Request for Proposals (RFP)
The Operational Plan for Comprehensive HIV and AIDS Care, Management and Treatment for South Africa

Background
In November 2003, the South African Cabinet approved The Operational Plan for Comprehensive HIV and AIDS Care, Management and Treatment for South Africa. The plan envisages a research programme that focuses on practical questions that are necessary for better understanding and improving the provision of comprehensive HIV and AIDS care and treatment. The objective of the research agenda is to conduct studies whose answers will define the most effective provision of HIV and AIDS care and treatment, and guide programme implementation. This will help to answer crucial questions that will inform improvements in the quality and efficacy of the programme. This RFP is part of the process of disseminating funds to take forwards this innovative research agenda.
The Operational Plan for Comprehensive HIV and AIDS Care, Management and Treatment for South Africa is available at **www.doh.gov.za**

Description:
This is a call for proposals for innovative research on HIV and AIDS. It is not intended to support the provision of services. Awards will be limited to a maximum of R1 million per annum. Successful proposals will be funded by the Medical Research Council (MRC) with the funds specifically allocated to the MRC by the National Department of Health for the Comprehensive HIV and AIDS Plan.
These should be proposals for projects addressing one or more of the following research priority areas:

1. Clinical, social and behavioural research in HIV prevention, treatment and care addressing programme issues such as HIV & tuberculosis; opportunistic infections or co-infections; antiretroviral therapy; drug resistance; efficacy and toxicity monitoring approaches in the South African context; nutrition; and complementary/traditional medicines in treatment of AIDS.
2. Health systems research related to activities aimed at improving the health system's capacity to handle the increased service requirements established by the implementation of the plan.

Proposals should also aim to offer approaches and technologies that enhance the goals of the Comprehensive HIV and AIDS plan. (Refer to **Appendix I** for a more detailed list of suggested research areas).

Project Duration:
Funding will be awarded for periods up to **36 months.**

Who May Apply:
Proposals may be submitted by local public or private organisations, including universities, research institutions, NGOs, etc. Awards will not be provided directly to individuals. Proposals may be awarded with a foreign Principal Investigator providing there is also a South African Principal Investigator and the intellectual property remains in South Africa.

Proposal Format/Contents:

All proposals must contain the following information written in English. The main text should be submitted in a **size 12 Times New Roman font**.

1) A cover letter, briefly describing the purpose of the proposed project, duration, place of performance, total requested funding, name of (South African) Principal Investigator, names and addresses of the technical or administrative point of contact, who can respond to inquiries regarding the request.
2) The proposal is limited to **25 single-spaced pages** (proposals will not be reviewed if they exceed the stated page limit) excluding the one page cover letter, references, budget and budget justification and **CV of Principal Investigator**. The proposal should at least contain the following sections/elements:

- **Executive Summary** – (1 page or less) including a statement of introduction, aims and objectives, summary of methods and statement of the importance of findings for public health.
- **Background and Rationale for the Project** (6-8 pages) – Justification for why the research project should be undertaken. What research question/s or hypothesis will be addressed?
- **Aim and Objectives**
- **Research Methods**– Proposed study design, sampling, data collection methods and analysis. How you will accomplish the project (include province(s) and target population(s)).
- **Staffing Plan** – Describing roles and responsibilities of individuals who will work on the project.
- **Capacity Development –** number of masters and doctoral students to be trained during the study.
- **Collaborators** – Describe any partnerships with other organisations and what tasks those other organisations will perform.
- **Plans for Disseminating Project Results.**
- **Risks, benefits and plans for the protection of human subjects**
- **Project Workplan** – A detailed timetable covering all major activities of the project.
- **Budget** (not included in the 25 page limit) in SA Rands as described below.
  - Budget Justification (short descriptions to support the budget). The budget (SA Rands) should be broken down into categories to include: salaries, rates, travel, equipment, supplies/materials, contracts, overhead, etc.
- **Organisation's Experience & Expertise** (not included in 25 page limit) (in administering similar projects).
  - Describe financial management expertise of the organization. (The Research Committee may ask the applicants to provide information about constitution of their Board and ask to see the last year's audited accounts).
  - Describe the mission of your organisation.
  - Indicate which of the following describes your organisation:
    (a) Academic Institution,
    (b) Non-Governmental Organisation,
    (c) Community Based Organisation,
    (d) Private for-profit organisation or
    (e) Other (please specify).
- **CV of Principal Investigator (5 pages) and 2 page CV of all other investigators**. CVs should include a few lines summarising the goals and methods of other projects currently being undertaken and completed in the last 5 years by each investigator.

Proposal Submission: (Proposals should be sent on both hard and soft copies).

- Submit proposals on hard copy for attention: Prof A MBewu, President: Medical Research Council, PO Box 19070 TYGERBERG 7505.
- Soft copies should be e-mailed to Ms B Chamberlain at **rgmd@mrc.ac.za.**

Enquiries
Enquiries should be directed to Dr LE Makubalo, Chief Director: Health Information, Evaluation and Research, Department of Health, at (012) 312 0774/5.

For enquiries regarding proposal process contact Mr. CJ Molaba at (012) 312 0509 or Ms B Chamberlain (021) 938 0217.

Deadline:
The deadline for submission of proposals is **03 February 2006**. Proposals not received by end business on the closing date will not be sent for review.

Ethics Approval:
A letter of approval from a South African research ethics committee will be required before awards can be finalized. Where applicable, MCC approval may also be required. However, these letters should not be solicited prior to award notification.

Reporting Requirements:
Applicants who receive funding will be required, at a minimum, to submit annual progress reports.

Data Rights:
An agreement between the Department of Health and the applicant will be entered into regarding all data to be delivered or generated under the awarded project.

APPENDIX I

Research categories for RFPs

Comprehensive HIV and AIDS Care, Management and Treatment Plan for South Africa
The main objective of the research agenda as outlined in the operational plan is to conduct studies whose answers will define the most effective provision of HIV and AIDS care and treatment, and guide programme implementation. This will help to answer crucial questions that will inform improvements in the quality and efficacy of the programme.
Within the framework of the research programme for the comprehensive HIV and AIDS plan, there are a number of specific research questions that are of highest priority that will be funded by the Department of Health.
This is a summary of various research questions that are identified in the research chapter of the Operational Plan for Comprehensive HIV and AIDS Care, Management and Treatment.
The sub-categories in the current RFP are not all-inclusive – i.e. proposal can be accepted if it fits into one of the 5 categories outlined below.

1. Social and behavioural research and research into prevention strategies

- Condom promotion strategies.
- Modification of sexual behaviour.
- Evaluation of the effectiveness of sexual behavioural interventions in the general population, for AIDS orphans and for people with HIV
- What is the impact of ART on the sexual behaviour of people with HIV?
- What is the impact of ART on social responses to ART, including stigma?
- Research on the effectiveness of and models of service delivery of HIV counseling and testing in increasing update, partner testing and disclosure
- Research on public understanding of ART, and the roles of nutrition, immune boosters and the traditional medicines in HIV care-seeking and prevention
- What is the impact of the use of immune boosters and traditional medicines on ART adherence?
- Lay knowledge of opportunistic infections, and the development and evaluation of strategies to improve levels of knowledge of signs of opportunistic infections in the general public and earlier presentation for care

2. HIV & Tuberculosis

- Optimising initiation of HAART in patients with tuberculosis
- What are the ARV regimen options that are most effective in the setting of concomitant clinical TB?
- Determination of the bioavailability of antiretroviral drugs and anti-TB medications among HIV-infected TB patients compared with non-HIV infected TB cases.
- Strategies to prevent tuberculosis in patients receiving antiretroviral therapy

3. Other opportunistic infections or co-infections

- Interactions between antimalarial and antiretroviral therapy
- What is the role of co-infection with sexually transmitted infections (such as HSV2) on -infections with HIV?
- What is the effect of intestinal parasites on drug absorption?
- Studies of the prevalence, diagnosis and treatment of HIV-associated cancers.

4. Antiretroviral therapy

- What is the impact of nevirapine PMTCT programmes on subsequent treatment of women and their children?
- Optimising PMTCT therapy

- What is the evolution of drug resistance in the treated population as the programme is rolled out?
- What is the prevalence of drug resistance in the untreated population (i.e., how much drug resistant virus is being transmitted)?
- What is the optimal use and frequency of CD4 testing?
- What is the optimal use and frequency of viral load testing?
- What effect do different CD4 counts have on treatment outcomes as it relates to initiation of therapy?
- What to start: Should the initial regimen be non-nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitor (NNRTI) based or protease inhibitor (PI) based?
- When to change: Should clinical, CD4 or VL indications be used to determine when to change therapy?
- What to do in pregnancy? What are the optimal first and second line regimens in pregnancy?
- What to do in paediatric infection? What are the optimal first and second line regimens in paediatric infection?
- What are the metabolic complications of ARV treatment in the South African population?
- What is the cost-effectiveness of ARV treatment in South Africa?
- Assess interventions to improve adherence
- What is the impact of mental health status on adherence to ART? What are the most useful mental health interventions in patients with newly diagnosed HIV and how should they be provided in the public health sector?
- How effective is the national policy of ART provision in reducing mortality and morbidity and improving the quality of life of people with HIV and AIDS in the population? What are the most important factors influencing its effectiveness? How does this vary in urban and rural areas? Does it vary by gender?
- What is the most effectiveness and appropriate service delivery model to meet palliative care needs for people with AIDS?
- What are the most effective models of care for urban and rural health care facilities?

5. Nutrition and Complementary/Traditional Medicines

- What are the optimal approaches to the delivery of essential nutritional elements to PLWHAs?
- Assess the effect of nutritional supplements on the natural history of HIV and AIDS.
- What is the role of micronutrients in PMTCT?
- Evaluate the safety of traditional medicines in HIV infection.
- Clinical trials to assess the efficacy of traditional/complementary medicines in HIV infection. Evaluate drug-drug interactions of traditional/complementary medicines with ARVs
- What is the impact of use of immune boosters and traditional medicines for HIV on household expenditure in homes where people have HIV?