

Addressing Physiological Barriers to Micronutrient Absorption from Fortified Foods

Grand Challenges

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Eligibility

Who is eligible for grants?

This initiative is open globally to nonprofit organizations, for-profit companies, international organizations, government agencies and academic institutions. Multi stakeholder collaborations are encouraged. Individuals and organizations classified as individuals for U.S. tax purposes are not eligible to receive an award from the foundation as part of this initiative.

Upon registration, applicants must provide information about the tax status of their organization as different terms and conditions may apply. You should confirm your organization's tax status with the appropriate advisor or entity within your organization, such as your grants or contracts department, finance, or office of sponsored research. The foundation may request additional information regarding your tax status. For information about tax statuses, you may check with your own advisors and review information provided on the Internal Revenue Service web site at: www.irs.gov.

Can non-U.S. applicants apply?

Yes. The RFP is global. The restriction is only that grants cannot be made to individuals (per U.S. tax classification).

Can my organization submit a join application with another organization?

Multi stakeholder collaborations are encouraged. In such cases, one lead organization must serve as the primary applicant and submit the proposal, with partner organizations included as sub-grantees.

Can early-career researchers apply?

Yes, there are no restrictions on career stage as long as the team and proposal are strong.

Can multiple organizations or sectors apply together?

Yes. Multi-sector and multi-institution collaborations are encouraged.

Can one organization submit multiple proposals?

Yes, but each proposal must have a different PI. A PI can only lead one proposal per RFP but can collaborate on others.

Do applicants need to be part of a Grand Challenges partner network?

No, any qualified applicant can apply.

Application Process

When is the RFP open call?

We will accept applications starting March 17, 2026, until April 28, 2026 (11:30 AM US Pacific Time). Please refer to the exact times on the challenge webpage.

What must my application include?

Please refer to the [Application Instructions document](#).

Am I able to edit my proposal once submitted?

Yes, you may edit your proposal up until the specified deadline.

What amount of indirect cost is available?

Details of the foundation indirect cost policy guidelines can be found here: [Gates Foundation's indirect cost policy](#).

What is the application length and format?

Initial proposal is 2.5 pages plus a 1-page budget. Figures are allowed within the page limit.

Is there a second stage?

Yes. Selected finalists (announced around July 2026) will submit expanded proposals during due diligence.

How should partnerships be structured in the application?

One lead organization submits the proposal; partners can be included as subgrantees or collaborators. Detailed sub-budgets are not required.

How should budgets (including subgrants and indirect costs) be presented?

Subgrant totals (including indirect costs) should be included as line items. Indirect cost rates depend on organization type per policy.

Can applicants exceed the page limit?

The system won't block longer submissions, but applicants are expected to adhere to the 2.5-page limit.

Review Process

How does the review process work?

Please refer to the [Rules and Guidelines document](#).

Can I get a list of potential reviewers who might be assigned to my application?

No. We do not make public the roster of reviewers.

Can I request that my application not be reviewed by a specific individual?

No. However, we will ask reviewers to self-identify conflicts of interest and will not assign reviewers with conflicts.

Will I receive specific feedback on my application if it is not selected?

Due to the rapid proposal and review timelines applicable to this RFP, applicants with proposals that are not selected for award may receive a notification of decline without specific feedback.

What are reviewers looking for in proposals?

- Clear problem framing related to physiological barriers to micronutrient absorption
- Strong biological/mechanistic rationale
- Defined target population and context
- Innovative, testable, and feasible solutions
- Measurement and evaluation plans
- Scalability in low-resource settings
- Consideration of regulatory/manufacturing feasibility
- Team capability (preferably multidisciplinary)

Are simple approaches acceptable, or is advanced analysis required?

Simple, fit-for-purpose methods are acceptable and often preferred, especially if scalable in low-resource settings.

Can proposals focus on basic science or mechanisms?

Yes, if clearly linked to improving food fortification effectiveness.

How many proposals will be funded?

Not predetermined; depends on proposal quality and portfolio considerations.

Award Information**Are grant awards made directly to individuals?**

No. All awards are made to the organization where the individual holds their primary appointment. Institutions must agree to the terms and conditions governing each grant award prior to award activation.

How much money will each grant provide?

We will consider proposals for awards of up to \$250,000 USD for each project, with a grant term of 18 months. Application budgets should be commensurate with the scope of work proposed. Indirect costs will be considered and should be included in the budget for the up to \$250,000 USD award (subject to the [Gates Foundation's indirect cost policy](#)).

What types of costs are allowed?

Personnel, subgrants, and project-related costs aligned with scope. Personnel costs must reflect actual project involvement.

Can salary support and trainees be included?

Yes, for individuals directly working on the project (including trainees).

Are proof-of-concept projects acceptable?

Yes. Full product development is not required; early-stage or conceptual work is acceptable if impact is clear.

Intellectual Property and Confidentiality

How can applicants protect their ideas and ensure confidentiality when sharing concepts in proposals?

When submitting materials to the Foundation please keep in mind that because we have a focus on achieving charitable outcomes, we view information that we obtain through our grantmaking as a public good. Subject to the [Gates Foundation's Privacy & Cookies Notice](#), the Foundation may also share information you provide to us (either orally or in writing) with third parties, including external reviewers, consultants, contingent workers, key partners and co-funders. You should assume that nothing will be kept confidential and should not include any information in the proposal, budget, supplemental materials, or reports that you consider proprietary.

Who owns Intellectual Property in funded projects?

Grantees retain ownership of intellectual property (IP) developed through foundation-funded grants. The foundation does, however, require that grant outputs be made widely available to the intended beneficiaries. You can read more here: [Gates Foundation Global Access and IP Policy](#)

Are there any requirements on access to outputs?

Yes. Outputs must be made broadly accessible in line with the foundation's Global Access policy.

Scope and Technical Clarifications

What types of solutions are in scope?

- Strategies or products improving micronutrient absorption
- Absorption enhancers, microbiome or anti-inflammatory approaches
- Biomarkers for identifying affected populations
- Mechanistic or discovery research linked to fortification effectiveness

What is out of scope?

- Agriculture/plant biology research
- Live biotherapeutics (due to regulatory challenges)
- Public health data collection alone
- Policy/advocacy or commercialization/marketing

Are supplements or home fortification approaches allowed?

Yes, if they contribute to improving large-scale fortification effectiveness.

Are specific micronutrients required?

No. Iron, zinc, vitamin A, folate, and others are all acceptable.

Can proposals target specific conditions (e.g., obesity, autoimmune disease, cancer)?

Yes, if findings are applicable to broader populations and public health impact.

Are regulatory considerations important?

Yes. Solutions must have a feasible regulatory pathway, especially for use in food in low- and middle-income countries.

Technical Support

I forgot my password. How do I reset my password?

You can request to update your password within the application site. If you continue to have issues, please reach out to grandchallenges@gatesfoundation.org.

How will I know if my application has been submitted?

Once an application is submitted, an email confirmation will be sent.

I'm having trouble uploading my application file. What should I do?

If you are having issues submitting your application, we would encourage you to submit from a different browser. If the issue persists, please email the specifics of your problem to grandchallenges@gatesfoundation.org.

Can applicants ask questions during the process?

Yes. Questions can be emailed to grandchallenges@gatesfoundation.org.

Are resources available to guide applicants?

Yes. Supporting materials include rules and guidelines, application instructions, and FAQs (updated regularly).

Will webinar materials be available?

Yes. Slides and recordings will be posted online after the session.

How often do you intend to update the Frequently Asked Questions, and do you plan to provide answers to all questions submitted?

We will periodically post answers to questions as they are submitted, but do not have a specific schedule. We will provide answers on this page that are of relevance and of general interest to potential applicants. For answers to specific questions that are not covered here, please email grandchallenges@gatesfoundation.org