

On 31 December 2019, a cluster of acute respiratory illness was reported from China, later confirmed as COVID-19 on 7 January 2020. Consequent to its worldwide spread, Dr Tedros Ghebreyesus, WHO Director General, declared the outbreak a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) on 30 January 2020, and pandemic during March 2020. The Eastern Mediterranean Region, like other regions of the world, has been heavily affected by this pandemic. Since the advent of the pandemic, globally, there has been more than 500 million confirmed cases and over 6 million deaths. Introduction of vaccines and guidance on evolving public health measures have played a critical role in preventing transmission. Recent available data suggests that there is a global decrease in the number of cases whereas in the Eastern Mediterranean, 13 countries reported 20%+ decrease in cases, 9 countries reported a decline in the number of deaths and 4 countries reported zero deaths during week 14 of 2022. In the Region, 10 countries (Bahrain, Islamic Republic of Iran, Kuwait, Morocco, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Pakistan, Oman and Tunisia) have 46-97% of their populations fully vaccinated.

The regional Incident Management Support Team (IMST) was formulated in order to coordinate COVID-19 response, particularly in bringing together regional partners and driving forward the operational response. Given the importance of research and data driven decision making at national and global levels, the WHO Regional Office decided to establish a cross-cutting Research and Knowledge Management pillar within its IMST structure. The pillar was charged to strengthen coordination and collaboration with other IMST pillars in supporting national research studies, assessing availability of the latest evidence in support of decisions, use of evidence in national decision, knowledge management and use of innovation and digital technology, in response to the pandemic. Such studies have included solidarity RCTs, sero-epidemiology surveys, vaccines effectiveness studies and other epidemiological research of key priority, while ensuring to observe ethics in research.

This call for proposals is linked to these areas of work to ensure priority COVID-19 related research is supported through a small grants scheme. Targeted multi-disciplinary research still needs to be conducted in countries to further understand the characteristics and impact of the pandemic and develop preparedness, response and recovery guidance, which would be useful in response to future outbreaks / epidemics / pandemics. Hence WHO is seeking small scale proposals, 3-6 months, which could shed further light on national and regional experiences and outcomes of innovations, as well as the impact of the COVID-19 on health care systems and population health.. We will give priority to proposals that address national level issues, but proposals that deal with large subnational areas with clear messages and potential for further learning and understanding will also be considered.

## **Objectives**

The general objective is to promote regional-based COVID-19 research to:

generate local knowledge relevant to the COVID-19 pandemic;

build capacity for research;

strengthen the link between evidence generation and health policy-making; and

enhance an exchange of experience between Member States of the Region.

## **Grant application**

The completed proposal with its annexes should be submitted to: [emrgorpd@who.int](mailto:emrgorpd@who.int), and include the following:

Completed proposal form

Data collection form(s)

Completed ethics review checklist

Informed consent forms (in English and local language)

Support documents (provisional national/institutional ethical approval; short CVs of investigators).

The responsibility for proper citation rests with authors of the proposal (team of investigators) and their respective institution; all parts of the proposal should be prepared with equal care addressing this concern.

## **Eligibility of applicants**

Health-related scientists, researchers and scholars based in countries of the Region are encouraged to submit proposals. While postgraduate students are not encouraged to submit research proposals on their own, they could support teams of investigators, accordingly. The Principal Investigator (PI) must be a national of a Member State of the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region and the research site should be in one of its Member States.

## **Individuals and institutions**

Individuals and institutions engaged in regional health research are considered eligible for submitting proposals which include:

Ministries, academic institutions, research institutes in countries of the Region.

Nongovernmental organizations: professional societies and civil service organizations involved in regional health research activities.

## **Submission of proposals**

The deadline for submission of proposals is 15 June 2022.

All proposals should be submitted in English language only, via email to: [emrgorpd@who.int](mailto:emrgorpd@who.int). The applications must be signed by the PI and the Head of the concerned institution. Unsigned copies will be considered incomplete and will not be processed.

[Guidelines and application form](#) for the [Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean Special Grant for COVID-19 Research, 2022](#)

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