _____

Contact person: _____

Title of contact person: _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

Fax: _____

Address: _____

Project Name: _____

Duration of the project: _____

Estimated total cost for the project (\$US): _____

Amount requested from the A&T Small Grants Program: _____

Amount expected from other donors*: _____

Amount already committed by other donors*: _____

*please note that matching funds or contributions from other donors are not used in the selection criteria.

Please let us know how you heard about the A&T Small Grants Program:

Please submit this form and a 2 page maximum LOI to: ATresearch@ucdavis.edu

Appendix:

Alive and Thrive Technical Advisory Group

Zulfiqar A. Bhutta, MB, BS, FRCP, FRCPC, FCPS, PhD
Husein Lalji Dewraj Professor & Head
Division of Women & Child Health
The Aga Khan University, Pakistan

Mickey Chopra, PhD
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South African Medical Research Council, South Africa

Denise Costa Coitinho, PhD
Inter-agency Team on Child Hunger and Undernutrition
Office of the Executive Director
World Food Programme

Kathryn Dewey, PhD [Chair of TAG]
Professor, Department of Nutrition
Director, Program in International and Community Nutrition
University of California, Davis, USA

Edward Frongillo, PhD
Professor and Chair
Department of Health Promotion, Education, and Behavior
Arnold School of Public Health
University of South Carolina, USA

Rukhsana Haider, MBBS, MSc, IBCLC, PhD
Chairperson
Training and Assistance for Health and Nutrition Foundation, Bangladesh

Dominic Schofield, MBA
Manager, Infant and Young Child Nutrition Program
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Public Health, University of Toronto; Hospital for Sick Children, Division of
Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition
Senior Scientist, Research Institute, Hospital for Sick Children
Founder and Head, Sprinkles Global Health Initiative
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