RiGHT Foundation

Request for Proposals 2025

Product Development Award
General Call

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Request for Proposals: PDA, General Call

Innovation to develop vaccines, diagnostics, therapeutics, and biologics as global public goods

Executive Summary

The Product Development Award (PDA) General Call seeks proposals aimed at developing new or improved vaccines, diagnostics, therapeutics, and biologics as global public goods for prevention and control of infectious diseases that disproportionately affect populations in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs).

By the end of the PDA, grantees are expected to have achieved a series of specific and measurable milestones toward WHO Prequalification (PQ) or national regulatory approval by governments in low- and middle-income settings with the ultimate goal of public procurement.

The PDA aims to stimulate collaborations between the South Korean biotechnology R&D industrial complex and international partners, specifically those based in LMICs. Applicants are required to articulate a plan of early engagement with local stakeholders and to reflect the needs and priorities of the LMIC governments and to support equitable access within the development plan. Upon successful completion of the grants, grantees will be invited to apply for supplemental funding via the Bridging Award to advance the funded work towards licensure and WHO PQ.

The RIGHT Foundation evaluates proposals based on existing evidence of global public health need, demonstration of potential future impact, and alignment with RIGHT Foundation's investment priorities. The RIGHT Foundation reserves the right to consider or decline proposals at its sole discretion throughout the proposal evaluation process.

1. About RIGHT Foundation

The RIGHT Foundation is a Korean non-profit global health R&D funding organization supported by the Korean Ministry of Health and Welfare, Korean life science companies,

and the Gates Foundation. RIGHT Foundation deploys funding that aims to alleviate the burden of infectious diseases that disproportionately affects people in LMICs through three strategic objectives:

1. **Product Development:** Develop essential health technologies as global public goods
2. **Evidence Generation:** Fill critical knowledge gaps to further the impact of product development
3. **Training:** Train work force in manufacturing essential health technologies

2. About the Product Development Award

The Product Development Award (PDA) aims to support efforts to develop and make available essential vaccines, therapeutics/biologics and diagnostics (VTDs) as global public goods. Investments in product development of VTDs are vital for reducing disease burden and alleviating suffering from infectious diseases. Vaccines, among the most cost-effective interventions, prevent millions of deaths annually. Diagnostics play a crucial role in timely detection and management of diseases, advancing innovative approaches to improve surveillance and outbreak control. Ongoing therapeutics research focuses on combating drug-resistant strains and neglected diseases, ensuring that treatments are accessible to underserved populations.

These advancements collectively build resilience against future health emergencies, fostering efficient global health responses and reducing the time required to develop and deploy critical interventions.

RIGHT Foundation addresses global health challenges by bridging R&D funding gaps, focusing on translational development of essential VTDs with product characteristics and use-cases to meet unmet medical needs in LMICs and improve health equity within and across countries. With a focus on traversing the first ‘valley of death’, this PDA provides investment resources to carry technically proven candidates through to product licensure.

RIGHT Foundation's product development strategy is centered on commandeering South Korea's strength in R&D and world-leading expertise in engineering and process development, to address entrenched and emergent global health needs. This approach permits investments in technologies and disease areas that may be excluded from traditional pathogen-driven investment strategies.

3. Objective

This RFP seeks to support a broad range of efforts to **develop and make available vaccines, diagnostics, therapeutics, and biologics that can significantly improve effectiveness, safety, or access across regions.** Specific areas of interests are described under "Funding Scope".

4. Funding Scope

	Funding Scope
Vaccines	• Vaccine concepts with new antigens or antigenic epitopes to improve efficacy, breadth or duration of protection against multiple related species, strains, serotypes, groups or variants • Clinical development of novel immunogens designed with the structure-guided approach or reverse vaccinology 2.0 [1-3] • New formulations or adjuvants to extend the duration of immunity (i.e., long-lasting immune memory) • Platform technologies that can reduce complexity and cost of manufacturing to support local production in LMICs • Innovative delivery platforms to close immunization gaps in marginalized communities • Optimization of existing vaccines to improve the route of administration, and/or reduce the number of doses
Therapeutics/ Biologics	• New small molecules or biologics that target the molecular sites from new understanding of the pathogen, host-pathogen interactions, mechanisms of infection or mechanisms of severe disease • New or improved approaches to reduce doses and treatment duration • New combination of previously characterized compounds to improve potency, safety and expand the target population to include high-risk groups (e.g., pregnant women)

	• Optimizing production method to reduce complexity and costs to support local production in LMICs

Diagnostics	• True or near point-of-care (POC) molecular diagnostic platforms that can offer:
	  ○ High sensitivity and specificity
	  ○ Detection near patient
	  ○ Fast turnaround time
	  ○ Routine multi-disease tests across >80% of primary healthcare facilities
	  ○ Low-cost and easy-to-use platforms
	  ○ Simple device-based and instrument- free technologies
	(see reference [4] for background information)
	• New platforms to simultaneously detect multiple pathogens using minimal specimen volume
	• Innovative platforms to detect multidrug resistance (e.g., antimicrobial resistance) and analyze results to guide treatment and patient management in support of appropriate use of antibiotics
	• Improvements in existing diagnostics to reduce complexity for end users across diverse resource settings (e.g., rural, community settings), to reduce cost and assay time

Technology Transfer	• Technology transfer of vaccine, diagnostic, therapeutic, or biologics components or products from or to a Korean partner to increase global access
Access-enabling Research	Studies designed to evaluate new or licensed VTDs to support policy development by governments for integration into national disease control programs, including but not limited to: • Age group expansion studies that assess product safety and effectiveness in new demographic segments • Geographic adaptation research examining product performance in new countries or regions with distinct epidemiological profiles, healthcare infrastructure, or environmental conditions that may impact effectiveness or implementation requirements. • Evaluation of dosing, schedules or route of administration to optimize outcomes (e.g. safety, potency, duration of protection) and improve compliance or resource utilization. • Combined intervention studies evaluating licensed products used in novel combinations or sequences with other therapeutic agents.

	• Off-label indication research examining product effectiveness for treating conditions beyond the original licensed indication.

We will not consider funding for:

- Early-stage discovery-phase proposals to generate pre-clinical candidates
- Basic research studies to improve understanding of pathogens, infections or disease
- Proposals without any data to support the proof of principle
- Proposals for setting up research facilities or capital equipment
- Duplicate technologies without a substantive advantage over the current best practice
- Concepts without a clear hypothesis or rationale for improved efficacy, potency, safety and/or ease of use over the current tools in clinical use or tools currently in development
- Proposals with a target use-case that fails to reflect the gaps, needs and the end-users' perspectives in LMICs
- Development of products with characteristics that will pose a barrier to equitable access to the populations in LMICs

5. Featured interests:

This RFP is open to applications of all product types and disease indications; however, the RIGHT Foundation has identified two specific areas of funding interest.

I. Novel lipids or non-lipid-based delivery systems for mRNA-based vaccines and therapeutics

Lipid nanoparticles (LNPs) represent a critical delivery system for mRNA vaccines, serving as protective carriers that ensure fragile mRNA reaches target cells intact and facilitates cellular uptake. The development of optimized LNP formulations has been instrumental in the success of current mRNA vaccines, but challenges remain around thermal stability, manufacturing costs, access, and scalability - factors that significantly impact vaccine access in low-income settings. Current LNP systems often require ultra-cold storage and complex manufacturing processes, creating barriers to widespread distribution and affordability.

To accelerate equitable access to mRNA-based vaccine or therapeutics, proposals addressing development of novel lipid formulations or non-lipid-based delivery systems (e.g. polymeric nanoparticles, cationic nanoemersion) with enhanced stability at higher temperatures and improved biodegradability profiles are encouraged. Priority areas include designing innovative lipids that enable efficient cellular delivery while reducing cold chain requirements and advancing manufacturing processes to increase production efficiency and reduce costs. Additionally, research into alternative lipid compositions that maintain efficacy while simplifying production could help establish regional manufacturing capabilities, ultimately democratizing access to these transformative vaccines. For background information on lipid- and non-lipid delivery systems for mRNA vaccines, see Chaudhary N, et al. [5].

II. Antiviral therapeutics for pandemic preparedness

Antiviral therapeutics play a crucial role in pandemic preparedness by providing a vital defense line against emerging viral threats, complementing vaccines in our public health response arsenal. The development of broad-spectrum antivirals that can effectively target multiple viruses within the same family is particularly valuable, as these therapeutics could potentially address both known pathogens and novel variants that may emerge. This approach is especially important given the increasing frequency of viral outbreaks and the time required to develop pathogen-specific countermeasures during an emergency.

This RFP seeks proposals that employ advanced understanding of structure-function relationships between drug candidates and their viral targets and utilize cutting-edge structural biology techniques and computational approaches to design more effective broad-spectrum antivirals that exploit conserved viral mechanisms.

6. Eligibility Criteria

Partnership requirement

The applicant team must include *at least one Korean entity* with R&D expertise to make a significant contribution to the project (eligible entities listed in Table 1). Inclusion of researchers, developers or advisors from the LMICs as the Principal Investigator or a collaborator is highly preferred.

Table 1

Eligible entities for Korean or international partners
• For-profit companies engaged in life science or healthcare • Non-profit research organizations and foundations • Government research institutions • Academic institutions • Public health laboratories

Commitment to Global Access

As a funding condition, we require *all our grantees and their collaborators* to agree to our Global Access Policy, and to articulate a clear path to achieving global access.

Our Global Access Policy represents the core principle of the RIGHT Foundation to achieve our mission of improving health and health equity. "Global Access" means (i) all information and knowledge gained from grants, projects or other investments funded by the RIGHT Foundation should be promptly and broadly disseminated; and (ii) products, data and other innovations resulting from the funded work should be made accessible to LMICs in terms of price, quantity, quality, and timeframe to ensure equitable access by those in need regardless of their resource constraints.

7. Award Description

Award amount	Up to 4 billion Korean won per project
Co-funding	• Required for applicant teams that include a for-profit entity. At least 50% of total project costs in the form of in-kind or cash contributions • Not required for applicant teams that are comprised solely by non-profit entities (e.g. academic, non-profit, and government institutes)
Project duration	Up to 36 months
Target health conditions	• Infectious diseases with a disproportionate burden in LMICs or infectious diseases with pandemic potential *This list references several key prioritization documents published by WHO.*

	The list is not exhaustive and targets that are not included below will be considered. • Neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) (see the WHO list of NTDs) • Bacterial pathogens included in 2024 WHO Bacterial Pathogen Priority List for control of antimicrobial resistance • WHO global priority endemic pathogens for vaccine R&D
Development stage	• From or near the initiation of the clinical development or validation phase to regulatory approval and WHO prequalification (WHO PQ)

8. Application Guidelines

- Applicants must create an account and submit a full proposal through the Grant Management System.
- Proposals will be accepted from 10 March 2025 until 10AM KST on 14 April 2025
- Short-listed candidates will receive invitations to interview.

9. Evaluation Criteria

Category	Criteria
Responsiveness to public health needs	• Alignment with global health priorities, unmet health needs in low- and middle-income countries, WHO-recommended target product profile or preferred product characteristics where available • Value-add over the current best practice
Strengths of proposal	• Scientific quality/merit (e.g., strength of evidence for the proposed work and analysis plan for QC/QA, potential impact on global public health, feasibility) • Probability of technical and regulatory success • Suitability for local manufacturing in resource-limited settings across diverse regions • Suitability for scalability
Paths to potential impact	• Implementation plan to achieve equitable access within public health systems in LMICs via regulatory approval, WHO PQ, registration in LMICs

	• Probability of policy development and procurement to support global and equitable access across regions • Commitment and capabilities to implement the Global Access Policy
Team-level capability	• Capabilities of the Principal Investigator (e.g., proven track-record of success in the related domain, relevant expertise) • Strength of the project team • Quality of the collaboration among the team members
Alignment with RIGHT Foundation strategy	• Alignment with the RIGHT Foundation's strategic priorities and approach • Strategic value in the context of the RIGHT Foundation investment portfolio

10. References

[1] Burton DR. What Are the Most Powerful Immunogen Design Vaccine Strategies? Reverse Vaccinology 2.0 Shows Great Promise. 2017, Cold Spring Harb Perspect Biol

[2] Kwong PD. What Are the Most Powerful Immunogen Design Vaccine Strategies? A Structural Biologist's Perspective, 2017, Cold Spring Harb Perspect Biol

[3] Rappuoli R. Reverse vaccinology 2.0: Human Immunology Instructs Vaccine Antigen Design, 2016, J Exp Med

[4] Jani IV & Peter TF. Nucleic Acid Point-of-Care Testing to Improve Diagnostic Preparedness. 75: 723–728, 2022, Clin Infect Diseases

[5] Chaudhary, N., Weissman, D. & Whitehead, K.A. mRNA vaccines for infectious diseases: principles, delivery and clinical translation. Nat Rev Drug Discov 20, 817–838 (2021). https://doi.org/10.1038/s41573-021-00283-5

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