

Lions Clubs International Foundation (LCIF)
SightFirst Research Grant
2023-2024 Request for Proposals

Introduction

The LCIF SightFirst program strengthens eye care systems in underserved communities enabling them to fight blindness and vision loss and assist those who are blind or visually impaired. The program funds high-quality, sustainable projects that deliver eye care services, develop infrastructure, train personnel, increase public awareness of eye health, and/or provide rehabilitation and education for persons who are blind or have low vision.

SightFirst funds are also available to support public health research initiatives whose outcomes directly influence or inform operation of the SightFirst program and, in some cases, that of other global blindness prevention efforts. SightFirst research projects evaluate existing approaches, identify and validate innovative or improved program strategies, determine the eye care needs of a particular region or population and/or assess the barriers to uptake of eye care services.

Research Objectives & Funding Priorities

SightFirst research grants of up to US\$100,000 will be awarded to support an experienced individual, institution, organization or consortium engaged in a public health research project to be completed in less than 36 months.

The funding priorities for the 2024 SightFirst research grant program are as follows:

1. Cataract
 - 1.1 Investigate the provision of high-quality cataract surgery and improvement post-operative outcomes;
 - 1.2 Evaluate the cost-effectiveness, efficacy and efficiency in training primary health workers and community health workers in the identification and referral of cataract cases;
2. Uncorrected Refractive Error
 - 2.1 Examine how to reduce and correct refractive errors as part of the provision of sustainable comprehensive eye care services;
 - 2.1 Analyze the effectiveness of different optical workshop models in the provision of uncorrected refractive error services;
3. Rapid Assessments of Avoidable Blindness (RAABs)
 - 3.1 Undertake first-time Rapid Assessment of Avoidable Blindness surveys (RAABs);
 - 3.2 Conduct repeat RAABs in areas where RAABs were conducted at least five years ago;
 - 3.3 Give priority to areas where there is potential for development of SightFirst projects;

For RAAB-focused projects: although repeat RAAB studies are still very important, SightFirst is particularly looking for research projects that survey areas where Lions could develop SightFirst projects. The project should demonstrate strong potential for connection to the Lions and the

development of service. ***Thus, if submitting a proposal for a RAAB project, priority will be given to studies that develop a link between the RAAB survey and a potential SightFirst project.***

4. Diabetic Retinopathy

4.1 Investigate and promote cooperation between diabetic retinopathy and diabetes mellitus care providers to ensure the provision of patient-centered care;

4.2 Investigate barriers to compliance with diabetic retinopathy screening and management;

5. Protocol

5.1 Develop and field test a protocol, including questionnaires, that assesses the prevalence of main causes of ocular morbidity and vision loss in a representative sample of all-ages of a population.

SightFirst welcomes proposals that investigate any one of the funding priorities as it relates to disadvantaged or marginalized communities, who face inequities in access to eye care and bear a greater burden of eye conditions and visual impairment. SightFirst funds support the goal of universal health coverage, so that all people have access to the health services they need, when and where they need them, without financial hardship.

Project types might include but are not limited to pilot or feasibility studies, secondary analysis of existing data or small, self-contained research projects which advance work in progress.

Priority will be given to proposals that demonstrate a direct link to the operation of current or future SightFirst projects with potential for immediate impact and/or broader geographical application. **Priority** will also be given to proposals seeking to increase local research capacity, particularly in low- and middle-income countries, by having local researchers lead the work and publish under their name.

Proposals should also include a risk mitigation plan. Provided that an unexpected event results in the destruction or delay of research activities, the proposal should address steps on managing the risks threatening the progress of the project.

Unexpected events may include, but are not limited to:

- Loss of key personnel due to resignation, sickness, or death
- Restriction of access to study facilities and/or study patient population
- Natural disasters
- Civil unrest
- Epidemic outbreak
- Ethical approval delays
- Loss of co-funding (if applicable)

SightFirst research grants are not available for capacity building or service delivery projects that are more appropriately considered through other [SightFirst](#) and LCIF grant programs.

Eligibility Information

Eligible institutions and organizations must have a proven track record of successful research project implementation and may include public or state-controlled institutions of higher education, private institutions of higher education, nonprofits, and governmental agencies or institutions of any nation.

Eligible individuals or groups of individuals include any person(s) with the skills, knowledge and resources necessary to carry out the proposed research as the Principal Investigator (PI) with his/her organization or consortium.

Grant Application Process – Letters of Intent

The SightFirst research grant program requires a Letter of Intent (LOI). The LOI should be no more than three pages in length and include the following:

- Research question or hypothesis to be tested
- Alignment with the SightFirst Research grant program's funding priorities
- Research strategy
- Itemized budget
- *Brief* professional history/biography of the PD/PI

LOIs in pdf file format should be e-mailed to LCIF Global Health Initiatives at: sightfirstresearch@lionsclubs.org. Applicants may submit more than one LOI provided that each project is scientifically distinct. The deadline for LOI submission is **November 15, 2023**.

If selected, applicants will be invited in mid-January 2024 to submit their full proposal by March 21, 2024.

Grant Application Process – Full Proposals

If invited by LCIF to submit a full proposal, the packet must include a cover letter with PI contact information and project site location(s). Research plans must include the following information:

- Introduction
- Alignment with the SightFirst Research grant funding priorities
- Full research protocol
- A GANTT chart illustrating major milestones and deliverables
- Department resources, collaborators & contractual arrangements
- Project leadership plan (for consortiums)
- Research team professional history/biography
- Literature review, pilot data
- Letters of support
- Plan, including estimated timeline, to secure ethics approval from local government and/or institutional review boards (IRB) or equivalent, as required

- Inclusion of a risk mitigation plan
- Publication plan

The proposal budget should accompany the research plan. Cost sharing is not required, but it is also not restricted. The budget must be submitted in US dollars and itemized according to the following categories:

- Personnel (salaries, per diems, honoraria, etc.)
- Equipment (including consumables, rentals, etc.)
- Travel
- Publication

LCIF does not have an official Facilities & Administrative expenses (F&A) statement, and its grant programs (research or otherwise) do not provide for these costs. For those institutions that traditionally segment expenses in this manner, however, a range between 13-17 percent may be acceptable to the review committee. F&A costs informally placed in the budget must not cause the overall request to exceed the US\$100,000 maximum grant request.

Full proposals in pdf file format should be e-mailed to the LCIF Sight Programs Department at: sightfirstresearch@lionsclubs.org by **March 21, 2024**.

Full Proposal Review & Selection

To be eligible for consideration, completed proposals must be submitted no later than **March 21, 2024**. Proposals will undergo a preliminary review in May or June 2024 before and after which applicants may be asked to provide further detail and/or revisions by a specific deadline. Final review and selection by the SightFirst Advisory Committee will occur at their meeting in August 2024.

The grant will be awarded based upon the scientific and technical merit of the proposed project. The Committee will also consider the following criteria:

Relevance: Does the proposed project align with SightFirst priorities such that potential outcomes may directly influence program operation? Does the proposed project seek to evaluate existing SightFirst strategies or identify new and innovative alternatives? Does the proposed project seek to assess the eye care needs of underserved populations in countries/regions where SightFirst currently operates or where it plans to operate in the future? Does the proposed project identify barriers to the uptake of eye care services in countries/regions where SightFirst currently operates or where it plans to operate in the future?

Approach: Are the conceptual or clinical framework, design, methods, and analyses adequately developed, well-reasoned, and appropriate to address the research hypothesis? Does the proposer acknowledge potential problem areas and consider alternative tactics? For proposals designating a consortium, is the leadership approach, including the designated roles and responsibilities, governance

and organizational structure consistent with and justified by the aims of the project and the expertise of each of the members of the consortium?

Investigator: Are the PI and consortium members appropriately trained and well suited to carry out this work? Is the work proposed appropriate to the experience level of the PI and other members of the consortium? Do the PI and consortium members bring complementary and integrated expertise to the project (if applicable)?

Environment: Do(es) the scientific environment(s) in which the work will be done contribute to the probability of success? Do the proposed studies benefit from unique features of the scientific environment(s), or subject populations, or employ useful collaborative arrangements? Is there evidence of institutional and/or government support and approval? Does the proposer acknowledge potential risks to working in the environment and propose measures to mitigate any such risks?

Budget: Does the proposed budget seem reasonable for the requested period of support in relation to the proposed research?

Due Dates

- November 15, 2023 – Deadline for submission of Letter of Intent
- Mid-January 2024 – Invitations to submit full proposal distributed
- March 21, 2024 – Deadline for submission of full proposal
- August 2024 – SightFirst Advisory Committee proposal review & notice of award

Award Information

A formal Notice of Award will be provided to the grant recipient no later than September 2024. Funding will be awarded in two disbursements, with the second disbursement being sent upon receipt and approval of a mid-term progress and financial report. Subsequent funding is not guaranteed, but may be available based upon the findings of the initial grant project and their relevance to the advancement of SightFirst priorities.

Reporting Requirements

The grant recipient is required to submit a progress report and financial statement when requesting disbursement of additional approved funds and a comprehensive final report at project end. The reports should detail the following information: expenditures, work accomplished results, problems encountered and mitigating actions taken.

Project Communications

The grant recipient may publish, present and use for instruction and research any results arising out of this project. At least 30 calendar days prior to submission for publication or presentation, the grantee will submit a copy of any proposed publication to LCIF for review and comment. LCIF may review the publication to (a) determine whether it discloses LCIF- provided confidential information and, if so, whether LCIF-provided confidential information is reasonably necessary for the reporting or verification

of the results, (b) provide information that the grant recipient may not have, (c) determine whether the publication discloses any potentially-patentable inventions, and (d) content feedback.

LCIF will submit to the grant recipient any comments related to the proposed publication within 30 calendar days of receipt. The grant recipient will consider LCIF comments, but is not required to modify the publication based on them. If requested by LCIF, the grantee will withhold submission for publication for 30 calendar days in addition to the initial review period to allow LCIF to file patent applications to establish and preserve LCIF's proprietary rights. Alternatively, the grantee may delete information pertaining to the potential invention from the Publication.

LCIF will use its reasonable efforts to complete its reviews and filings prior to end of the above time periods. If LCIF does not exercise its rights under this section within the time periods stated, the grantee may submit the publication for publication or presentation.

Grant Acknowledgement

The grant recipient must acknowledge that LCIF owns certain trademarks and trade names and agree to comply with the LCI Trademark Policies. Grant recipients must also agree that projects receiving grant funding shall be clearly identified as being made possible by LCIF through appropriate recognition, signage and public relations activities.

Content Created for Client(s)

Content that the grant recipient creates in connection with an approved project is solely owned by LCIF and may be used by LCIF for reproduction, disclosure, transmission, publication, broadcast, and posting, unless otherwise agreed in writing. Content created independently of, or prior to, an approved project remains the grant recipient's property and he/she retains all rights, title and interest in and to the content; however, the grant recipient must grant LCIF a perpetual, worldwide, royalty-free, and transferable license to use any content. The grant recipient must agree that LCIF is free to use any ideas, concepts, know-how, or techniques for any purpose whatsoever, including, but not limited to, developing, manufacturing and marketing products using such information. Any inventions, discoveries or improvements that are based in full or in part on any content and information the grant recipient creates for LCIF in the course of an approved project, and all intellectual property rights in such inventions, discoveries or improvements, shall be owned entirely by and shall be proprietary to LCIF.

For More Information

LCIF welcomes inquiries regarding this Request for Proposals. Please direct questions or comments to: sightfirstresearch@lionsclubs.org.