

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) - [Updated]

Options for Pregnancy Termination Innovation Initiative (“OPTions Initiative”)

Round 3 - Request for Proposals

This document contains all anticipated queries to Grand Challenges Canada regarding the OPTions Request for Proposal launched June 16th, 2021. This document has been updated to include frequently asked questions received by July 16th, 2021.

If you could not join us for the Funding Opportunity Information Session and would like to watch the recording, please follow this link: <https://youtu.be/JLmN5esvkZE>

1. What types of innovations are in scope of the OPTions Initiative Request for Proposals?

Proposed innovations must be **bold, innovative, transformational and ‘outside-the-box’**, and must have the potential to represent a significant improvement over current access to or methods of safe abortion in either of the following two focus areas:

1. **ACCESS: Introducing or increasing early access to manual vacuum aspiration (MVA) and/or medical abortion (MA).** This includes but is not limited to the following:
 - a. Decentralizing and de-medicalizing abortion care
 - b. Reclassifying existing abortion methods to fit within relevant regulatory frameworks
 - c. Reframing and normalizing abortion to combat stigma
 - d. Increasing the number of trained providers and available safe services
 - e. Reducing economic barriers to accessing safe abortion
 - f. Improving access to information that will help a girl, woman or person with a diverse sexual and gender identity to safely terminate a pregnancy

2. **NEXT GENERATION METHODS: Introducing a next generation method of safe abortion** that provides one or more significant improvements over existing methods, including:
 - a. Equal or better effectiveness at terminating pregnancy over existing methods
 - b. Permissive within existing regulatory frameworks (e.g., it has other primary indications)
 - c. Ability for self-administration with greater autonomy and privacy
 - d. Cost effective relative to current safe methods
 - e. Ease of use/compliance (e.g. single pill administration)
 - f. Reduced side effects and pain
 - g. The ability to be effectively administered at later stages in gestation

Please note that this is the target product profile for new methods of safe abortion. Both pre-clinical and clinical stage proposals are eligible, and project objectives for the 18 to 24 month grant period will be tailored accordingly.

2. If my innovation isn't targeting the beneficiaries mentioned in the OPTions Initiative Request for Proposals, can I still receive funding?

No. Innovations must ultimately benefit marginalized women, girls and/or people with diverse sexual and gender identities in eligible low- and middle-income countries (listed in Appendix A of the Request for Proposals). Innovations that serve hard to reach individuals in conflict or humanitarian emergencies, legally restrictive or high stigma environments and those with multiple barriers to access are particularly welcome to apply.

Proposals that do not serve marginalized women, girls and/or people with diverse sexual and gender identities in eligible low- and middle-income countries will not be considered for funding in this Request for Proposals. Innovations focused on introducing a next generation method of safe abortion are expected to be early stage (pre-clinical or clinical stage), and therefore not yet ready for implementation. These innovations can be developed in any country, so long as the next generation method of safe abortion is ultimately designed to benefit marginalized women, girls and/or people with diverse sexual and gender identities in eligible low- and middle-income countries.

3. Will there be another call for proposals which addresses targets beyond those mentioned in the OPTions Initiative Round 3 Request for Proposals?

At this time, the timing and scope of future Request for Proposals have not yet been determined. We encourage you to check our website regularly or to [subscribe](#) to our newsletter for new funding opportunities.

Eligibility Criteria

4. How do I know which countries are eligible to apply?

Country eligibility depends on the type of intervention proposed. For access interventions, applications must come from an institution legally incorporated in a low- or middle-income country. Please see Appendix A in the OPTions Initiative Request for Proposals for a list of low- and middle-income countries, or refer to this [country list by the World Bank](#). For next generation methods interventions, applications may come from any country, including a high-income country. Applications from low- and middle-income countries are particularly welcome.

5. How do I know which countries are eligible for implementation?

Access innovations must be implemented in low- or middle-income countries where there are one or more legal grounds to support abortion. Please see Appendix A in the OPTions Initiative Request for Proposals for a list of low- and middle-income countries, or refer to this [country list by the World Bank](#). The innovator is expected to understand and be able to articulate the impact

of the legal framework on the innovation and be able to mitigate risks.

Next Generation Methods innovations are expected to be early stage (pre-clinical or clinical stage), and therefore not yet ready for implementation. These innovations can be developed in any country, so long as the new method of safe abortion is ultimately designed to benefit marginalized women, girls and/or people with diverse sexual and gender identities in eligible low- and middle-income countries.

6. Do I need co-funding?

No. Co-funding is not a requirement at the proof-of-concept stage. However, all innovators are encouraged to start securing co-funding during proof-of-concept to better make a case for reinvestment at the transition-to-scale stage.

7. Must I be a citizen or permanent resident of the country from which I am applying?

No. You do not have to be a citizen or permanent resident of the country from which you are applying. However, you must be affiliated with an eligible institution. OPTions values the lived experience of local innovators.

8. What do you define as an eligible institution?

Eligible institutions include social enterprises and other recognized institutions (e.g., non-profit organizations, academic institutions, and for-profit companies) that:

- are formed and legally incorporated in an eligible country, as determined by which focus area of the Request for Proposals an institution is applying to (see Question 5)
- can successfully execute the activities in their respective technical area
- are capable of receiving and administering grant funding
- are not sole proprietorships (sole proprietorships include any business structure that places liability on an individual or individuals, i.e. limited liability partnerships or unincorporated trusts in certain jurisdictions, rather than an incorporated business entity or organization).
- are not United Nations country offices or multilateral organizations

Note that all applications from India must include proof of Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) exemption or compliance. This exemption or compliance cannot be coordinated during the due diligence phase.

9. Can an institution submit more than one (1) proposal?

Each institution may only submit one (1) proposal per focus area of the Request for Proposals (i.e. one proposal for innovations that increase access to existing methods of abortion and one proposal for next generation abortion methods). For universities, one (1) proposal per focus area of the Request for Proposals will be accepted from each research center within the university.

10. Can an applicant submit more than one (1) proposal?

No. A Project Lead may only be listed on one (1) application to this Request for Proposals.

11. Can a Project Lead funded in Round 1 or 2 of the OPTions Initiative submit another application?

Project Leads funded under OPTions Round 1 or 2 are ineligible to submit an application for Round 3 unless their previous project has closed. However, institutions currently funded under Round 1 and/or 2 are eligible to apply (if all eligibility criteria is met) with a different Project Lead.

12. Do I need any specific academic qualifications to apply?

No. This competition is open to everyone regardless of age or academic qualifications. The Project Lead and team must have the skills to carry out the proposed activities of the innovation.

13. Do I need a local collaborator?

No. If the applying institution is not based in the country in which the innovation will be implemented, collaboration with a local partner is advantageous and encouraged - but not required. However, the case for investment is always stronger if established relationships exist with local partner(s).

14. Can a group of people submit a proposal together with one or more co-applicants (e.g., as a consortium)?

While collaboration is encouraged, proposals can only have one Project Lead (i.e. there cannot be co-principal investigators). There is space provided in the Applicant Information section of the application form to list any other team members or collaborators. Successful applicants will be able to assign a co-principal investigator during the negotiations phase, if they so wish.

15. Why can't multilateral organizations such as United Nations apply to this Request for Proposals?

In our past experiences we have found that multilateral organizations such as the United Nations (UN) are unable to agree to the terms and conditions of our Grant Agreement. United Nations country offices are therefore not eligible to apply. We highly recommend that these organizations instead apply through a local partner organization. Staff from the UN office could act as collaborators on the project.

16. Is it possible to submit a proposal focused on advocacy/policy and legal reform?

No. While prohibitive laws and policies are recognized as key barriers to the health of women, girls and people with diverse sexual and gender identities, policy and legal reform are not objectives of this call. Please see Section 2.2 Areas of Focus in the Request for Proposals for further details on the scope of this call.

17. Do you encourage applications from the private sector?

Yes. Social entrepreneurs and private companies are strongly encouraged to apply to this Request for Proposals. Grand Challenges Canada encourages applications from "unusual

suspects” and values solutions with a strong business case for scaling, sustainability and the ultimate achievement of impact.

Social entrepreneurs and for-profit companies interested in applying should ensure they have the legal capacity to enter into a contract with Grand Challenges Canada. Grand Challenges Canada does not fund individuals, sole-proprietorships, partnerships, unincorporated trusts or any entity that does not have the legal capacity to enter into a contract.

18. Can local government or public entities apply?

Yes, local government or public entities can apply if eligibility criteria are met and the project that you are proposing aligns with the call for proposals. Please refer to the Request for Proposal to ensure that eligibility is met by consulting the "Eligibility Screen and Criteria" in the "3.3 REVIEW PROCESS" section.

19. Are there any restrictions on eligibility for current or former grantees or subgrantees of the Very Large Anonymous Donor?

There are no restrictions on eligibility based on past donors. Current or former grantees or subgrantees of the Very Large Anonymous Donor are welcome to apply.

Funding and Duration

20. What is the amount of funding of the proof-of-concept seed grant?

Applicants can apply for funding of up to \$250,000 CAD.

21. What costs are allowed in the budget of the proposal?

For allowable costs, please refer to Section 5.1 of the OPTions Initiative Request for Proposals. For more information on eligible and ineligible costs, please refer to the Grand Challenges Canada [Cost Directive](#).

22. Are there any restrictions on indirect costs?

Innovators are entitled to indirect costs, calculated as 10% of all direct costs. Indirect costs are costs that cannot be directly traced to a specific project activity.

Innovators must consistently charge costs as either indirect or direct costs and must not double charge or inconsistently charge the same cost, or categories of costs, as both.

Please note: Only costs incurred during the project period are considered eligible. Any expenses incurred after the project end date cannot be allocated to Grand Challenges Canada's funding.

23. What is the duration of the proof-of-concept seed grant?

The timeframe is 18 to 24 months to develop and test the proposed innovation. In exceptional circumstances, no cost extensions may be processed.

24. What will I do if I can't complete my project due to COVID-19 restrictions?

In the case of COVID-19 related delays or disturbances, GCC will entertain no cost extensions and pauses on an individual basis. It is important that innovators be prepared to mitigate risks due to COVID-19. COVID-resilient proposals are preferred.

25. As an Indian not-for-profit organization with FCRA status, if successful in our application, could you provide any guidance on the level of flexibility around how the funding can be distributed given FCRA requirements?

Please see below for some guidance:

- Sending funds outside of India: As these organizations are not be able to send funds outside of India, Grand Challenges Canada cannot provide funding directly to other organizations outside of India in their place.
- Sub-granting: These organizations are unable to sub-grant to other organizations.
- Sub-contracting: These organizations may sub-contract as long as it is with a for-profit Indian entity. Please note that Grand Challenges Canada's [Contracting Procurement Policy](#) would need to be followed.
- Administrative expenditure: Limited to 20% of the overall budget due to FCRA regulations. Indirect costs of 10% would count towards the administrative expenditure.

Application Submission

26. What happens if I experience technical issues with my application via the Fluxx Portal?

The [Fluxx Quick Reference Guide](#) describes (using screen shots) how to create a Fluxx account, how to reset the password on an existing account and other helpful tips on navigating Fluxx and the application form. Please note that Google Chrome is the recommended browser when using Fluxx (DO NOT use Internet Explorer).

Both new and returning Fluxx users should read the **Fluxx Quick Reference Guide** linked above to avoid any technical issues. For technical assistance with registration or the online application, contact Grand Challenges Canada's Fluxx [Technical Support](#) team. Please note that Technical Support is only for questions or issues related to the Fluxx Portal.

Please give yourself plenty of time to submit your application ahead of the deadline, especially as it takes up to three business days to receive your Fluxx login credentials and this may take longer during peak periods. ALL applications must be received on or before the respective deadline for Access and Next Generation Methods applicants (please refer to the Request for Proposals for more information). Applications received

after this time will not be considered.

27. Is there a template for the written proposal? I would like to learn about the word limit and other requirements before registering.

The application questions will be made available on the day of the RFP launch on June 16th. Applicants will be able to access a PDF version of the application questions in addition to accessing them via the Fluxx Portal. Please be reminded that applications will only be accepted if completed and submitted via Fluxx, not as PDF files or in any other format. We would strongly advise applicants who do not have an existing Fluxx account to register for an account as soon as possible, as it takes up to three business days to receive your login credentials and this may take longer during peak periods. Please note that creating a Fluxx account does not require that the applicant submit a proposal at this time.

After saving your application in Fluxx, you will see a “Printable” button at the top right of your screen, which you can click to print the application questions.

28. Will I need to provide any additional information or documentation beyond the online application, such as a CV or video submission?

No additional information is required at the time of application; however, successful applicants may be asked to provide supporting evidence, such proof of incorporation status.

29. Can I submit my application via email?

No, any application sent via email will not be considered. All applications must be submitted through the Fluxx Portal (<https://gcc.fluxx.io>). Please find more information about the submission process in this Application Submission section of the FAQs.

30. In the application guidelines for the OPTions Initiative, there is a note that applicants are required to seek and obtain sign-off from their affiliated organization/institution(s) before submitting their application. I am wondering in what format this permission should be granted?

You are required to obtain approval from your institution before submitting your application, however there is no form or signature that needs to be completed at the time of application. If a grant is awarded, certain documents may be requested at that time.

Review Process

31. Will the selection process use a peer review or champion-based review in evaluating applications in the OPTions Initiative’s Request for Proposals?

Both Access and Next Generation Methods applications will undergo a three stage review process, including: Eligibility Screen, Innovation Screen and External Peer Review. Please refer to Section 3.3 of the Request for Proposals for details on the process.

32. Will successful applicants be required to engage in public engagement activities or communications activities after securing the grant?

This depends on the level of comfort of the applicant. Grand Challenges Canada is committed to profile successful grantees and showcase their work and successes, however there is an option to remain an anonymous grantee (confidential name and/or intervention) if safety is a concern.

General Program Questions

33. Is the intent of the grant to support specific technology development that is already underway (i.e., development of a new technology platform) or completely novel ideas that have not yet been tested?

Both. However, there must be a strong element of innovation that is well articulated and demand-driven. Please ensure that you are proposing to test an original, bold and innovative idea that is not already funded as a component of another grant. As such, we do not seek to fund projects that only have a small novel component, nor the continuation of projects that have already been implemented in the proposed setting.

34. If I am successful, what kind of country approvals will I need in order to accept the funding from Grand Challenges Canada? When should I start this process?

Every country has different requirements for accepting foreign money and some countries require formal approval. It is up to you and your institution to attain any relevant approvals. For example, applicants from India will require clearance through or compliance with the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA).

Because this process can be lengthy, we recommend that you start as soon as possible, even at time of application for grant. If you need to state information about Grand Challenges Canada in an application, please note that Grand Challenges Canada is a not-for-profit organization incorporated in Canada and funded by the Government of Canada.

Additional Questions

As indicated in the Request for Proposals, ONLY technical questions will be answered going forward. For technical assistance with registration or the online application in the Fluxx Portal, contact Grand Challenges Canada's Fluxx [Technical Support](#) team. If you have any doubt about which Project Scope applies to your proposed innovation (between the "Access" and "Next Generation Methods" Project Scope), please email us at info@optionsinitiative.org

For information on the OPTions Initiative, please find us at optionsinitiative.org and on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

For information on all Grand Challenges Canada programs, please find us at grandchallenges.ca and on **Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and LinkedIn**.