Africa Oxford Health Innovation Platform (AfOx-HIP) Frequently Asked Questions

Africa Oxford Health Innovation Platform (AfOx-HIP) is a multi-disciplinary programme to support African innovators develop new solutions to Africa's health challenges. It does so by connecting research to industry to tackle prevention, early detection, and treatment through impact investment and innovation. AfOx-HIP is a University of Oxford platform supported by key researchers and led by the Africa Oxford Initiative (AfOx).

Contents:

Eligibility

1. **Applicant eligibility: Am I eligible to apply?**
   The applicant must be
   - a national of an African country or have indefinite leave to remain in an African country
   - domiciled in an African country in which they must be a legal resident **and**
   - developing the proposed health innovation in their host country

   Applications from individuals or innovators leading small teams are eligible.

   Being an academic or a researcher is not a requirement. However, a robust foundation in the science or technology behind your innovation is expected.

2. **Solution eligibility: Is my solution eligible?**
   The solution must be a science-based innovation for disease prevention, diagnosis, management and treatment. This includes vaccines, diagnostics, medical devices, therapeutics and surgical devices.

3. **Venture eligibility: Is my venture eligible?**
   Your venture must have legal presence in domicile country. Founders that do not have a venture (are yet to register a formal legal entity) are eligible.

   NB: The scheme is not intended to support innovations from well-established businesses, non-profits, consultancies, intermediaries, consortiums or industrial research companies.
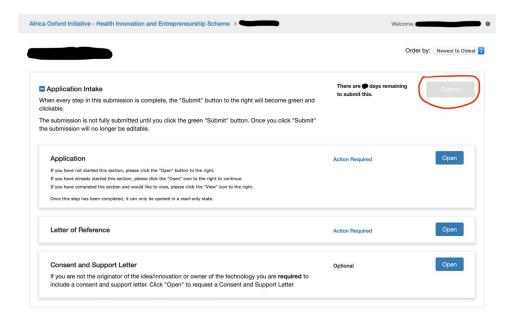
The Application Form

4. **I have completed my application for the AfOx Innovation and Entrepreneurship Scheme. How do I know if submission was successful and that you have already received it?**

   Once you have completed all required sections in the application form, requested and received a recommendation letter (and consent letter of support) through the submission portal, you must click **SUBMIT**.

   The **submit button** circled in red below will turn green and clickable, when every step in the submission is complete and your application is ready for submission.

   If your submission is successful, you will receive an email **from** '*AfOx health innovation*' with the **subject** '*Application submission for AfOx Innovation and Entrepreneurship Scheme*', confirming that we have received it.

   NB: If you forget to press submit, before the deadline, your application will be automatically withdrawn from the selection process and you will not be considered for the scheme. The submission deadline for cohort 4 is **31st May 2024 at 23:59 BST.** The portal will automatically cease to allow submissions.

5. **In what format should I submit my response to questions?**

The application form contains guidance information for responses to questions and specific help text accompanying specific questions below the text box for your response. Please be sure to read all the guidance information carefully. The maximum word count is also displayed.

6. **Can applications be submitted in any language that is widely used across the African continent?**

All applications must be submitted in English. Applications submitted in any other language will be considered ineligible and will not be reviewed. The *AfOx Innovation and Entrepreneurship Scheme* training will take place in English - it is important that shortlisted applicants have a strong command of the English language.

7. **Different countries have different formats for entering their names. Is there a specific expectation of how I should enter my name in the profile section of the application?**

Please ensure that you enter your first name and last name. You may include your middles name(s), but this is optional.

Example: First name/Given name/Prénom: **Caroline**
Middle name(s)/Autres Prénom(s): Aïcha
Last name/Surname/Nom: **Diop**

8. **I may potentially have a conflict of interest to declare, but am not entirely sure whether it actually constitutes a conflict of interest. What should I do?**

In case of any actual or potential conflict of interest, please notify us about it in the application by responding to the question 'Is there any actual or potential conflict of interest you would like to tell us about?'. If you are unsure about there being a conflict of interest, select the response 'I am not sure'. It is important to let us know about any conflicts of interest to help determine how best to handle them.

9. **What are the expectations for a demonstration of the technology behind the innovation?**

Demonstration upload 1: this may be a schematic, design drawing, a photo or any other form of visualisation of the innovation in document form (pdf). The applicant may include more than one form of visualisation, but the pdf must not exceed TWO pages. It should not be a written proposal.

Demonstration upload 2: If uploading a video, it should be of the innovation in action and not of the applicant pitching to the screen. Any accompanying voice over should be about explaining the demonstration in action. Uploading a video is optional. It may not be relevant to all forms of innovations.

NB: A pdf document in text format that is outlining the innovation and can be understood as a text proposal rather than an image/visualisation will disqualify the applicant. Similarly, a video that can be understood to be a proposal pitch to the screen rather than a demonstration of an innovation in action will disqualify the applicant.

10. **What is required for the <u>letter of reference</u>? Who is supposed to give this? Is it from my team or someone reputable?**

The referee should be able to demonstrate the capacity or extent to which they are connected to the applicant and why the applicant is a suitable candidate for the scheme. The referee should be able to provide sufficient detail about the applicant that can be corroborated.

The letter of reference can be issued by the institution or organisation the applicant is affiliated to (e.g., a university, research institution, innovation hub, employer etc.). If the applicant does not have any such affiliation or contact, the letter may be issued by e.g., previous incubator programme, fellowship programme etc.

A reputable person could strengthen your application if they are able to meaningfully demonstrate they actually know you, and where possible, that they are convincingly conversant with your innovation work or journey. A colleague may also provide the letter if they are better placed to put your case forward in an objective manner.

11. **I would like to provide a key piece of information that is not directly requested in the application form.**

Applicants are encouraged to provide any critical additional information under the section 'Further information - Is there anything else you would like to tell us about?' Please ensure the information is specific (rather than vague and generic content), with only relevant detail.

12. **There are some errors in my application. How can I correct this?**

The application process allows you to make changes to the application while it is still in draft form and to save it on the platform until a later time or date when one is ready to submit. An application can no longer be edited once it has been submitted.

13. **What does the review process involve?**

Applications will be reviewed by expert panel reviewers. The reviewers will gauge the applicant's understanding of the nature of the innovation and the proposed benefits. The proposal should allow the reviewers to have a clear picture of the innovation and to substantiate and corroborate the statements of the applicant. The selection process will take into account:

- Adherence to all entry and eligibility requirements
- The relevance and viability of the proposed health innovation
- The extent to which the health innovation is likely to promote the pursuit of business with purpose
- The health innovation's potential for venture acceleration and scaling-up
- The individual, or teams', innovation and entrepreneurial potential

14. **When will I know if I have been selected for *AfOx Innovation and Entrepreneurship Scheme*?**

All applicants to cohort 4 will be notified of the outcome of their application via email by the end of July 2024 at the latest.

The Applicant

15. **Do I have to be African to be eligible for the *AfOx Innovation and Entrepreneurship Scheme*?**

    The applicant must be
    - a national of an African country or have indefinite leave to remain in an African country
    - domiciled in an African country in which they must be a legal resident **and**
    - developing the proposed health innovation in their host country

    Applicants must meet all these three criteria above.

16. **What chances do female applicants stand to be selected?**

    Applications from female and under-represented innovator/entrepreneurs are particularly highly encouraged. The *AfOx Innovation and Entrepreneurship Scheme* will competitively select a limited number of outstanding innovations proposing new solutions for health in Africa. The quality of the application is key and gender does not in any way present a disadvantage.

17. **I am developing a health innovation as part of team. Am I eligible to apply as part of a team?**

    Yes. Applications from innovators leading small teams are eligible. If successful, the named (lead) applicant will be the beneficiary of the training on behalf of the team.

18. **I have a viable health innovation with strong potential for significant impact, but have not yet set up a team. Am I eligible to apply?**

    Yes. Applications from individuals are eligible. Selection is based on the robustness of the application – a clearly articulated proposal of a health innovation with a demonstrable benefit on an unmet health protection or healthcare needs and strong potential of evolving start-ups into successful business ventures will be considered.

19. **I am not the originator of idea, health innovation or owner of the technology. Am I eligible to apply?**

    An applicant is eligible to apply if they have a clear association to the health innovation with regards to the originator of the idea and/ or owner of the technology. For example, if the applicant is part of the team developing the health innovation and have been nominated by their team to put in an application. Such applicants will however be required to provide a consent and letter of support from the originator of the idea/innovation and/or owner of the technology.

20. **Is the consent and support letter obligatory or optional?**

    If the applicant cannot claim to be the owner of the idea, innovation or technology behind the innovation the letter is obligatory. The applicant will need to seek explicit consent and support letter. The letter should be provided by the person who owns the idea, innovation or technology behind innovation if these are owned by a single person or any one person where the idea, innovation or technology behind innovation are owned by different persons.

Consent must be given in an express manner and support for the application must be explicit.

Please note that should anyone challenge your association to the innovation at any stage of the application process or training, the Africa Oxford Initiative will withdraw you from the process if there is justification for the contestation.

21. **Do I have to be a researcher at a university or research institution to be eligible to apply?**

No, being an academic or a researcher is not a requirement. However, a robust foundation in the science or technology behind your innovation is expected. You will also need the talent and creativity to tap into and reconfigure knowledge located in disparate spaces.

The University of Oxford promotes the effective application of knowledge to real world challenges in many areas including for the improvement health. This is in line with its strategy of promoting an environment in which research can flourish to create knowledge through the broadest range of research.

22. **Is an engineering or medical sciences academic background a requirement?**

Whilst innovations typically draw heavily from scientific knowledge, and the application must demonstrate a clear innovation, the applicant need not be an engineer or a medical scientist. Crucially though, the innovation must demonstrate viability and a clear strong potential for significant health impact.

23. **Am I eligible to apply for *AfOx Innovation and Entrepreneurship Scheme* if I have previously held an AfOx grant or fellowship?**

Yes. This is an open competition scheme. Selection of candidates is based on the strength of their application. It does not confer any specific advantages or disadvantages to previous or prospective AfOx grant or fellowship holders.

24. **Is having an Oxford-based research collaborator a requirement to apply for *AfOx Innovation and Entrepreneurship Scheme*?**

No. However, if an Oxford-based research collaborator is involved in the proposed health innovation, please indicate this in the application form including their role. It is also advisable, if applicable, to notify us of any prior involvement with any Oxford-based research collaborator unrelated to the proposed health innovation in the application form.

The Innovation

25. **I have a portfolio of health innovations. Can I submit more than one application for different health innovations?**

AfOx will consider a single application from an applicant for one health innovation. If successful, the applicant will be the beneficiary of the training. Please note that multiple applications by the same applicant or multiple applications for the same health innovation by multiple applicants will be withdrawn from the selection process.

26. **My health innovation is only at the idea stage. Am I eligible to apply?**

    No. If you are working on digital technologies, AI or machine learning as your primary innovation, compelling and demonstrable traction is required (MVP or growth stage).

    Yes. If you are working on a diagnostic, therapeutic or medical device, it is not a requirement to have a prototype. We will consider applications at the idea stage, but applications at the prototype stage or beyond and with strong potential for a scalable solution have an advantage.

    NB. If none of the above technologies (Q24) are in any way related to your innovation, compelling and demonstrable traction is required (MVP or growth stage).

27. **If my health innovation provides a robust solution to a significant health challenge, but is not an engineering innovation *per se*, am I eligible to apply?**

    Strong non-engineering innovations with demonstrable benefits on an unmet health protection or healthcare needs and strong potential of evolving start-ups into successful business ventures will be considered.

28. **Does the innovation have to be 'new to the world', directly originating from blue sky science?**

    The innovation may be novel, deriving from translational research or a reconfiguration of existing knowledge and technologies and with strong potential for far reaching health benefits.

The Training

29. **What topics does the *AfOx Innovation and Entrepreneurship Scheme* training cover?**

    This virtual training offers a unique interactive programme on *Innovation and Entrepreneurship in Health for Africa*. The training aims to equip participants with key insights into the entrepreneurial journey - from the process of developing ideas, understanding core entrepreneurial talents and skills required to succeed, through to launching a venture.

    The training covers crucial skills ranging from creative problem solving, translational research, entrepreneurial thinking and venture acceleration. It integrates the use of virtual workrooms for small group engagement, interactive media and e-learning activities as well as traditional didactic components. Successful applicants will be provided with further details of the training.

30. **What is the time commitment for the virtual training?**

    This entirely online training of self-paced learning is designed for optimal accessibility for the busy, working, talented, African innovator. Assessment will be continuous and based on a series of practical assignments submitted online. The self-paced interactive programme and weekly workshops will require about 8–10 hours/week in total. Specific details on the training will be made available to successful applicants before commencement of the training.

31. **How will the successful completion of the virtual training be recognised?**

Upon successful completion of the training, participants will receive a certificate of attendance from the Africa Oxford Initiative as proof of the enhanced skills and critical thinking abilities they will have developed.

32. **If my application is successful for the *AfOx Innovation and Entrepreneurship Scheme* training and my project later selected as one of the projects with the highest potential for further development, what next?**

The candidates with highest potential projects will be invited to apply for *AfOx Innovation Scholarships*. This includes personalised support in Oxford to meet specific needs for mentorship and technical collaborative support. Successful applicants will be provided with further details of the enhanced Oxford-based programme.

Further Questions

33. **What is the African Academy of Sciences involvement with AfOx-HIP?**

Grand Challenges Africa is an initiative of the Science for Africa Foundation and a partner of AfOx-HIP. Grand Challenges Africa promotes Africa-led scientific innovations to help countries better achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by awarding seed and full grants to the continent's most impressive solutions. It involves a network of Africa's most innovative young thinkers across the continent.

34. **Who should I contact for further information?**

If you have a question which is not answered on the website, application form or in these FAQs, please email the AfOx Team.

NB: We may not be able to respond to queries already answered on the website, application form or in these FAQs.