

## EDCTP-AREF Preparatory Fellowships

### Guidance on completing the Application Form of the Letter of Intent (Stage 1)

#### Documentation you must read and use

Please ensure that you have read the following related description and procedure available at:

<http://www.edctp.org/call/preparatory-fellowships-joint-call-with-the-africa-research-excellence-fund/>

#### The purpose and structure of this Guidance

The purpose of this Guidance is to help you correctly complete the **Application Form – Letter of Intent** (1<sup>st</sup> Stage of the Call) and use of any accompanying documentation.

The Guidance has the following 4 parts:

<b>A. About the Joint Call</b>	<b>B. About the Letter of Intent</b>
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#### PART A: ABOUT THE JOINT CALL

##### 1. The objectives of the Joint AREF-EDCTP Preparatory Fellowships Call

###### Partnership objectives

The Africa Research Excellence Fund (AREF) and the European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership (EDCTP) have agreed to address the needs of early career African researchers to enhance their **competitiveness** for international fellowship and grant funding, such as (but not only) for EDCTP Fellowships. For this purpose, EDCTP and AREF are launching a second joint call on 2 November 2018.

The Fellowships, which offer a **3 to 9-month placement** at a HOST centre of excellence in Europe or Africa plus a 3-month reintegration at the fellow's HOME organisation are designed to enable awardees to *develop* a compelling research project and proposal during the Fellowship, through specific planned activities.

The anticipated immediate outcome of the Call is the award by AREF and EDCTP of a total of about **12 Preparatory Fellowships**, to be awarded in Quarter 4, 2019.

Shortlisted applicants will be invited to participate in a **Preparatory Workshop** (see Section C).

The intended **medium term outcome** of the Programme is that AREF-EDCTP Fellows go on to (1) win substantial funding for their own ideas through competing for grants and fellowships; and (2) impact on health through high quality contributions to research knowledge, new skills and tools development, and capacity building. Through these means, the fellowship aims to contribute to **better human health** in Sub-Saharan Africa and globally.

### Call objectives

1 – **Skills**: To enable outstanding African researchers (0 to 3-year post-PhD or MD) to:

- Further advance their research skills, through short-course(s) and hands-on training, preferably using biological samples and/or data they or their home organisations have already generated
- Strengthen their competencies in developing a compelling research question and a robust project and proposal design
- Deepen collaborative relationships and extend professional networks internationally
- Enhance essential “generic/transferable researcher skills” that have the outcomes of strong research relationships, impactful research outputs and effective use of fellowship/grant opportunities and funding
- Contribute to growing the community of researchers optimally equipped with knowledge and skills to address local research needs.

2 – **Competitiveness**: To enable individuals to deploy their own scientific excellence, resourcefulness and research relationships to best effect in competing for early/mid-career Fellowships, such as (but not only) the AREF Research Development Fellowships and EDCTP Career Development Fellowships.

3 – **Capacity building**: To enable career development and early retention of postdoctoral researchers and postgraduate global health researchers in research in and for sub-Saharan Africa.

4 – **Excellence**: To provide a firm foundation and increase the quality, efficiency and impact of fellowship projects funded by organisations such as AREF and EDCTP.

### Tips

- Before completing the Letter of Intent form, map out your objectives, particularly the kind of project that a Preparatory Award could lead to, and develop a clear and convincing plan for the Fellowship.
- As you complete the Letter of Intent, ensure your proposed plan is aligned closely to the EDCTP-AREF objectives listed above.

## 2. Scope of the Call

The scope of this competition will include communicable infectious diseases *and* non-communicable diseases that are significant sub-Saharan Africa.

- EDCTP supports all phases of clinical trials, as well as product-focused implementation research, with a focus on phase II and III clinical trials, for new or improved medical intervention against poverty-related infectious diseases, including advanced testing and field validation of new diagnostic tools.
- Poverty-related infectious diseases covered by EDCTP: HIV, tuberculosis, malaria, neglected infectious diseases (Buruli ulcer, cysticercosis/taeniasis, chikungunya, dengue, dracunculiasis, echinococcosis, foodborne trematodiasis, leprosy (Hansen disease), human African trypanosomiasis, leishmaniasis,

lymphatic filariasis, mycetoma, onchocerciasis, rabies, schistosomiasis, soil-transmitted helminthiases, trachoma, yaws); diarrhoeal diseases; lower respiratory tract infections, as well as emerging or re-emerging infectious diseases of particular relevance for Africa, such as Ebola virus disease or yellow fever. EDCTP priorities are detailed in our Strategic Business Plan (2014-2024) and may be accessed at <http://www.edctp.org/publication/edctp-strategic-business-plan-2014-2014-may-2018-reprint/>

- AREF has a broad remit that includes both communicable and non-communicable diseases.
- AREF is keen to attract excellent proposals on neglected tropical diseases, in particular on chronic ill-health and mental health.
- AREF is keen to support a broad range of disciplines and research methodologies applied to solving significant human health challenges. They include the following:
  - advanced medical statistics
  - medical bioinformatics
  - biomedical computational modelling
  - molecular biology and omics technologies for health
  - other advanced, laboratory-based biomedical sciences
  - quantitative and qualitative social sciences
  - public health interventions
  - economics for health
  - “one-health”
  - environmental health

Proposals scored above the funding threshold and ranked highly will be funded by either EDCTP or AREF depending on the scope of the proposal. Competitive proposals that are not in the EDCTP remit but are within that of AREF will be considered for an award through AREF.

### Tips

- Ensure you have a research question that falls within the remit of the call, which is broad: remember EDCTP aims to build *clinical research capacity* (<http://www.edctp.org/>) and AREF has a more broadly based *human health* remit. Your proposal can fit either remit or both.
- Justify in the proposal why you, with your particular disciplinary skills plus those of your home and host institutions, can address the particular health challenge and research question.

### 3. What activities does the Fellowship support?

Applicants should keep the following in mind:

- The purpose of the Fellowship is **developmental**: i.e. for developing a future project and competitive grant or fellowship proposal. It is NOT a small project grant.
- Awardees will undertake a tailored programme of developmental activities that is likely to include a specified advanced short course (research methods / technologies); hands-on, supervised methods/technical training; activities to build and strengthen research relationships internationally, interactions with research-users; preparing findings for publication; and proposal development.
- Collecting or otherwise generating substantial new datasets will not be funded.
- However, limited new collection or generation of data is permitted, as are preparation and transfer of samples and data-sets to the host organisation, with the purpose of enabling training and pilot work, e.g. to validate a novel method or technique, to demonstrate feasibility or generate data to inform the design of the future project.

- Applicants are encouraged to participate fully in host programmes that develop generic “soft skills”, such as personal effectiveness, communication, engagement, team management, project management and leadership.

### Restrictions

The placements are NOT designed to support substantive research projects – as the Preparatory Fellowships are neither long nor well-funded enough to support a whole research project from beginning to end.

Literature reviews and scoping studies are expected to have been completed *before* rather than during the Fellowship, although they can be refined during the placement where that contributes to the AREF-EDCTP objectives for the programme. However, a formal systematic review may be conducted as part of the Fellowship, where the other AREF-EDCTP objectives are also met.

The Preparatory Fellowships may not support Masters training except where the host organisation offers intensive short training through participation in a specific and relevant module of a Master’s programme.

### Tips

- Differentiate very clearly between what you intend to do *during* the Fellowship placement and what you would like to do *afterwards*.
- Be consistent in how you describe each aim and activity: do not confuse the reviewers by using different terms for the same activity.
- Use this Fellowship to *develop* a compelling project. If you have already developed a substantive research project, do not try to squeeze it into the Preparatory Fellowship format to try and achieve funding.

## 4. Are you eligible?

The **applicant** must be an **organisation** with an established **legal entity** in sub-Saharan Africa (the “applicant legal entity”).

The **proposed fellow** must be employed or have guaranteed employment by the applicant legal entity (the home organisation) where they intend to remain working for a minimum of two years after the expiration of the grant.

Fellows must:

- be a post-doctoral scientist
- have been awarded their doctorate within 3 years before submission deadline of the EDCTP-AREF Preparatory Fellowship application
- have been either a PhD student or MD, and have been active researchers for up to three years following award of their doctorate
- be resident of or be willing to relocate to a sub-Saharan African country
- not have been funded under this fellowship scheme (previous AREF fellows are ineligible) before.

## 5. Relationship to other AREF and EDCTP Calls

AREF is not intending to launch a fourth programme of stand-alone Research Development Fellowships programme in 2018/19. AREF may organise other workshops during 2019 that include skills for grantwriting. They are most likely to be organized in partnership with other organisations and will be advertised on our website [www.africaresearchexcellencefund.org.uk](http://www.africaresearchexcellencefund.org.uk)

**EDCTP Clinical Research and Product Development Fellowships:** Aims to support researchers and key members of clinical trial research teams from sub-Saharan Africa to acquire specific skills in clinical research and development through placements in pharmaceutical companies, PDPs and CROs.

**EDCTP Career Development Fellowships:** Aims to promote career development and retention of postdoctoral researchers and postgraduate medical researchers in the research field and in sub-Saharan Africa; and to equip the fellows with the ability to establish themselves as independent researchers and with the skills to initiate and manage their own research at host organisations in sub-Saharan Africa.

**EDCTP Senior Fellowships Plus:** Aims to support joint applications between senior and early career scientists. This will result in a twining of research leaders in sub-Saharan African who have long-term trainer-of-trainers and mentorship skills with other early-career researchers with emphasis on hands-on research training linked to clinical trials activities in countries with high disease burden but little human and/or infrastructural capacity.

## 6. Two-stage Application Process

The Programme has a **two-stage** application procedure

### 1<sup>st</sup> Stage

For the first stage, you will need to submit a **Letter of Intent** with a letter of support from the applicant legal entity (home organisation employing the fellow) by 1 February 2019 through the EDCTPgrants portal <https://www.edctpgrants.org/Login>

**This guidance is for completing the EDCTP Letter of Intent form/template.**

If you use the downloadable word template, you will need to transfer all the information to the online application form, noting that the questions on the template and in the online form may be ordered differently. Applicants are strongly advised to allow ample time to prepare and submit the online form. Follow the EDCTP guidance notes carefully.

The Letters of Intent will be reviewed by a panel of independent experts jointly identified by the EDCTP and AREF. Up to 36 fellowship candidates with first stage proposals scored above threshold will be invited to a Preparatory Workshop organized and financed by AREF. The Workshop is expected to take place in the last week of May 2019.

Short-listing results of the first stage are expected to be available by Q2 (2019). Participation by shortlisted applicants in the Preparatory Workshop is recommended but is not obligatory: all shortlisted applicants will be eligible to proceed to the second stage.

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Stage

For the second stage, the shortlisted applicants and their home organisations (applicant legal entities) submit a full proposal that includes a comprehensive training and development plan (including a draft re-integration plan). An independent peer-review committee will assess the plans. The EDCTP and AREF aim to announce the awards of up to 12 Preparatory Fellowships by Q2 (2019).

## 7. Call Timetable

Activities	Call opens	Call deadline	Outcomes expected
Stage 1	2 November 2018	1 February 2019	4 April 2019
Stage 2	4 April 2019	4 July 2019	7 October 2019

## 8. Looking ahead

What if your first-stage application is shortlisted?

1. We will invite you to a workshop that focuses on Essential Skills in Grantwriting, likely to take place at the end of May 2019 in Entebbe, Uganda. Make sure that your diary is free, you have permissions to travel and a valid visa in good time. AREF will organize your travel.
2. Shortlisted applicants will be invited to submit a **Full Application** by 4 July 2019.
3. *If shortlisted*, you may fine-tune the details of your proposed project (to follow after your Fellowship) such as the research question and design. You will need to provide a more comprehensive plan for your Fellowship placement.
4. If shortlisted, also discuss logistics and other practicalities with Host and Home organisations in preparing your Full Proposal. For instance, make sure you do the following:
  - Find out about accommodation availability and costs, how to book the accommodation, and any routine travel that may be necessary.
  - Identify with your Host their induction requirements, including health and safety training, and training required in regulated procedures (e.g. for working with experimental animals or with human participants).
  - Ensure you discuss at an early stage the obligations you may have with appropriate authorities in your Home Organisation. They may include teaching, exam monitoring, and other research. Work with them to mitigate these responsibilities.

## 9. Terminology

Here are some terms commonly used by EDCTP or AREF

EDCTP	AREF	Notes
Applicant legal entity	Home institution	This is normally the institution that employs you. For this Call, it must be in Sub-Saharan Africa.
Applicant		In this guidance, "applicant" refers mainly to the individual seeking a Fellowship. For the purposes of the EDCTP Call and forms, "the applicant" is formally the institution (see "Applicant legal entity").
Home organisation	Home Institution	This is the applicant legal entity where the fellow is currently employed and will return to after the placement
Host organisation	Host institution	This is the institution at which you propose to undertake your 3 to 12- month placement.

Full proposal	Full proposal	See Part A Section 6: Two stage application process and AREF's separate Guidance document for the Full Proposal
Letter of Intent	An outline proposal	An outline proposal.
Sponsor	Mentor/Supervisor	The person at the Home institution who takes responsibility for ensuring your Fellowship is fully supported. The Host has similar enabling responsibilities.

## PART B: ABOUT THE LETTER OF INTENT

These notes provide the applicant with additional advice, supplementary to the definitive notes embedded in the EDCTP Letter of Intent application form.

### TITLE OF PROPOSAL

Choose a title that is concise, memorable and informative.

It helps the funder if your title indicates the research challenge that you aim to tackle as a result of this Fellowship. Other useful information identifies what the learning will be and the proposed host. Use no more than 20 words.

Examples of informative topic titles are as follows:

- "Developing public health research expertise at XXX University in order to investigate indoor woodsmoke exposure on infant health outcomes." This example indicates the skills area your Fellowship would develop and the health challenge you wish to tackle.
- Or you could ask a question, "How do specific woodsmoke components affect infant susceptibility to TB? Learning advanced exposure and outcome measures at XXX University."

### FELLOW

You will need to register as a user of EDCTPgrants at <https://www.edctpgrants.org/Login>

Please be consistent in how you use your names throughout the competition. Do not create multiple accounts in the system. Similarly, be consistent about the exact name of your home institution.

### DURATION

For this fellowship, the duration of the entire grant (training placement plus re-integration period) is 12 months. It excludes work you do before the placement. The minimum placement duration at a host is 3 months and the maximum is 9 months. The reintegration period is up to 3 months, thus the maximum total duration is 12 months.

### 1. PARTICIPANTS

Carefully follow the advice in the notes in the EDCTP Letter of Intent form.

#### Declaration and Statement of Support by the Home Organisation

It is important that your Home Organisation provides a supporting letter that demonstrates that it is fully engaged in your development as a researcher.

- The letter should address each of the bullet-points in the guidance to this section in the EDCTP Letter of Intent form.
- In addition, your application is likely to be more competitive if your organisation includes a short piece drafted by your Head of Department that explains what the Department will do to ensure you are able to embed your learning into practice. For instance, on completing your Fellowship they may reduce your administrative duties while giving you time (and funding) for further training, or responsibility, for example, for coordinating a new research project, i.e. activities that deploy your learning during the Fellowship.

### **Previous projects, Publications and Presentations**

These sections give you the opportunity to demonstrate, that you have the prior learning, experience and skills necessary to make good use of the specific activities that you propose for your Fellowship. If you have more than the number of projects, publications and presentations we ask for, be selective: choose those that have had most impact in your field and/or are most relevant to this application.

### **Career Summary and Motivation statement**

This section covers two kinds of information: (1) factual information, e.g. listing of current and recent posts, roles and responsibilities, achievements; and (2) your motivational statement. Present (1) in a concise format, using headings and bullet/numbered points. By contrast (2) your motivational statement should be a succinct and compelling narrative.

## **2. HOST ORGANISATION SELECTED**

This section is about your chosen Host Organisation, a centre of research excellence in Europe or Africa.

### **Rationale for selecting this Organisation**

Identify specific expertise, technology, facilities and connections of the proposed Host that are relevant to your application for this Fellowship.

The Preparatory Fellowship offers the intended Fellow the opportunity to extend his/her international network. If your host organisation is in the same country as your home organisation, explain why you could not work with that organisation through informal means.

## **3. FELLOWSHIP PROPOSAL AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT**

In this section distinguish clearly between your Fellowship and the project that you might aim to do as a result of the Fellowship. The information that you provide about the future "project" that wish to develop, and the outline plan for the Fellowship placement will be crucial in demonstrating your application's competitiveness for an award.

The connection between your current experience and expertise, the planned placement under the Fellowship, and your future project must be compelling. That means your application needs to be ambitious yet feasible, well-supported, be clear and specific, and provide a convincing route to benefits for you and your home organisation.

If your Letter of Intent is Successful (i.e. your application is short-listed), we will ask you to provide more details of your placement plans in the invited Full Proposal).

### **Research question**

You should identify a research question that you could *tackle in the future, after and as a result of the Fellowship*. It should not be a statement, but a question. Make it specific and focused.

### **Outline Fellowship Plan**

The competitiveness of your application will depend on you have having a compelling plan for the Fellowship placement that adds a lot of value to your experience and expertise. The placement activities should give you a convincing set of stepping stones that lead to you being able to developing a research project after the Fellowship (addressing the research question you have identified, or a refinement of the question developed through the Fellowship experience).



#### 4. IMPLEMENTATION & ADMINISTRATION

##### Proposed Start Date and Proposed Duration

Think carefully about the start date and duration, and discuss them thoroughly with your Head of Department and your Host.

- Create enough time for permissions, including obtaining necessary visas and ethical approvals in advance of travelling.

#### PART C. ABOUT THE PREPARATORY WORKSHOP

The Preparatory Workshop for applicants whose Letter of Intent is shortlisted will take place in the **Q2 (2019) in Entebbe, Uganda**. The workshop precedes the deadline for shortlisted applicants to submit their 2<sup>nd</sup> Stage, Full Application.

The workshop will bring together up to 36 African early career researchers, including those selected competitively through the Joint EDCTP-AREF Preparatory Fellowship Call.

The workshop will aim to enable participants to enhance *generic* proposal-writing skills, including how to

- make a persuasive case for their research ideas
- formulate a compelling research question
- justify their research design and methodology
- provide assurance their team is capable of implementing the research in terms of roles and skills mix, institutional support and resources, and partnership and intellectual property management
- address ethical and participant safety considerations
- demonstrate competencies in clinical trial operations, study and site management, clinical data management and statistics and communication and teamwork approaches for clinical trials
- formulate a tight budget.

The team of experienced facilitators will use practical, participatory learning approaches.

The workshop will *not* provide comprehensive and detailed training in clinical trial design and implementation.

The workshop is designed to provide skills that will support participants in improving their confidence in proposal-writing and their understanding of peer review. Facilitators will *not* assist applicants with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Stage of their EDCTP-AREF Preparatory Fellowship applications.

##### Tips

- Ensure that you are well prepared if short-listed to obtain the appropriate travel permissions, including a visa for Uganda.
- Similarly, be ready to advise AREF of the best routing and flights (economy fares) that would enable you to participate in the Workshop.

#### PART D: FURTHER INFORMATION

If you have any questions relating to the Call, please contact us via email:

**EDCTP:** Dr Michelle Singh ([singh@edctp.org](mailto:singh@edctp.org))

**AREF:** Mr Sulayman Janneh ([Sulayman.Janneh@aref-africa.org.uk](mailto:Sulayman.Janneh@aref-africa.org.uk))