



# Request for Applications 2022-032: MATRIX Technology Accelerator Domain 1

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# Request for Applications # 2022-032

## MATRIX Technology Accelerator Domain 1

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## I. Opportunity summary

This is an opportunity to apply for funding to advance research applications for development of new HIV prevention approaches. Applicants from a wide range of **US, Kenyan, South African, and Zimbabwean institutions** (universities; private, for-profit, or not-for-profit small companies; university researchers and research consortia/programs; innovation or incubation hubs) are invited to apply to this request for applications (RFA) sponsored by the Microbicide R&D to Advance HIV Prevention Technologies through Responsive Innovation and eXcellence (MATRIX) Consortium and United States Agency for International Development (USAID). We are seeking **innovative, game-changing research applications for the development of new HIV prevention drug and strategies, multipurpose prevention technologies (MPT), and technologies that enable HIV prevention strategy development and have the potential to strengthen capacity in targeted countries**. Established researchers, research consortia, students, postdoctoral fellows, and new investigators establishing laboratories and/or seeking tenure from US, Kenya, South Africa, and Zimbabwe are encouraged to apply. Proposed research must be milestone-, go/no-go criteria- and timeline-driven, and must target development of HIV prevention for one or more of the following populations: adolescent girls and young women, pregnant and breastfeeding women, and female sex workers. Applications are limited to projects with direct costs of US\$150,000 and duration of 18 months. PATH, a member of the MATRIX Consortium, will oversee the application submission and award processes using an oversight structure that draws from US- and Africa-based administrators.

*Key words:* HIV prevention, multipurpose prevention technology, early phase technology, adolescent girls and young women, pregnant and breastfeeding women, and female sex workers, drugs and delivery technologies

## II. Key dates

**Table 1. Summary of key dates**

Release of request for applications	August 15, 2022 (8:00 a.m. Pacific time)
Letter of intent due	August 22, 2022 (8:00 a.m. Pacific time)
Fact-finding questions due	August 22, 2022 (8:00 a.m. Pacific time)
Applicants provided responses to fact-finding questions	August 29, 2022 (8:00 a.m. Pacific time)
<b>Applications due</b>	<b>September 19, 2022 (8:00 a.m. Pacific time)</b>
Applicants notified of decision	October 21, 2022 (8:00 a.m. Pacific time)
Estimated project start date	December 1, 2022

Note that MATRIX reserves the right to modify this schedule as needed. Parties who express interest will be notified by email of any changes.

This RFA expires on September 20, 2022.

### **III. Funding opportunity purpose**

#### **Matrix Technology Accelerator Domain 1**

MATRIX is designed to expedite research and development of products for prevention of HIV in women (<https://matrix4prevention.org>). MATRIX is funded by the USAID and is led by Dr. Sharon Hillier (Magee-Womens Research Institute, Pittsburgh, PA, USA) and Dr. Thesla Palanee-Phillips (University of the Witwatersrand Johannesburg, South Africa). MATRIX's scientific and operational priorities focus on ensuring equitable leadership and representation by sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) stakeholders to advance products that meet the diverse HIV prevention needs of adolescent girls and young women, pregnant and breastfeeding women, and female sex workers.

The overarching scientific objective of the MATRIX program is to create a self-sustaining, milestone- and go/no-go criteria-driven platform for the efficient development of HIV prevention products that are acceptable, affordable, scalable, and deliverable; that increase end-user choice; and that make a positive public health impact while actively involving SSA researchers and stakeholders. A significant component of MATRIX's SSA product development strategy is the Technology Accelerator Domain 1 (TA-D1), which was designed to accelerate early research and development of new HIV prevention products, MPTs (specifically, combinations of contraceptives and anti-HIV drugs), and/or technologies that support drug discovery/development. TA-D1 will accomplish this by identifying and funding potentially high-risk proof-of-concept projects with significant innovation that are potential game changers for HIV prevention and MPTs and/or their supporting technologies. Funding will be prioritized to applications that are meritorious and address critical gaps in the current HIV prevention toolbox and/or open new pathways to achieving the objectives of MARTIX.

The scientific objective of this RFA is to support the development of innovative, potential game-changer research by supporting students, new/early investigators, and established researchers and collaborative teams from a broad range of entities.

#### **Areas of research interest**

1. Development of novel anti-HIV products, MPTs, and next-generation antiretrovirals for prevention of HIV infection.
2. Development of new or optimized drug delivery systems that address current gaps in HIV prevention products and MPTs by offering new and/or improved drug delivery options to MATRIX's target populations. Products that are systemic (i.e., injectable) or topical (i.e., vaginal) will be considered.

3. Development of laboratory techniques and/or diagnostic tools with increased sensitivity and/or precision, which facilitate the preclinical and/or clinical development of new HIV prevention products.
4. Development/optimization of new approaches for local manufacture of HIV and MPT products. Novel/optimized synthesis approaches for new and established anti-HIV/antiviral and MPTs that reduce cost of manufacture and/or facilitate production in low- and middle-income countries are encouraged.
5. Development of novel, sensitive, and accurate point-of-care HIV diagnostics for the detection of HIV, anti-HIV/antiviral drugs, and/or contraceptive components of MPTs.
6. Proof-of-concept engineering advances that could substantially impact the development of HIV prevention products and MPTs through the provision of better or optimized tools to support preclinical and clinical development.
7. Basic research that could add significantly to our understanding of HIV susceptibility, with an emphasis on vaginal biology and the interaction of HIV prevention strategies with the female reproductive system, immune system, and/or microbiome.

### **Nonresponsive areas of research**

Applications proposing research that is identified as not responsive to this funding opportunity will be returned without review, including:

1. Research that involves first-in-human, phase 1, phase 2, or phase 3 clinical trials or studies that involve direct intervention with human subjects are not responsive to this funding opportunity. Applicants may propose research using samples from completed or ongoing clinical trials, but applicants may not use this RFA to support any component of a clinical trial or observational study. Applicants with the proper ethics committee approvals may propose to use tissues and/or secretions that have been specifically obtained from healthy volunteers to conduct research.
2. Applications with MPTs that do not include anti-HIV activity or that contain an antiviral (new or established) without anti-HIV activity.
3. Development of any product or process that does not have anti-HIV activity or application to HIV prevention. Applicants may propose products with a broad spectrum of antiviral/antimicrobial activity or applicability beyond HIV and MPT development, but the research application must focus on development of their role as potential HIV prevention strategies.
4. Development of products, new drugs, drug delivery systems, diagnostics, and/or technologies that do not support advancement of HIV prevention or MPT product development.
5. Applications focusing solely on the development of rectal HIV prevention strategies. Proposed strategies may have potential for dual-compartment usage (female reproductive tract and gastrointestinal tract), but the proposed research must include the use of the prevention strategy in the female reproductive tract.

6. Applications that propose the development of HIV vaccines (or components of vaccines), including combination of antivirals and vaccines in a single drug delivery system or as an MPT.
7. Applications with proposed innovations that are not supportive of the HIV prevention needs of adolescent girls and young women, pregnant and breastfeeding women, and female sex workers.
8. Applications focusing on social behavioral research, such as end-user and marketing studies to determine general end-user perceptions, acceptability, or market interest for a specific or hypothetical HIV prevention strategy or MPT. Applicants may integrate end-user input into the design or identification of a critical feature of a prevention strategy or MPT drug delivery system. If included in a research application, end-user research that is focused on identifying critical rheological and/or “look and feel” properties of a drug delivery system that is proposed for development must be 25 percent or less of the proposed research and research budget. Furthermore, the research must be focused and proposed early enough in the scope of work such that the results can be incorporated into the proposed prevention product or technology within the funding period.
9. Applications that propose optimization of existing pre-exposure prophylaxis strategies through repackaging or distribution strategies, such as co-packaging of drugs. Applicants may propose significant redesign of a licensed HIV drug delivery strategy that provides significant advantages over the current product, such as longer durations of protection, reduced pharmacokinetic tails, and/or increased forgiveness intervals.

## **Award highlights**

### *Eligible awardees*

MATRIX is committed to strengthening capacity in SSA via support of novel and innovative scientific approaches to HIV prevention, MPTs, and technologies that support HIV prevention in its target populations. For this first RFA, applicants from a wide range of US, Kenyan, South African, and Zimbabwean institutions (universities; private, for-profit, or not-for-profit small companies; university researchers and research consortia/programs; innovation or incubation hubs) are invited to apply using the processes outlined in the RFA instructions. **Only eligible researchers and institutions in the United States, Kenya, South Africa, and Zimbabwe should apply.** MATRIX, through TA-D1 funding and support, is also committed to strengthening capacity in these countries. MATRIX will accomplish this by accepting applications from students and early investigators in the target countries who are sponsored by an established researcher and/or their institution. The applicant must design and implement a mentoring and/or training program with the aim of advancing the awardee’s scientific career either through an academic award or advancement in their institution. MATRIX will also entertain applications from established research teams and individual researchers that meet MATRIX’s research objectives.

### *Inclusion of Gantt chart, milestones, and go/no-go criteria*

Application should include a timeline that describes the research to be performed. It is preferred that the timeline is depicted as a graphical representation (e.g., Gantt chart), although timelines in a table format will also be acceptable. Applicants must also provide appropriate milestone(s) and go/no-go decisions to be achieved at the halfway point and at the end of the proposed research. Milestones and go/no-go criteria should not be restatements of specific aims; rather, they should be independent descriptive statements that quantify success or failure of the research. Examples of milestones and go/no-go criteria are included in the attached main application template.

#### *Application and award procedures*

During the application and award process, operational and research oversight for this funding opportunity will be provided by PATH ([www.path.org](http://www.path.org)), a member of the MATRIX Consortium. PATH will provide guidance on the RFA application submission processes and budgeting should questions arise prior to the award. Applicants should submit a letter of intent to PATH via the email [MatrixTechAcceleratorRFA@path.org](mailto:MatrixTechAcceleratorRFA@path.org). Applicants may submit questions via the same email; answers will be sent to those who express interest. Following submission, applications will be screened for responsiveness to this RFA and scientific priority. The responsive applications with the highest scientific priority will be advanced to review. PATH will manage the review using procedures designed to minimize conflicts of interest and ensure confidentiality of the applications. The review committee will be cochaired by PATH personnel from the United States and SSA, and the review committee will be composed of internal MATRIX and external subject matter experts. After the award, PATH will appoint a technical liaison to assist the awardee in management of the award.

Terms and conditions of the solicitation that apply to the award process and award are included in section XII of this document.

## **IV. Key term definitions**

The following definitions will be used for key terms throughout this document:

- **Game-changer concept:** An idea that, if proven true, would alter current best practices for HIV prevention products and/or MPT development. This could include but is not limited to alternative drugs, dosing strategies, and/or novel technologies that support the discovery and development of new drugs and delivery systems.
- **Proof of concept:** Evidence, generated through experimental methods, that a concept meets preestablished criteria for feasibility, such as milestones and/or go/no-go criteria.
- **Multipurpose prevention technology or MPT:** The combination of drugs to prevent HIV infection and pregnancy, delivered in a single drug delivery system.
- **Activity:** A discrete event that will be performed to achieve a specific goal or milestone. An activity must begin with an active verb.
- **Milestone:** A research milestone is a measure of progress. Milestones identify critical junctures/steps in the research process that must be accomplished/completed in order to

successfully complete the research. A milestone may also incorporate go/no-go criteria in its description as measures of progress in attaining the milestone.

- **Go/no-go criteria:** These are critical decision points stated as absolutes in the development pathway of a product. Go and no-go statements/criteria are an integral part of defining a milestone. Go is a decision to continue development. No-go is a decision to stop development. A single milestone may have multiple go/no-go criteria depending upon its complexity. A go decision allows the research program to proceed to the next milestone.

## V. Award information

MATRIX expects the following:

- **Number of awards:** We anticipate issuing up to three awards. The number of awards is contingent on submission of meritorious applications, available funds, and the applications' applicability to MATRIX's mission and objectives.
- **Award budget:** Up to US\$150,000. Budgets should be detailed, reasonable, and realistic.
- **Award project period:** The duration of the awarded project is up to 18 months, depending on the proposed scope of work and timeline. A single no-cost extension up to an additional six months may be requested. Requests must be submitted formally two months prior to the end date of the award.

## VI. Eligibility information

- The proposed research project needs to address a critical need for HIV prevention product or MPT development that meets the goals and objectives of the MATRIX Consortium and USAID.
- Applicants from US, Kenyan, South African, or Zimbabwean institutions (universities; private, for-profit, or not-for-profit small companies; university researchers and research consortia/programs; innovation or incubation hubs) consisting of students, postdoctoral fellows, and new/early and established investigators with an active research program are invited to apply. Foreign nationals from Kenya, South Africa, or Zimbabwe working in the US are eligible to apply.
- The proposed research project must be original, innovative, and a potential game-changer concept.
- Principal investigators (PIs) must have the skills, knowledge, and institutional resources necessary to carry out the proposed research.
- For applications proposing mentoring of students, postdoctoral fellows, or early/new investigators, the applicant must identify a mentor or mentor team and document the experience of the mentors. The applicant must provide a mentoring/training plan.
- Projects that would use funds to provide material support or resources to individuals, entities, or organizations of countries that have been identified by the United States



Department of State as state sponsors of terrorism are ineligible. The countries currently identified are Cuba, Iran, North Korea, Sudan, and Syria.

- Project applications can be submitted by MATRIX’s existing partners.
- Applicant organizations or PIs may submit more than one application, provided that each application does not overlap with, and is scientifically distinct from, other submitted applications.

## VII. Scope of work and deliverables

### Proposed project timeline

Project start date	December 1, 2022
Completed risk register due	January 15, 2023
Completed new project request form due	March 15, 2023
Completed update report form due	June 15, 2023
Completed update report form due	December 15, 2023
Final report due	June 15, 2024

### Scope of work

MATRIX is seeking a diverse pool of investigators in HIV prevention research and development, particularly early stage researchers, to develop a new, innovative concept in the form of a product, drug delivery system, drug, lab technique, or diagnostic tool. The award may be used to mentor and train a student or postdoctoral fellow.

### Deliverables

- A new, innovative, potential game-changer concept in the form of a product, drug delivery system, drug, lab technique, or diagnostic tool for the prevention of HIV in women that meets the milestones and go criteria set forth in the application.
- Each project team will need to complete a risk register following the first month of the project. A template will be provided upon acceptance of an application.
- Each project team will need to complete a one-page report every six months to update PATH on the project status. A template will be provided upon acceptance of an application.
- Each project team will need to complete a new project request form to present at the first MATRIX scientific advisory group (SAG) meeting after the award. The SAG is an independent multidisciplinary committee of international experts that conducts unbiased data reviews of critical path products to help inform prioritization of, and decision-making concerning, MATRIX’s product portfolio. The goal of the new project request form will be to introduce the project to the SAG, MATRIX, and USAID. A template and due date will be provided upon acceptance of an application.

- At the end of the award period, each project team will need to present project results to the MATRIX steering committee and USAID. Each team will need to provide a summary of the project results along with any publications for the MATRIX website. Project teams are strongly encouraged to publish project results in peer-reviewed journals. Confidential information may be excluded from the results presentation and/or from the MATRIX website, as appropriate.

## VIII. How to respond to this request for application

### Step 1. Letter of intent

By the date listed in section II of this document, prospective applicants are encouraged to submit a non-binding letter of intent that includes the following information:

- Descriptive title of proposed activity.
- Name(s), address(es), and telephone number(s) of the PI(s).
- Names of other key personnel.
- Participating organization(s).
- Number and title of this funding opportunity.
- Names of suggested reviewers or people who should not review the application due to potential conflict of interest.

The letter of intent should be sent via email to

[MatrixTechAcceleratorRFA@path.org](mailto:MatrixTechAcceleratorRFA@path.org)

Applications will still be accepted if no letter of intent is submitted. However, PATH will only email answers to fact-finding questions and templates directly to those who submit a letter of intent; answers to fact-finding questions and templates will also be accessible from the RFA website.

If a PI intends on submitting multiple applications, then separate letters of intent should be sent for each application.

The subject line of the email should read as *RFA2022-032\_ letter of intent\_organization\_PI Name*. For example, an application from PATH would read as *RFA2022-032\_ letter of intent\_PATH\_ J Doe*.

### Step 2. Fact-finding questions

Questions concerning this opportunity are welcome. Questions and answers to all questions will be provided to all participants who confirm interest. See section II of this document for related dates. Questions received after August 22, 2022 (8:00 a.m. Pacific time) cannot be accommodated.

The fact-finding questions should be sent via email to

[MatrixTechAcceleratorRFA@path.org](mailto:MatrixTechAcceleratorRFA@path.org).

The subject line of the email should read as *RFA # 2022-032\_ Organization\_ fact-finding questions*. For example, an application from PATH would read as *RFA # 2022-032\_ PATH\_ fact-finding questions*.

### Step 3. Applications

Completed applications should be submitted by email to [MatrixTechAcceleratorRFA@path.org](mailto:MatrixTechAcceleratorRFA@path.org).

The subject line of the email should read as *RFA2022-032\_application\_ Organization\_ PI Name*. For example, an application from PATH would read as *RFA2022-032\_application\_PATH\_J Doe*.

#### Formatting requirements

Applications that do not follow the requirements below will be returned without review.

- Applications must be in English.
- Budgets must be in US dollars.
- The main narrative application and budget narrative must be written in 11-point font or larger in a standard font (e.g., Arial, Calibri, Times New Roman). Their pages should be on US letter-sized paper (8.5 x 11 inches or 22 x 28 cm) with 1-inch margins (2.54 cm). Pages should be numbered using an X of Y format in the lower left-hand corner (e.g., 3 of 5).
- Biographical sketches, or biosketches, should follow the United States National Institutes of Health biosketch requirements without the “Contributions to Science” section (<https://grants.nih.gov/grants/forms/biosketch.htm>). An eRA Commons account is not required for application.
- Tables and charts can be in 10-point font.
- The detailed budget must be submitted in an unlocked Excel file. All other files must be submitted as PDF files. Do not send locked or password-protected PDF files.
- If confidential data or information is contained in the application, the phrase “Confidential—do not disseminate” should be placed in the footer of each page.
- Each submitted document should follow the naming conventions:
  - All documents should be labelled *RFA2022-032\_file type\_ organization\_ PI Name*.
  - Organization names should be abbreviated; for example, for New York University, *NYU* is acceptable.
  - The principal investigator’s name should be first initial and last name, such as *J Doe*.
  - If multiple applications are from the same PI, add *sub1* or *sub2* at the end of all file names; for example, for a PI’s second submission, label documents *RFA2022-032\_file type\_ organization\_ PI Name\_sub2*.

#### Application components

Your submission should include the following six attachments:

1. **Main narrative application (use the template provided):** A template for the main narrative application is attached to this RFA. The template also will be sent to all applicants who express interest. Label this file [RFA2022-032\\_application\\_organization\\_PI Name](#).
  - a. **Technical application (four-page limit).**
    - i. The technical application should describe how your project addresses the objectives of the request for application and how you would work with MATRIX and its partners to achieve the deliverables. See section X of this document for detailed technical application requirements.
  - b. **Mentorship support statement (one-page limit).**
    - i. Your mentorship support statement should identify your mentor(s) and their qualifications. It also should indicate what support will be provided through your institution and what support may be needed from MATRIX. The requested support must be congruent with the scope of MATRIX (<https://matrix4prevention.org/>) and limited to mentoring and support of the proposed activities. Note that MATRIX does not guarantee that it can or will fulfill specific support requests.
  - c. **Future funding (one-page limit)**
    - i. This section should describe the impact of the work on future funding and/or on career advancement.
2. **Biosketches (for relevant personnel only; no page limit):** Label this file [RFA2022-032\\_biosketches\\_organization\\_PI Name](#). The suggested format is a US NIH biosketch without the “Contributions to Science” section (<https://grants.nih.gov/grants/forms/biosketch.htm>). eRA Commons accounts are not required for this application.
3. **Detailed budget (use template provided; no page limit):** See section IX of this document for detailed budget requirements. The template is attached to this RFA; it also will be sent to all applicants who express interest. Label this file [RFA2022-032\\_detailed budget\\_organization\\_PI Name](#).
4. **Budget narrative (use template provided; no page limit):** The budget narrative should describe how you arrive at your total dollar amount in each line item of your detailed budget. It should also provide justifications for each proposed budget item. See section IX of this document for detailed budget narrative requirements. The template is attached to this RFA; it also will be sent to all applicants who express interest. Label this file [RFA2022-032\\_budget narrative\\_organization\\_PI Name](#).
5. **Tax information: W-9 (for US-based entities) or W8-BEN-E (for non-US entities).** Label this file [RFA2022-032\\_W9 or W8\\_organization\\_PI Name](#)
6. **Risk assessment questionnaire (use form provided):** The template is attached to the RFA; a form also will be sent to all applicants who express interest. Label this file [RFA2022-032\\_RAQ\\_organization\\_PI Name](#). This form requires the latest version of Adobe Acrobat to fill out electronically (preferred). If you have challenges filling in the form electronically, you

may fill out the form in hard copy and send a scanned file with any required sub-attachments.

## **Step 4. Conclusion of process**

Applicants will be notified of MATRIX and USAID's decision by the due date listed in section II of this document. See section XI of this document for the review criteria that will be used to evaluate submissions. Final awards are subject to the terms and conditions included in this solicitation, as well as successful final negotiations of all applicable terms and conditions affecting this work.

Unsuccessful applicants will receive feedback from the review panel. Applicants who were unsuccessful are welcome to modify their applications and submit a new application in future rounds of the RFA.

## **IX. Application requirements—financial**

### **Detailed budget (use template provided)**

Budgets must be in US dollars.

Budgets must list itemized costs for the total scope of this project based on the scope of work and deliverables outlined in section VII of this document. The final scope of work may be subject to negotiation. However, application selection will be made based on the original scope of work.

The budget template provides more instructions and separates costs into the cost categories outlined below.

#### **Personnel—inclusive of salary and leave**

- Salary rates of key staff.
- Total number of days in budget for each staff member.

#### **Fringe benefits**

- Costs associated with benefits.

#### **Travel**

- Transportation and per diem costs (other travel-related costs, such as vaccines and passports, should be listed in the "Other direct costs" section). Travel is limited to one scientific meeting annually plus well-justified travel necessary for coordination among collaborators.

## **Equipment**

- Equipment is defined as an item costing US\$5,000 or more **and** having a useful life of more than one year. Note: At USAID's discretion, equipment may need to be returned at the end of the awarding period.
- Requests of the total budget for equipment must not exceed 10 percent of the total budget. Any application requesting an equipment budget greater than 10 percent will be returned without review.
- Electronic equipment—such as computers, tablets, and smartphones—must be well justified for the proposed work. They should be listed as a separate line item in the budget.

## **Supplies**

- Supplies and materials required to perform the scope of work.
- Animal acquisition and handling costs need to be kept as separate line items.

## **Contractual costs**

- Consultants.
- Subagreements.
- Subcontractors.

## **Construction—not applicable for this scope of work**

- Applications with requests for costs to construct or modify research spaces to conduct the proposed work will be returned without review.

## **Other direct costs**

- Itemization of all other direct costs that do not fall under the categories above.
- Non-allowable direct costs include construction of, or modifications to, research spaces; rent; general office equipment; and transportation costs not associated with described travel. Applications with such requests will be returned without review.

## **Indirect costs**

- Organizations with a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) with the US government may use that rate.
- Organizations that do not have a NICRA may use a de minimis rate of up to 10 percent of its modified total direct costs. This is a maximum allowance. If the organization has lower rates, the lower rates should be used.
- If an indirect rate is budgeted, a NICRA or other supporting documentation that outlines a cost allocation policy and methodology must be provided.

## **Budget narrative (no page limit, use template provided)**

The budget narrative should follow the layout of the detailed budget and describe how you arrived at the total dollar amount for each line item of your detailed budget.

## **X. Application requirements—main narrative**

### **Technical application (four-page limit)**

Provide a narrative on your technical approach to accomplish the scope of work and deliverables per section VII of this document, including:

- PI details: Name, title, organization, department, country, email address.
- Discussion of project management and roles of the project team.
- Significance and innovation.
- Description of technical approach broken down in one to three specific aims.
- Timeline to meet the deliverables: The timeline should include milestones and go/no-go criteria at the halfway point and end of the project.
- Anticipated problems and solutions.
- Brief discussion of major internal and external resources, including facilities and essential equipment available to support the proposed research in this application.

In addition, provide a one-page statement on mentorship capacities for this project and a one-page statement of how you will leverage this work into future funding and career opportunities.

## **XI. Review criteria**

The following is a list of significant criteria against which applications will be assessed:

- Significance and innovation:
  - Does the proposed research address a critical need in HIV prevention for MATRIX's targeted populations?
  - Does the proposed research develop an original, innovative, potential game-changer concept or technology?
- Approach:
  - Are the proposed study design, methods, and analyses adequately described and realistic for the time frame of the award?
  - Does the application include proper time-bound milestones and benchmarks, including go/no-go criteria at the halfway mark and end of proposed study?
  - Are the timelines and budget appropriate and realistic for the proposed project?
  - Will the generated data support the proposed outcomes and identified go/no-go criteria?

- PI's qualifications:
  - Does the PI possess, or will they gain, the proper training and experience to direct and/or manage the proposed research?
  - Does the assembled team have expertise to complete the proposed work?
- Mentorship:
  - If the applicant identified mentors, are they appropriate to the proposed research?
  - Does the mentoring plan demonstrate the advantages or training that the awardee will gain?
  - Does the application strengthen the capacity of an SSA investigator or institution?

Note: MATRIX reserves the right to include additional criteria.

## **XII. Terms and conditions of the solicitation**

### **Notice of nonbinding solicitation**

MATRIX and PATH reserve the right to reject any and all applications received in response to this solicitation. MATRIX and PATH are in no way bound to accept any application.

### **Confidentiality**

All information provided to MATRIX and PATH by the applicant as part of this solicitation will be treated as confidential. If any information is inappropriately released, MATRIX and PATH will seek appropriate remedies as allowed. With the fact-finding questions as an exception, all letters of interest, applications, discussions, and information received in response to this solicitation will be held as strictly confidential within the MATRIX Consortium and its partners, except as otherwise noted.

### **Conflict of interest disclosure**

Applicants must disclose any actual or potential conflicts of interest (Col) via email to [MatrixTechAcceleratorRFA@path.org](mailto:MatrixTechAcceleratorRFA@path.org). Col could be present if there is a personal relationship with a MATRIX and/or PATH staff member that constitutes a significant financial interest, board memberships, other employment, and ownership or rights in intellectual property that may be in conflict with the applicant's obligations to MATRIX and/or PATH. When necessary, a management plan that provides mitigation of potential risks presented by the disclosed conflict of interest will be created. Not reporting any Col via email indicates that no Col is present. Failure to disclose any actual or potential Col will result in the application returned without review.



## **Communication during application process**

All communications regarding this solicitation shall be directed to [MatrixTechAcceleratorRFA@path.org](mailto:MatrixTechAcceleratorRFA@path.org). Contacting third parties that are not part of the research team but are involved in MATRIX or operations of TA-D1, the review panel, or any other party may be considered a conflict of interest and could result in disqualification of the application.

## **Acceptance**

Acceptance of an application for evaluation/review does not imply funding of the application as submitted, nor does it imply acceptance of its terms and conditions. MATRIX and PATH reserve the right to negotiate on the final terms and conditions of the award. MATRIX and PATH additionally reserve the right to modify the substance of the finalist's application, such as milestones and go/no-go criteria, as well as the option to accept partial components of an application, if appropriate. Required flow-downs are below in the 'Terms and conditions of the award' in section XII of this document and are not negotiable.

## **Third-party limitations**

MATRIX and PATH do not represent, warrant, or act as an agent for any third party as a result of this solicitation. This solicitation does not authorize any third party to bind or commit MATRIX and PATH in any way without our express written consent.

## **Application validity**

Applications submitted under this request shall be valid for 90 days from the date the application is due.

## **Intellectual property**

Intellectual property generated under this award will be owned by awardees who are nonfederal entities. USAID can access the intellectual property and may authorize it for US federal purposes. See 'Terms and conditions of the award' in section XII of this document for further details.

## **Conflict resolution**

The PI is responsible for conducting the research in accordance with the agreed upon scope of work. Additionally, it is the responsibility of the PI to manage research collaborations and any conflicts that arise within the proposed research team.

Throughout the award period, project teams are expected to meet with an assigned technical liaison to track progress and risks. Any disagreements that may arise in scientific or programmatic matters (within the scope of the award), any missed milestones, or no-go decisions reached will necessitate a meeting with the technical liaison, TA D1 cochairs, and the MATRIX leadership to discuss the future of the project. MATRIX leadership will make the final decision on how the project will proceed.

## Terms and conditions of the award

USAID, the federal awarding agency for this award, specifies requirements to be placed on all funded research. These terms and conditions are non-negotiable upon acceptance of the award. Applicable links to 2 CFR 200, 2 CFR 700, and Standard Provisions are included below as a reference.

- 2 CFR 200, applies to US and non-US based organizations:  
<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/subtitle-A/chapter-II/part-200?toc=1>
- 2 CFR 700, applies to US and non-US based organizations:  
<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/subtitle-B/chapter-VII/part-700>
- Mandatory Standard Provisions for US based organizations:  
<https://www.usaid.gov/ads/policy/300/303maa>
- Mandatory Standard Provisions for non-US based organizations:  
<https://www.usaid.gov/ads/policy/300/303mab>
- Additional Mandatory Standard Provisions for fixed amount awards for US and non-US based organizations: <https://www.usaid.gov/ads/policy/300/303mat>