

Call for Proposals

Implementation research on health systems development and public health interventions for ageing populations towards Universal Health Coverage (UHC): Lessons from Japan

Deadline for submission: Friday, 31 March 2017, 17:00 JST

Japan-based research institutions working in broad areas of health are invited to submit Proposals for implementation research¹ projects that address one, or a combination, of the following specific issues in ensuring and sustaining Universal Health Coverage (UHC)² for ageing populations in Japan, and that can contribute to other countries' efforts:

1. **Community-based integrated care systems:** How they are designed, rolled out and what implementation issues are being faced by large-scale health/social service delivery programmes at municipal, prefectural, regional, or national levels.
2. Public health interventions on **Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs)**, including, however not limited to, cancers, cardio-vascular disease, chronic lung disease and oral health, with an emphasis on “age-friendly” interventions to prevent NCDs and/or manage multiple morbidities in ageing populations in specific settings, e.g., “healthy cities”.
3. **Health Workforce**-related implementation issues: Assessing the need for, and competencies of, human resources for community-based care systems, care management systems, cultural notions of and community models for health/social care.
4. Use of affordable **technological innovations** (i.e., assistive products, technologies, information/communication technologies), particularly to ensure older people can “age in place,” and how these technologies are integrated into home, community and health care settings.
5. Development of novel approaches for risk assessment/public health preparedness for ageing populations and **health emergencies** (natural disasters, communicable disease outbreaks).

¹ Implementation research is defined and reporting guidelines compiled at <http://www.who.int/bulletin/volumes/94/1/15-167585/en/>

² Universal Health Coverage (UHC) is the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3.8 and defined, with indicators at <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg3>

The research projects are expected to investigate and help to resolve implementation issues in public health and the design/delivery of health or social services for older populations enabling them to maintain their health status, functionality, wellbeing, and to remain at home or the community for as long as possible; and to highlight lessons to be learned from Japan, for other countries and their health systems. It excludes biomedical research.

Recognizing that the World Health Organization's Centre for Health Development (WKC) is located in Kobe, Japan, Hyōgo Prefecture, and that WKC will provide technical assistance to the funded research entities, this Call is directed at the following research institutions (with the following priority):

1. Universities or academic institutions in the Kansai region
2. Japan-based research institutions working with public health programmes, health systems or populations in Kansai region, Hyōgo Prefecture or Kobe municipality
3. Universities in Japan working with other universities in the Kansai region

The lead institution is welcome to form a consortium with other Japan-based or international institutions. The research work is expected to lead to high-profile, UHC-relevant and internationally recognized research that will be published in high impact scientific journals and lead to effects in policy and public health practice.

This Call, issued by WKC is in support of the Centre's mandate and 10-year strategy to support and strengthen research on Universal Health Coverage, with an emphasis on interventions for ageing populations³.

Under this Call, a total amount of \$500 000 will be used to fund successful proposals, leading to research projects selected for one year's funding not to exceed **US\$ 100 000** each.

Background and rationale

One of the key challenges to attain UHC is to strengthen health systems for ageing populations. Rapid population ageing is having profound implications for transforming and re-aligning health, social, and economic systems to improve health and wellbeing. Expanding and disseminating evidence is urgently required to improve decision making leading to more sustainable and inclusive policies and programmes for ageing populations. In this situation, WKC has launched its new ten-year research strategy on UHC, Innovation and Ageing, whereby the Centre will expand its collaboration on joint research with local, Japanese and international academia. Examples of long term issues to be considered include: policy and programme innovations; new community-based models of care and support; integrated and coordinated health and long term care systems; technological innovations; strengthening health systems (e.g. health workforce); and monitoring of age and dementia friendly initiatives. Many lessons from Japan can be adapted for other countries and their health systems: For example, how to address public health concerns of ageing societies and needs of ageing populations, the increasing prevalence of cognitive impairments/dementia, and efforts to increase health leadership and research capacity strengthening.

³ The World Health Organization's Centre for Health Development has its Ten Year Strategic Plan (2016-2025) "Imagining the Future: Innovations for Sustainable Universal Health Coverage" at http://www.who.int/kobe_centre/about/WKCstrategicplan.pdf

Proposal submission and protocol development

The proposal should outline the design, methodology and estimated budget (of up to USD 100,000) for a one-year implemented research project, to be carried out in 2017-2018 in collaboration with WKC, and in partnership with other research projects funded under the research scheme. Given the need for review/clearance of WHO Ethics Review Committee before the actual start of an accepted proposal (see below), the expected project start date should be no sooner than 1 August 2017 and the end date should be no later than one year after start date, 1 December 2018 at the latest.

Proposals should be submitted using the WHO Kobe Centre's Proposal form (available on the WKC website at http://www.who.int/kobe_centre/en/). Short one-page CVs of Principal Investigators (PI) and proposed researchers, including letters from researchers of other institutions confirming their willingness to collaborate on the proposed activity, should be attached.

Research teams of proposals selected for funding will be invited to an initial protocol development workshop held at the WHO Kobe Centre from 22-23 May 2017. Teams will have one month from the workshop to submit the full research protocol. Submission of a proposal indicates general willingness and availability to participate at the workshop with two members of the research team having different but complementary disciplinary backgrounds. The full research protocol will need review and clearance from local/national Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) (if applicable), and the WHO Research Ethics Review Committee (ERC). Projects cannot be funded or initiated until both clearances have been obtained. While the time it will take to obtain the clearance will vary by project, WHO funding for the projects, and their actual start, are expected to be in the 3rd or 4th quarter of 2017.

Evaluation criteria

All incoming proposals will be evaluated by a peer review group external to WKC (convened by WKC). Such evaluation will be according to scientific merit and relevance to the Call, with special attention to the following features of the future research project:

- Multidisciplinary research team
- Involvement of key stakeholders (both at the national policy as well as the local policy implementation level, e.g. communities, municipalities, resident and welfare societies)
- Multi-sectoral interventions
- Social mobilization and community participation components
- Gender-sensitive approach
- Multi-scale / multi-level analysis (using quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods)
- Dissemination and utilization of research results
- Policy linkages based on research results
- Potential relevance for adaptation to other country contexts
- Appropriateness of budget and value for money

Scientific merit

- Appropriate problem statement and rationale
- Clear and well defined objectives
- Appropriate and feasible research questions
- Concise, pertinent, complete, appropriate literature review
- Sound analytic framework and feasible design, including intervention design
- Appropriate methodology
- Appropriate response to ethical issues and challenges
- Time plan
- Soundness

Relevance

- Appropriateness of the methodology to the problem and the context
- Plans to engage non researchers, those who have a stake in the research results
- Potential for capacity development of research team and institution
- Potential to strengthen organizational capacity
- The extent to which the proposal has potential to influence policy
- The extent to which proposed project is likely to address societal problems
- The extent to which the proposed project can inform other countries and their policy development
- Dissemination plan
- Principal Investigator and research team members' track record in research in relevant fields (e.g. publications, research grants, etc.)
- Existing capacity of institution and potential for increased capability
- Ability of the Principal Investigator to manage the project
- Team composition suitable to the tasks proposed

HOW TO APPLY

Proposals should be submitted in English, by e-mail (preferably as a pdf file, with scanned signatures) to **wkc@who.int** using the e-mail subject line, "2017 Proposal for Implementation Research". All proposals will be reviewed by an independent AdHoc Review Group convened by WKC in April 2017. The selection of successful research teams will be announced in early May 2017. The protocol development workshop for selected teams will be held at the WHO Centre for Health Development in Kobe, Japan, 22-23 May 2017. Actual funding to selected projects will be provided once the research protocol has been cleared by the WHO Research Ethics Review Committee, to be expected in the 3rd or 4th quarter of 2017.

Disclaimers

WHO has the right to eliminate bids for technical or other reasons throughout the evaluation/selection process. WHO shall not in any way be obliged to reveal, or discuss with any bidder, how a proposal was assessed, or to provide any other information relating to the evaluation/selection process or to state the reasons for elimination to any bidder. WHO is acting in good faith by issuing this call for proposal. This document itself does not oblige WHO to fund any proposal or project.

DEADLINE FOR RECEIPT OF APPLICATIONS AT THE WHO Kobe Centre: Friday, 31 March 2017, 17:00 JST

For further details, please contact:

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Specific queries related to this call can be addressed to

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