Request for Letters of Intent

International Development of H5N1 Influenza Vaccines

The World Health Organization (WHO) intends to provide funding to developing country vaccine manufacturers to develop capacity for the production of human H5N1 influenza vaccines (or other vaccines derived from influenza virus strains of pandemic potential), in line with national government efforts and the WHO Global Action Plan to Increase Supply of Pandemic influenza Vaccine (GAP). The long-term objective of this project is to mitigate the anticipated global shortage of influenza vaccines in the event of an influenza pandemic. The present offer is a continuation of earlier WHO seed grants in support of international influenza vaccine production capacity building.

Funding is available for a one year grant whose objective is to facilitate necessary technology transfer, vaccine manufacturing process optimization, infrastructure development including for the establishment of fill-finish capacity, and where appropriate enhancement of existing manufacturing capacity to support cGMP production of influenza vaccine candidates. Clinical development up to the level of Phase I trials may be supported through the grant as well. Developing country vaccine manufacturers supported by previous WHO seed grants for establishing influenza vaccine capacity are not eligible for this round of funding.

Current developers or manufacturers of human vaccines or other biologics in developing countries are invited to submit Letters of Intent (LOIs) to WHO indicating their interest in, and plans for, establishing influenza vaccine manufacturing and distribution capacity or enhancement of existing influenza vaccine production capacity for H5N1 or other pandemic influenza vaccine candidates. LOIs will be reviewed by an independent expert committee, which will prepare recommendations for candidate selection by the WHO secretariat. Selected applicants will receive limited short-term financial and technical
support to enable them to prepare and submit a detailed development plan. Successful candidates for the full grant will receive a maximum of US$ 1,000,000 for activities for a one year project.

The final decision on the selection of successful candidates will rest solely and exclusively with WHO. The submission of a LOI does not entitle the party submitting such LOI to claim compensation, financial or otherwise, from WHO.

ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

This funding opportunity is open to developing country(1) developers and manufacturers of human vaccines or other biologics if they meet the following eligibility requirements:

- Have demonstrated credible plans for domestic registration within three years with a National Regulatory Agency, of a vaccine for human use;
- If appropriate for the selected influenza vaccine production technology, have an acceptable virus handling facility in compliance with WHO biosafety guidelines for the production of human pandemic-influenza vaccine
- If appropriate for the selected influenza vaccine production technology, have capacity to work with genetically modified organisms according to WHO guidelines.

Preference will be given to vaccine manufacturers who:

- Are from countries with an active and sustainable influenza vaccine development program, or demonstrated plans to develop such a program, as part of nationally supported pandemic-preparedness activities, and which are in line with WHO and/or national immunization policy;
- Provide evidence of strong manufacturing related quality assurance capacity as demonstrated for example by having one or more vaccines prequalified by WHO, or by successfully passing a WHO commissioned GMP audit.
Pre selection procedure:

- Following evaluation of the technical feasibility of the projects submitted in the LOI, limited financial support, up to US dollars $25,000, will be provided to each of the highest ranking proposals from newly applied developing country manufacturers to facilitate their preparation of full grant application to the WHO.

Expenditures allowed under the proposed grant agreements:

The grants provided to selected manufacturers will be used by the manufacturer to establish or enhance capacity at pilot-plant or production level for pandemic influenza vaccine development and permits to cover the following activities:

- Hiring of experts to assist in influenza vaccine production technology-transfer process;
- Upgrading of virus-propagation facilities to enable pilot-plant scale production;
- Establishment of pilot-plant production, or where appropriate and feasible within the time-frame, production at a commercial level, including capital investment;
- Establishment of fill-finish facilities for handling of imported bulk influenza vaccine;
- Upgrade biosafety and cGMP influenza vaccine production at the pilot-plant or, where appropriate and feasible within the time-frame, at the commercial production level, including capital investment;
- Salaries, reagents and equipment to undertake pandemic influenza vaccine development;
- Training of staff of technology-recipient manufacturers at site of technology-provider, and where appropriate travel of staff from technology-providers to technology-recipient manufacturing site;
- Preclinical cGLP safety, immunogenicity, efficacy and toxicology studies;
- Phase I clinical trials including production of the study vaccine;
• Establishment of QC processes including lot release product testing, equipment, training and staff, validation of process, and conduct of QC and stability studies on the vaccine.

The influenza vaccine production technologies that are eligible for funding under the proposed award include recombinant antigens, inactivated subunit, split or whole virus, live attenuated influenza vaccine, and cell culture and egg-based production. Financing under the proposed award may cover clinical development of the vaccine candidates only up to Phase I level trials.

Pre-Proposal details

Letters of Intent, written in English, should include the following elements (maximum four pages length for all the following items):

• Identification of the manufacturer and responsible persons with full contact information.
• Either: details of existing vaccine production capacities and proof of approval by the national regulatory agency for at least one human vaccine; or, documentation of credible plans for domestic registration of a vaccine for human use within three years.
• If required for the manufacturing technology selected, evidence of ability to handle pathogenic organisms according to WHO biosafety guidelines for the production of human pandemic-influenza vaccine.
• If required for the manufacturing technology selected, evidence of capacity to handle genetically modified organisms for vaccine production according to WHO guidelines.
• An outline of the manufacturer’s interest in developing pandemic vaccine production capacity and an identification of support required to achieve this goal.
• A letter of support for the project signed by a government agency.
The full grant proposals submitted by successful candidates further to their Letter of Intent will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Project Plan
- Staffing and Management Plan
- Performance Measures
- Understanding of Operational Tasks
- Potential impact on national and regional pandemic influenza vaccine preparedness

These criteria will be communicated in more detail to the applicants invited to submit full proposal after evaluation of their LOIs.

Additional information regarding the proposal may be requested at torellig@who.int

**The deadline** for receiving Letters of Intent is the **25th of April 2011**.

**Letters of Intent should be submitted via e-mail and courier mail to**

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(1) "Developing Country" means any country other than Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Monaco, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, San Marino, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America.