



Support for the South African National Health Research Enterprise in Response to U.S. Funding Withdrawals

Request for Applications (RFA)

SAMRC-RFA-GIPD-04-2025

Release Date: 29 July 2025

Closing Date: 1 September 2025

1. Introduction and background

The mission of the South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC) is to improve the nation's health and quality of life by conducting and funding relevant and responsive health research, development, innovation, and research translation. The SAMRC is the largest local funder of health research in Southern Africa and supports high quality research, innovation, and capacity development through a variety of grant programmes and strategic partnerships. However, the National Health Research Enterprise in South Africa is predominantly funded from foreign sources, in particular, funds emanating from the United States Government through the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

For decades, South Africa has been the largest recipient of U.S. federal funding from the NIH outside of the U.S. Similarly, the country has also been one of the largest recipients of overseas development assistance through agencies like the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) – all which have underpinned vital health research initiatives. However, various Executive Orders issued by the U.S., starting in January 2025 with an Executive Order on Reevaluating and Realigning United States Foreign Aid, have resulted in the substantial withdrawal of U.S. federal support for research in South Africa, threatening not only the continuity of research but also the national capacity to address emerging health challenges. One of the greatest success stories from South Africa has been the development of a high-calibre cadre of clinicians and scientists who have led pioneering scholarship that has been impactful, not just for South Africa, but for the whole world. However, with the funding disruptions this year, South Africa stands at a critical juncture in its public health and biomedical research trajectory.

Since the announcement of the U.S. funding cuts, the SAMRC has been spearheading efforts to raise funding to support affected institutions/organisations. In recognition of the urgency, the South African Government has approved an initial R132 million allocation for the 2025/26 financial year under the emergency provisions of the Public Finance Management Act for this purpose. An additional R268 million will be proposed through the 2026 budget process to complete a total three-year commitment of R400 million. This investment has been augmented by generous commitments of R100 million each from the Gates Foundation and the Wellcome Trust.

The SAMRC is now pleased to launch this request for applications (RFA) to support the South African National Health Research Enterprise affected by the U.S. funding withdrawals as a strategic imperative to safeguard and secure the country's research future.

2. Funding opportunity description

This RFA seeks to support research and academic institutions with previously active U.S. grants that were directly affected by the U.S. funding withdrawal and whose projects / proposals meet the following criteria:

- Projects that have already received a notice of award (NOA) from a U.S. funding agency and/or have been successfully contracted to commence their projects (most recent NOA to be provided as proof).
- Projects under any thematic area of interest, including TB, HIV and others.
- Projects conducted in South Africa by South African investigators.

- Projects meeting the above criteria that:
 - Have been formally terminated and require funding to continue / complete the research / ethically close out projects.
 - Have been paused and not yet reinstated.
 - Have been paused and since reinstated but have not received funds for a prolonged period.

Applicants may apply for funding support for up to 12 months (plus reimbursement period, where applicable) to continue, wind down or complete critical research activities and sustain the projects until U.S. funding is resumed or alternative funds are sourced.

Proposals may include support for the following areas if these were directly included in the original approved grant award and budget:

- Research activities directly in line with the original approved grant award
- Support for affected early-and-mid-career scientists
- Support for students and postdoctoral fellows to complete their training which has been disrupted by the pause or termination of research grants
- Support for maintenance of health research infrastructure

Activities not included in the original grant that may be considered for support include the following:

- Ethical termination of intervention studies and final follow-up of study participants
- Other maintenance of health research infrastructure (e.g. biorepository running costs, software costs, equipment maintenance etc.) until alternative funding is sourced.

Funding requests may include reasonable reimbursement of costs incurred after termination or pause of grants but prior to the launch of this RFA that cannot be covered from other resources. Projects submitted for funding can be at any stage of the project lifecycle; however, the funding request in response to this RFA must not exceed 12 months. Funding support will terminate in the event that the original grant is reinstated and receives funds or that alternative funding for the project is secured.

Importantly, this RFA does not seek to fund new research projects or to fully replace the original funding awards. It is intended to provide immediate bridging support to enable continuity of critical research, sustain key personnel and infrastructure and support post-doctoral studies interrupted by the U.S. funding cuts.

3. Eligibility

This is an open call for applications from researchers with active / previously active U.S. funded grants that were affected by the funding cuts, based at South African public universities and South African public research entities, namely Science Councils, National Facilities, and other recognized research institutions. PIs must be South African citizens or permanent residence holders. Researchers that hold more than one grant affected by the U.S. funding cuts may submit a separate application for each grant / project.

4. Application Process and Timeline

All applications and supporting documents for this RFA must be submitted online using the following link: [SAMRC-RFA-GIPD-04-2025](#)

No applications submitted via email will be accepted.

All sections of the application must be comprehensively and accurately completed. It is important to include all relevant information and detail that will enable the application to be evaluated. All applications must be approved by the relevant duly authorized representative of the institution submitting the application through a signed Declaration Form to be uploaded on the system.

The due date for applications is 1 September 2025, 23:59 (SAST). No late or incomplete applications will be accepted.

Documents to be uploaded/submitted:

- Completed online application: [SAMRC-RFA-GIPD-04-2025](#)
- [Abridged Proposal in SAMRC template](#) and signed by the designated institutional authority
- [Abridged Budget in SAMRC](#) template (in ZAR)U.S. funded original project proposal and budget
- U.S. funded original project proposal and budget
- Most recent notice of award (NOA)
- Letter of termination or pause of award or any related communication
- Most recent project progress report

The budget should not deviate substantively from the original approved line items and the total request should not exceed the amount requested and/or previously approved by the original funder for the period. Any deviations must be well motivated in the proposal and must be in line with the allowable and non-allowable costs in the SAMRC's General Terms and Conditions of Funding, which can be found here: [Funding at the SAMRC | SAMRC](#).

The timelines for the application and award process are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Estimated application and award timelines.

Process Stage	Due Date
RFA Release Date	29 July 2025
Application Due Date	1 September 2025
Review of Applications	September 2025
Notification of Awards	September /October 2025

5. Evaluation of Applications

There will be a two-step review and evaluation process:

1. Internal SAMRC screening for responsiveness to all the specified administrative and procedural provisions required in the RFA.
2. A steering committee will be established by the SAMRC to review applications and make recommendations for funding.

The SAMRC will not submit the applications for peer-review as we will proceed on the premise that the awards have already been peer-reviewed and deemed fundable. However, the SAMRC reserves the right to seek peer-review where required.

Internal screening

All submitted applications will be screened by the SAMRC for completeness and responsiveness to the RFA and its administrative requirements/provisions. If the application is found to be incomplete or unresponsive to the provisions described in the RFA, or was submitted after the deadline, the application will not be processed further.

Internal screening will be conducted using the following criteria:

- Was the application received on or before the closing date?
- Do the entity and applicant meet all eligibility criteria according to the guidelines?
- Is the application complete, with all sections filled in, and endorsed by the entity's relevant authorized representative in a signed letter?
- Have all the required supporting documents been provided?

Steering Committee Review

Each application that passes the internal screening will be reviewed by a Steering Committee established for this purpose, taking into account at least the following criteria:

- Significance of the research and the potential impact on the South African health system, research capacity and advancement of the field
- The impact of the U.S. funding cuts on the project/personnel /unit/organisation/research participants
- Original U.S. approved budget vs. requested budget
- Other resources leveraged to date
- Timeline of the funds and stage of project (year of funding, number of years until completion)
- How this grant will be leveraged for future sustainability of the project/personnel /unit/organisation
- Available budget for the RFA

6. Selection of Awardees

The awarding of grants emanating from this RFA will be determined by the SAMRC and a Steering Committee convened for this purpose. The SAMRC and Steering Committee may also consider additional factors, such as institutional diversity, spread of priority areas and transformation in making its final determinations. Based on the merit of the applications and/or budget limitations, the SAMRC may award fewer or more grants than expected and may elect to not allocate all the available funds to awards from this RFA.

The SAMRC reserves the right to make no awards and re-advertise the RFA if it so wishes or to cancel this RFA altogether. The SAMRC may also phase the awards as required.

7. Additional important information

- The SAMRC may seek to verify any information provided by applicants through independent research,

by contacting the original funder(s) or by third parties approved by the SAMRC.

- The SAMRC assumes no responsibility for costs incurred in responding to this RFA or any further invitations or communications.
- The SAMRC reserves the right to amend or withdraw the RFA at any time and/or to make no awards.
- Successful awards may be subject to addressing comments from the Steering Committee and/or negotiation of project plans and budgets.
- Grants will be paid to the institution/organisation where the PI is employed, as set out in a funding agreement to be concluded between the parties.
- The SAMRC reserves the right to withhold grant funds until proof of the necessary ethics and regulatory approvals for the project have been provided to the SAMRC. Should the investigators fail to obtain the necessary approvals within a reasonable time period, the SAMRC reserves the right to withdraw the award.
- The SAMRC reserves the right to terminate the award should the original grant funds be reinstated and received and/or if alternative funds are secured.
- The SAMRC may require the return of funds used for expenses that are later reimbursed by the original or a new funder.
- The SAMRC may use text, video or other visual representation submitted by successful applicants on the SAMRC website or on SAMRC materials for publicity and/or public awareness.

8. POPIA Compliance

As of the 1st of July 2021, the new Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA) came into full effect (see <https://popia.co.za/> for full details on the act). The law is designed to protect how all juristic persons use, store and process data. The SAMRC as a responsible statutory science council complies with POPIA.

The SAMRC will receive personal information through the applications submitted to the SAMRC in response to this RFA. The personal information requested on the application template is necessary for the SAMRC to fully evaluate the application for funding. This information will be shared with external reviewers, where applicable, local and international funders, the relevant steering committee as well as the SAMRC management for the purposes of processing the application. The SAMRC will process this personal information strictly in accordance with POPIA. The SAMRC undertakes specifically to process the personal information on the basis that (a) it was provided voluntarily and (b) the information will be processed only as far as may be necessary and within the limitation and ambit of the purpose of evaluating the application for funding (i.e., the purpose for which the personal information was received). The SAMRC confirms that it is lawfully processing the information since the purpose of processing is to seek quality applications for funding which the SAMRC is mandated to do in terms of Section 4 of the SAMRC Act 58 of 1991, thus the SAMRC is fulfilling its legislated and lawful mandate, and strategic objectives as provided for in the SAMRC Act.

By submitting your application to the SAMRC, you acknowledge and agree to the use of your personal information as outlined above. Should you not approve of such use of your personal information then please refrain from submitting an application.

9. Enquiries

Any enquiries on this RFA should be addressed to gipd.rfa@mrc.ac.za.