

## 2026 Call for Proposals: HIV CURE SIDACTION & AIDSFONDS

*This call is a joint call financed by Aidsfonds and Sidaction. Sidaction will manage the applications and the grants on behalf of both parties.*

**In this Call for proposals, you will find information about the aim of this program, the conditions for the grant application and how your proposal will be assessed. This is the information you need to submit a grant application.**

### 1. CONTEXT

Since the beginning of the HIV epidemic, major scientific advances have been made in HIV treatment and prevention, saving many lives and improving the quality of life of people living with HIV (PLHIV). However, major challenges remain. Despite the availability of effective antiretroviral drugs, the persistence of the virus in the body accelerates immune aging and increases the risk of comorbidities. Above all, current treatments cannot eliminate infected cells from the body, which is a major challenge for the long-term management of infection.

Recent advances in research have paved the way for new therapeutic targets to specifically eliminate infected cells. Scientific advances have also led to a better understanding of the individual response to HIV infection, identifying new opportunities for immune intervention. It is therefore important to continue deciphering cellular, genetic and clinical markers to develop new therapeutic targets that could potentially lead to HIV remission if not cure, while keeping people living with HIV at the center of research.

It is against this backdrop, combining new challenges linked to the evolution of the HIV control strategies and the current state of research, that Sidaction and Aidsfonds are pleased to jointly launch a call for scientific proposals for the year 2026, aimed at accelerating advances in HIV cure research. This initiative, the fruit of a renewed collaboration between the two organizations, aims to mobilize and connect researchers from France, the Netherlands and African countries around this crucial issue for global health. The goal of this ambitious initiative is to foster collaboration between researchers, institutions, and communities, with an emphasis on interdisciplinary and collaborative research on the cure for HIV.

### 2. AIM

The aim of this call for proposals is to fund research projects exploring mechanisms or strategies that will contribute to achieve a cure or a remission for HIV. The candidate projects may explore mechanisms to target the viral reservoir or enhance immune driven control, the development of new therapeutic concepts as well as all the social sciences around HIV cure or remission. With this call, we aim to fund research ultimately leading to biomedical breakthroughs, social acceptance of cure interventions and promotion of an HIV cure available to the maximum of PLHIV worldwide.

This call for proposals is therefore aimed at all parties involved in the development and implementation of HIV cure. Researchers from different disciplines, representatives of PLHIV, HIV counsellors and

physicians can submit a **letter of intent** describing the rationale, objectives, and relevance of their project in the context of this call for proposals. Proposals that pursue the development of a cure (total elimination of infected cells) and those that pursue ART-free control of persistent virus will be considered.

### 3. FINANCING ARRANGEMENTS

The available budget for this Call for proposals is a total of € 1,500,000. The funders strive to fund 3 to 4 projects. Proposal should have a budget between € 300k-600k.

Provided they are scientifically coordinated and financially managed by a legally registered entity in the country concerned, with recognized experience in managing research funds from international donors (such as ANRS-MIE/European Union/USAID/CDC/Aidsfonds, Sidaction...), research projects could take place anywhere in the world but the researchers that perform the research should be based:

- in France or Netherlands in public sector entities and non-profit organizations whose missions include supporting research, and/or
- in countries with limited resources in the African region, as defined by the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (see [2025 list](#)).

Research teams may be funded for a research project lasting a **maximum of 36 months**.

For research projects concerning human samples or clinical studies, funding will be conditioned on the obtention of regulatory and ethical approvals.

A researcher can only be a lead investigator once but can be collaborator researcher on other proposals for the same call.

The budget may include:

- Operating costs
- Equipment costs
- Remuneration costs for non-statutory staff and community based organisations
- Salaries
- Knowledge utilisation (publication costs, participation in conferences or congresses, mission expenses...): At least 2% and up to 10% of the overall project budget
- Project management
- Overhead costs (see *Guide for applicants* for detailed information)

For the projects to be successfully selected for the funding, an audit line of 3% will be inserted in your budget **just before the contracting phase**. This will imply for your organization to conduct an audit, the conditions of which will be detailed in the funding agreement.

### 4. ONLINE APPLICATIONS

The steps involved in writing your application are:

#### ***Letter of intent***

- Submitting a letter of intent describing the background, objective, design, workpackages, relevance and a estimated budget of the project to the HIV Cure.
- The letter of intent for this international call should be completed in English (French could be acceptable if the principal investigator is not fluent in English ).

- The template can be downloaded from Sidaction or via Aidsfonds website.
- The letter is then submitted on **Sidaction website only**
- If the letter of intent is accepted (see below for criteria), then you will be invited to submit a full proposal.

### **Full proposal**

You must write your application in English (French could be acceptable if the principal investigator has major difficulties with English).

If the full proposal differs significantly from the description in the letter of intent, e.g. 10% difference in the budget, change of partners or other significant alterations, a clarification is needed.

**An application can only be submitted via the web application Synto.** Applications that are not submitted via Synto will not be taken into consideration. As the main applicant, you are required to submit the application via your own **personal Synto account**.

**WE INVITE YOU TO SUBMIT YOUR APPLICATION TO SYNTO IN ADVANCE. WE WILL NOT BE ABLE TO PROCESS ALL URGENT APPLICATIONS IN THE LAST FEW DAYS BEFORE THE DEADLINE.**

- To apply for funding, you must have an account on the Synto platform.
  - ✓ If your letter of intent is selected by the call's review committee, you will receive a confirmation email requesting the information necessary for Sidaction to set up a Synto account for the main applicant and partners.
  - ✓ Once your account has been created by the Sidaction team, you will receive an invitation to submit your full proposal when the platform opens.
- The online application is a form made up of a set of independent tabs that can be filled in over several connections.
- Once the form has been fully completed, you will be asked to sign it and send it electronically to Sidaction via the Synto platform. Please note once the form has been sent, it cannot be modified.
- If you have any questions or require assistance in creating or updating your account, please contact the Scientific Department by email: [aps@sidaction.org](mailto:aps@sidaction.org)

## **5. SELECTION, PROCESS & CRITERIA**

### **Committee**

An *ad-hoc* committee of international experts recruited from different scientific disciplines will evaluate the projects. Community representatives will be part of the committee.

### **Letter of intent pre-selection**

Letters of intent will be reviewed by a scientific committee to ensure: the application's relevance to the thematic of the call, its approach originality, its feasibility, its potential impact, its multidisciplinary and international collaboration (a minimum of two countries involved is compulsory) and the involvement of people living with HIV. Applicants who pass this first selection will be sent an invitation to submit a full proposal via their Synto platform.

## ***Full proposal***

For your describing your impact pathway, please consider that the development of a cure will require a series of well-planned research steps. For interventional approaches, applicants should provide a detailed series of milestones that culminate in a clinical trial of the cure concept under consideration. For observational studies (including fundamental research), a clear rationale should be provided how the research may contribute to better interventional approaches in the future.

The call is open to projects including *in silico*, *in vitro*, pre-clinical, social, economic, or clinical research.

Proposals will be reviewed for scientific and impact quality by at least two experts from the scientific committee. A minimum threshold should be reached to be eligible for funding. Proposals that pass the threshold will be ranked based on the following criteria:

- Compulsory: Minimum of 2 countries collaborating;
- Budget 300k (minimum) - 600k (maximum)
- Quality of science and method;
- Multidisciplinary approach involving cooperation between researchers from different specialties (basic science, clinical science, humanities and social sciences);
- Complementarity of skills and justified contribution among partners
- Research that pursues interventional strategies, even if preliminary stages, is preferred over approaches that are purely descriptive;
- Involvement of communities that live with HIV
- Innovative and integrated nature of the research: impact focused on a combination of insights and interventions that build on existing research on HIV cures and/or by new approaches and insights that have not been used before;
- Feasibility and appropriateness of the proposed research plan;
- Operational and financial choices in the project budget;
- Strong prospects for biomedical, social and economic impact
- Early Career Lead Investigators, defined as a researcher whose career spans less than 8 years between the date of the PhD/doctorate (or similar experience) and the date of involvement in the research project and/or involvement of young researchers in the project (PhD students and/or postdoc);
- Project governance, division of tasks and roles within the team
- Connection strategy to engage relevant stakeholders and involve end-users.

Final selection of projects will be based on the ranking and budgetary fit with the available funds. Additionally, the funders strive to create a balance between type of research (basic science, clinical research, social sciences) and countries.

## **6. PROJECT ROLES AND FUNDING ELIGIBILITY**

Research projects under this call may involve different types of participants. The roles, responsibilities, and funding arrangements for each should be clearly described in the proposal.

**Lead investigator and co-applicants** The lead investigator bears overall responsibility for the scientific direction, coordination, and reporting of the project. Co-applicants are researchers at eligible

institutions who contribute substantially to the design and execution of the research. Lead investigators and co-applicants must be based at eligible institutions in France, the Netherlands, or in African countries as defined under the eligibility criteria of this call. Grant funding — including salaries, operating costs, and equipment — may be requested directly for lead investigators and co-applicants.

**Collaborating partners** Collaborating partners are organisations or individuals that contribute specific expertise, infrastructure, data, or access to networks or populations that are essential to the project. Examples include companies, public or private organisations, community-based organisations, and other research institutions. Collaborating partners participate on the basis of in-kind contributions and are not direct recipients of grant funding except for reimbursement of expenses. Their role in the preparation, execution, and translation of the research should be described in the proposal, including the nature and estimated value of any in-kind contributions.

We see creative ideas and experience from outside the academy as important for valuable input to the research project. Therefore, relevant parties from outside the academy who are willing and enthusiastic to contribute to the research project are encouraged to be a collaboration partner. Meaningful involvement of community-based organizations is encouraged; community members should be reimbursed for the time they invest

**Third-party service providers** Where specialised services are required that cannot be delivered by the project team or collaborating partners, these may be procured from third parties. This includes, for example, contract research, laboratory services, or consultancy. Costs for third-party services may be included in the project budget and must be justified in the proposal. An organisation that participates as a collaborating partner may also provide specific paid services to the project as a third-party provider, provided these services are clearly delineated and budgeted separately from its collaborative role.

## 7. TIMELINES

- Letter of intent submission opening: 12<sup>th</sup> March 2026
- Informative webinar (French<sup>1</sup>): 24<sup>th</sup> of March 2026
- Deadline submission of Letters of Intent: 10<sup>th</sup> May 2026
- Announcement of pre-selected projects: last week of June 2026
- Deadline for submission of full proposals: 1<sup>st</sup> September 2026
- Selection of winning projects: November 2026
- Announcement of winners: December 2026

## 8. CONTACT

For specific questions about this Call for proposals, please contact:

**At Sidaction :**

Simon Fretel [s.fretel@sidaction.org](mailto:s.fretel@sidaction.org)

**At Aidsfonds:**

Remko van Leeuwen [rvanleeuwen@soaids.nl](mailto:rvanleeuwen@soaids.nl)

---

<sup>1</sup> The record of an informative webinar that took place in English last year is hosted on Sidaction website and can be envisioned by new English-speaking applicants.