



Call for Proposals:

A platform trial approach to assess the immunogenicity and safety / reactogenicity of fractional COVID-19 vaccine(s) as an additional dose in primed populations (FraCT-CoV)

CEPI is pleased to announce a new funding opportunity for clinical trials with the aim to generate data on fractional doses of COVID-19 vaccines given as additional doses in primed populations. Further details can be found at https://cepi.net/get_involved/cfps/

This Call for Proposals (CfP) invites consortia and individual organisations that would like to contribute an individual trial based on a platform trial approach. The Applicants should provide proposals that include a description of the proposed clinical trial along with requested information necessary to evaluate the scientific merit, strategic fit, and operational feasibility of the clinical trial. The focus of this program is to accelerate global COVID-19 vaccine coverage and to optimise vaccination regimens in special populations especially in low- and middle-income countries without compromising vaccine efficacy, Applicants should state in what ways the proposal can contribute to CEPI's mission of increasing LMIC access to affordable vaccines.

This CfP is open **immediately**. Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis as they are received. The CfP will remain open until the budget limit has been reached.

CEPI reviews and evaluates proposals based on stated eligibility criteria, CEPI's overall project portfolio, and the equitable access benefits of the proposal. Regardless of eligibility at any stage of a CfP, CEPI, in its sole discretion, reserves the right to consider and to decline any proposal.

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1. Introduction

Several vaccines have successfully demonstrated high protection against COVID-19 through placebo controlled clinical trials. This has paved the way for approval / emergency use authorisation in several countries starting in Q4/2020. Yet, in many LMICs, vaccination coverage is still less than 5%.

Many countries which implemented COVID-19 vaccination programs early and have achieved high vaccine coverage are now considering additional vaccine doses (a third dose in the case of a two-dose primary series), particularly in populations at risk of severe disease. This is to improve, broaden, and maintain the immune response over time to protect against COVID-19 as well as possibly reducing SARS-CoV-2 transmission and infection rates. However, availability of vaccines and vaccine supply remain limited and while COVAX is leading the global effort to enable equitable access to COVID-19 vaccine doses, global vaccine inequity remains unacceptable, with many vulnerable people in LMICs yet to receive a primary series. Evaluation of the use of fractional doses of COVID-19 vaccines as a potential solution could begin to address this issue.

The use of fractional doses of COVID-19 vaccines, instead of full doses, given as an additional dose to previously primed populations, presents an opportunity to improve, broaden, and prolong the immune response and, hence, vaccine effectiveness while minimising the impact on limited vaccine supplies. In the past, fractional doses of [yellow fever](#) and polio vaccines have been used successfully for public health campaigns and routine vaccination. Fractional / reduced doses may also improve vaccine reactogenicity profiles.

CEPI is pleased to announce the launch of this programme and invites applications from consortia or individual organisations to conduct trials assessing the immunogenicity and safety / reactogenicity of fractional versus full dose COVID-19 vaccine(s) given as an additional dose in primed populations. CEPI will make available up to US \$25 million in funding to support this programme. Consortia that apply and are selected to join this programme will be funded from this total amount. CEPI has identified an external implementing partner who will also provide oversight, coordination and operational support for this programme.

2. Objectives

The objective of this programme is to generate data on fractional doses of COVID-19 vaccines when given as an additional single dose in previously primed populations (either via full or partial vaccination or natural infection).

These data are primarily intended to support pragmatic recommendations by, for example National Immunisation Technical Advisory Groups (NITAGs) / World Health Organization [Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on Immunization \(WHO SAGE\)](#).

The programme intends to compare data across projects, if applicable, and thus has a defined set of core elements and study design features to be included in individual trials joining the programme. These core elements are specified in a separate document which can be [found here](#). This document also provides further background / information on flexible trial elements. Individual Applicants will be required to define these flexible elements based on the specific objectives of the trial and local requirements. Please review the document describing core and flexible protocol elements before submitting an application.

3. Scope of the Call

This Call is to support individual clinical trials of COVID-19 vaccines that will assess and compare the immunogenicity as well as safety and reactogenicity of fractional dose(s) of COVID-19 vaccines when given as an additional dose in populations which are primed, for example via previous full or partial vaccination or natural infection.

The programme intends to address gaps of relevance to LMICs. It is, however, not the intention to duplicate other programmes / trials generating similar evidence (e.g., on the general application of booster doses in fully vaccinated healthy populations).

Applicants must provide information in their application as outlined below which will allow eligibility assessment for this programme:

- The selected COVID-19 vaccine being evaluated in the trial must have received authorisation for use in general population outside of clinical trials (e.g., full licensure or emergency use authorisation) from a relevant /competent regulatory authority (e.g., FDA, EMA) or WHO. Use of unlicensed / non-authorised vaccine(s) currently in advanced stage clinical development could also be considered but will require justification and documentation as appropriate. The vaccine can be either same as or different to the one used for priming.
- A study protocol synopsis must be provided with the application; however, a full protocol is encouraged.
- Applicants must be able to provide evidence regarding availability and stability of the COVID-19 vaccine(s) used in the trial.
- **The scope and objective of the clinical trial should address at a minimum the below aspects:**
 - **Full versus fractional single dose** of the selected vaccine.
 - **Four-week interval** between study vaccination and primary immunogenicity endpoint. Applicants may consider long duration immunogenicity endpoints (for example at 3 or 6 months or longer) if logistically feasible and adequately justified (including timelines).
 - Immune response for primary endpoint assessed based on **binding antibodies** (IgG ELISA)
 - **Reactogenicity** assessment as co-primary objective
 - Safety follow-up for at least **3 months**
For core and flexible study design features, please review the [suggested protocol elements document](#).
- Applicants are strongly encouraged to use secondary antibody standards calibrated to the WHO international reference standard in serologic assays assessing the immune response – wherever possible. (www.nibsc.org/science_and_research/virology/centre_for_aids_reagents/covid-19_reagents.aspx).
- Applicants are further encouraged to consider plans to integrate immunological testing of a comprehensive subset of samples via CEPI's [Centralised Laboratory network](#), and apply for sample testing by completing and submitting the [Sample Analysis Request Form](#).
- Applicants should have a Data Safety Monitoring Board (DSMB) in place and be willing to participate in the meta- Data Safety and Monitoring Board (mDSMB) scheme offered as part of the Safety Platform for Emergency vACcines (SPEAC) project (<https://brightoncollaboration.us/speac/>)
- Applicants should provide realistic timelines for the proposed clinical trial including protocol finalisation, clinical trial approval by responsible authorities, recruitment period (first subject included, last subject included), and interim analysis / data availability for the primary objective. CEPI may reject applications where delayed timelines may result in expiry of the relevance of findings.
- The Applicants should also include details of clinical trial sites and personnel, laboratory for immunogenicity testing, regulatory and / or ethics approval process, and other operational aspects (e.g., data management, pharmacy etc.) and highlight where they would need support.
- The Applicant should highlight the unique aspects of the proposed individual trial and the added value with regards to COVID-19 vaccination strategies.

CEPI will collaborate with a partner for implementation support, oversight and coordination and will also be able to provide further operational support as necessary / if requested.

4. Applicant guidelines and the review process

The proposal must include aspects as required in **Section 3**, provide realistic assumptions to provide evidence on the primary objective in a timely manner, and contain sufficient information on vaccine procurement and supply strategies. Any claims made within the proposal must be supported by evidence.

The proposal should:

- be provided in the application template (attached) and be no longer than 5 pages (excluding references); a study synopsis or, preferably, a full protocol should be provided as a separate attachment
- include high-level budget (in USD) with direct costs (personnel, travel, consultants, equipment, other direct costs) and indirect costs in compliance with CEPI's [Cost Guidance](#); and
- be written in English.

This Call for Proposals is open until the funding allocation has been reached. Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis, and Applicants are encouraged to submit as early as possible. The Call may be closed when the budget limit has been reached or the strategic scope is being revised. Each application will go through immediate eligibility screening by the project team. Eligible applications will be sent for peer-review by expert reviewers. All experts that participate in the review process will be assessed for any potential conflicts of interest and are required to sign non-disclosure agreements. Responses to Applicants will be issued as soon as they are available. CEPI will make every effort to accelerate review timelines as it recognises the urgency of the proposed work. In line with its commitment to acceleration, CEPI intends to issue awards quickly but also expects Applicants to show willingness and flexibility.

The application template is accessible [here](#). To respond to this CFP, Applicants must submit their application to CEPI via a secure portal. Please send an email to cfp@cepi.net to be provided with a link to upload your application to the secure portal (in the Subject field indicate: Application for FraCT-CoV CFP). The application should be uploaded via the secure portal in a pdf format. Apart from the application and a separate trial synopsis/protocol, do not send any additional documents to cfp@cepi.net. The application will be treated as confidential and personal data included in any proposal that is submitted will be handled according to [CEPI's Privacy Notice](#).

This is a direct CFP, which means that no additional information should be submitted.

Please note that CEPI will not cover any costs incurred by the Applicants for the development and submission of proposals.

Applicant organisations: This request for proposals is open worldwide to relevant entities that bring the relevant expertise and experience to address challenges within the scope of this call. Funding beneficiaries must be legal entities. CEPI may conduct due diligence reviews for feasibility verification, legal, business, and financial compliance prior to awards being granted.

5. Note on vaccine access

CEPI is committed to the principle of universal, equitable, and affordable access to vaccines, especially for the most vulnerable countries, as expressed in its [Equitable Access Policy](#). CEPI's access policy with respect to COVID-19 requires that vaccines are allocated fairly based on public health need rather than ability to pay.

CEPI co-leads the vaccine pillar (COVAX) of the [Access to COVID-19 Tools \(ACT\) Accelerator](#) which has established a global mechanism to procure and fairly allocate COVID-19 vaccines (the COVAX Facility). Successful applicants receiving funds through this call who are also manufacturers of COVID-19 vaccines will be required to supply and sell vaccines to this mechanism (or make available their

technologies and/or data in order to do so) in quantities reflective of the funding received and at fair prices that are sustainable to the manufacturer.

CEPI will not take ownership of patents arising from its funded projects. CEPI will not seek a share of any commercial return from the vaccine manufacture during the pandemic period, focusing instead on expanded access by ensuring global allocation needs are met. CEPI's goal is to support the open sharing of data resulting from CEPI funding and therefore successful applicants will be obligated to promptly publish the resulting data in an open access publication.

6. Award conditions

Before submitting an application, Applicants should take note of three Award conditions. Firstly, each Awardee should recognise CEPI's governance, which can be found [here](#). Secondly, any funding is dependent on the signing of an Award Agreement, which provides the terms and conditions under which the Award will be made, in line with CEPI's Third Party Code, which can be found on [CEPI's website](#). Thirdly, that there will be a close collaboration with and involvement of an implementing partner external to CEPI in coordinating the programme.

Contractual terms and conditions will need to be rapidly concluded in days or weeks, and Awardees must meet these pressing timelines given the urgency of the pandemic and the need to commence funding projects promptly.

Applicants unable or unwilling to meet these requirements should not submit an application.

7. Technical and administrative questions

Technical and administrative questions about this Call should be directed to the CEPI Secretariat (cfp@cepi.net). In the Subject field please indicate: "Application for FraCT-CoV Cfp".