



COVID-19 Africa Rapid Grant Fund launched

A COVID-19 Africa Rapid Fund Grant with an initial total funding of approximately USD4.75million, close to R90 million, has been launched to address research questions and implement science engagement activities associated with the pandemic.

The National Research Foundation (NRF) supported by South Africa’s Department of Science and Innovation (DSI), Canada’s International Development Research Centre (IDRC), the Fonds de Recherche du Québec (FRQ), the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), the United Kingdom’s Department for International Development (DFID), United Kingdom Research and Innovation (UKRI) through the Newton Fund, and SGCI participating councils are collaborating in this initiative, which has been conceptualised under the auspices of the [Science Granting Councils Initiative in Sub-Saharan Africa](#) (SGCI).

The Fund aims to support knowledge generation and translation to inform diagnostics, prevention and treatment of COVID-19, strengthen African regional and continental science engagement efforts in response to the pandemic, and leverage existing multilateral collaborations and attract new collaborations from international partners.

The COVID-19 Africa Rapid Fund Grant Fund will support projects in three areas: 1) research; 2) science engagement - call to science and health journalists and communicators; and 3) science engagement - call to science advisers in response to the global COVID-19 pandemic.

“The current pandemic has taken a significant toll on the lives and health of millions of people across the globe. Strategic partnerships and concerted efforts such those leveraged here are an essential element of delivery on the mandate of science granting councils, such as the NRF, to advance, enable, support and promote scientific research and science engagement with the aim to improve the quality of lives of citizens,” says Dr Molapo Qhobela, Chief Executive Officer of the NRF, which will administer the Fund.

The research strand is informed by topics identified by the World Health Organization (WHO), the African Academy of Sciences (AAS) and the Canadian 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Rapid Grant Funding Opportunity. Funding will be provided to research projects which will investigate research areas such as prevention and control, socio-cultural dynamics of transmission, mental health and vulnerability.

Science engagement is a fundamental component linking scientific findings to translation and uptake by policymakers, and the society at large. An innovative component to this Fund entails support to science and health journalists and communicators in efforts to produce and disseminate coordinated science communication on COVID-19. Additional support for projects intended to advance science advisory activities to African governments, with a specific focus on efforts by academies of science and the International Network for Government Science Advice (INGSA) Africa chapter will be supported.

Message from Partners:

Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC)

Canada's International Development Research Centre is very pleased to be collaborating with South Africa's National Research Foundation, the 15 science granting councils involved in the Science Granting Councils Initiative (SGCI) in sub-Saharan Africa, and other international partners in the COVID-19 Africa Rapid Grant Fund. This powerful collaborative effort to support national researchers, science advisors and communicators in Africa will improve understanding of how to prevent and treat COVID-19 across the continent and internationally. - **Dr Jean Label, President, International Development Research Centre, Canada.**

Tanzania Commission for Science and Technology (COSTECH)

In times of crisis, as in responding to COVID-19, the degree to which existing partnerships in science, technology and innovation can be leveraged to solve a challenge that is inherently transboundary is especially critical. Fifteen science granting councils on the continent, have been working together to strengthen various aspects linked to our mandates since 2014. We have, during this time, strengthened partnerships with one another and with our development partners in the context of the SGCI. The launch of this call is a demonstration of these partnerships culminating into a multilateral effort to facilitate research and science engagement in response to COVID-19. The SGCI participating councils are delighted to join and contribute to the implementation of the activities of this Fund. - **Dr Amos Nungu, Director General, Tanzania Commission for Science and Technology and Chair, SGCI Councils Committee**

Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida)

The COVID-19 pandemic requires urgent action, with a response that is based on sound scientific research. Sida is proud to support this call which will not only generate new knowledge, but also make sure that science related to COVID-19 is communicated and made available to the community and policy makers. - **AnnaMaria Oltorp, Head of Research Cooperation Unit, SIDA**

United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID)

Coronavirus is a global crisis, which is affecting us all right now. However, by bringing together scientific research and expertise from around the world we can end this pandemic sooner for the benefit of everyone. UK aid support to the Africa Rapid Grant Fund will support African researchers to mitigate the impact of the virus across Africa. This will help stop future global waves of the

infection. - **James Duddridge, Department for International Development and Foreign and Commonwealth Office joint Minister for Africa**

United Kingdom Research and Innovation (UKRI)

Overcoming the many challenges created by COVID-19 will only be possible if all nations have a voice. Through the UK's funding we are delighted to support the COVID-19 Africa Rapid Grant Fund. The Fund will help to ensure researchers from across Africa are empowered to investigate the local repercussions of and responses to COVID-19 and to find solutions to the threat the pandemic presents to lives as well as livelihoods. Their findings will not only be crucial for their individual countries, but to international efforts to overcome the pandemic too. - **Professor Andrew Thompson, UKRI International Champion**

About the NRF:

The National Research Foundation (NRF) is an independent statutory body established in accordance with the National Research Foundation Act. Its mandate is to support and promote research through funding, human resource development and the provision of the necessary research facilities in order to facilitate the creation of knowledge, innovation and development in all fields of science and technology, including indigenous knowledge; Supporting and promoting public awareness of, and engagement with, science; and Promoting the development and maintenance of the national science system and support of Government priorities, thereby contribute to the improvement of the quality of life of all South Africans. Website: www.nrf.ac.za | Twitter: @NRF_News | Facebook: @NRFSouthAfrica.

About DFID

The Department for International Development (DFID) leads the UK's work to end extreme poverty. We are tackling the global challenges of our time including poverty and disease, mass migration, insecurity and conflict. Our work is building a safer, healthier, more prosperous world for people in developing countries and in the UK too. For additional information visit www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-international-development/about

About DSI

The Department of Science and Innovation seeks to boost socio-economic development in South Africa through research and innovation. To achieve its goals, the Department provides leadership, an enabling environment and resources for science, technology and innovation. For additional information visit www.dst.gov.za/

About FRQ

The Fonds de Recherche du Québec, under the auspices of the Chief Scientist of Quebec, include three research funds in the fields of natural sciences, health, social sciences and culture, which promote and provide financial support for research in Quebec as well as the training of researchers and the development of partnerships as needed to promote and disseminate knowledge.

For additional information visit www.scientifique-en-chef.gouv.qc.ca

About IDRC

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. For additional information visit www.idrc.ca/en/about-idrc

About the Newton Fund

The Newton Fund is a consortium of outstanding research and innovation partnerships between the UK and select countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America to support economic development and social welfare, tackle global challenges and develop talent and careers. The fund is managed by the UK’s Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, and delivered by UK and international partners. For additional information visit www.newtonfund.ac.uk

About SGCI

The Science Granting Councils Initiative is a multi-funder initiative that aims to strengthen the capacities of 15 science granting councils in Sub-Saharan Africa in order to support research and evidence-based policies that will contribute to economic and social development. For additional information visit <https://sgciafrica.org/en-za/home>

About SIDA

The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Sida, is a government agency working on behalf of the Swedish parliament and government, with the mission to reduce poverty in the world. Through our work and in cooperation with others, we contribute to implementing Sweden’s Policy for Global Development. For additional information visit www.sida.se/English/About-us/About-Sida/

About UKRI

UK Research and Innovation works in partnership with universities, research organisations, businesses, charities, and government to create the best possible environment for research and innovation to flourish. We aim to maximise the contribution of each of our component parts, working individually and collectively. We work with our many partners to benefit everyone through knowledge, talent and ideas. For additional information visit www.ukri.org/

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