

Accelerating Innovation in Vaginal Formulations in Support of Women's Health

Grand Challenges

Rules & Guidelines

Applications due no later than December 16, 2025, 11:30 a.m. U.S. Pacific Time

Supporting Materials

- 1) Full RFP – [Accelerating Innovation in Vaginal Formulations in Support of Women's Health](#)
- 2) [Application Instructions](#)
- 3) [Budget Template and Narrative](#)
- 4) [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\)](#)

Key dates and deadlines*

Key Dates	Event
October 28, 2025	Application period opens
December 16, 2025, 11:30 a.m. US PT	Application period closes, deadline to submit
May 2026	Applicants notified of decisions
By September 2026	Estimated start dates

*Any changes to the Key Dates and Deadlines will be updated on the Grand Challenges website.

Eligibility Criteria

This initiative is open to research institutes, nonprofit organizations, for-profit companies, international organizations, government agencies, and academic institutions. Please note that all applicants will be expected to comply with the Foundation's global access clause. We encourage groups to build upon existing and/or complimentary projects/studies/trials and to collaborate with other institutions. We particularly encourage applications from projects led by women and/or researchers at institutions based in LMICs and/or involving collaboration with women-led or LMIC-based organizations. Only individuals who are applying through a legally recognized corporate entity are eligible.

Upon registration, applicants must provide information about the tax status of their organization as different terms and conditions may apply. You should confirm your organization's tax status with the appropriate advisor or entity within your organization such as your grants or contracts department, finance, or office of sponsored research. The foundation may request additional information regarding your tax status. For information about tax statuses, you may check with your own advisors and review information provided on the Internal Revenue Service web site at: www.irs.gov.

How to Apply

Please review the [Application Instructions](#) as you develop your proposal.

Changes to the [Rules and Guidelines](#) and to the [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQ\)](#) document will be posted periodically, including any changes to the dates listed above. Please read the FAQ document before submitting any questions or concerns.

Awards

Projects with a duration of up to two years and a maximum requested budget of \$250,000 USD are eligible for funding. **Exploratory projects with shorter durations/lower budgets that focus on high-risk, innovative areas are strongly encouraged and will be given priority.** Budgets should be commensurate with the scope of work proposed. Indirect costs should be included in the budget and should not exceed 10-15% of the total award (subject to the [Gates Foundation's indirect cost policy](#)).

Review Process

Handling of Applications

When submitting materials to the Gates Foundation please keep in mind that because we have a focus on achieving charitable outcomes, we view information that we obtain through our grantmaking as a public good. Subject to the [Gates Foundation's Privacy Policy](#), the Gates Foundation may also share information you provide to us (either orally or in writing) with third parties, including external reviewers, consultants, contingent workers, key partners and co-funders. You should assume that nothing will be kept confidential and should not include any information in the proposal, budget, supplemental materials, or reports that you consider proprietary.

Additionally, the foundation is required by the IRS to publish a list of its grants. The foundation also provides general descriptions of its grants on its web sites, in press releases, and in other marketing materials. These Rules and Guidelines are subject to these [Terms of Use](#).

Review of Applications

The Grand Challenges application review process is executed in four steps:

1. The first step consists of screening applications to evaluate whether proposals address the key needs described in the topic. We screen for responses that are completely unrelated or specifically excluded description. Excluded responses encompass ideas related to the topic but that, for strategic reasons, we are not funding under the Grand Challenges initiative. In addition, we exclude proposals that are considered incremental advances, appropriate responses that are similar to work in which the foundation or other Grand Challenges programs are already investing, or avenues of inquiry we deem ill-suited to the Grand Challenges initiative. Applicants with proposals removed from consideration during the screening process will be notified that their proposals were declined but will not receive specific feedback.
2. In the second step, reviews are chaired or co-chaired by technical leads from the foundation and, in some cases, other funding partners and are conducted by reviewers both outside and within the foundation. Reviewers are selected from the world's leading researchers and comprise both experts in the topic area and experts in complementary areas. Not all reviewers have deep expertise in the topic; please consider this information when drafting your proposal.

The criteria considered in these reviews are:

- Potential to lead to solutions with substantial impact related to the specific topic
- Scientific and technical excellence & innovation, including:
 - creativity of the project's approach and clear differentiation from existing approaches
 - a clear and rigorous conceptual framework for the activities
- Project Plan, including:
 - investigator and organization capabilities and potential for collaboration
 - value in terms of appropriateness of the budget and timeline relative to project complexity, risk, and potential impact

3. The third step is the validation and final selection of the proposals to be funded by the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee may recommend the proposal be funded, subject to specific modifications which will be negotiated as part of the award process. Organizations invited to submit full proposals will be provided additional technical instructions at that time.
4. The fourth and final step is a due diligence review and to directly discuss and negotiate any adjustments to the proposed project recommended by the Executive Committee. Investigators will be contacted as part of the due diligence review.

Management of Conflict of Interest

To identify and avoid conflicts of interest among application reviewers, such reviewers will not be permitted to review proposals from organizations with which the reviewer has self-identified conflicts of interest.

Eligibility and Notifications

Please review the [Gates Foundation's sample terms and conditions](#). Please note that depending on the tax status of your organization, alternate terms and conditions may apply. Please also review the [Gates Foundation's standard Request for Proposal \(RFP\) Terms and Conditions](#).

Privacy Notice and Terms of Use

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For more information, please review the [Grand Challenges Privacy and Terms of Use](#).

Representation:

By providing any Submission Materials, you represent to the Gates Foundation that (i) you have the right to provide any personal information submitted; (ii) you are a duly authorized representative of the Applicant and agree to be bound by the terms set forth above, without amendment and (iii) none of the information in your Submission Materials is confidential or proprietary.

Frequently Asked Questions

Answers to many application questions can be found on the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document.

Inquiries

Please direct all questions about this initiative, selection criteria or application instructions by e-mail to the following address: grandchallenges@gatesfoundation.org.