

GLOBAL FUND OBSERVER (GFO) NEWSLETTER, a service of Aidspace.

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The Global Fund announced its Fifth Call for Proposals on March 17. For the first time, one component for which applications are accepted is "health system strengthening." The Fund expects to need \$1,000 million to cover the costs of this Round, but at present only \$300 m. has been promised.

[2. NEWS: "Aidspace Guide to Round 5 Applications to the Global Fund" is Released](#)

"The Aidspace Guide to Round 5 Applications to the Global Fund" has just been published. The 83-page Guide discusses factors that lie behind some of the questions asked in the Round 5 proposal form, and distils conclusions that can be drawn from the successful proposals that were submitted to the Fund in Rounds 3 and 4.

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An excerpt from the new Aidspace Guide discusses why so few applications to the Fund from NGOs have been approved.

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1. NEWS: Global Fund Announces Fifth Call for Proposals
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The Global Fund announced its Fifth Call for Proposals on March 17, as agreed by the board last November.

As in the past, the three main "components" for which applications are accepted are HIV/AIDS, TB, and malaria. But in addition, for the first time, applications will be accepted that focus on "health system strengthening." (The Fund defines this as "system-wide approaches and cross-cutting responses to strengthen health systems" that are linked to the fight against the three diseases.)

All proposals submitted by the closing date of 10 June 2005 will be reviewed to ensure that they meet the eligibility criteria. Eligible proposals will then be forwarded to the Technical Review Panel (TRP) for consideration. The TRP will make recommendations to the Global Fund Board, which will make its decisions at its 28-30 September board meeting.

When the TRP members review the proposals, they will do so in their personal capacities – they must not share the information with or accept any instructions from their employers or their national governments.

Once the TRP has assessed each proposal, it will assign it a rating in one of the following categories:

- Recommended (Category 1): Proposal is recommended for approval.
- Recommended (Category 2): Proposal is recommended for approval, subject to the applicant satisfactorily responding to a number of requests by the TRP for clarification.

- Not Recommended (Category 3): Proposal is not recommended in its present form, but applicant is encouraged to submit an improved proposal in a future round.
- Not Recommended (Category 4): Proposal is not recommended for approval, and applicant is not encouraged to re-submit.

In allocating each proposal to one of the above categories, the TRP will take into consideration only technical factors, such as whether the project described in the proposal is technically sound, whether it is one that the specified organization(s) are capable of implementing, and whether it represents good use of the money. The TRP is required to ignore the question of whether it believes the Global Fund has enough money to pay for all of the proposals that it is recommending. If the TRP recommends more proposals than the Fund has money to finance, it will be for the Board to deal with the problem.

As of 17 March 2005, the Fund estimated that only US\$300 million was available to cover the costs of Round 5. Clearly, additional pledges will be received before the board has to approve proposals at the end of September 2005. But the Fund estimates that the cost of Years 1-2 of Round 5 proposals that the TRP will recommend for approval will be about \$1,000 m. (The cost for Round 4 was \$1,038 m.) This means that the Fund needs to receive \$700 m. in additional pledges for 2005 by the end of September. Most observers believe it is unlikely that this will happen. However, some of these observers – including Aidspace, publisher of GFO – have urged that the Fund soften its financial policies, which currently require that the Fund not sign a grant agreement unless funds to cover the entire cost have already been deposited in the Fund's bank account. Softening the policy would make it possible to approve more grants in Round 5.

Once a proposal is approved by the board, the Secretariat will enter into a lengthy and complex process of: (a) ensuring that the applicant answers, to the satisfaction of the TRP, any questions that the TRP asked regarding the proposal; (b) assessing the ability of the proposed Principal Recipient (PR) to perform the role that the proposal assigns to it; and (c) negotiating grant agreement(s) with the PR. It is only after this multi-month process that the first cash disbursement will be sent. Thus, although proposals have to be submitted by 10 June 2005, it is unlikely that the first funding will be sent for successful proposals before the beginning of 2006.

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2. NEWS: "Aidspace Guide to Round 5 Applications to the Global Fund" is Released

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"The Aidspace Guide to Round 5 Applications to the Global Fund" has just been published. It is accessible at no charge at www.aidspace.org/guides, where three previous Aidspace Guides are already available.

The 83-page Guide discusses factors that lie behind some of the questions asked in the Round 5 proposal form, and distills conclusions that can be drawn from a detailed analysis of the successful proposals that were submitted to the Global Fund in Rounds 3 and 4.

The Guide is not intended to tell readers what they "should say" in their applications to the Fund. The objective instead is to de-mystify the application process and to provide a clearer feeling of what is expected. It is based on the premise that there is no single "correct" way of completing the proposal form. It encourages applicants to clearly describe their plans to tackle HIV, TB, or malaria; and to make a convincing case that the plans are viable, capable of delivering the anticipated results, and something that the applicants are committed to and capable of implementing.

The main sections in the Guide are as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction and Background

- Overview of the Global Fund
- Who is Eligible?
- Description of the Applications Process and the Steps Following Grant Approval
- Some Key Concepts to be Used in all Proposals

- Some Warnings

Chapter 2: Getting Ready to Apply

- Deciding Whether to Apply
- Designing a Process for the Period Before Starting to Fill Out the Proposal Form
- Determining How CCMs Can Make the Best Use of the Private Sector
- Determining How CCMs Can Make the Best Use of NGOs
- Deciding Whether to Consider Submitting a Non-CCM Proposal
- Deciding Whether to Consider a Regional Proposal
- Deciding Whether to Consider a Sub-National CCM Proposal

Chapter 3: Lessons Learned from the Third and Fourth Rounds of Funding

- Strengths [See next article]
- Weaknesses [See next article]

Chapter 4: Step-by-Step Guide to Filling Out the Round 5 Proposal Form

- Importance of the Round 5 Guidelines for Proposals
- Guidance on Use of the Different Formats of the Proposal Form
- General Guidance on the Proposal Form
- Guidance on Specific Sections of the Proposal Form

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3. ANALYSIS: The Major Strengths and Weaknesses of Previous Applications to the Fund

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Chapter 3 of *"The Aidspan Guide to Round 5 Applications to the Global Fund"* discusses the strengths and weaknesses of applications submitted in Rounds 3 and 4. The list provided is based on an extensive analysis by Aidspan of comments made on those applications by the TRP.

The main strengths that the TRP has mentioned are as follows:

1. The proposal was clear and well-documented; the strategy was sound.
2. There was good involvement of partners (including NGOs and other sectors) in the implementation plan.
3. There was a strong political commitment to implement the project.
4. The project targeted high-risk groups and vulnerable populations.
5. The proposal demonstrated complementarity – i.e., it built on existing activities.
6. The proposal demonstrated sustainability – i.e., national budgets were identified to help sustain the activities once Global Fund support terminated.
7. The goals, objectives, activities, outcomes, and budgets were well aligned.
8. The monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plan was solid.
9. The budget was well detailed.
10. There was good collaboration among programs addressing the three diseases.
11. The project was realistic and achievable.
12. The proposal contained a good situational analysis.
13. The proposal reflected comments made by the TRP during earlier rounds of funding.

14. The proposal built on the national strategic plan or other existing programs.
15. The CCM was strong and had wide sectoral representation.
16. The proposal demonstrated good co-funding.
17. The Principal Recipient(PR) is a strong organization, with experience managing similar programs.
18. The proposal contained innovative strategies, some of which could lead to best practices.
19. The proposal built on lessons learned and best practices.
20. The proposal built on earlier projects financed by the Global Fund.

The main weaknesses that the TRP has mentioned are as follows:

1. The workplan was inadequate. There was insufficient, unclear or questionable information on one or more of the following: the rationale, the strategic approach, the objectives, the activities and the expected outcomes.
2. The budget information was inaccurate, questionable and/or not sufficiently detailed.
3. The various sections of the proposal were not well aligned.
4. The M&E plan was either missing or inadequate.
5. The budget (and therefore the project) was imbalanced; too much or too little was allocated to one or more sectors or activities.
6. The treatment, care and support component of the proposal was missing or inadequate.
7. In HIV/AIDS and TB proposals, there were either no joint activities or insufficient joint activities involving both diseases.
8. The project was too ambitious; some or all of the goals and objectives were not realistic.
9. The use of partners (including NGOs and other sectors) in the implementation of the project was inadequate or unclear.
10. The impact and/or outcome indicators were inappropriate or poorly defined.
11. The project did not focus sufficiently on vulnerable groups.
12. The proposal did not demonstrate complementarity or additionality; it was not clear how the project related or added to existing programs.
13. The proposal did not contain a good situational analysis and/or provide adequate baseline information.
14. The plan for procurement and supply chain management was inadequate.
15. The CCM was not sufficiently representative.
16. There were problems concerning the PR.

"The Aidsplan Guide to Round 5 Applications to the Global Fund" discusses all of these in detail, and provides links to proposals and TRP comments that provide illustrations of the strengths.

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4. EXCERPT: Deciding Whether to Consider Submitting a Non-CCM Proposal

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[The following is an excerpt from "The Aidspace Guide to Round 5 Applications to the Global Fund", available at www.aidspace.org/guides.]

The Global Fund prefers that all applications come from CCMs, and strongly discourages applications from NGOs. One of the reasons for this is that the Global Fund wants to promote partnerships among the stakeholders. Another reason is that the Fund does not want to be swamped with multiple applications from one country, with objectives pointing in different directions.

The Round 5 Guidelines for Proposals state that organizations from countries in which a CCM does not exist may apply directly, but must provide evidence that the proposal is consistent with and complements national policies and strategies.

For countries where there is a CCM, the Guidelines state that proposals from organizations other than CCMs are not eligible unless they satisfactorily explain that they originate from one of the following:

- countries without legitimate governments (such as governments not recognized by the United Nations);
- countries in conflict, facing natural disasters, or in complex emergency situations; or
- countries that suppress or have not established partnerships with civil society and NGOs.

The Guidelines state that a non-CCM proposal must demonstrate clearly why it could not be considered under the CCM process, and provide documentation of these reasons. The Guidelines further state that if a non-CCM proposal was provided to a CCM for its consideration, but the CCM either did not review it in a timely fashion or refused to endorse it, the steps taken to obtain CCM approval should be described; and arguments in support of the CCM endorsement, as well as documentary evidence of the attempts to obtain CCM approval, should be provided.

In the first four rounds of funding, proposals from NGOs have been funded only in very limited circumstances.

In Rounds 3 and 4, the Global Fund approved proposals from NGOs in Somalia and Côte d'Ivoire, two war-torn countries. In Round 3, the Fund approved a proposal from an NGO in Russia where, at the time, there was no CCM in existence. In Round 2, two proposals were approved from NGOs in Madagascar where, again, there was no CCM in existence. However, because a CCM was being formed in Madagascar at the time the proposals were submitted, the Global Fund stipulated in its grant agreements for these projects that once the CCM was formed, the CCM must oversee the implementation of the projects.

There has only been one instance of a proposal from an NGO being funded outside the circumstances described above. It was a proposal to provide prevention services to injection drug users in Thailand, and it was funded in Round 3. Several factors made this situation unique:

- The government was not funding prevention activities targeting injection drug users.
- A military and police crackdown on drug traffickers and individual drug users was underway.
- The NGO submitting the proposal said that it had been informed that some members of the CCM would not support any proposal that included prevention programs for injection drug users.

These were the only proposals from NGOs approved in Rounds 2-4. In Round 1, when many CCMs were still being formed, the Global Fund approved four proposals from NGOs.

The bottom line for Round 5 is that NGOs are best advised to work through the CCM. Exactly how NGOs become involved in the applications process will depend on the process that the CCM uses to prepare proposals. It may also depend on the degree of satisfaction that NGOs have with this process. If NGOs are unhappy with the process, one option they might consider is to prepare a proposal and then attempt to get the CCM to adopt it as its own proposal.

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This is an issue of the GLOBAL FUND OBSERVER (GFO) NEWSLETTER.

GFO is an independent source of news, analysis and commentary about the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria (www.theglobalfund.org). GFO is emailed to 7,500 subscribers in 170 countries once to twice a month.

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