1. Introduction
This request for proposals (RFP) is made by the WHO Department of Immunization, Vaccines & Biologicals (IVB). IVB is seeking proposals for a rigorous systematic review of the effect of rubella containing vaccine (RCV) in order to update the WHO Rubella Position Paper.  

2. Background
Rubella is of public health importance due to its teratogenic potential. If a rubella infection occurs in a woman just before conception or during early pregnancy, miscarriage, fetal death or congenital defects known as congenital rubella syndrome (CRS) can occur. The highest risk of CRS occurs in countries with high rates of susceptibility to rubella among women of reproductive age.

Over the past twenty years, there has been a significant increase in the number of countries introducing RCV into their routine immunization programme. As of 2018, only 25 of 195 member states have not yet introduced RCV. Globally, as a result RCV introduction, there has been a drastic reduction in the number of cases of rubella and CRS.

Of the six WHO regions, the Region of the Americas eliminated rubella and CRS in 2015. Two additional WHO regions (European and Western Pacific Region) have goals for rubella and CRS elimination. As an integral part of supporting routine immunization programmes and the elimination efforts, WHO is updating the position paper on rubella. The purpose of this systematic review is to review the literature on RCV published since 2011 in order to update the WHO Rubella Position Paper.

3. Research Objectives
The primary objective of this RFP is to invite applications for a systematic review and critical appraisal of the evidence on the effectiveness, safety and duration of protection for RCV in order to update the WHO Rubella Position Paper.

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Successful applicant teams will use systematic search strategies and will perform a systematic review of literature in order to include all relevant publications published since 2011. The review should be conducted in accordance with international standards for the conduct and reporting of systematic reviews, and should include but need not be limited to the following objectives:

- Perform a systematic review of the evidence to identify relevant publications.
- Critically appraise the literature with regard to the appropriateness of the methodology and the analyses performed, and how this may have influenced any conclusions.
- As appropriate, perform quantitative or qualitative syntheses of the available evidence.
- Critical appraisal of the evidence including risk of bias assessment and methods to address missing data.

4. Requirement for proposal
The research proposal should include the following (maximum of 10 pages):
(i) Project description with goals and/or objectives.
(ii) Project budget and justification. Applicants must provide a detailed budget, with accompanying justification for all proposed expenses. The budget should include costs per task and deliverable and the applicable Programme Support Cost (PSC), if appropriate. Total proposed costs will be considered when evaluating the application.
(iii) Statement of activities and projected timeline, including major milestones, anticipated completion dates and projected completion date for the project.
(iv) Statement of capacity of individual/organization to complete the work including references to other similar technical work completed.
(v) Declaration relating to conflicts of interest for proposed key personnel (see form attached).
(vi) Contact information for your organization including the full name of the organization, address and, if appropriate, a signed cover letter from an institutional official supporting the submission.
(vii) Use additional pages, if necessary, to include short biographies of the core members of the research team. Provide information on anticipated involvement of any partner organizations if applicable.

5. Deliverables
A presentation (including retrieval methods, flowchart and synthesis of the review findings) by June 2019.
Travel to Geneva to present to Measles and Rubella Working Group (July 2019)
A final report will be due in September 1, 2019. The final product will be a report including, among others, the following elements:
(i) Executive summary
(ii) Background
(iii) Research question(s) and/or study objectives
(iv) Search strategy for sources of evidence, including information on the databases and resources used
(v) Selection criteria for quality of evidence (inclusion and exclusion criteria)
(vi) Data collection and analysis (critical assessment)
(vii) Main results and/or main estimates
(viii) Authors’ conclusions on results and data quality and critical appraisal of evidence
(ix) Citations and access to extracted data in a MS access or comparable format
(ix) GRADE and Evidence to Recommendation tables

The report must include interpretative commentary with respect to sources of error, bias and missing data in the reviewed data. The report may also identify key limitations in the data. The report may also make suggestions for future research that is needed. A representative of the research team (PI or deputy) will be expected to attend WHO expert consultations, as required (maximum of two meetings).

A comment period will commence following the submission of the draft and final reports to IVB. Within a reasonable amount of time following its submission, IVB will initiate a peer review of each report and submit questions and comments. Teams are expected to provide a written response to IVB on how comments received were addressed. Public release of the final report will occur after the review process is completed. While a draft manuscript is not a requirement or deliverable of this project, research teams are encouraged to publish the content of the final report in an appropriate peer reviewed journal.

All rights in the work, including ownership of the original work and copyright thereof, shall be vested in WHO, which reserves the right (a) to revise the work, (b) to use the work in a different way from that originally envisaged, or (c) not to publish or use the work. The data will be posted in a public website, as appropriate.

6. Eligibility

The team will be selected on the basis of:
(i) Experience of the principal investigator and the team’s expertise conducting and disseminating similar research. The project team should include a principal investigator (PI) with experience in vaccines and systematic reviews of vaccine evidence.
(ii) Methodological rigor of their proposed approach, including feasibility of timelines,
(iii) Proposed timelines. Project duration will not exceed 7 months from signature of contract but the ability to complete the project in less time will be considered favourably in the application review.
(iv) Proposed budget/overall value of the project,
(v) Adequacy of mechanisms for addressing any intellectual and financial conflicts of interest.
(vi) Content expertise on the team in immunization and vaccines is desirable although not essential.

Applicants are expected to disclose any possible conflict of interest capable of influencing their judgments, including personal, political, proprietary, family, academic and financial. A WHO disclosure form for Declaration Conflict of Interest must be completed by all named persons on the research team and submitted with the RFP application.

Research proposals will be evaluated in a two-stage process:
Upon receipt, IVB staff will review all applications for compliance with the parameters of this competition.
Applications that pass review by the IVB staff will then be reviewed by at least two independent reviewers with relevant expertise in the field for a recommendation on funding.

Final authority on funding approval rests with WHO Secretariat. WHO will notify the successful applicants directly. WHO will be unable to provide individual feedback on unsuccessful applications.

7. How to Apply
Proposals must be submitted by email as an electronic version to vaccineresearch@who.int. Electronic submission must be received by 5 pm (Geneva time) on March 27, 2019 and, should include “IVB – Systematic Review Rubella Vaccination Update” in the subject line. Proposals that are incomplete, or received after the due date, will not be reviewed.