



## UNIVERSITY OF GHANA SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH

### REQUEST FOR LETTERS OF INTENT (LOI)

#### DECISION MAKER LED IMPLEMENTATION RESEARCH

The **University of Ghana School of Public Health** in collaboration with the Alliance for Health Policy & Systems Research (AHP SR), the Special Programme for Research, Development and Research Training in Human Reproduction (HRP), and the Special Program for Research and Training on Tropical Diseases (TDR), is soliciting letters of intent for research that seeks to enable the effective implementation of health programmes in **Ghana**. **Grants of US dollars \$10,000 will be available to support research studies of up to 12 months in duration.**

#### **ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA**

Implementers working with researchers are eligible to submit proposals in response to this call. The Principal Investigator must be an implementer—an individual directly involved in the implementation of health programmes in **Ghana**. Programme managers, district health officers, practitioners, and front line health workers are typical examples of such individuals. Additionally, the research team must include at least one researcher affiliated with an academic or research institution based in the study country. Please note that **both these conditions must be met** for the proposal to be eligible for funding.

#### **SELECTION CRITERIA**

Letters of intent will be judged on the potential of the research to make a difference in the delivery of health programmes. Other criteria that will be taken into account include value for money, institutional capacity, as well as ensuring diversity in terms of issues addressed by the research.

#### **DEADLINES**

The deadline for the submission of a **two page letter of intent (LOI)** is **15 August 2016**. Invited full proposal submissions will be due on **30 September 2016**.

#### **HOW TO APPLY**

All submissions must be sent to the following email address: **scapir@ug.edu.gh**

#### **THIS CALL**

In spite of proven solutions and increased support at national and international levels there exists a staggering burden of avoidable child morbidity and mortality with unacceptably slow progress on improvements in health outcomes.

The University of Ghana School of Public Health in collaboration with the Alliance for Health Policy & Systems Research (AHPSR), the Special Programme for Research, Development and Research Training in Human Reproduction (HRP), and the Special Program for Research and Training on Tropical Diseases (TDR), is soliciting letters of intent for research that seeks to enable the effective implementation of health programmes in University of Ghana School of Public Health. Research funded under this call is expected to focus on the generation of new strategies and knowledge that will enable more effective implementation of existing programmes within health systems. Proposals to develop and test new interventions will not be funded under this call.

Implementers of health programs are the main target audience for this call. The practical orientation of the field of implementation research, and the kinds of questions it asks, makes it necessary for implementers to have a central role in the conceptualization, design and analysis of Implementation Research projects. While researchers are needed to provide their skills in research methods for the conduct of high quality studies, most often, it is the person working in the field, as opposed to the academic who asks the most important questions related to implementation.

To ensure that these questions are heard and the research undertaken is directed to answer them as opposed to topics that are of interest mainly to academic researchers, this call requires the Principal Investigator to be an implementer. Potential research areas of specific interest for this call include (but are not limited to):

Grants for research studies of 9-12 months will be of up to US dollars \$10,000 depending on the scope and focus of the study as well as the study setting. Additional funding from other sources should be sought if the budget is anticipated to exceed this amount. Through this call it is aimed to:

- Enhance knowledge creation to inform better implementation of existent programmes;
- Strengthen the capacity of decision-makers (implementers) to use research as a means of addressing implementation problems that they face in the field.

In line with these aims, selected teams will be provided active training by expert facilitators organized by the University of Ghana School of Public Health to further develop and refine the research questions and research methods.

#### **WHAT IS IMPLEMENTATION RESEARCH?**

Despite abundant evidence on the efficacy of affordable, life-saving interventions, there is little understanding of how to deliver these interventions effectively in diverse settings and within the wide range of existing health systems. Research is needed to shine light on the often bumpy interface between what can be achieved in theory and what actually happens in practice. Implementation Research aims to do this, by understanding not only what is and isn't working, but how and why implementation is going right or wrong, and testing approaches to improve it.

Implementation Research is a broad field that can address any aspect of implementation, including factors that influence implementation, the implementation process or implementation outcomes. It includes many types of studies using a wide range of approaches including qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods. Implementation Research's main focus on finding actionable

solutions to real problems faced by health systems requires it to pay special attention to context, since implementation issues often arise as a result of contextual factors that policy-makers and health system managers may not even have considered. In addition, Implementation Research involves a variety of stakeholders at each stage of the research process, including program managers, front line health workers and decision-makers who are at many times the source of the most important and pertinent questions. The emphasis on locally relevant research involving practitioners and grounded within the routine functioning of the health system enables Implementation Research to provide unique insights on why a particular intervention succeeds or not in achieving its goals in a specific setting.

For more information on Implementation Research, please refer to:

***Implementation Research in Health: A Practical Guide***

<http://www.who.int/alliance-hpsr/resources/implementationresearchguide/en/>.

## LETTER OF INTENT SUBMISSION DETAILS

### ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Implementers, including practitioners and policy-makers working with researchers are eligible to submit proposals in response to this call subject to the following criteria:

- The Principal Investigator must be an individual directly involved in the implementation of health interventions. Programme managers, district health officers, front line health workers are typical examples of such individuals.
- Additionally, the research team must include at least one researcher affiliated with an academic or research institution based in the study country.

Please note that **both these conditions must be met** for the proposal to be eligible for funding.

Additionally the team should include individuals with:

- A variety of technical expertise (e.g. sociology, policy, epidemiology, management sciences) relevant to the proposed study.
- A mix of roles and responsibilities within the country's health system, i.e., policy-makers, implementers, front line health workers and program managers.

### HOW TO APPLY

All submissions must be sent to the following email address: [aengmann@staff.ug.edu.gh](mailto:aengmann@staff.ug.edu.gh)

- Applicants must submit an initial two page letter of intent by **15 August 2015**. This is a firm deadline. **Letters of intent received after the deadline will not be accepted or considered.**
- The letter of intent should:
  - Clearly state the problem or the barrier to successful implementation
  - Explain why overcoming this barrier is relevant to enabling the effective implementation of measures to improve maternal, newborn and child health within an existing health programme
  - Clearly spell out the proposed research including a brief description of proposed methods
  - Describe what the proposed research would achieve and how this achievement would be measured
  - Provide details of the research team including position and qualifications of the Principal Investigator and Research Partner(s).

- Provide an estimate of the total funding requested for the project
- Letters of intent will be judged on the potential of the research to make a difference in the delivery of health programmes in Ghana. Other criteria that will be taken into account include value for money, institutional capacity, diversity of issues addressed by the research, and regional representativeness.

**Successful applicants will be notified by 30 August 2016.** Projects that are selected will be invited to develop their letters of intent into full proposals. **Full proposals of up to 5,000 words are due by 30 September 2016.**

All proposals will be assessed by an external committee of independent experts using the following criteria:

- Relevance of the proposed research to the present call: Research objectives and questions should relate to implementation. Knowledge generated through the proposed research should enable improvements in the implementation of the identified health programme.
- Feasibility of approaches proposed. This includes: a) feasibility of methods proposed to address the research question within the intended time frame, and b) feasibility of research to produce results within the intended time frame that can be acted upon by the intended audiences.
- Justification of methods and study design to address the primary research question.
- Capacity of research team to implement the proposed study.
- Appropriateness of budget and timing for proposed research activities and precision and clarity in budget proposal and justification.

Research teams should submit these proposals based on an understanding that accepted proposals will undergo refinement at the Protocol Development Workshop (see below).

Based on these criteria, proposals will be selected for funding. Funding decisions will be communicated to applicants by **30 October 2016.**

- Selected teams will be invited to a Protocol Development Workshop in **December 2016** where expert facilitators will provide technical assistance on further refining the proposals.
- Based on feedback obtained at the workshop research teams will be expected to develop their proposals further and have final proposals ready by the **first week of February 2017.**

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**CONTACT DETAILS**

The Coordinator  
SCAPIR Project  
University of Ghana School of Public Health  
Near Noguchi Memorial Institute  
Legon Campus  
024 4276201  
Email: [scapir@ug.edu.gh](mailto:scapir@ug.edu.gh)

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