

**Synergy**

# **Partnership for HIV Cure 2021**

Aidsfonds' funding  
opportunity 2021 to  
accelerate an HIV Cure

Aidsfonds, June 2021



# 1. Synergy for HIV Cure

## Accelerating a cure for HIV

The ultimate goal is a cure for HIV in order to end the epidemic and to offer a cure to almost 40 million people with HIV worldwide. Therefore, accelerating an HIV cure is one of the five strategic goals of Aidsfonds for 2018-2021<sup>1</sup>. In 2018 and 2019 we initiated and facilitated the establishment of the partnership NL4Cure, a network of research institutes and stakeholder organisations (Hiv Vereniging (PLHIV), NVHB (physicians), V&VN VCH (nurses)). With these partners we created a [research agenda](#) to guide the Dutch field in the development of a cure. In addition, together with our funding partners Aidsfonds has given the HIV cure research field a strong impulse in the past years three years by funding twenty-five (research) projects on social engagement, reservoirs, strategies and cohorts with a total value of €8,9 million (see appendix 1).

### Scientific synergy

With these investments we have laid out strong building blocks for the road to cure: a network, research agenda, financial support for twenty-five projects and support for the cohort infrastructure. We see a strong base, potential impact and energy to collaborate. At the same time, the connection between these specific projects is limited and the progress of the majority of these projects is strongly affected by Covid. In addition, we see that building a partnership can be challenging and takes time especially in a context and culture where competition is rewarded.

### NL4Cure Linking and learning

The development of a cure is still in the early research phase, the dream of a cure is a promising and desirable perspective for many people with HIV. With the progress of research and reports in the media about scientific breaking news, people with HIV need to have more access to professionals/ knowledge-based interpretation. In addition, physicians and nurses play a key-role to provide information about cure, cure trials (participation) and in the future the implementation of a cure. While this might still take time, we currently see the need to accelerate linking and learning between NL4Cure stakeholders.

## 2. Aidsfonds funding opportunity for Synergy partnership

- Theme: accelerating HIV Cure
- Available budget: €1.200.000
  - Start date: March 2022
  - Duration: maximum 4 years

Given this context and needs, we currently see an opportunity to bring these building blocks to a next level through the start of a Synergy- partnership. This Synergy-partnership aims to accelerate a cure as follows:

- by investing in impactful research project(s) that span across institutes and disciplines
- by accelerating of the development and uptake of a cure through an investment in linking and learning among professionals and stakeholders involved in cure.

This partnership will build on the strengths of the cure field in the Netherlands, aims to offer incentives for collaboration and allows the partners to strengthen their collaboration. With this partnership we will also accelerate a cure by positioning NL4Cure in the international Cure field. In the design and execution of this partnership, the NL4Cure partners are in the lead. This will demand strong collaboration and engagement of partners.

Thanks to our donors a considerable budget of €1.200.000 is available this year.

### Incentives and conditions

1. Research agenda<sup>ii</sup> is guiding
2. NL4Cure partners are in the lead in the design and execution of the partnership
3. The partnership makes use of existing platforms where possible
4. The process facilitates collaboration

### Aim

With this **Synergy partnership** we aim to accelerate a cure investing in impactful (research)projects that connects and strengthens the currently stand-alone HIV cure research projects in the Netherlands. In addition, we aim to accelerate the development and uptake of a cure by investing in linking and learning among professionals and stakeholders involved in cure. Within this aim there is maximum space and freedom for the partnership design and execution in order to facilitate and strengthen collaboration between NL4Cure partners.

The Synergy partnership consists of two pillars:

1. **Connective Impactful research projects to accelerate a cure:** Project(s) that accelerate a cure by focusing on the potential synergy among existing projects and span across institutes and disciplines.
2. **Linking and learning between NL4Cure partners:** a sustainable, continuous and integrated knowledge flow on HIV Cure related topics for all stakeholders: especially PLHIV, HIV physicians, HIV nurses.



### Expected deliverables:

We expect the following deliverables. The applicant(s) are free to add more deliverables that contribute to the aim.

## 1. Accelerating impactful and connective research:

Impactful research projects, that contribute to the research agenda, connect the independent pillars of the research agenda and make use of existing projects/cohorts.

- Impact full research project(s), if beneficial for the impact we encourage the involvement of all NL4Cure research partners.
- If more than one project is created, the connection between the projects should be clear and have clear added value.
- This pillar can be combined with the linking and learning pillar by interchange of personnel and/or bringing in international expertise (knowledge/technical)
- If applicable, bring recently developed COVID-knowledge that can be useful for HIV Cure into the HIV Cure field (e.g. mRNA vaccine technique).
- We encourage involvement of new people/ partners/ organizations
- We encourage the inflow of new talent and the career-development of current young investigators.
- Free employment of personnel (e.g. there is no requirement to create PhD projects). NWO- salary scales will apply.

## 2. Linking and Learning: including knowledge dissemination and community engagement strengthening

*Sustainable, continuous and integrated knowledge and collaboration for all stakeholders. Please note we suggest to dedicate a significant amount of the budget towards this pillar.*

- For PLHIV, HIV physicians, HIV nurses: access to and uptake of sustainable and integrated knowledge/information on HIV Cure (research, news and trial participation) fitting with their needs. This should be connected to existing channels& platforms (e.g. digitale leerweek) and there should be a clear structure (including role, responsibilities) and budget allocated to sustain this this.
- Learning program on community engagement in cure research and trials for all involved stakeholders.
- A formal and skilled community advisory board and a pool of community advisor/reviewers on HIV cure.
- Connection to international cure-initiatives resulting in positioning of NL4Cure in the international cure field: for example: outreach of NL4Cure to the Delaney collaborations<sup>iii</sup> at science and community (board) level.
- Activities to engage stakeholders and researchers at all levels (e.g. at PI's but also post-doc/ PhD students) across disciplines and/or institutes.
- A structure (incl role, responsibilities) and budget to facilitate these activities and make them sustainable for the full duration of the project.

### What we are looking for?

- A plan/ application with a clear impact-route<sup>ivv</sup>, addressing the aspects of the aim and the deliverables.
- We prefer to receive one application. This may consist of separate parts and several 'penvoorders' but synergy must be clear. If more than one application is filed, selection might be needed.
- Duration max 4 years.
- Suggestion for budget available for Impactful research projects 950K, Linking and learning €250.000.

### What is excluded:

- No funding for delay/extension on existing projects is allowed.

## 4. Process to create Synergy partnership for a cure

The design of this partnership will require a different application process. Aidsfonds offers budget (and suggestions) for an external facilitator to guide the process /participants.

- Open & collaborative process
- A process which allows new people to join (e.g. Sanquin, TU, immunotherapy experts)
- External facilitator is available

### **Timeline:** *(dates are tentative)*

The design process (June- September) is to be designed by the partners of NL4Cure.

Information and preparation to start: May/June

- Start meeting with NL4Cure partners, facilitated by Aidsfonds – May
- Facilitator assignment (if needed)

Design of the partnership: June/ Sept

The partners are free to design the process. Suggestions:

- Open meeting for all interested people (by facilitator)- June
- Partnership development by partners - June/ Sept

### **Application(s) due : Sept 20<sup>th</sup>**

Eligibility check by Aidsfonds: Sept

Review by external parties: Oct

Revision by partners : revised application due end Oct

Assessment by Advisory Board Aidsfonds: applicant(s) give a pitch and Q&A: Nov.

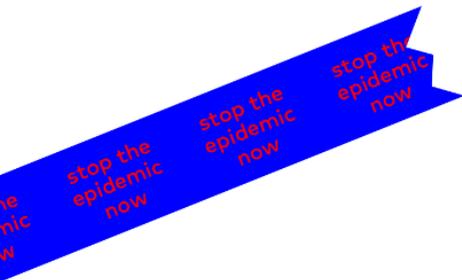
Possible revision of the application and additional Board meeting.

If the requested budget exceeds the available budget, a selection will have to be made.

Final advice by Advisory Board Aidsfonds: Dec

Decision by board of Aidsfonds: Dec

**Eligibility criteria, Application form, budget requirements and assessment criteria will be available in June 2021.**



## Appendix 1: 25 Aidsfonds projects funded since 2018's Strategy 'No time to waste'

### Aidsfonds projecten doelstelling 4: versnellen van hiv-genezing door mobiliseren van 10M euro

Call	Project	Organisatie	Totaal budget	AF donateurs bijdragen
1 2018 High Risk	A novel gene therapy approach to cure HIV	E. Herrera- Carrillo	75000	75000
2 2018 High Risk	Molecular insights in HIV-specific CD8+ T cell dysfunction: cause and consequence	N. Kootstra	75000	75000
3 2018 High Risk	Super antibodies as a weapon against HIV-1	M. van Gils	75000	75000
4 2018 High Risk	Understanding the brain as a reservoir for HIV using novel stem cell technology to grow 'minibrains in a dish'	L. de Witte	75000	75000
5 2018 Adam Diner extra	Impact of late presentation and sex differences on size and activity of HIV subtype C reservoirs before and during cART	A. Wensing	75000	0
6 2018 PPS call	Induced Cell Death and/or Induced Cell Killing for HIV Cure	C. Boucher/ R. Gruters	1295848	13490
7 2018 PPS call	Towards a HIV-1 cure: detection and elimination of the HIV-1 reservoir	T. Geijtenbeek	2198720	100000
8 2018 ZonMw translationeel call	NL4Cure: bridging shock-and-kill strategies	M. Nijhuis	2150000	600000
9 2019 Small grant	HIV Cure: Researchers meet community meet-up	F. Verdult	9680	9680
10 2019 Small grant	Viro-immunological correlates of 18 years' post-treatment control in an HLA-B44 positive patient intermittently treated during acute HIV infection	G. de Bree	10000	10000
11 2019 Social Engagement/ Next Gen	Awareness, importance, and meaning (AIM): HIV cure experiences and perspectives of PLHIV and key populations	Daas, des	275000	275000
12 2019 Social Engagement/ Next Gen	Ensuring meaningful involvement and stigma reduction in HIV cure research	Stutterheim	274938	274938
13 2019 Social Engagement/ Next Gen	Making HIV cure work: impact on quality of life, risk behavior, and the Dutch epidemic	Baster/ Rozhnova	274894	274894
14 2019 Social Engagement/ Next Gen	Selective killing of HIVinfected, viral RNAproducing cells to eliminate the viral reservoir	Rao	275000	275000
15 2019 Social Engagement/ Next Gen	Reservoir characterization in people with dominant HIV subtypes from Europe and Sub-Saharan Africa	Rokx	197000	197000
16 2019 Social Engagement/ Next Gen	Antibody engineering to improve antibody therapeutics for HIV-1 Cure	Taeye, de	275000	275000
17 PPS HH 2019	Organoids2CureHIV: Human cerebral organoids as a novel cell culture model to accelerate HIV cure research	Nijhuis	137333	10000
18 Sq 2020	EU2Cure: towards an European HIV cure agenda and community	Rokx	11284	10000
19 Sq 2020	FDA-approved Thalidomide analogues as latency reversing agents for HIV-1 cure	Crespo	10000	10000
20 Sq 2020	HIV Reservoir dynamics in relation to cART interruption and resumption (HIVRESATI)	Lungu	10000	10000
21 Sq 2020	HIV Cure Africa Acceleration Partnership (HCAAP)	Dybul	10000	10000
22 Cohorten 2020	IciStem: an International Collaboration to guide and investigate the potential for HIV cure by Stem Cell Transplantation	Wensing	349774	349774
23 Cohorten 2020	the NOVA study (The Netherlands Cohort Study on Acute HIV infection)	de Bree	350000	350000
24 Cohorten 2020	HIV-1/2 EC cohort (Elite controllers of chronic HIV-1 or HIV-2 infection)	Gruters	290872	290872
25 Cohorten 2020	The CHRONO cohort: longitudinal in-depth studies of viral reservoirs in chronic HIV infected patients	Rokx	159354	159354

Per 1 januari 2021

€ 8.939.697 € 3.805.002

### Footnotes:

<sup>i</sup> No time to waste; focus, accelerate and boost our efforts. Strategy 2018 – 2021, Aidsfonds – Soa Aids Nederland.

<sup>ii</sup> <https://aidsfonds.nl/media/2115/nl4curedef.pdf>

<sup>iii</sup> <https://www.niaid.nih.gov/research/mdc>

<sup>iv</sup> [https://www.zonmw.nl/fileadmin/zonmw/documenten/Maatschappelijke\\_impact/ZonMw\\_praatplaat\\_mouse\\_over\\_A4.pdf](https://www.zonmw.nl/fileadmin/zonmw/documenten/Maatschappelijke_impact/ZonMw_praatplaat_mouse_over_A4.pdf)

<sup>v</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2PKRXSC37xw>