



**2nd Request for Applications (RFA)
Support for the South African National Health Research
Enterprise in Response to USA Funding Withdrawals**

SAMRC-RFA-GIPD-06-2025

Release Date: 19 December 2025

Closing Date: 19 February 2026

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 of America (USA).

Following the announcement of USA funding cuts early in 2025, the SAMRC raised substantial funding to support affected institutions/organisations and ran a Request for Applications (SAMRC-RFA-GIPD-04-2025), issued on 29 July 2025, for this purpose. The SAMRC is currently finalising around 60 grants with an estimated budget of around R226 million from this RFA.

Following the RFA outcomes, a number of NIH awards were reinstated to varying extents, while further clarity has been received by CDC and other USA grant awardees on the current status of their awards. It is evident that gaps in the South African National Health Research Enterprise remain as a result of the withdrawal of USA funding, despite some reinstatements. As such, the SAMRC is now pleased to announce this second call for proposals to support any remaining gaps in funding.

This second call, drawing from the same funding allocation, is intended to support additional national research activities impacted by the funding withdrawals, including projects that only received partial reinstatements. This forms part of the SAMRC's continued strategic efforts to safeguard and strengthen the country's research landscape. This program is supported by the South African Government, the Gates Foundation and the Wellcome Trust, through the SAMRC.

2. Funding opportunity description

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

- Projects that have already received a notice of award (NOA) from a USA funding agency and/or have been successfully contracted to commence their projects (most recent NOA to be provided as proof). The RFA will not support projects that have not yet been awarded funds by a USA funding agency.
- 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 issued a NOA in 2025 to be reinstated but were only partially reinstated and require funding to complete as per the original award.
 - Are in any health thematic area of relevance to South Africa, including TB, HIV and others.

Applicants may only apply for funding support up to **12 months (plus reimbursement period, where applicable)** to continue, wind down or complete critical research activities and sustain the projects until USA

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. Preference will be given to projects that can be fully completed within 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 USA funding cuts.

If an applicant receives a notice of reinstatement of their grant after submitting their application, they must notify SAMRC with the relevant details. This may affect the award in full (it may be withdrawn if SAMRC funds are no longer required) or impact the budget or timing of the award. Should this occur after contracting, any funding disbursed by SAMRC would need to be returned in full.

Applicants who received alternative funding support for their research following the USA funding cuts may not apply to this RFA to reimburse the alternate source.

3. Eligibility

This is an open call for applications from researchers with active / previously active USA funded grants that were affected by the funding cuts, based at South African public universities and South African public research entities, namely Science Councils and 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 USA funding cuts may submit a separate application for each grant / project.

4. Detailed Budgetary Restrictions

This RFA is intended to provide relief/bridge a funding gap and must align with the requirements of the various funders supporting the program. In addition to the SAMRC [General Terms and Conditions of Funding](#), the following grant-specific budgetary restrictions must be strictly adhered to:

- a. Funding support is limited to SA investigators only and no funding support is allowed to any USA-based collaborators or Principal Investigators (PIs).
- b. Institutional overhead/levy is limited to a maximum of 5%.
- c. Inclusion of any support for additional levies is non-allowable. Any such related costs must be included as a direct line item, fully justified and should have been part of the original proposal.
- d. Inclusion of new line items not in the original approved USA proposal is non-allowable, unless well motivated.
- e. The value of any line item may not exceed the amount originally requested in the USA grant, unless well motivated.
- f. The total budget request may not exceed the maximum value of the initial grant award.
- g. Salary support is not permitted for permanent or fixed-term staff (e.g., tenured staff, professors) whose salaries are fully covered by the host institution or other grants. Only soft-funded or grant-funded personnel costs may be included.
- h. International travel for conference or meeting attendance is not allowed.
- i. Travel support is permitted only for direct project-related activities and must be limited accordingly and justified.
- j. Publication costs are not allowable; applicants should seek alternative funding sources for these expenses.
- k. All line items must include a detailed budget justification in the proposal template.

Applicants are advised to carefully review both the [General Terms and Conditions of Funding](#) and the above grant-specific restrictions while preparing their applications.

5. Application Process and Timeline

All applications and supporting documents for this RFA must be submitted online using the following link: [SAMRC-RFA-GIPD-06-2025](#)

No applications submitted via email will be accepted.

Projects that were separately/jointly funded by a USA funding agency linked to the same project award should consolidate their proposal into a single submission with one lead PI taking responsibility for the project and subawards.

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 on the proposal template.

The due date for applications is 19 February 2026, 23:59 (SAST). No late or incomplete applications will be accepted.

Documents to be uploaded/submitted:

- Completed online application: [SAMRC-RFA-GIPD-06-2025](#)
- [Abridged Proposal in SAMRC template](#) and signed by the designated institutional authority
- [Abridged Budget in SAMRC template](#) (in ZAR)
- USA funded original project proposal and budget
- Most recent notice of award (NOA)
- Letter of termination or any related communication
- Most recent project progress report
- Ethics approval (if applicable)

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	19 December 2025
Application Due Date	19 February 2026
Review of Applications	February-March 2026
Notification of Awards	April 2026

6. 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. The NHRE Steering committee will 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:

- Does 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?
- 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 USA funding cuts on the project/personnel /unit/organisation/research participants
- Original USA approved budget vs. requested budget
- 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

7. Selection of Awardees

The awarding of grants emanating from this RFA will be determined by the SAMRC and the 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 not to 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.

8. 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.

9. 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.

10. Enquiries

Kindly refer to the [FAQ's](#) for any clarification.

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