



Advancing Innovative Solutions for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health

Request for Proposals (RFP)
Grand Challenges Nigeria (GCNg) Funding
Opportunity

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Background

Nigeria, Africa's most populous nation, is confronting some of the most urgent health and development challenges in the world. Among the most critical of these is achieving substantial improvements in maternal, newborn, and child health. Despite various interventions over time, the country continues to face some of the highest maternal and child mortality rates in the world, with unrelenting poor indicators of morbidity, undernutrition, and human development. These challenges are deeply intertwined with poverty, limited access to healthcare, and a suboptimal food system.

The 2023 UN Report on trends in maternal mortality from 2000-2020 revealed that nearly 28.5% of global maternal deaths happen in Nigeria where a woman has a 1 in 19 lifetime risk of dying during pregnancy, childbirth, or postpartum, whereas, in the most developed countries, the lifetime risk is 1 in 4,900 (WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, World Bank Group and UNDESA, 2023). Nigeria has the fourth highest maternal mortality ratio worldwide currently at 1,047 per 100,000 live births and the second highest neonatal death rate worldwide - approximately 262,000 babies dying at birth each year (WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, World Bank Group, and UNDESA, 2023). Alongside other underlying issues affecting maternal and child health is a nutrition crisis in which 39.5% of children under five are stunted, 8.4% suffer from wasting, and 26.6% are underweight (FMoHSW, NPC, and ICF, 2024). Nigeria ranked 109th out

of 125 countries in the Global Hunger Index (von Grebmer et al., 2023), indicating a “serious” level of hunger. Recent reports reveal that 78.7% of households experience moderate or severe food insecurity, highlighting vulnerabilities in the nation’s food systems. Additionally, 87% of women are at a high or moderate risk of poor diet quality, underscoring the urgent need for systemic solutions to improve food access, nutrition, and dietary diversity (2024 Global Hunger Report).

These statistics situate Nigeria as a focal point for any global effort in maternal, newborn, and child health interventions and underscore the urgency of groundbreaking, locally rooted solutions to tackle complex and grand-scale challenges. Solutions to these problems will require collaboration across disciplines and sectors and a systems-thinking approach that builds on impactful science with the power to drive meaningful progress.

We recognize that a robust in-country policy landscape, shaped by national health initiatives and international commitments, exists to support Maternal, Newborn, and Child Health. Focus on health and social investment as an essential pillar of development constitutes one of the eight priority areas of the current government. Moreso, the National Strategic Health Development Plan (NSHDP) 2018-2022 and the Nigeria Every Newborn Action Plan (NENAP) 2016-2030, among several other policy positions, have been implemented accordingly. However, these efforts have been hampered by a combination of socioeconomic, infrastructural, cultural, technological, and environmental, with health and food systems-related factors.

This Request for Proposals (RFP) by Grand Challenges Nigeria aims to drive bold, innovative solutions to improve Maternal, Newborn, and Child Health, thereby accelerating progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals and a healthier future for all Nigerians.

The Challenge

In this Request for Proposals, “Advancing Innovative Solutions for Maternal, Newborn, and Child Health,” Grand Challenges Nigeria seeks to support innovative, scalable ideas and interventions that leverage local contexts and prioritize human health and development at their core.

Specifically, the objectives of the challenge will be:

- To identify and fund innovative, scalable ideas and interventions that leverage local contexts to address critical challenges in maternal, newborn, and child health, ultimately prioritizing human health and development.

- To encourage the development of accessible, technology-driven healthcare solutions—including low-cost diagnostics, telemedicine, and point-of-care diagnostics—that enhance maternal, newborn, and child health care and diagnostics.
- To strengthen maternal and child health through innovative nutrition solutions, focusing on micronutrient supplementation, fortification, biofortification, and maternal and child nutrition strategies.
- To support innovations in sustainable agriculture and climate-resilient food systems, aiming to improve dietary diversity and future-proof diets for maternal and child health.
- To foster innovations that utilize advanced technologies and methodologies—such as AI and machine learning, digital health platforms, behavioral science, multi-sectoral collaborations, and geospatial analysis—to enhance the impact, scalability, and relevance of maternal and child health interventions.
- To support solutions that integrate human-centered and participatory design, encouraging approaches that are tailored to the unique needs and preferences of communities, thus ensuring greater adoption and sustainability.

Funding Level

This RFP will provide Seed Grant funding up to NGN 60,000,000 (Sixty Million Naira) per grant for a 12 to 15-month project implementation period. The final grant amount awarded will be determined based on the specific needs, scope, and proposed budget of the project. Applicants are encouraged to submit realistic budget proposals that reflect the actual costs required to achieve their project goals. A maximum of ten (10) projects will be funded.

While we aim to fund projects close to the requested budget, GCNg reserves the right to adjust the final grant amount based on the availability of funds, project viability, and strategic considerations. This may include awarding a lower amount if the review panel determines that the project can be successfully implemented with fewer resources or if certain budget items are deemed non-essential.

We recognize that innovation projects vary in complexity, procurement needs, and implementation timelines. Therefore, while the maximum funding is capped at NGN 60,000,000, projects with smaller budgets and shorter timelines are welcome and will be considered equally competitive. Projects that demonstrate strong results and potential for scaling and impact may be eligible to apply for further funding at a later stage, through our

Scale Grant program. Details for this phase will be duly communicated to successful grantees at the appropriate time.

Eligibility

To be eligible for the Grand Challenges Nigeria (GCNg) Funding Opportunity, applicants must meet the following criteria:

1. The Lead applicants must be affiliated with a registered organization or institution that has been in existence for more than 2 years. Lead applicants' organizations must be legally registered to operate in Nigeria and be in good standing with relevant regulatory authorities.
2. Eligible organizations include registered non-government/profit organizations, private organizations (excluding sole proprietorships), private and public research institutions, private and public academic institutions, research centres, and social enterprises.
3. Individuals with institutional affiliation but who are not applying on behalf of their institution are eligible to apply directly but the project will prioritize funding for institution or organization applications or from a collaborative team or partnership.
4. While local and international collaborations are encouraged, the lead applicant (or Principal Investigator) must be Nigerian and affiliated to a Nigerian organization or institution.
5. Applicants must have the necessary expertise, resources, team, and infrastructure to successfully implement their proposed project.
6. Applicants must have a proven record of accomplishment of working in the thematic area of their submitted proposal and of engaging with relevant stakeholders on the subject.
7. The proposed project must be implemented within Nigeria.
8. Teams or organizations that have received any Grand Challenges or other funding in the past are eligible to apply, but they must demonstrate how the proposed project differs from the previous work for which they have received funding.
9. Applicants must be willing to participate in monitoring, evaluation, learning, dissemination, and amplification activities throughout the project implementation period. See our [Open Access Guide](#) document.

What We are looking for:

- o Are executed within Nigeria and led by local innovators, researchers, stakeholders, or community-driven organizations. While global partnerships are welcome and actively encouraged, proposals must demonstrate that at least 80% of the funding is allocated to an investigator affiliated with a Nigerian institution. Again, we actively encourage local and international collaborative efforts involving multiple institutions.
- o Clearly articulate how the project will create impact and ensure sustainability through the implementation duration and beyond. Emphasis should be placed on strategies for maintaining the project's outcomes and benefits in the long term.
- o Describe the scalability of the proposed solution beyond its initial scope, extending its reach beyond localized regions or specific populations. Priority will be given to approaches capable of expanding to diverse geographic areas, demographic groups, and use cases.
- o Provide evidence of engagement with local and/or regional communities, decision-makers, and potential adopters. Demonstrating active involvement and collaboration with stakeholders is essential for ensuring the project's relevance and effectiveness.
- o Cultivate inter-sectoral coordination and collaboration by encouraging partnerships among various sectors including healthcare, agriculture, education, and government agencies. Emphasizing initiatives aimed at bridging sectoral divides will enhance the project's capacity for comprehensive and enduring impact.

We will not consider funding proposals that:

- o Fail to illustrate that the primary work proposed will be conducted by investigators and/or local stakeholders residing in Nigeria.
- o Will be implemented outside of Nigeria.
- o Lack of strategy or evidence of potential for sustainable impact and scalability.
- o Have no connection to, or lack a plan for engaging, pertinent key stakeholders and decision-makers from the communities affected.
- o Has already secured funding from another organization using the same proposal.