



Independent observer  
of the Global Fund

## Igniting Hope: Pandemic Fund's Second Call for Proposals

### A Brief History of the Pandemic Fund

Born out of the imperative to address the glaring gaps exposed by previous health crises, the Pandemic Fund emerged as a beacon of collaboration. It is a multi-stakeholder partnership that mobilized \$2 billion from [25 sovereign and philanthropic contributors](#). The Fund, a collaborative effort between governments, the World Bank, the World Health Organization (WHO), UN agencies, multilateral development banks, global health initiatives, philanthropies, and civil society organizations, embodies inclusive governance with representation from both the Global North and the Global South.

In a resolute commitment to strengthen the global response to pandemics, the Pandemic Fund announces its Second Call for Proposals, demonstrating a significant stride toward building resilience in low- and middle-income countries. With a grant envelope of \$500 million, the Fund invites eligible nations and entities to submit innovative proposals that prioritize high-impact investments in pandemic prevention, preparedness, and response.

### Objectives of the Second Call for Proposals

Before addressing the objectives of the second call for proposals, it is important to emphasize that the Fund's achievements in its inaugural year set an impressive benchmark. [Grants worth \\$338 million were awarded to 19 applicants, covering 37 countries across six regions](#). The rapid response and deployment of resources showcased the Fund's agility and commitment to addressing immediate needs.

The Second Call for Proposals builds on the success of the first, considered as a pilot and addresses the overwhelming demand for funding. With a larger envelope of \$500 million, the Fund aims to focus on high-impact investments, particularly in early warning and disease surveillance systems, laboratory capabilities, and the strengthening of human resources in public health and community workforces.

More broadly, the Pandemic Fund intends to emphasize commitment to equity in all its dimensions. The second round of proposals places particular attention on community and civil society engagement, gender equity, and broader considerations of fairness. These elements are woven into the fabric of proposal development and implementation, ensuring that the benefits of funded projects reach all segments of society.

### Scaling Up with Determination

Dr. Chatib Basri, former Minister of Finance of Indonesia, and Dr. Sabin Nsanzimana, Minister of Health, Rwanda, co-Chairs of the Pandemic Fund Board, [emphasize the urgency of scaling up efforts. While the \\$500 million for the second Call promises a noticeable impact, the leaders stress the importance of not losing sight of long-term financing needs](#).

Furthermore, in recognition of the unprecedented demand observed in the first call, Pandemic Fund management encourages unsuccessful applicants to resubmit proposals in the second round. Feedback from initial submissions is expected to be a resource for refining and improving the quality of proposals. The Fund says it is determined to ensure that the speed of response does not compromise the excellence of its work.

### Key Deadlines and Application Process

The online application portal is set to open in late February and will remain accessible until May 17, 2024. Eligibility extends to countries eligible for funding from [IBRD and/or IDA](#). The exact date for funding allocation will be decided by the Governing Board in June, with the announcement scheduled no later than October 2024. For more information and detailed guidance on the application process, interested parties can refer to the [official Guidance Note](#) and [Call for Proposals](#) from the Pandemic Fund.

While the Pandemic Fund has undeniably emerged as a central player in strengthening global health resilience, mobilizing significant resources and fostering collaboration, the fact remains that, like any ambitious initiative, it faces many criticisms that cannot be dismissed out of hand.

We have already mentioned some of the criticisms levelled at this instrument. You'll find our analyses [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#).

Aspects to consider to improve the impact of the Pandemic Fund

### 1. Overwhelming Demand vs. Funding Constraints

The success of the first call for proposals, with [179 applications requesting over \\$2.5 billion from 133 countries](#), underscored the overwhelming demand for pandemic-related funding. While this reflects the urgent need for such initiatives, it also exposed the funding constraints faced by the Pandemic Fund. Despite a substantial grant envelope, the sheer scale of requests poses challenges in meeting the diverse needs of countries grappling with varying levels of preparedness.

### 2. Speed vs. Quality Dilemma

The urgency inherent in pandemic response often demands swift action. However, critics argue that the need for speed should not compromise the quality of project evaluation and implementation. The Fund's commitment to a rapid turnaround, while admirable, has raised concerns about thorough vetting and the potential oversight of critical aspects in the rush to disburse funds promptly. Striking the right balance between speed and diligence remains a persistent challenge.

### 3. Resource Allocation and Equity Concerns

While the Fund explicitly emphasizes equity considerations, the challenge lies in ensuring that resources are distributed equitably across nations and regions. The inherent disparities in healthcare infrastructure, economic capacities, and pandemic severity among recipient countries create a complex landscape for resource allocation. Striking a balance that addresses immediate needs without perpetuating existing inequalities is a delicate task.

### 4. Inclusive Governance and Representation

The Pandemic Fund prides itself on inclusive governance, with representation from both the Global North and the Global South. However, some critics argue that achieving true inclusivity is an ongoing challenge. Balancing the interests and priorities of diverse stakeholders, including governments, philanthropies, and civil society organizations, requires a continuous effort to ensure that decision-making reflects the nuanced realities of all parties involved.

## 5. Long-Term Financing Amidst Immediate Crises

While the Fund has made significant strides in mobilizing resources, there is a looming concern about the sustainability of its efforts. The emphasis on not losing sight of long-term financing needs, as highlighted by Fund leaders, brings attention to the ongoing struggle to secure consistent, long-term funding for pandemic prevention, preparedness, and response. The cyclical nature of health crises demands a sustained commitment that transcends immediate challenges.

## 6. Learning from the First Call for Proposals

The first call for proposals, despite its success, became a learning ground for the Fund. The unprecedented demand and oversubscription revealed unforeseen challenges in anticipating and meeting the diverse needs of countries. The Fund's commitment to encouraging resubmission and learning from the initial round demonstrates a willingness to adapt and improve. However, it also sheds light on the evolving nature of the global health landscape and the need for dynamic responses.

As the Fund navigates these complexities, it remains a crucial instrument in the global fight against pandemics, continually learning and evolving to meet the ever-changing demands of a world grappling with multiple crises. We strongly encourage eligible Interested eligible [countries, regional entities, and implementing entities](#) to submit their applications for this second call for proposals.

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