

Funding Opportunity Announcement
Tobacco and HIV in Low and Middle Income Countries (LMICs)
[PAR-17-087](#) [R01] and [PAR-17-086](#) [R21]

Webinar Questions and Answers

Q. What do we consider a low or middle income country in terms of eligibility?

- A.** A detailed list of specific countries is not provided in the funding opportunity announcement, partly to allow investigators the flexibility to make the case for the country they are working in. We are using the World Bank classifications for the criteria low income countries, lower middle-income and upper middle-income countries; we are excluding high-income countries. Applicants should justify how doing research in their country of choice will contribute to advancing the science on tobacco use in the context of HIV in low and middle income countries.

World Bank Country Classifications

<https://datahelpdesk.worldbank.org/knowledgebase/articles/906519-world-bank-country-and-lending-groups>

Q. What type of exploratory work are you looking for the R21 call? Specifically, do you expect an intervention that has already been developed and pilot tested by the end of the funding period? Or can this be ground-setting work to understand the HIV-positive population or the health system that you are working in?

- A.** The R21 is an exploratory mechanism, and applicants are not expected to have pilot data in advance of submission. Also, the proposal does not have to be an intervention study. Applicants should consider carefully how their research would advance the science. While we certainly do need research that better characterizes tobacco use and HIV-affected populations, we would caution against a study that merely describes the prevalence or distribution of tobacco use in a specific population, which might be helpful in planning an intervention. A stronger research proposal would pose a scientific question, such as identifying factors that influence tobacco use in the HIV-positive population that you're working with.

Q. Is there a focus on specific regions such as Latin America or Africa?

- A.** We have not set out specific priorities for particular geographic regions, and we do not have a preference for one region over another. Certainly, we know that the characteristics of the HIV epidemic vary widely across different regions of the globe. The type of study you are pursuing may certainly be driven partly by the environment that you are working in. It is most important in your application to demonstrate why the country you are working in is an important place to study the problem that you are investigating and how studying the problem in that particular context is going to advance the science more broadly.

- Q. Is there a preference for the type of tobacco product studied (such as hand rolled or manufactured cigarette)?**
- A.** No. Most of the existing literature on HIV and tobacco use has been focused on cigarette smoking. However, other forms of tobacco use (e.g., bidis, cigars, waterpipe, or even smokeless tobacco) may also be important for HIV outcomes. Your application should provide a scientific explanation for why you are focusing on a particular tobacco use behavior.
- Q. Can an application look at a TB population, not specifically an HIV-positive population?**
- A.** To meet the criteria for funding under this FOA, the expectation is that the focus of the research will be in an HIV-positive population. You may discuss your specific proposal with either of the two Scientific Program Contacts (Mark Parascandola-NCI and Rich Jenkins-NIDA).
- Q. Are eHealth and/or mobile health interventions for tobacco use acceptable for this FOA?**
- A.** Yes. One of the stated goals of the announcement is to support research on novel interventions to reduce tobacco use in the HIV treatment context.
- Q. Is it assumed or preferred that the research will take place in multiple countries?**
- A.** No. The research can take place in a single country or in multiple countries. However, the application should provide a scientific justification for the study site (or sites) that are selected. For example, how will conducting the study in the proposed country help to answer the research question and advance the science? If you are working in multiple countries, the application should explain what you will learn from working across those countries, why you have chosen the specific countries for the study, and how it will inform the science.
- Q. Does the applicant institution need to be from a Low- and Middle Income Country (LMIC) institution or could it be from a High-Income Country (HIC) institution along with a LMIC institution (e.g., PI from HIC institution and Co-PI LMIC institution)?**
- A.** Both LMIC and HIC institutions are eligible, and the PI can be based at a HIC institution. However, given the focus of the Program Announcement, it is expected that the research will take place in an LMIC and involve collaboration with LMIC investigators.
- Q. Do you accept applications from institutions or only by single researchers?**
- A.** The R01 and R21 grants funded under this mechanism are structured as grants to institutions, not to individuals. While the Principal Investigator is named on the application, the grant is awarded to the Investigator's institution. The types of eligible institutions are listed in the announcement. However, if you are unsure if your institution is eligible, feel free to contact one of the Scientific Program Contacts.
- Q. Is a U.S. partner required on these applications?**
- A.** Foreign institutions are eligible to apply, and you do not need to partner with a U.S. institution to apply. However, the NIH grant process is highly competitive and in evaluating

applications, reviewers are asked specifically to consider the strength of the research environment at the institution that is applying for the grant. If your research institution does not have a strong research record or prior experience with NIH funding, you may want to consider partnering with an organization that has had such experience.

Q. Are new applicants who have not had prior NIH funding before encouraged to apply?

A. Yes, we welcome applications from new and early stage investigators. Additionally, one of the aims of this funding announcement is to encourage the development of new transdisciplinary teams that bring together expertise in HIV and tobacco. However, if you are new to the NIH application process, we strongly encourage you to consider working with someone who has experience with the NIH grants process before. Additionally, we encourage you to speak with the Scientific Program Contacts in advance so they can help guide you.

Q. Are these applications being reviewed by a special emphasis panel?

A. All applications submitted under this program announcement will be reviewed by a special emphasis panel that is convened specifically for this initiative. They will have expertise specifically relevant to HIV, tobacco use and global health. The R01s and the R21s will be reviewed by the same group.

Q. Why are the standard NIH receipt dates not included for this application?

A. Normally, there would be three receipt dates for a traditional Program Announcement, but because these applications are going to a special review panel rather than a standing study section, we have our own set of receipt dates for this program announcement. The announcement is limited to two cycles per year. Receipt dates can be found on the program announcements.

Q. Why are there different due dates?

A. You can use either receipt date. Given the expectation that applications will involve research using and HIV population, you should be eligible to apply to the AIDS research date. All applications will go through the same review process.

Q. Should the Letter of Intent be sent to Mark Parascandola (NCI) or Rich Jenkins (NIDA)?

A. The Letter of Intent (LOI) could be sent to either NCI or NIDA.. The LOI should include a title, a brief description of what you are planning to do, the name of the principal investigator, and your primary coinvestigators. This information helps the NIH to ensure appropriate expertise on the review panel and determine which prospective reviewers are not eligible to serve on the basis of conflicts of interest.

Q. Do you know how many projects will be funded in each application due date?

A. No, we do not. The number of funded projects will depend on the scores the applications receive in review and on available funds. Since this is a Program Announcement rather than an RFA, there is no specific amount of funds set aside for grants under this announcement.

Q. Does NIDA take applications with cancer components? What specifically is NIDA interested in in this FOA?

A. The institutes exist because we focus on specific problem areas, and there is little replication. If the preponderance of your research aims seem to be related to cancer, chances are your grant proposal will probably go to NCI, even if you request NIDA. NIH colleagues confer with one another about the best assignments. NIDA's interests are a bit more aligned with tobacco use as an addiction. NIDA also has portfolios that are related to tobacco cessation in drug use settings because there is a great deal of overlap with drug use and tobacco use. NIDA also works with FDA in terms of regulatory policy and has some tobacco policy research of its own.

Q. How does the current political landscape influence funding of this type of work?

A. At this time, the NIH is operating business-as-usual, and we are continuing to fund high-priority work. Note that a lot of the money that goes into tobacco and HIV, in particular, is AIDS money that is congressionally-mandated.

Contacts

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