

Pfizer Quality Improvement Request for Proposals

Competitive Grant Program – using Expert Review Panel

Optimizing vaccination pathways among at-risk or immunocompromised adults and the elderly in Italy



Overview

It is our intent to support Quality Improvement (QI) initiatives that identify and address gaps in adult vaccinations, improve and optimize access and immunization practices, leading to an increased vaccination coverage among the high-risk, immunocompromised adult and elderly populations.



Geographic Scope/Location of Project

Italy



Project Types and Area of Interest

Potential applicants are encouraged to address immunization practice and vaccination access gaps among **at-risk, immunocompromised and/or elderly populations**. This may include:

- Clinical practice to improve the immunization service quality and the access to the vaccination among at-risk or immunocompromised patients
- Novel clinical pathways, in hospital or outpatient settings, to optimize the vaccination access and immunization practices among the target populations
- Innovative solutions to monitor adult vaccination status, identify gaps and barriers in following local vaccination recommendations.
- Implementation of educational tools and/or interventions to increase vaccination awareness, boost healthcare professionals' confidence in addressing vaccine hesitancy, and educate vaccinators on disease burden and risk.



Key Milestones



Funding Range and Project Length

Individual projects requesting up to **50,000 EUR** will be considered. The estimated total available budget related to this RFP is **300,000 EUR**. Larger grant amounts may be considered depending on the project scope and methodology. Project length will be a maximum of **18 months**.

I. Eligibility

Geographic Scope/Location of Project

- Italy

Applicant Eligibility Criteria

- The following may apply: medical, dental, nursing, allied health, and/or pharmacy professional schools; healthcare institutions (both large and small); professional organizations; government agencies; and other entities with a mission related to healthcare improvement.
- Only organizations are eligible to receive grants, not individuals or medical practice groups (i.e., an independent group of physicians not affiliated with a hospital, academic institution, or professional society).
- Collaborations within institutions (e.g., between departments and/or inter-professional), as well as between different institutions / organizations / associations, are encouraged. Please note all partners must have a relevant role and the requesting organization must have a key role in the project.
- The applicant must be the Project Lead/Principal Investigator (PI) or an authorized designee of such individual (e.g., Project Lead/PI's grant/research coordinator).
- The Project Lead/PI must be an employee or contractor of the requesting organization.
- Requesting organization must be legally able to receive award funding directly from Pfizer Inc. We strongly recommend that applicants confirm this with their organization or institution prior to submitting an application. Grants awarded to organizations that are subsequently found to be unable to accept funding directly from Pfizer Inc. may be subject to rescission.

II. Requirements

Primary Area of Interest

- Vaccines

Specific Area of Interest for this RFP

It is not our intent to support clinical research projects. Projects evaluating the efficacy of therapeutic or diagnostic agents will not be considered.

It is our intent to support projects that focus on immunization practice and vaccination access among at-risk and immunocompromised patients, including but not limited to:

- Clinical practice improvement of the immunization service quality or the access to vaccination among at-risk, immunocompromised patients and/or elderly population
- Supporting, training and/or other educational approaches for HCPs on disease awareness, current recommendations, the value of immunization in specific subpopulations, providing tools and resources on disease burden and risk of developing severe disease among high risk individuals
- Novel and/or tailored clinical pathways in hospitals or outpatient settings optimizing, facilitating and streamlining implementation of the recommendations and access to the immunizations among at-risk or immunocompromised patients
- Supporting the vaccination access in hospital setting
- Innovative solutions to monitor adult vaccination status, identify gaps and communicate needs according to local vaccination recommendations
- Increasing HCP's competence and confidence to address vaccine hesitancy.

Multi-disciplinary collaborations are encouraged when appropriate, but all partners must have a relevant role.

There is a considerable amount of interest in receiving responses from projects that utilize system-based changes. Although educational efforts for grantees and patients may be entirely appropriate components in responses to this RFP, projects that include an overt description of system changes will be given high priority.

Disease Burden Overview

- According to the World Health Organization (WHO), vaccinations prevent 2 to 3 million deaths annually. However, vaccine preventable diseases continue to contribute to a significant number of fatalities, particularly among high-risk individuals, such as immunocompromised patients and those with chronic comorbidities (e.g., cardiovascular, respiratory, renal, hepatic diseases, diabetes). Due to their weakened immune response, they face a higher-risk of developing severe complications, leading to long-term sequelae, hospitalizations, and increased mortality. Prioritizing vaccination for these vulnerable groups remains a key public health goal.
- In Italy, data from the InFluNet surveillance system coordinated by the Istituto Superiore di Sanità indicate that during the 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 influenza seasons:
- A total of 439 severe cases of confirmed influenza were reported, with 82 deaths
- At least one pre-existing risk condition (e.g., diabetes, cancer, cardiovascular disease, chronic respiratory disease, obesity) was present in 84% of severe cases and 89% of deaths
- 80% of fatal cases had not been vaccinated, highlighting a significant gap in preventive efforts

Recommendations and Target Metrics

- In line with Scientific Societies recommendations, the National Immunization Plan (PNPV) 2023-2025 provides free vaccinations for adults at increased risk due to age or underlying health conditions.
- RSV is an emerging cause of severe respiratory infections among adults and the elderly with comorbidities. In Italy, it is estimated that RSV leads to approximately 290,000 cases of acute respiratory infections, 26,000 hospitalizations, and 1,800 in-hospital deaths annually among individuals over 60 years old, the majority with one or more comorbidity. Despite the significant burden, there are currently no specific vaccination programs targeting RSV in high-risk populations. However, many EU and ex-EU countries are issuing specific recommendations for RSV vaccination, based on age and other risk factors.

Gaps Between Actual and Target, Possible Reasons for Gaps

- Current vaccination strategies primarily target age cohorts rather than high-risk conditions, leading to suboptimal coverage among medically vulnerable populations. The recruitment of immunocompromised and high-risk patients into vaccination programs is hindered by the fragmented nature of their healthcare pathways, involving multiple specialists, general practitioners, and hospital-based care.

Barriers

- Specialty care remains focused primarily on disease treatment rather than preventive strategies like vaccination, exacerbating the gap in vaccine access. These structural barriers contribute to a significant unmet medical need: fragile and immunocompromised patients remain highly exposed to potentially fatal infectious diseases that could be effectively prevented through vaccination. The issue is particularly critical for infections such as invasive pneumococcal disease, meningococcal disease, and viral infections like influenza, for which vaccination coverage rates remain alarmingly low. Additionally, the burden of RSV is being recognized increasingly.

Current National Efforts to Reduce Gaps

- Some initiatives directed to HCPs, highlighting the importance of the vaccination practice among at-risk and immunocompromised patients, are endorsed by the Scientific Societies. Initiatives aimed at the general population exist but are sporadic and their reach is difficult to evaluate.
- The National Immunization Plan (PNPV) 2023-2025 provides free vaccinations for adults at increased infectious risk due to age or underlying health conditions. However, substantial barriers remain to integrating high-risk individuals into vaccination programs.

Target Audience

- HCPs practising in specialty care and/or institutions with mission related to healthcare improvement.

Expected Approximate Monetary Range of Grant Applications:

- **Individual projects** requesting up to **50,000 EUR** will be considered. The estimated total available budget related to this RFP is **300,000 EUR**.
- Award amounts include direct costs, institutional overhead costs (capped at 28% per Pfizer policy), and indirect costs.
- The amount of the grant Pfizer will be prepared to fund for any project will depend upon the expert review panel's evaluation of the proposal and costs involved and will be stated clearly in the grant agreement.

IMPORTANT: Grants will be distributed following a fully executed agreement and submission of Final Protocol, Documentation of IRB/IEC Approval, Regulatory Approval (if applicable), Exemption or Waiver.

Timeline



IMPORTANT: Be advised applications submitted after the due date will not be reviewed.

* Please note the deadline is 23:59 Eastern Standard Time (e.g., New York, GMT -5).

III. Submissions

How to Submit

IMPORTANT: Please read this section carefully since applications submitted not following these instructions will not be accepted and will be cancelled.

- Please go to www.cybergrants.com/pfizer/QI and sign in.
 - Note: there are individual portals for each grant application type. Please be sure to use the URL above.
 - First-time users should click "Create your password".
- Click the button "**Start a New Quality Improvement Application**"
- Requirements for submission:
 - **Complete all required sections of the online application** and **upload your project proposal** (see [Appendix](#)) in the Full Proposal Submission field.
- In the application:
 - For the question "**Competitive Grant?**" select "**Yes**"
 - Select the following **Primary Area of Interest: VAV - RSV (Respiratory Syncytial Virus) - QI**
 - Select the following **Competitive Grant Program Name: 2025 VAC ITA Optimizing Vaccination Pathways QI**

Questions

- If you encounter any technical difficulties with the website, please click [here](#) or the “Technical Questions” link at the bottom of the page in cybergrants.
- Please click [here](#) to view “Frequently Asked Questions” regarding the Competitive Grant Program.
- If you have questions regarding this RFP, please direct them in writing to the Grant Officer, Monika Sojewska (monika.sojewska@pfizer.com), with the subject line **“Optimizing vaccination pathways among at-risk or immunocompromised adults and the elderly in Italy”**.

Review and Approval Process

- A specific grant program RFP uses an expert review panel (ERP) to make final grant decisions.
- The panels are comprised of professionals from the medical community with advanced degrees and expertise in particular clinical areas, or specific needs of a geographic region/learner group, or expertise in research, continuing professional development or quality improvement.

Mechanism by which Applicants will be notified

- All applicants will be notified via email by the dates noted above.
- Applicants may be asked for additional clarification during the review period.

Grant Agreements

- If your grant is approved, your institution will be required to enter into a written grant agreement with Pfizer. Please click [here](#) to view the core terms of the agreement.
- Under Pfizer's competitive grant program, modifications to grant agreements will not be reviewed unless a genuine conflict exists as between applicable law and the terms of the relevant grant agreement. Applicant is encouraged to share the core terms with counsel for approval prior to submitting an application.
- Except where prohibited by applicable law and, in any case, subject to review by Pfizer Legal, payment of grant funding may only be paid to the grantee organization.

About Pfizer Global Medical Grants & Partnerships

Pfizer Global Medical Grants & Partnerships (GMGP) supports the global healthcare community's independent initiatives (e.g., research, quality improvement, or education) to improve patient outcomes in areas of unmet medical need that are aligned with Pfizer's medical and/or scientific strategies.

Pfizer's GMGP competitive grant program involves a publicly posted general Request for Proposal (RFP) that provides detail regarding a general area of interest, sets timelines for review and approval, and uses an expert review panel (ERP) to make final grant decisions. Organizations are invited to submit an application addressing the research gaps as outlined in the specific RFP.

For all quality improvement grants, the grant requester (and ultimately the grantee) is responsible for the design, implementation, and conduct of the independent initiative supported by the grant. Pfizer must not be involved in any aspect of project development, nor the conduct or monitoring of the quality improvement program.

About Pfizer Quality Improvement Projects

Quality improvement (QI) projects are systematic, data-guided, sustainable activities designed to bring about immediate, positive changes in the delivery of healthcare in particular setting (1,2). Quality improvement seeks to standardize structure and processes to reduce variation, achieve predictable results, and improve outcomes for patients, healthcare systems, and organizations. Structure includes things like technology, culture, leadership, and physical capital. Process includes knowledge capital (e.g., standard operating procedures) or human capital (e.g., education and training) (3).

QI projects systematically apply what is already known into the local practice, intended to quickly improve patient care within a specific setting. The goal of QI projects is to close a gap in performance at a specific health care system. The "performance" is a standard in health care that is not efficiently/appropriately/consistently being done (4). For these reasons, QI focuses on translating existing knowledge into programs or practices to immediately improve the quality of services to individuals and populations within a local institution or setting (5). The risk of participation in QI is the same as the risk of receiving standard clinical care (6) since the standard of care remains the same for all patients.

In contrast, research projects use a systematic approach to discover something that is unknown. Research projects add new knowledge to what was previously unknown in literature through testing of a hypothesis or a scientific question (4). Research aims to generate knowledge with broad applications, often through controlled studies. The subjects may or may not benefit directly from the knowledge gained. Research studies aim to evaluate an innovation, study something new, or analyze a process not yet rigorously studied (6).

1. Baily MA, et al., Hastings Cent Rep, 2006.
2. Lynn J, et al., Ann Intern Med, 2007.
3. Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, Page Last Modified: 09/10/2024.
4. Jackson C, Research Quality Manager, Office of Research and Scholarship University of Maryland, Baltimore School of Nursing.
5. Columbia University Institutional Review Board Guidance for the Classification of Quality Improvement Activities Versus Research with human Subjects, 2023.
6. Newhouse et al., J Nurs Adm, 2006. bibliography of relevant references.

References

- World Health Organization (WHO). Vaccines and immunization; 2013
- Napolitano F, Della Polla G, Capano MS, Augimeri M, Angelillo IF. Vaccinations and chronic diseases: knowledge, attitudes, and self-reported adherence among patients in Italy. *Vaccines (Basel)*. 2020;25(8):560.
- Doherty M, Schmidt-Ott R, Santos JI, Stanberry LR, Hofstetter AM, Rosenthal SL, Cunningham AL. Vaccination of special populations: protecting the vulnerable. *Vaccine*. 2016;34:6681–90.
- Ministero della Salute. Piano Nazionale Prevenzione Vaccinale 2023-2025.
- Società Italiana di Gerontologia e Geriatria. Un Position Paper della Società Italiana di Gerontologia e Geriatria. I vaccini nell'adulto e nell'anziano: conoscerli per promuoverli. 2020.
- Fondazione The Bridge. Vaccinazioni ai pazienti fragili: un'opportunità di salute. Documento intersocietario sulla vaccinazione dell'adulto. Lombardia, 2023.
- Savic, M.; Penders, Y.; Shi, T.; Branche, A.; Pircon, J.Y. Respiratory syncytial virus disease burden in adults aged 60 years and older in high-income countries: A systematic literature review and meta-analysis. *Influenza Other Respir. Viruses* 2023, 17, e13031.
- Calabrò GE, et al. Strategies to Improve Vaccination among At-Risk Adults and the Elderly in Italy. *Vaccines* 2020, 8, 358; doi:10.3390/vaccines8030358

Appendix

IMPORTANT: Specific RFP Submission Requirements

Applications will be accepted via the online portal listed in the How to Submit section. Project Proposals/Protocols should be single-spaced using Calibri 12-point font and 1-inch margins. Note there is a 15-page limit exclusive of references. When uploading your Full Proposal please ensure it addresses the following sections:

Goals and Objectives

- Briefly state the overall goal of the project. Also describe how this goal aligns with the focus of the RFP and the goals of the applicant organization(s).
- List the overall objectives you plan to meet with your project both in terms of learning and expected outcomes. Objectives should describe the target population as well as the outcomes you expect to achieve as a result of conducting the project.

Assessment of Need for the Project

- Please include a quantitative baseline data summary, initial metrics (e.g., quality measures), or a project starting point (please cite data on gap analyses or relevant patient-level data that informs the stated objectives) in your target area.
- Describe the source and method used to collect the data. Describe how the data was analyzed to determine that a gap existed.
- If a full analysis has not yet been conducted, please include a description of your plan to obtain this information.

Target Audience

- Describe the primary audience(s) targeted for this project. Also indicate whom you believe will directly benefit from the project outcomes. Describe the overall population size as well as the size of your sample population

Project Design and Methods

- Describe the planned project and the way it addresses the established need.
- If your methods include educational activities, please describe succinctly the topic(s) and format of those activities.

Innovation

- Explain what measures you have taken to assure that this project idea is original and does not duplicate other projects or materials already developed.
- Describe how this project builds upon existing work, pilot projects, or ongoing projects developed either by your institution or other institutions related to this project.

Evaluation and Outcomes

- In terms of the metrics used for the needs assessment, describe how you will determine if the practice gap was addressed for the target group. Describe how you expect to collect and analyze the data.
- Quantify the amount of change expected from this project in terms of your target audience.
- Describe how the project outcomes will be broadly disseminated.

Anticipated Project Timeline

- Provide an anticipated timeline for your project including project start/end dates.

Additional Information

- If there is any additional information you feel Pfizer should be aware of concerning the importance of this project, please summarize here.

Organization Detail

- Describe the attributes of the institutions / organizations / associations that will support and facilitate the execution of the project and the leadership of the proposed project. Articulate the specific role of each partner in the proposed project.

Budget Detail

- The budget amount requested must be in **EUR**.
- While estimating your budget please keep the following items in mind:
 - General organizational running costs such as legal fees, insurance, heating, and lighting etc. should be included in an Institutional Overhead (if required). These costs are not specific to a grant request and therefore, should not appear as line items in budgets. However, costs that are specific to the study (e.g., some countries require insurance to be taken out on a per-study basis for clinical research) would be acceptable to be included as line items.
 - The inclusion of these costs cannot cause the amount requested to exceed the budget limit set forth in the RFP.
 - Pfizer does not provide funding for capital purchases (infrastructure expenses such as equipment, purchases of software or software licenses, technology or bricks and mortar). Equipment hire/leasing is acceptable and may be included in project budget.
 - It should be noted that grants awarded through GMGP cannot be used to purchase Pfizer therapeutic agents (prescription or non-prescription).
- Pfizer maintains a company-wide, maximum allowed overhead rate of 28% for independent studies and projects. Please [click here](#) for details.

Required Documents

- Project Plan or Proposal