



Call for Research Proposals:

RAPID RESEARCH FUND FOR EBOLA VIRUS DISEASE OUTBREAKS

- This document is a Call for Research Proposals for funding support from the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC).
- The purpose of this call is to support research projects that apply social science and humanities, population and public health and/or health systems research approaches to the current Ebola Virus Disease outbreak in the DRC and/or risks of extension to the surrounding region.

Deadline: Friday, 13 July 2018

Click [here](#) to submit an application

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1. About this Call

Intent

The Rapid Research Fund (RRF) for Ebola Virus Disease Outbreaks supported by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) aims to support social science and humanities, population and public health and/or health systems research to increase collaboration and adaptive scaling of past evidence-based interventions that have proven successful in curbing Ebola Virus Disease transmission, promote novel approaches to remaining challenges, and link existing resources and expertise across the globe to inform the response to the outbreak of Ebola Virus Disease that started in April 2018 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), as well as inform prevention and response to future outbreaks of Ebola Virus Disease and other similar diseases. Specific aims of the Call intend to enhance the mobilization of interdisciplinary teams of Canadian and African health and social scientists and humanists, as well as knowledge users, to help contain the current Ebola Virus Disease outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and prevent or mitigate the impact of future Ebola Virus Disease and similar threats to the region.

2. Goal and Objectives

2.1 Goal

Support social science, humanities, public health and/or health systems research to enhance collaborations between researchers and knowledge users, and link existing resources and research expertise across the globe to more effectively and collaboratively contain the current, as well as future Ebola outbreaks more readily.

2.2 Specific Objectives:

- Enhance the mobilization of interdisciplinary Canadian and African health and social scientists and humanists, as well as knowledge users, to help contain the current Ebola Virus Disease outbreak in the DRC;
- Enhance the adaptive scaling of successful interventions in curbing Ebola transmission (and other diseases of similar relevance), and support the exploration of novel approaches to remaining challenges of outbreak mitigation and control;
- Improve understanding of an effective role for international agencies in preventing and responding to Ebola Virus Disease outbreaks in Africa, including how international institutions can better engage local leadership to ensure that responses are culturally appropriate, community specific, and leverage local characteristics; and,
- Support collaboration and policy making that promote evidence-based practices to prevent or mitigate the impact of future Ebola threats in the DRC and surrounding region.

3. Research Context and Focus of the Call

3.1 Research Context

- There is an active outbreak of Ebola Virus Disease in the DRC, which has spread to the major urban centre of Mbandaka. The DRC government has called for international support to control the outbreak. While not designated by the World Health Organization (WHO) as a public health emergency of international concern, the lessons learned from the devastating outbreak of 2014-2015 in West Africa indicate that immediate action is necessary to avoid potentially catastrophic losses to the disease;
- Research funders and donors have pledged to make research resources available more quickly to address urgent knowledge gaps in public health emergencies. A variety of mechanisms are in place to facilitate this including the Global Research Collaboration for Infectious Disease Preparedness (GloPID-R). The IDRC and CIHR are both members of GloPID-R;
- The [GloPID-R](#) and the [Joint Programming Initiative on Antimicrobial Resistance \(JPIAMR\)](#) have identified the need to establish an international Network of Social Sciences Research Expertise, to better address governance and other challenges in the prevention and response to infectious threats and outbreaks, be it at local, national, regional or global levels. A call for applications was launched by the European Commission to establish the central coordinating hub for the network which will be in place by the end of 2018;
- In the 2014-2015 West Africa Ebola Virus Disease outbreak, early international response floundered. Interventions were slowed or rendered ineffective when they failed to sufficiently take into consideration and directly address customs, beliefs, values, and social practices, as well as the broader social, economic and political context of the affected communities;
- Identified gaps for effective control and treatment interventions from the 2014-2015 West African outbreak highlight the need for more and integrated social science and humanities research during outbreak response activities;
- There have been other outbreaks of global public health significance in addition to Ebola Virus Disease (e.g. Yellow Fever) in Africa that may inform approaches to the current and future outbreaks; and,
- Social science, humanities and health systems research was significantly underfunded in the 2014-2015 West African Ebola Virus Disease outbreak.

To sustainably improve response capacities to Ebola Virus Disease and similar diseases, and build from past successes and failures, the Government of Canada, through the IDRC and two of its research councils, CIHR and SSHRC, and in coordination with WHO and GLOPID-R members, has enabled the creation of this pooled fund for the rapid mobilization of interdisciplinary teams with a fully integrated social science and health systems research component, to contribute knowledge in the context of the current Ebola Virus Disease outbreak in DRC.

3.2. Focus of the Call

The focus of the supported research will be to inform the response to the current Ebola Virus Disease outbreak in the DRC with the aim of improving prevention and preparedness efforts to future Ebola or similarly significant infectious threats in the region. As the fund is designed for rapid research support, the focus will remain broad enough to receive and adapt to identified priorities and will avoid being prescriptive in nature. Projects should aim to apply social science, humanities, population and public health and/or health systems research approaches that build on previous learnings and/or respond to documented knowledge and practice gaps of integrating these research approaches for more effective outbreak response, containment and mitigation efforts.

- Projects must be focused on addressing challenges related to the current Ebola outbreak in the DRC and/or risks of extension to the surrounding region;
- Research must be justified as beneficial to the current Ebola Virus Disease emergency in the DRC and surrounding region; and,
- The proposal must justify the use of Rapid Research funds and explain how the same research success and impact would not be achieved through traditional, less time sensitive funding sources.
- Applicants are required to indicate how they will account for sex (as a biological variable) and gender and/or other socio-cultural factors in the research design, methods, analysis and interpretation, and/or dissemination of findings. For more information and resources, please see [Sex, Gender and Health Research](#).

Potential areas of focus include but are not limited to the following:

- Novel social interventions to address challenges associated with response to the 2018 outbreak of Ebola Virus Disease in the DRC, for example: effective communication and public outreach, provision of health services during the outbreak, and also addressing socio-cultural challenges, such as those associated with local food systems, bushmeat demand and increased risk of exposure to Ebola virus;
- Improved understanding of travel and social behaviors that influence the risks of Ebola virus transmission particularly within and between remote, rural areas and densely populated urban zones;
- Improved understanding and prevention of the secondary health impacts of Ebola outbreaks, such as increased pressure on fragile local health systems, reduced access to and use of critical health services, and undermined rule of law and governance systems;
- Research addressing ethical concerns related to conflicts between public health practice, experimental design and local social reality;
- Research addressing community-based outbreak control measures, and how emergency response can take into account community beliefs, practices and solutions and mobilize existing and new knowledge into effective practices;

- Research to identify practical early warning systems and other public health interventions (e.g. through health systems strengthening) to slow or prevent continued and future transmission;
- Transboundary policy-relevant research and evidence to strengthen local and regional capacities for mitigating Ebola virus transmission and disease;
- Research addressing the role of international agencies and African institutions in preventing and responding to Ebola Virus Disease and similar outbreaks in Africa, including how these institutions can better engage local leadership and institutions (e.g. schools, local clinics and hospitals, churches) to ensure that responses are culturally appropriate, community specific, and leverage local characteristics;
- Mobilizing and sharing best practices and lessons learned for enabling, coordinating, and supporting monitoring, research, response, and prevention tactics and protocols;
- Social and cultural contexts in the development and implementation of public health interventions at times of crisis, e.g. experimental vaccine delivery, uptake and efficacy studies; use of experimental treatment options;
- Social, cultural and historical factors within specific communities influencing behaviors that aid or limit the effectiveness of political, educational, technological and biomedical approaches to preventing and responding to Ebola Virus Disease outbreaks; and,
- Research addressing differential gender-related transmission risks of Ebola virus disease and gender implications on access to care, participation in community responses, recovery and long-term impact of Ebola.

4. Eligibility

- Partnerships between African and Canadian researchers are mandatory, including the following:
 - Application from one Canadian lead applicant and an African co-lead applicant.
 - Application from one African lead applicant and a Canadian co-lead applicant.
 - Eligible organizations are legal entities, such as accredited universities, non-governmental or government-funded research organizations.
- African - Canadian partnerships may include other co-applicant research partners from eligible organizations.
- Intergovernmental organizations (e.g. United Nations system) and CGIAR Centres cannot apply to this Call as lead or co-applicants. Intergovernmental organizations may participate as third-party organizations.
- The lead applicant and co-applicants may negotiate and develop funding arrangements directly with third-party organizations for specific services. IDRC will not contract directly with third-party organizations. Applications that involve third-party organizations must clearly justify their involvement and explain their role(s).

- At most, a person can apply as the lead applicant for one project and be a co-applicant for one additional project.

5. Geographic Area of Focus

The DRC and surrounding region at risk of Ebola virus transmission and impact

6. Funds Available

- IDRC, CIHR and SSHRC will contribute to a total CA\$1.5 million towards this Rapid Research Fund.
- Project funds will be disbursed and administered by IDRC on behalf of the IDRC/SSHRC/CIHR partnership.
- A minimum of four successful teams will be eligible to receive Research Grants up to CA\$360,000 over two years (2018-2020).
- The number of supported projects will depend on the number, quality, review and ranking of eligible proposals by an external peer-review process.

7. Proposal Development and Budget Guidelines

- Please submit proposals and budgets according to the [proposal guidelines](#) and the [Guidelines for acceptable project expenditures](#). Please fill in the web based budget template provided in the online application platform (FluidReview).
- Successful applications will be required to submit a detailed budget and using [IDRC's Financial Workbook template](#). Guidance on how to fill in the template will be provided to the selected applicants by a Grant Administration representative of IDRC.

8. Research Ethics

- It is the policy of IDRC that research involving human participants or animals must be carried out in accordance with high ethical standards. Please refer to the [Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans](#) and [International Ethical Guidelines for Biomedical Research Involving Human Subjects](#).
- Research funded through this call must adhere to all applicable regulations and procedures, including research ethics approvals in the countries where the research will take place.

- Successful Canadian applicants are advised to contact the Research Office of their respective institutions to address compliance issues with the [conditions of the Grant agreement](#).

9. Evaluation Process and Criteria for Merit Review

9.1 Selection Process

- Proposals will undergo a relevance review by a Technical Review Committee comprised of members from IDRC, CIHR and SSHRC. A Peer Review Committee (PRC) comprised of external, independent members suggested by IDRC, CIHR and SSHRC will then evaluate and rank relevant research proposals according to the review criteria outlined below. The PRC will operate through established terms of reference including declarations that there are no conflicts of interest in their participation as reviewers in the RRF Ebola Call. The final project score and assessments made by the PRC will be shared with the RRF Ebola Governance Committee for their funding approval.
- Proposals will be either accepted or rejected. Accepted proposals may receive specific comments from the reviewers, including budgetary adjustments, which applicants will be required to satisfactorily address before receiving any grant. Applicants with accepted proposals will be required to sign a Grant Agreement with IDRC that details the [terms and conditions for the grant](#).

9.2 Review Criteria

Proposals will be assessed against the following review criteria:

Review criteria	Percentage of score (%)
Relevance and Technical Merit The proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides a detailed justification of rapid funding requirement and meets the intent of the Call as stated in section 3 of the Call document. • Adequate consideration has been given to relevant research ethics issues. • Is relevant to research-users and/or stakeholders 	20
Feasibility The proposal: Describes how the proposed results will be achieved within the 24-month funding period and the allocated budget.	20

<p>Partnership</p> <p>The proposal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotes strong collaboration between researchers and research-users in Canada and Africa. • Describes the extent or nature of the relevant organizational involvement in the development of the program of work. <p>Information on the following should be included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identified partners and a brief description of how they operate or will operate with regard to governance and communication; • Contribution (e.g. in kind resources, staff time, and/or funds) and support for the program of work provided by the institution(s) and community organization(s); and, • Clear communications strategy to extend the impact of the research and results to communities and individuals. 	20
<p>Expertise and composition of research team</p> <p>The research team has the necessary partners and expertise to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link existing resources and expertise across between Canada and Africa, and enable rapid, open and responsible sharing of research findings and data. • Enhance interdisciplinary health and social science research to the current Ebola outbreak in the DRC. 	20
<p>Knowledge Translation</p> <p>The knowledge translation plan articulates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategies identified to enable the proposed program of work to foster a culture of linking research with policy and practice; • How knowledge users involved in the research will be integrated throughout the process; and, • A clear dissemination plan outlining how findings will be shared with those who could use and benefit from the evidence. 	10
<p>Monitoring and Evaluation</p> <p>Quality of the monitoring and evaluation framework of proposed research.</p>	10

In addition to the above score, the review of each proposal will consider issues of balance and representation of disciplinary perspectives and research approaches, political sensitivities, local acceptability and sustainability, and relevance and coordination with respect to the global research and emergency responses to the DRC outbreaks.

10. Timeline

- Deadline to submit a grant application: Friday, 13 July 2018 at 12:00pm Eastern Daylight Time (Ottawa). Acknowledgements of receipt will be sent to all applicants whose application was received before the closing date and time.
- Successful applicants will be notified by Monday, 30 July 2018 by 17:00pm Eastern Daylight Time (Ottawa).

11. How to Apply

- All applications must be submitted through an online application system. Please click [here](#) to access the online application system and all the documents related to this Call.
- Applications can be submitted in either English or French.
- Applications must align with the [Canadian Coalition for Global Health Research's Principles for Global Health Research](#) as appropriate.

12. Inquiries

- If you have additional inquiries after consulting the online documents and [FAQs](#), please contact the Food, Environment, and Health program at fehcalls@idrc.ca. Any inquiries which affects all applicants will be posted in the updated FAQs.

13. Additional Important Considerations

1. While collaborations between organisations are encouraged, IDRC will only negotiate Grant Agreements with the organization of the lead applicant and the organization of one co-applicant. There is no limit to the number of third-party organizations in one application.
2. Equipment: If equipment is needed, it is expected that key equipment will be procured and purchased within the first 12 months of the project. Please state how the project will ensure that this occurs. Also, clarify who will own any purchased equipment during and after the project. Unless justified, this should be one of the eligible country partners.
3. As a Canadian Crown corporation, IDRC is subject to [Canada's Access to Information Act](#). Consequently, any submissions to this Call for Proposals will be held by IDRC in a manner consistent with the *Access to Information Act*, including IDRC's obligations to disclose documents requested by members of the public.
4. By way of submitting an application under this call, the applicants consent to the disclosure of the documents submitted by the applicant to IDRC and external reviewers who are involved

in the assessment and selection processes of proposals. If selected for funding, the applicants further consent to the disclosure of their name and the title of the proposed project in any announcement of selected projects. Unsuccessful proposals will be destroyed within 180 days after the close of the application period.

5. Applicants must be committed to publishing research findings in the public domain in accordance with [IDRC's](#) and the [Tri-Agency's](#) open access policies, as well as with public health and research communities and the World Health Organization, as outlined in the [Statement on Data Sharing in Public Health Emergencies](#).
6. IDRC reserves the right to reject proposals based on the geographical location of the applicant's organization or based on relevant policy or legislative considerations.
7. IDRC reserves the right to cancel the process at any time without prior notice and/or at its discretion to reject applications.
8. After an institutional assessment of an applicant's organization is performed, IDRC reserves the right to require the applicant's organization to partner with another institution as a condition of receiving the grant.

14. About the Funders

International Development Research Centre (www.idrc.ca)

The International Development Research Centre (IDRC) funds research in developing countries to promote growth, reduce poverty, and drive large-scale positive change.

A Crown corporation, we support leading thinkers who advance knowledge and solve practical development problems. We provide the resources, advice, and training they need to implement and share their solutions with those who need them most. In short, IDRC increases opportunities — and makes a real difference in people's lives.

Canadian Institutes of Health Research

At the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), we know that research has the power to change lives. As Canada's health research investment agency, we collaborate with partners and researchers to support the discoveries and innovations that improve our health and strengthen our health care system.

Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada

The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) is the federal research funding agency that promotes and supports postsecondary-based research and research training in the humanities and social sciences. By focusing on developing [Talent](#), generating [Insights](#) and forging [Connections](#) across campuses and communities, SSHRC strategically supports world-leading initiatives that reflect a commitment to ensuring a better future for Canada and the world.