Aidsfonds’ open call for HIV Cure 2020

The call is open for cohorts to accelerate an HIV Cure

For further information please contact research@aidsfonds.nl
Sophie van der Erve (programme assistant) or Marein de Jong (policy officer)
Content

Submit a research proposal for cohorts! 3
Accelerate the development of an HIV Cure 3
Theme 2020: HIV cure cohorts 3

What we are looking for? 4
Theme 4
What to apply for? 4
Who can apply? 4
How to submit a proposal 4
Application manual 4

Before you start 5
Engagement of people with HIV 5
Financial sustainability 5

Our procedures 6
Application assessment process 6
Timeline 6

Our criteria 7
Admissibility criteria 7
Assessment criteria 8
Submit a research proposal for cohorts!

Accelerate the development of an HIV Cure

Accelerating research for HIV cure
The ultimate goal is a cure for HIV in order to stop the epidemic. Therefore, accelerating an HIV cure is one of the five strategic goals of Aidsfonds for 2018-2021. In 2018 and 2019 we initiated and facilitated the establishment of the partnership NL4Cure. With all these partners we created a research agenda to guide the development of a cure in the Netherlands. In addition, together with our partners we gave the HIV research field a strong impulse in the past years by funding research projects on social engagement, reservoirs, and strategies with a total value of €7.4 million.
Currently there is no cure available (yet) but we strongly believe that in the next few years steps will be made to progress from laboratory-based science to clinical studies. To prepare for this we aim to create a fertile Dutch climate by investing in the basic infrastructure for HIV cure cohorts.
Thanks to our donors a considerable budget of €1.100.000 is available for this call in 2020.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value of cohort in accelerating an HIV-cure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Access to exclusive information and materials to answer cure-related research questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Opportunity to participate in clinical trials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Accelerated implementation of a cure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Creating an attractive Dutch climate for (inter)national collaboration</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With this call Aidsfonds strives to accelerate an HIV cure by investing in the basic infrastructure for cohorts.
We are looking for cohorts that clearly have the potential to contribute to accelerating a cure. These cohorts have to have the potential to answer important scientific questions and should have a connection to the NL4Cure research agenda.

Theme 2020: HIV cure cohorts

Aidsfonds' call for proposals 2020 focusses on investments in the infrastructure of cohorts that contribute to the acceleration of an HIV Cure.
Funding is available for the continuation and/or expansion of an existing cohort. It includes all aspects of sample/data collection and storage.
Research and analyses of the cohorts are excluded in this call. More information can be found on the next page and in the budget explanation.

The procedure we follow
In the next paragraphs you will find information on: what to apply for; who can apply; how to submit a proposal; our procedures; our criteria; an explanation of the application form.

We are looking forward to receive your proposals!

1 No time to waste; focus, accelerate and boost our efforts. Strategy 2018 – 2021, Aidsfonds – Soa Aids Nederland.
What we are looking for?

Theme
We are specifically looking for cohorts that will significantly contribute to accelerating an HIV Cure.
This is not limited to biomedical cohorts. Social/ psychological cohorts aiming at accelerating an HIV cure are welcome as well.

What to apply for?
This call is solely focused on funding infrastructure for HIV cure cohorts.
This funding may be used for the continuation and/or expansion of an existing cohort. It includes all aspects of sample/data collection and storage and may consist of personnel costs, costs related to participants inclusion and communication and/or material costs. We expect a tangible and concrete contribution of the host institution to the support of the cohort as well (see further). Research and analysis of the cohorts are excluded of this call.
Applicants can apply for funding for cohort for a total of €350,000 (minimum € 75,000) and a duration of 3 - 4 years.

Who can apply?
Project leaders from Dutch organisations in charge of existing HIV Cure cohort studies are eligible to apply.

How to submit a proposal
Proposals for the 2020 grants round need to be submitted only via our online application form.
The link to the form is available on our website.
The complete application needs to be submitted not later than Thursday the 10th of September 2020, 11:00 CEST. If you have any questions about your application or the application process, please contact us by e-mail before the deadline has expired at research@aidsfonds.nl We aim to respond as quickly as possible. After the submittal deadline, incomplete or otherwise incorrectly submitted applications will be declared ineligible. For details see our list of criteria in the last chapter of this call.

Application manual
An application manual with explanation is available on our website.
Before you start

Engagement of people with HIV
Aidsfonds values the involvement of people with HIV in HIV-Cure related activities. In cohorts the involvement of people with HIV is eminent and should be pursued at all stages of the cohort and project plan. Involvement can be done at different levels (informing, advising, co-creating, etc.) and at different stages (preparation of the project plan and planned activities, recruitment of participants, dissemination of results). In these cohorts we expect a plan of how involvement of people with HIV is meaningfully embedded. An integral part of the assessment procedure is that your project proposal is reviewed by a panel of people with HIV. In the application form we provide you with guidelines on how to most optimally inform this panel of your project plans.
For more information about engagement of people with HIV please visit participatiecompas.nl and www.participatiematrix.nl.
We strongly advise you to involve people with HIV early on. Please be aware that if you would like their involvement in your project, they will need reasonable time and appropriate reimbursement for their provided time and efforts.

Financial sustainability
Cohorts usually require long-term collection, storage and follow-up of data. Aidsfonds has by no means the wish and resources to provide funding for more than the here offered timespan. In addition, the needs of the Dutch cohorts are likely to exceed available funding. Therefore, we expect a tangible and concrete contribution of the host institution to the support of the cohort and funding from other partners is strongly recommended. We also expect a vision and strategy on how the financial sustainability will be ensured beyond the requested funded period. Financial sustainability is an integral part of the assessment procedure.
Our procedures

Application assessment process

- In consultation with the chair of the Scientific Advisory Board (SAB; in Dutch “Wetenschappelijke Adviesraad”), Aidsfonds assesses the eligibility and admissibility for further assessment, based on the below mentioned admissibility criteria.
- (Inter)national external referees will peer-review the applications based on the assessment criteria (see below). We aim for a minimum of two and a maximum of four referees per application. A panel of representatives of people living with HIV (PLHIV) will review the applications based on relevance and involvement of PLHIV in research.
- The applicant has the opportunity to submit a rebuttal to the anonymized review reports.
- The quality of the review reports will be assessed by the SAB after the rebuttal is received. The board is free to divert from the reviewers’ assessments.
- (A selection of) applicants will be invited to give a presentation to explain their proposal. This selection, based on the assessment criteria, may be made by the SAB depending on the number of applications. Applicants who are not invited to give a presentation will be informed by e-mail. This also means that for these projects the Scientific Advisory Board will give a negative grant advice to the Executive Director of Aidsfonds.
- The presentations will take place late November/ beginning of December. This will be face-to-face unless COVID- restrictions do not allow meetings in person.
- The SAB including representatives of PLHIV weighs and internally discusses the applications, making use of the application, reviewer reports, rebuttals, Aidsfonds’ previous experiences with the applicants, the aim of this call, and Aidsfonds’ organisational strategy.
- The SAB will formulate a grant advice for the Executive Director of Aidsfonds.
- Based on the advice of the SAB, the Executive Director of Aidsfonds decides whether an application is eligible for a grant. In principle, the Executive Director of Aidsfonds has discretionary power to decide which proposals are funded.
- Each applicant will receive a message about the funding decision along with the considerations in December 2020.

Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cohort call</th>
<th>Dates (provisional)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Call open</td>
<td>02-07-2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deadline to submit your proposal</td>
<td>10-09-2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebuttal</td>
<td>Mid October/ Early November</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pitches in presence of the Scientific Advisory Board including PLHIV representatives</td>
<td>Late November / Early December</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding decision by Aidsfonds' Executive Director</td>
<td>16-12-2020</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Due to circumstances it might be necessary to adjust the timeline during the assessment procedure and/or request additional information about the cohort from the applicant. If this is the case, we will contact the applicants by email.
Our criteria

We kindly ask you to take note of the criteria mentioned below, as they will be applied strictly.

For this call the grant regulations ("Voorwaarden") and Terms and Conditions as listed on the Aidsfonds’ website apply. By submitting an application, the applicant is aware that these Terms and Conditions will apply and that these are non-negotiable.

Admissibility criteria

Applicant
• An applicant is allowed to be the main applicant only once. In cases where a person submits more than one application, the one we receive first will be dealt with.
• The applicant (project leader) must (soon) be employed at a widely recognised Dutch institute for scientific research and must hold a PhD in the relevant discipline.
• The applicant must represent an existing cohort.
• Each cohort is allowed to submit one application.
• In one application funding for continuation and/or expansion may be requested.

Application
• The cohort must contribute to an HIV Cure and to the NL4Cure research agenda.
• The project must be hosted in the Netherlands. However, collaboration with international universities or research institutes can be submitted and funded. A clear explanation of the added value for the project must be provided by the applicant;
• The application must be written in English;
• The application must be submitted via our online application form, following the guidelines and before the given deadline;
• The application must be co-signed by the financial manager of the section or department and by the competent authority of the institute where the applicant is working (based on the valid mandate arrangements);
• The project must start before the 1st of March 2021. If not, the project grant will be withdrawn;

Budget
• The budget that is applied for consists of staff costs and material costs. Aidsfonds follows the Agreement Funding Scientific Research.
Assessment criteria

The following aspects play a role in the assessment process:

We are looking for cohorts that clearly have the potential to contribute to accelerating a cure. These cohorts have to have the potential to answer important scientific questions and should have a connection to the NL4Cure research agenda. A successful cohort has a feasible plan and expertise and collaborations to run the cohort. It is strong in recruiting and retaining participants and its organisation and management involves people with HIV. It shares their data/samples with others, communicates to relevant stakeholders and is financial sustainable.

a) Cohort aim rationale
   • Relevance for HIV Cure
   • Connection to the NL4Cure research agenda
   • Rationale for included people
   • Scientific potential and importance
   • Uniqueness

b) Project specification
   • Feasibility
     This includes: quality of the work plan, adequacy of the method, realistic planning, data management, identification of risk factors, and efficient staffing and budget for the duration of the project. For cohorts this also includes inclusion and retaining participants.
     • Involvement of people with HIV
       This includes a clear rationale on the involvement at the different stages of the project.
     • Quality of the cohort and the applicant
       This includes the expertise and potential of the applicant and collaboration. How well has the cohort functioned in the past years. The quality of projects that received grants previously from Aidsfonds might be taken into consideration as well.
     • Data sharing, communication, knowledge transfer and implementation
       This includes, amongst others, access to information and samples by others and dissemination and implementation of the cohort information.
     • Financial sustainability
       This included financial support from partners and support from the host institution.

c) Relevance for Aidsfonds
   This includes relevance for the aim of this call and Aidsfonds’ organisational strategy, for the NL4Cure HIV cure research agenda, and for people living with HIV. In addition, the diversity in proposed projects and attractiveness to the general public might play a role in the grant advice of the SAB and/or in the final decision of the Executive Director of Aidsfonds.