

Call for Letters of Intent: ANDI Product R&D Projects

Background:

The mission of the African Network for Drugs and Diagnostics Innovation (ANDI) is *"To promote and sustain African-led health product innovation to address African public health needs through the assembly of research networks, and building of capacity to support human and economic development"*. The long-term vision is *"To create a sustainable platform for R&D innovation in Africa to address Africa's health needs"*.

ANDI (www.andi-africa.org) was conceived by the World Health Organization (WHO) through the Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases (TDR), and launched as a concept at Abuja in 2008 by several African institutions, policy makers, Africans in the Diaspora, the African Development Bank (AfDB) and other stakeholders. The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) is now the host agency for ANDI in Africa. ANDI intends to develop and fund a portfolio of collaborative network projects and leverage existing capacity in Africa in a manner that will support capacity and infrastructural development for product research, development and delivery. The goal is to sustainably discover, develop and deliver affordable new drugs, vaccines, diagnostics and other health products (including those based upon natural products and traditional medicines) to fight and prevent diseases that disproportionately affect the African continent.

This call follows an earlier call to identify ANDI designated Centres of Excellence (CoE), which resulted in over 115 applications covering the 5 sub-regions of Africa and the various stages along the product R&D pipeline. ANDI intends to align the selected network projects with relevant CoE for additional technical support, and to ensure coherence as well as efficient use of available resources and capacity across Africa. Through this mechanism, ANDI plans to create a virtual network of convergent and integrated centres supporting specific projects, capacity and entrepreneurial development. These in turn could stimulate pan-African institutional technology transfer and broader South-South and North-South collaborations.

Objective:

The specific objectives of this call are:

- a) To identify promising and innovative projects at African institutions (public and private) with potential to result in new drugs, vaccines, diagnostics, insecticides and other tools to fight/prevent diseases that are predominant in Africa.
- b) To identify institutions and investigators with the capacity and technology platforms that will partner and support the above objective.

Areas of focus for the call:

ANDI is soliciting letters of intent (LoI) from academic/research institutions and biotech/pharmaceutical companies in Africa with the skills, expertise and infrastructure to conduct research in the following areas:

Research & Development projects:

- ***Product discovery and related basic research***

- The identification or optimization of drug targets and leads using biological techniques, integrated medicinal chemistry, screening and ADMET (Absorption, Distribution, Metabolism, Excretion and Toxicology) approaches.
- Diagnostics discovery projects
- Vaccine discovery projects
- Vector control tool discovery
- Other technology development e.g. medical devices.

- ***Pre-clinical and clinical product development (drugs and vaccines)***

The pre-clinical evaluation of available compounds or biomolecules with demonstrated efficacy and safety profiles in appropriate models. The focus of development projects will be to support proof-of- concept, clinical evaluation or support for registration especially where the lack of resources, expertise, development partners have prevented the advancement of such products. If necessary, ANDI will look to leverage partnerships with public, private, international and non-governmental organizations to rapidly advance such projects.

- ***Traditional Medicines***

- Innovative traditional medicines or natural products proposals outlining a systematic approach in the evaluation of: (i) herbal remedies; (ii) fully characterized active components or extracts (with demonstrated efficacy).
- Innovative processes for the standardization and evaluation of phytomedicines (and where appropriate their assessment in clinical trials).
- The application of biotechnology to improve the quality and yield of the raw materials.

- ***Innovations in drug formulation, combination and delivery systems***

Identification of efficacious and safe drug delivery methods to support the development and/or enhance the use of new and existing drugs.

- ***Innovations in diagnostics technologies and concepts, and related disease management guidelines***

The application of innovative, affordable and practical technologies to identify new methods for prevention, diagnosis and treatment of disease.

Please note: These focus areas should be considered in the context of the objectives outlined above including capacity building. We strongly encourage investigators with very strong and high impact projects with clear delivery timelines to apply.

It is expected that targeted capacity building activities will be undertaken as part of some of the selected projects and CoE described above.

This call is **open to ALL** institutions and investigators based in Africa.

Application guidelines:

The LoI should include a clear scientific rationale, articulating its competitiveness, potential for African health impact, milestones and deliverables aimed at tracking progress. Applicants can be further guided by the detailed ANDI strategy and implementation plan, outlined in the Strategic and Business Plan (www.andi-africa.org). The call is open to applications in both communicable and/or non-communicable disease areas that disproportionately affect the continent, however, preference will be given to proposals on neglected diseases of high relevance in Africa.

Lols should be formatted as follows:

- Name and institutional contact of principle investigator
- Objective(s) of proposal
- Specific focus or unique aspect of the proposal
- Potential impact for African health
- Scientific rationale and data to justify the project
- Research plan summary containing
 - research questions and/or hypotheses
 - methodological approach
 - milestones and deliverables with date
 - role of partners (if multiple partners on LoI)
- Requested budget
 - with brief justification
- Names, affiliation and contact details of project partners.
- CV of principal investigator

Please note - The total number of pages of the LOI should not exceed 5 pages.

Funding:

Applicants can be guided by the Strategic Business Plan on the funding level per network project (i.e. up to \$1 million per network project). However, it should be noted that fundraising activities for ANDI are in the early stages; hence the number of supported projects will depend upon the availability of funds.

Selection process and deadlines:

The Lols will be reviewed and evaluated by the ANDI Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC). We anticipate that the review and short-listing process will be concluded by June 2011. Following this review, only short-listed applicants will be contacted to develop a full proposal. To ensure alignment with the ANDI mission,



existing efforts and needs, short-listed proposals will be expected to participate in a proposal development workshop. If a promising project is missing a critical partner and expertise, the ANDI secretariat will endeavor to identify such expertise from its accredited Centres of Excellence or third parties. STAC will review the resulting final proposals and from these, make their recommendations.

All LoIs should be submitted electronically to info@andi-africa.org **no later than February 28, 2011**. Please contact Dr. Foluke Fakorede (fakoredef@who.int) or Dr. Victor Konde (ykonde@uneca.org) with any queries.