

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Options for Pregnancy Termination Innovation (OPTions) Initiative

Round 2 - Request for Proposals

*This document incorporates all queries as of **February 4, 2020**.*

This document addresses questions received by Grand Challenges Canada that relate to the OPTions Initiative Request for Proposals announced November 14, 2019.

Additional questions may be submitted to info@optionsinitiative.org.

Updated FAQ document(s) will be posted periodically, up to one week prior to the Request for Proposals deadline of **April 14, 2020 at 3:00 p.m. ET**.

Topic Areas

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 make a substantial improvement on access to safe abortion. The innovations are expected to improve access to safe abortion through either of the following two focus areas:

1. **Increasing early access to manual vacuum aspiration (MVA) and medical abortion (MA)**. This includes but is not limited to the following:
 - a. Increasing the number of trained providers and available safe services
 - b. Improving access to information that will help a girl or woman safely terminate a pregnancy
 - c. Reframing and normalizing abortion to combat stigma
 - d. Decentralizing and de-medicalizing abortion care
 - e. Reducing economic barriers to accessing safe abortion
 - f. Reclassifying existing abortion methods to fit within relevant regulatory frameworks
2. **Introducing a new method of safe abortion** that provides one or more significant improvements over existing methods, including:
 - a. The ability to be effectively administered at later stages in gestation
 - b. Effectiveness at terminating pregnancy
 - c. Ability for girls and women to access and self-administer with greater autonomy and privacy
 - d. Ease of compliance (e.g. single pill administration)
 - e. Reduced side effects and pain

- f. Stability profile
- g. Permissive within existing regulatory frameworks (e.g., it has other primary indications)
- h. Cost effectiveness

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. Who are the target beneficiaries?

Innovations must ultimately benefit women and girls who are among the poorest of the poor in eligible low- and middle-income countries

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

No. Proposals which do not address women and girls who are among the poorest of the poor 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 women and girls in low- and middle-income countries.

4. Will there be another call for proposals which addresses targets beyond those mentioned in the OPTions Initiative Round 2 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

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

Only institutions legally incorporated in a low- or middle-income country are eligible to apply to the 'increasing access to existing methods of abortion' focus area of the Request for Proposals. Institutions from all countries, including high-income country institutions, are eligible to apply to the 'next generation methods of abortion' focus area of the Request for Proposals. Please see Appendix A in the OPTions Initiative Request for Proposals for a list of low- and middle-income countries, or refer to: <https://datahelpdesk.worldbank.org/knowledgebase/articles/906519-world-bank-country-and-lending-groups>.

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

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: <https://datahelpdesk.worldbank.org/knowledgebase/articles/906519-world-bank-country-and-lending-groups>. 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 new method of safe abortion is ultimately designed to benefit women and girls in low- and middle-income countries.

7. Do I require 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 position their innovation for scaling as this will become a requirement during transition-to-scale funding.

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

No. You do not have to be a citizen or permanent resident of the country through which you are applying. However, you must be affiliated with an eligible institution.

9. 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 not previous or current direct grantees of the very large anonymous donor**
- 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
- are not United Nations country offices

10. 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.

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

A Project Lead may only be listed on one (1) application to this Request for Proposals.

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

Project Leads funded under OPTions Round 1 are ineligible to submit an application for Round 2; however, institutions funded under Round 1 are eligible to apply (if all other criteria are met) with a different Project Lead.

13. 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.

14. Do I need a collaborator?

It is not mandatory for applicants to have a collaborator; however, collaborations are encouraged.

15. Can a group of people submit a proposal together with one or more co-applicants?

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.

16. Can 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.

Integrated Innovation®

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

While prohibitive laws and policies are recognized as key determinants to the uptake of safe abortion services, 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.

18. Do you encourage applications from social entrepreneurs?

Social entrepreneurs are strongly encouraged to apply to this Request for Proposals. Social entrepreneurs are individuals with innovative solutions to society's most pressing social problems. They are ambitious and persistent, tackling major social issues and offering new ideas for wide-scale change. Whereas business entrepreneurs typically measure performance in profits, social entrepreneurs seek a sustainable approach to achieve social returns to society. The OPTions Initiative believes social entrepreneurship is a critical feature to enable scaling, sustainability and the ultimate achievement of impact.

Funding and Duration

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

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

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

Successful proposals will be awarded seed grants of up to \$250,000 CAD for 18 – 24 months to develop and validate the proposed innovation.

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

For allowable costs, please refer to Section 4.6 of the OPTions Initiative Request for Proposals. Further information on eligible and ineligible costs can be found at this link:

<http://www.grandchallenges.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/EligibleCostDirective-2018Nov05-EN.pdf>.

22. Are there any restrictions on indirect costs?

The following **indirect** cost rates are allowed:

- Up to 15% for non-profit and non-governmental organizations
- Up to 10% for universities
- 0% for governmental bodies and for-profit agencies

If an organization's published or audited indirect rate is less than the maximum allowable indirect rate above, the grantee should apply its published or audited rate for proposal budgeting purposes. Additionally, indirect-cost rates **cannot** be applied to equipment or supply purchases, including depreciation.

Indirect cost rates also apply to approved sub-contractors that are part of the proposal. Indirect costs paid on approved sub-contracts are limited to the first \$25,000 of each sub-contract per year (12 months) of implementation. Indirect cost rates may not be applied to the following types of sub-contracted services: business supply services, administrative support services, audiovisual services, architect and engineer services, construction, or equipment maintenance. Sub-contractors may not charge the primary applicant for indirect cost rates that are in excess of the above stated policy.

Application Submission

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

The [FLUXX QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE](#) describes how to create a Fluxx Portal account, how to reset the password on an existing account and other helpful tips to navigate Fluxx and the application form.

Both new and returning Portal 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 [Technical Support](#). Please note that Technical Support is only for questions

or issues related to the Fluxx Portal. All non-technical questions that have not been addressed in this FAQ, should be directed to the OPTions Program Team at info@optionsinitiative.org.

Please ensure to give yourself plenty of time to submit your application ahead of the deadline. ALL applications must be received on or before the deadline of April 14, 2020 at 3:00 ET. Applications received after this time will not be considered for funding.

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

The only way to view the application questions, is through the Fluxx Portal. Applicants who do not have an existing Fluxx Portal account must register for an account using the following link: [Create an account](#). Once you have requested an account, please allow for at least one (1) business day for Grand Challenges Canada to process your information. Once you receive your login credentials, log in to the Fluxx Portal (gcc.fluxx.io) where application questions can be viewed and the proposal submitted. Please note that creating a Fluxx Portal account does not require that the applicant submit a proposal at this time.

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

25. 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, including degree certificates and certificates of incorporation of institutions.

26. 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 (gcc.fluxx.io). Once you have requested an account, please allow for at least one (1) business day for Grand Challenges Canada to process your information. More time may be required during peak periods. Once your information has been processed, you will be emailed login credentials to access the Fluxx Portal where you can input and submit answers to the application questions.

For more details on the steps above (including screen shots) please see the [FLUXX QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE](#) which describes how to create a Fluxx Portal account, how to reset the password on an existing account and other helpful tips on navigating Fluxx and the application form.

Both new and returning Portal users should read the **Fluxx Quick Reference Guide** linked above to avoid any technical issues. If you require technical assistance with registration or the online application, contact [Technical Support](#). Please note that Technical Support is only for questions or issues related to the Fluxx Portal. All non-technical questions that have not been addressed in this FAQ, should be directed to the OPTions Program Team at info@optionsinitiative.org.

27. 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

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

An independent scientific peer review process for this initiative, which includes an Eligibility Screen and Innovation Screen conducted by Grand Challenges Canada, will be conducted. Please refer to Section 4.4 of the Request for Proposals for details on the process.

29. Will successful applicants continue to undertake public engagement activities after securing the grant?

Yes, Grand Challenges Canada intends to work with the successful grantees to showcase their work and successes, to the extent that their safety is not put at risk.

Application Timelines

30. When will the funding decision be announced?

The application schedule is outlined below as per the Request for Proposals.

Key Deadlines	Event
April 7, 2020	<p>Suggested deadline to register for a Fluxx account (gcc.fluxx.io)</p> <p>Note: If you have applied for funding in the past, you already have an account. If you do not remember your password, you can reset it and gain immediate access to the Portal, simply click on Create or reset password.</p>
April 14, 2020	Application deadline at 3:00 p.m. ET
September 30, 2020	Notification of application status
December 31, 2020	Anticipated start date of projects

31. Is the start date flexible to accommodate relocation to start a new employment position?

All successful applicants must take up the grant no later than six (6) months after the receipt of a signed grant agreement from Grand Challenges Canada. Any deferral beyond this period may result in the forfeiture of the award.

General Program Questions

32. Is the intent of the grant to support specific technology development that is already underway (i.e., development of a new technology platform) or to support the more left-field ideas that have not yet been tested in the lab?

Both. However Grand Challenges Canada will not consider funding capacity-building initiatives, ongoing programmatic funding, ideas that are not applicable to poor women and girls in low- and middle-income countries, and ideas that are not transformative, innovative, and do not push the field beyond current paradigms and assumptions.

33. Are there any restrictions that apply to the tenure of concurrent grants or fellowships?

No. This Request for Proposals is focused on seeking projects demonstrating Integrated Innovation that could be implemented in low- or middle-income countries to improve access to safe abortion. However, 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 (i.e., an independent component that is novel or a follow-on project).

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 a formal approval. It is up to you and your institution to attain any relevant approvals. For example, applicants from India may require clearance through 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

Any additional questions should be sent to info@optionsinitiative.org.

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