

Innovations in Low-Cost and Simplified Pathogen Sequencing Workflows

Grand Challenge

Rules & Guidelines

Applications due no later than September 29, 2026, 11:30 a.m. U.S. Pacific Time

Supporting Materials

- 1) Full RFP – [Innovations in Low-Cost and Simplified Pathogen Sequencing Workflows](#)
- 2) [Application Instructions](#)
- 3) [Budget Template and Narrative](#)
- 4) [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\) Document](#)

Key dates and deadlines*

Key Dates	Event
August 18, 2026	Application period opens
September 1, 2026, 5:30-6:30 a.m. US PST	Webinar
September 29, 2026, 11:30 a.m. US PDT	Application period closes, deadline to submit
By January 31, 2027	Applicants notified of decisions
April 2027	Estimated start dates

*Any changes to the Key Dates and Deadlines will be updated on the [Grand Challenges website](#).

Eligibility Criteria

This opportunity 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 Gates Foundation's global access requirements](#). We encourage projects and/or consortia applications led by applicants from LMICs. Individuals and organizations classified as individuals for U.S. tax purposes are not eligible to receive an award under this RFP.

Eligible entities must not be subject to United Nations sanction or have committed serious violations of United States or UN sanctions. Eligible entities must not have derived revenue from the production of controversial weapons (such as antipersonnel landmines, cluster bombs, or nuclear bombs) or the production or manufacture of tobacco.

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.

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 \(FAQs\) document](#) will be posted periodically, including any changes to the dates listed above. Please read the FAQs document before submitting any questions or concerns.

Award Structure and Funding Level

To accommodate different stages of innovation maturity, this RFP supports a tiered award structure, with funding levels and expectations aligned to the readiness and scope of the proposed work. Indicative award categories are:

Tier 1: Early-stage feasibility awards: up to US\$300,000 (grant term up to 24 months). For technically ambitious or higher-risk, earlier-stage concepts focused on feasibility testing, assay or workflow prototyping, and initial cost-reduction validation. Intended for approaches that require focused development to demonstrate viability.

Tier 2: Mid-stage development awards: up to US\$600,000 (grant term up to 24 months). For concepts with preliminary feasibility evidence that are ready to advance from prototype toward an integrated workflow-optimizing performance, broadening assay or pathogen coverage, and generating more robust cost-reduction and performance data.

Tier 3: Advanced development and validation awards: up to US\$800,000 (grant term up to 36 months). For more mature concepts aimed at workflow refinement, performance optimization, and generation of proof-of-concept and validation data in relevant public-health use cases in LMICs.

We anticipate making approximately 15 awards across the three tiers. The final award amounts, number of awards, and funding mix will depend on proposal quality, technical maturity, funding availability, and strategic fit. Applicants should request funding commensurate with the scope and readiness of their proposed work and include a clear, milestone-based plan appropriate to the requested budget.

Indirect costs are allowable and should be included within the total requested funding (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.

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. 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 without meeting the key objectives of the RFP, 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. The Gates Foundation, in partnership with the Temasek Foundation, will conduct this initial screening and both organizations will have access to all information (including any personal information such as name, contact information, etc.) submitted.
2. In the second step, reviews will be co-chaired by technical leads from the Gates Foundation and the Temasek 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:

- Technical merit and feasibility
 - Credibility of proposed methodology
 - Qualifications of the team and strength of partnerships
 - Plans for validation of solutions against existing methods
 - Plans for transparency, and accessibility of new tools/methods for LMICs
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 with additional 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

When submitting materials to the 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 & Cookies Notice](#), the 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.**

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 in 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.