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THE GLOBAL FUND PUBLISHES GUIDELINES AND APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE RECENTLY APPROVED PHASE TWO OF THE COVID-19 RESPONSE MECHANISM

On 7 April 2021, the Global Fund published [updated guidelines](#) for the COVID-19 Response Mechanism (C19RM) and [application materials](#) to support its implementer countries to apply for COVID-19 funding through this mechanism. These updates follow the Global Fund's recent Board decision to extend the mechanism's lifespan. In line with this Board decision, the Global Fund will have until 31 March 2022 to award all the funding to countries, while the countries will have until 31 December 2023 to use up the funding. Initially, the Global Fund Board had approved the use of C19RM funds up to 30 June 2021.

Furthermore, the C19RM has recently received significant funding after [the United States \(US\) government approved \\$3.5 billion](#) in emergency funding on 11 March 2021 to support the Global Fund's COVID-19 response. The C19RM had [run out of funding](#) in December 2020 after [disbursing \\$759 million to more than 90 countries](#) since the mechanism's inception in April 2020.

Countries will now start submitting requests for funding from the C19RM from 7 April onwards. The application guidelines and materials clarify the application modalities approved by the Global Fund Board for phase two of the C19RM.

Information in this article mainly comes from the updated guidelines and application materials. The Global Fund Observer (GFO) will report in more detail on the Board's decision to extend the C19RM in the next issue (GFO 396).

The important aspects for applicants to consider include:

Scope of funding remains the same as phase one

The Global Fund has retained the focus of the C19RM on the three main areas covered in phase one: supporting the COVID-19 response through 'pure' COVID-19 interventions, mitigating the impact of the pandemic on HIV, tuberculosis (TB), and malaria programs, and strengthening health and community systems.

The C19RM 2021 will support interventions across these three categories as follows:

COVID-19 control and containment interventions

These include 'pure' COVID-19 interventions such as personal protective equipment (PPE), diagnostics, treatment, communications, and other public measures specified in the World Health Organization (WHO) guidance. The Global Fund has indicated that the C19RM funds will not support the procurement or deployment of COVID-19 vaccines. These are covered under the COVAX initiative as discussed in our article in this issue, [COVID-19 vaccination in Africa: From hope to reality](#).

COVID-19-related risk mitigation measures for programs to fight HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria

These interventions include support for COVID-19 activities needed to safely implement community and health facility-level services for HIV, TB, and malaria programs and additional delivery and procurement costs that arise when addressing COVID-19 disruptions. The Global Fund has emphasized the need for countries to articulate their adaptation needs and how they will address them.

Strengthening community and health systems

Countries can include interventions that strengthen key aspects of the health system, such as laboratory networks, supply chains, and community-led response systems, to address advocacy, services, accountability, and human-rights-based approaches.

The Global Fund has requested countries to consider appropriate community, rights, and gender-related interventions across the three areas.

Countries to receive allocation letters from 7 April onwards

All Global Fund recipient countries, including regional or multi-country recipients, are eligible for C19RM 2021 funds. However, in the funding request guidance the Global Fund notes that it will consider ineligible countries that are part of multi-country grants on a case-by-case basis.

The Global Fund will issue countries' allocation letters from 7 April 2021 onwards indicating how much money they can apply for, or what the Global Fund refers to as the C19RM Base Allocation. The Base Allocation is the amount that the Global Fund has awarded each country based on the countries' 2020-2022 core allocations and will be 15% of these. The Global Fund can adjust these awards based on factors such as the COVID-19 burden of disease and level of disruptions to better reflect the country's COVID-19 needs.

The Global Fund has also asked countries to submit C19RM Above Base Allocation Requests which could be potentially funded immediately or added to the C19RM Unfunded Demand for consideration should further funding become available. The guidelines note the high likelihood of countries receiving at least a portion of their above allocation request.

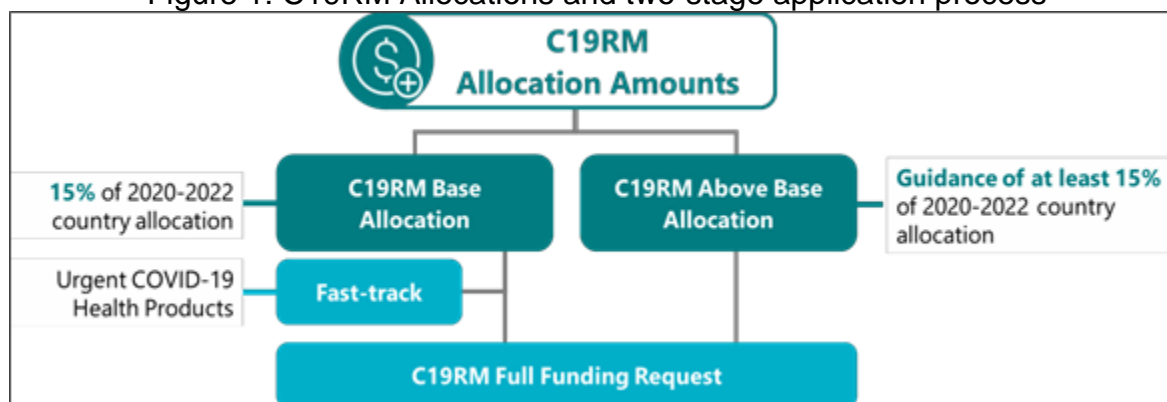
Countries can access funding in two stages

In a bid to balance speed, diligence and assurance, the Global Fund has introduced two application stages. In the first stage, countries can submit C19RM Fast-track Funding Requests to support urgent needs for the procurement and deployment of COVID-19 health products (including PPE, diagnostics, and therapeutics) and technical assistance. This stage is optional as countries may choose to prepare the Full Funding Request only. The Global Fund will review these requests on a rolling basis starting on 7 April.

Countries will then develop the C19RM Full Funding Request, which includes additional interventions as needed under the three eligible investment categories. Countries will submit this full funding request in the submission window assigned to them by the Secretariat. The Global Fund has created four submission windows: two in May (14th, 31st) and two in June (15th, 30th).

The allocation letter will define how much money countries can apply for, for both C19RM Full Funding Requests and C19RM Fast-Track Funding Requests.

Figure 1: C19RM Allocations and two-stage application process



Source: COVID-19 Response Mechanism Guidelines

Country Coordinating Mechanisms to coordinate and submit the C19RM funding requests

Key considerations for the countries in developing the C19RM funding requests include:

- Countries will submit their funding requests through the Country Coordinating Mechanisms (CCMs).
- The CCMs will ensure that the funding request development brings together all relevant in-country stakeholders, including civil society and community representatives.
- All CCMs will need to endorse both funding requests. The national COVID-19 response coordinating body will also need to endorse the 'pure' COVID-19 interventions included in the C19RM Full Funding Request.
- Countries should use the most recent data available and COVID-19 national strategic preparedness and response plans and guidance from partners to develop the funding request.
- Countries will need to elaborate the country context, the implementation of the C19RM 2020 award, the funding request, the implementation arrangements, the COVID-19 funding landscape, and sustainability plans for COVID-19 investments in the Full Funding Request.
- Countries can send in their applications in English, French, or Spanish. The Global Fund will translate the narrative core application documents into English. The Global Fund is encouraging the countries to submit supplementary documents in English.
- CCMs to identify the most optimal existing implementation arrangements/Principal Recipients for the delivery of funded interventions. However, in exceptional cases the Global Fund may approve a new Principal Recipient.

The Global Fund will review and approve all C19RM Fast-Track Funding Requests and C19RM Full Funding Requests of up to \$35 million with input from partners, including the Access to COVID-19 Tools

(ACT) Accelerator partners. Requests exceeding \$35 million will be reviewed and approved by the Board. The Secretariat will provide timelines for the review.

The Global Fund to provide additional support to CCMs

The Global Fund is making available [additional funding to CCMs](#) of up to 25% of CCMs' 2021 budget to support their central role in developing the C19RM funding requests. These funds will allow CCMs to ensure the adequate involvement and participation of in-country stakeholders, especially civil society, communities and the national COVID-19 response bodies during the C19RM Funding Request development process. More specifically, these funds will support increased staff, short-term consultancies on engagement and coordination, and physical or virtual consultations.

CCMs can access this funding by sending an email to the Global Fund's CCM Hub while ensuring that the Fund Portfolio Manager is copied in the communications.

The updated guidelines and application materials are available on the Global Fund website:

- [COVID-19 Response Mechanism Guidelines](#), 7 April 2021
- [COVID-19 Response Mechanism Funding Request Instructions](#), 6 April 2021
- [COVID-19 Response Mechanism Funding Request Form](#)
- [CCM and Partner Engagement Technical Guidance](#), 6 April 2021

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