
Frequently Asked Questions

General

What is ICODA?

[Health Data Research UK](#) has convened [the International COVID-19 Data Alliance](#), which is a global alliance of leading life sciences, philanthropic and research organisations. It acts as a global hub and supports researchers to address COVID-19 research questions and enable discoveries, through ensuring health data and analytical tools are accessible in a safe, secure and trusted environment.

ICODA is partnering with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's Grand Challenges programme to pilot the Grand Challenges ICODA COVID-19 initiative, supported by the COVID-19 Therapeutics Accelerator.

Where can I find more information about the funding call, including the Request for Proposals?

More information about this Grand Challenges ICODA COVID-19 Data Science initiative can be found here: <https://icoda-research.org/research/our-research/#grandchallenge>

How is this opportunity different from other Requests for Proposals?

This is a pilot programme that will focus on further development of processes, tools and approaches that maximise the impact of data-focused research studies to address the current COVID-19 pandemic. It will also lay the groundwork for the 2021 Global Challenge Request for Proposals that will launch at the end of next year. Selected grantees will not only receive between \$25,000-\$100,000 to address core research questions related to COVID-19 but will become exemplar projects, and part of a facilitated global, multi-disciplinary community supported by ICODA and its partners to further develop processes, tools and infrastructure to best facilitate reproducible research for data-centred projects.

How much time do grantees have to implement their projects?

Funded projects will have between 6 to 12 months to implement their projects from the date that the grant is awarded.

Will there be an information session for potential applicants?

ICODA and partners hosted an information session about this Grand Challenges ICODA COVID-19 Data Science initiative at 14.00 UTC on **07 January 2021**. During this session, we

presented details about the opportunity, details about the ICODA Workbench and answered interested applicants' questions. To see a recording of the event, please follow this [link](#).

Application process and eligibility

What is the focus of these Grand Challenges projects? Is it exclusively on clinical care, therapeutics and trials, or is it about broader aspects of the pandemic?

This is a Data Science focused call. We expect projects of this pilot Grand Challenges call to leverage existing data sets to answer COVID-19 related research questions from a broad range including those that cover:

1. Natural disease history, epidemiology and transmission
2. Vaccines and prophylaxis
3. Infection, prevention and control
4. Therapeutics
5. Clinical management

The latter would include the impact of COVID-19 on mental health, comorbidities and "long COVID" as well as on other conditions. It does ****not**** include the economic impact of COVID-19 or its impact on public finance, the delivery of health services and the environment.

How can I submit a proposal?

All applicants must complete and submit their application through <https://icoda.cognitive.city/>

Applications must be submitted before **19 January 2021 at 24.00 UTC**

I am having issues logging in to the ICODA Cognitive City site to access the application.

Here's a [link](#) to the welcome page of the site: hopefully, this will take you through to the applications. If you're continuing to have problems, please e-mail Exaptive directly at support@exaptive.com. Alternatively, you can go straight to their help centre, which is available via the purple icon in the bottom-right corner of every Cognitive City Page.

Can I submit my application in a language other than English?

For this pilot initiative, applications should be made in English.

Am I able to edit my application after submission?

Yes, you can still edit your application after formal submission. All edits must be made before **19 January 2021 at 24.00 UTC**

What type of study design is eligible for the GC data science call?

Only quantitative secondary data that is clearly defined and accessible by the applicant/s. No primary or incomplete datasets will be eligible, data should be available for analysis immediately following a successful application.

What is the key information needed to complete an application?

If you visit the [ICODA website](#) and the [application form](#) this sets out the information required for the initial application. The application form is also available as a Word document.

Can I submit more than one proposal?

You can only be a lead applicant/principal investigator (PI) for one submitted proposal. However, you can be a team member in other submissions from different host institutions. Furthermore, multiple applications from an institution are allowed, as long as they have different PIs.

How many applications are expected to be successful and funded?

As this is a pilot initiative, we are only envisaging a small number of awards (approx. 5-8). The exact number of applications that win awards will also be influenced by the number of quality applications we receive, and the resource requirements required from ICODA to deliver them.

What are the selection criteria?

The table below summarises the selection criteria that will be considered by the international review panel.

| Section | Criteria | Points available |
|--------------------|---|---|
| Research study | Proposed research study has the potential to have a direct impact on addressing the COVID-19 pandemic Impact can be achieved by the end of the project cycle | 20 10 NB: Applications scoring 0 against these criteria will be de-selected at this stage |
| Data | Appropriateness of, and access to, datasets being used to address research question Appropriateness of data science methods/ tools being used to address research question | 15 15 |
| Geographical scope | Geographical scope of study: involvement of | 10 |

| | | |
|--------------------------------|---|----|
| | LMICs and applicability to other regions | |
| Patient and public involvement | Patient and public involvement and engagement in study design and governance | 10 |
| Experience | Experience of research team and host institutions and capacity to deliver study | 10 |
| Budget | Proposed budget is reasonable and enables delivery | 10 |

Can research studies focus on diseases other than COVID-19?

No. The pilot initiative focuses on COVID-19 and its impact.

I don't have international collaborators for this project. Can I still apply?

Researchers from anywhere in the world are eligible to apply. However, given the multi-disciplinary nature of this call, we recommend including collaborators from different regional or international institutions and researchers, especially from LMICs.

Who is eligible to apply for this grant?

The call is open to researchers from anywhere in the world. Researchers based at international organisations, government agencies, research and academic institutions, non-profit organisations and for-profit organisations can apply.

Can I apply for this pilot initiative if the application is from a single institution and or country?

Yes, however, please note that we do encourage multi-site collaboration and also encourage involvement from lower- and middle-income countries.

I'm a postdoc, am I eligible to be a PI?

Yes, anyone can submit a proposal as long the institution you are affiliated to is able to host the grant and agree to the grant terms and conditions.

I don't have a funding track record; can I still submit a proposal?

Yes, anyone can submit a proposal as long the institution you are affiliated to is able to host the grant and agree to the grant terms and conditions.

I don't have a PhD, am eligible to be a PI?

Yes, anyone can submit a proposal as long the institution you are affiliated to is able to host the grant and agree to the grant terms and conditions.

Data and workbench

If I don't have any COVID-19 related data, can I still submit a proposal?

You don't have to have the data yourself, but you do need to co-apply with data custodians that have relevant data that could be analysed to answer COVID-19 related questions.

If I have a private dataset I'd like to work with, do I have to make it public?

No. ICODA and partners recognise that individual-level health data cannot be made openly available. We have review processes to ensure only accredited researchers are able to access data for approved research projects, so all access will be controlled. It is possible to bring private data into a private workspace on the ICODA Workbench to analyse as part of a research project.

We also encourage data contributors to make metadata available to improve searchability.

Where can I find more information about available data sources?

We are currently building our library of available datasets and resources. The main focus for this call is to encourage researchers who have already identified datasets to apply for funding.

Will the awards support research studies that involve the generation and/or collation of new data?

No. Applicants are expected to bring and use existing data sets to undertake secondary research and analysis.

Will the funded groups have to do all their data analysis using the Workbench?

Yes, the ICODA Workbench provides a secure environment for data analysis. If it is not possible to transfer data to the Workbench, we can also work to enable federated access provided the data is hosted in an appropriate research environment. This federated approach allows the analysis request to be sent to the data, rather than having to transfer data to the Workbench.

Will there be support and advice for funded groups as they engage with the Workbench?

Yes, absolutely. We have experts who can advise on a number of different aspects of a project, including data governance, data dictionaries, statistical analysis plans, and patient and public involvement and engagement.

Is there an opportunity for grantees to use their own tools via the workbench?

Yes. A wide range of tools are already provisioned in the Workbench, but it is also possible for researchers to import their own tools into the Workbench to undertake specific analysis.

If I contribute data, who will get access to it? Will it be accessible by ICODA/HDR UK and funding partners?

Access to data is restricted to researchers that have passed through ICODA's review processes. Researchers must be accredited, and research proposals must be approved. We will work with data contributors to agree the governance processes that fit their requirements.

Will I be able to see the names of the researchers who are accessing my data and their research use statements?

Yes.

If I have an idea but don't have enough data to execute it, can I still apply? Can organisers help connect me with data partners?

At this stage, we expect applicants to have clearly identified datasets for their proposed research studies and have agreement in principle from potential data contributors before submitting an application.

How will uploaded data, and data existing on the Workbench, be secured and shared?

Data can be uploaded securely to our strategic database partner, SAIL via a data contributor agreement. From there it may be securely transferred to the COVID-19 Workbench for analysis directly with tools within the Workbench by a project team, or alternatively queried remotely from the Workbench using "federated analytics". In this latter case, the data never moves – the analytics are sent to the data and a result returned to the Workbench.

Both these approaches facilitate open science, as the datasets within the SAIL databank may be requested by other research projects if usage meets guidelines specified by the data contributor. Data contributors are able to specify usage specifics within their data contributor agreement.

Data within the Workbench is only accessible by "Safe people" i.e., researchers who have been accredited by ICODA or SAIL and who are working on approved pilot projects. The Workbench is an airlocked environment where the data, analysis and results of analysis are securely held in a Workspace and accessible only to the researchers working on the project. Output of research goes through an airlock process whereby results are checked ahead of export from a Workspace for publication.

What are the benefits of sharing data in the Workbench?

The Workbench is a trusted research environment, providing a “Safe setting” (Workspace) within which research can be performed.

Budget

What costs will be covered by the grant awards?

We are currently finalising the full terms of the grant awards, but it's likely the following will be covered:

- Costs associated with salaries/back fill costs for the research team
- Equipment, up to a maximum of \$5,000 equivalent
- Indirect costs, up to a maximum of 10% of total budget
- Reasonable travel costs

Applicants are asked to estimate an overall budget in their application, using 100% full economic costs if from a lower- and middle-income country, and 80% full economic costs from other countries.

Can I use this fund to generate or validate data?

No, these grants can't be used to generate or collect data. This is a Data Science focused call that aims to leverage existing data sources.

Is there a maximum budget per project?

Successful proposals for this challenge will be awarded a seed grant between \$25,000 and \$100,000 for a 6 - 12-month duration to implement their projects. In addition, they will receive the following:

- Access to the ICODA Workbench (see <https://www.aridhia.com/covid-19/> for more information about the Workbench)
- Support with making data accessible and usable
- Statistical expertise
- Membership of a supportive community of data contributors, technical experts and researchers
- Access to content and resources to help them deliver on their commitment to public and patient involvement and engagement

Grant terms and conditions

Where can I find the detailed grant terms and conditions?

The organisations that host the successful applicants for this grant award scheme will receive their awards directly from Health Data Research UK (HDR UK), which convenes ICODA. Therefore, HDR UK's standard grant [terms and conditions](#) will apply.

What costs will be covered by the grant awards?

We are currently finalising the full terms of the grant awards. However, it is likely that these will be closely aligned with HDR UK's terms and conditions for awards, as well as reflect those of related Grand Challenges programmes. We anticipate the following will be covered:

Costs associated with salaries/back fill costs for the research team

Equipment, up to a maximum of \$5,000 equivalent

Indirect costs, up to a maximum of 10% of total budget

Reasonable travel costs

Applicants are asked to estimate an overall budget in their application, using 100% full economic costs if from a lower- and middle-income country, and 80% full economic costs from other countries.

Who should sign the grant contract?

When awarded, the contract needs to be signed by the person or department legally authorised to sign grants on behalf of your host institution.

What are the reporting requirements for the grant application?

Selected projects will be required to provide regular reports on the progress and outcomes of your research every 3 months. More information about how and when to do this will be shared with awarded grantees. Final financial and scientific reports will also be required from grantees.

It is important to note that selected projects will become ICODA Driver Projects and as such, will be expected to contribute to the global community of data scientists and researchers brought together by Grand Challenges and ICODA and to help develop collaborations and shape infrastructure, governance and processes to accelerate progress on managing COVID-19, future pandemics and wider health challenges.

Does ICODA publish grant applications received?

ICODA does not publish applications received. However, ICODA and the Grand Challenges Explorations may publish details of successful awards and their outputs, including the name of the PI, host organisation, project title, a summary of the grant/award and its value.

How is intellectual property handled?

This is a joint initiative between Grand Challenges and ICODA, and supported by the COVID-19 Therapeutics Accelerator. ICODA is convened by Health Data Research UK (HDR UK) and will be the grant awarding organisation, therefore HDR UK's [terms and conditions](#) will apply.

Are there specific requirements for publishing and sharing data?

In line with ICODA's commitment to openness and transparency, we expect authors to maximise the opportunities to make their results available for free. ICODA expects authors publishing the outputs of work using data accessed through the ICODA workbench to select publishing routes that ensure the work is available immediately on publication in its final published form, without a paywall or embargo period. We also expect data outputs, such as algorithms/software, to be uploaded to the Health Data Research UK GitHub Organisation repository. For further information, please see [ICODA's publication and attribution policies](#)

Project evaluation and community

What does a successful project look like, what type of results should this project achieve?

Selected projects are expected to deliver insights and impact on COVID-19 pandemic management within the proposed budget and time frame of 6-12 months.

They are also ICODA Driver Projects, which will help to test and evaluate processes and procedures for a wider community of researchers, as well as shape and improve the capability of the COVID-19 Workbench. This will require close collaboration and partnering with ICODA, its partners and the wider, global community. A successful project will therefore also help shape a platform that incorporates technology, processes and governance that helps researchers to securely access and work with data, and generate insights more rapidly. This will help to address both the current pandemic and future health challenges more effectively.

What does being part of the Grand Challenges ICODA community involve?

The initiative seeks to build a global community of data scientists and public health experts to address urgent challenges related to managing the COVID-19 pandemic, while involving and engaging patients and wider communities. Being part of the Grand Challenges ICODA community will provide access to shared resources and require contributions to collaborative activities, such as training, webinars and discussion forums, to maximise the impact of individual projects and accelerate collective progress.