



ESTHER Ireland
COVID-19 Response Funding Call
Application Guidelines 2020

Contents

1. Background & Rationale	3
2. Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Pandemic.....	4
3. Scope of ESTHER Ireland COVID-19 Response Funding Call	5
3.1 COVID-19 response call will target four main areas:	5
3.2 Examples of activities.....	6
3.3 Minimum requirements.....	6
3.4 Criteria.....	7
3.5 Grant Amount	7
4. Partnership Characteristics	8
4.1 Definition from the WHO APPS Programme.....	8
4.2 Examples of funded schemes.....	9

1. Background & Rationale

ESTHER Ireland is a joint HSE-Irish Aid health development cooperation initiative and a part of the ESTHER Alliance for Global Health Partnerships (EA). This alliance of European countries was initiated by the French Government in response to the AIDS crisis in Africa in 2002. Today Members of the Alliance seek to mobilise and create partnerships that facilitate health interventions across a wide range of areas of need with the world's poorest countries.

Ireland's participation in the ESTHER Alliance was guided by the 2010 MoU between Irish Aid and the HSE, culminating in Ireland joining the Alliance in 2012. ESTHER Ireland operates under the MoU and its Secretariat is hosted by the Irish Global Health Network. Since May 2018, responsibility and governance for the ESTHER Ireland programme sits within the HSE Global Health Programme.

The operational rationale for the ESTHER Alliance is grounded on the centrality of partnerships and their potential to achieve more through working as institutions rather than individuals. The theoretical basis behind this approach is that robust partnerships, working collectively and collaboratively, can contribute to improved health services for poor and disadvantaged communities and with a "multiplier effect" on health outcomes. The principle modality of these partnerships is twinning between hospitals, primary care services, universities, and other institutions with counterparts in partner countries. A variety of geographical arrangements are supported by ESTHER that may include North-South and South-South cooperation.

The partnership approach aims to make a significant contribution to health outcomes in poor countries through addressing inequities in access and coverage, while strengthening service delivery through capacity building and institutional development. Human resource capacity is strengthened through peer to peer relationships between personnel working in the partner institutions. Accordingly, ESTHER supported partnerships are "agents of change" in a multiplicity of intervention areas that focus on the creation of sustainable and resilient partnerships with positive changes at all stages of the results continuum. Self-mobilisation and financial leverage are considered key output performance indicators from a quality partnership and are expected to contribute to an improved health outcome.

ESTHER Ireland works closely with its European Partners and collaborates with WHO and the Tropical Health Education Trust (THET) in the UK. As well as contributing to the health outcomes in developing countries, these partnerships have also been shown to have advantages and benefits for developed countries.

Since 2014, with funding from Irish Aid, ESTHER Ireland has awarded €202k in small grants to 27 institutions to develop new partnerships or strengthen existing ones. To date eight of these institutions have achieved recognition as ESTHER partners, having an established partnership and demonstrating adherence to the [ESTHER Charter for Quality of Partnerships](#).

2. Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Pandemic

Over just a few months in 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic has become the priority health issue facing low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). It poses an immediate threat to the health services in these countries and threatens to undermine years of progress towards building resilient health systems and achieving universal health coverage. Furthermore, the restrictive measures being implemented to control the pandemic have socio-economic consequences and may have a detrimental long-term impact on people's health and wellbeing, especially the poorest in society.

Those working in North-South partnerships need to respond to the COVID-19 crisis. Partnerships are fundamentally about long-term commitment to work together towards a common interest. This means showing solidarity in a time of crisis and therefore co-operation should increase, despite the disruptions to travel. Partnerships are more important than ever, and it is a time for closer and more frequent contacts with partners in LMICs than before.

The current work being done by partnerships will be affected by COVID-19, and indeed it may not be feasible or appropriate to continue planned activities during this period. At the same time, the partners from the North and South have an established working relationship and are well placed to collaborate in responding to the pandemic. Flexibility is required and partnerships need to reflect on what is needed during the COVID-19 pandemic. Context is also important: partners from high-income countries should listen carefully to the needs expressed by partners in LMICs.

In responding to COVID-19, partnerships need to keep in focus their long-term goals of health service improvement and improved health outcomes. The response is not primarily about humanitarian or emergency aid, but to support partners in managing the COVID-19 outbreak while also maintaining essential health services and protecting health workers. The challenge is to continue the path to health system strengthening and consider how to build back better after the pandemic is over.

3. Scope of ESTHER Ireland COVID-19 Response Funding Call

As solidarity is the core of the institutional health partnerships and health relations between the global south and global north, health workers who are engaged in established health partnerships between high-income countries and LMICs are actively seeking new innovative ways to support their partners during COVID-19 pandemic. It is the intention that ESTHER Ireland will continue supporting and facilitating institutional health partnerships during this pandemic. Given the devastating impact might COVID-19 have on health systems and health workers; low resourced settings are particularly vulnerable during this challenging time. Therefore, partners in the global north are keen to support their counterparts in the global south during this unprecedented time. Thus, ESTHER Ireland is willing to provide guidance and resources to assist the northern partner in supporting their southern partners.

Since the start of COVID-19 pandemic, ESTHER Ireland started to receive requests from partners asking for flexibility regarding their granted funds to assist their southern partners in preparing and responding to COVID-19. Thus, it was deemed appropriate to be flexible and establish a specific COVID-19 response funding call. This call will be open for Irish institutions that are already working in a health partnership with a low- or middle-income country.

The focus of the call is primarily to provide partnerships with additional support that is needed in response to COVID-19. Activities can be to protect the population's health from COVID-19 and its consequences and/or contribute to the treatment of the affected people and the maintenance of essential services.

3.1 COVID-19 response call will target four main areas:

1. Strengthen and maintain essential health services during COVID-19 pandemic in LMICs
2. Address the health and socio-economic impact caused directly by COVID-19 or by measures which restrict to people's lives and work
3. Provide health and social care for those affected by COVID-19
4. Provide professional and psychological support for health workers in context of COVID-19

3.2 Examples of activities

- **Online Training and Learning Resources for Health workers**

This could include activities such as remote training on responding to COVID-19; funding online subscriptions and courses; or supporting the creation of accessible learning resources and channels.

- **Personal Protection Equipment Support and Solutions for Health workers**

This could include activities to help protect health workers while they are responding to COVID-19. For example, supplying items for Infection Control and Prevention (e.g. soap, ingredients for making antiviral hand-gel); or providing evidence-based innovative solutions for the use Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) in low resource settings.

- **Psychological support for health workers**

Activities might include resilience training; support groups and psychological consultations; or production of support videos.

- **Engaging in research and learning**

This may be for the benefit of the current crisis but also so that lessons are learned to accelerate innovation across all our health systems.

3.3 Minimum requirements

- Partnerships must demonstrate clear evidence of quality of partnership, in line with the ESTHER Charter for Quality of Partnerships.
- Eligible institutions are Irish hospitals, hospital groups, other service-delivery institutions, primary care facilities, public health institutions, training bodies and research institutions that have an *established partnership* with a counterpart overseas institution in a low-or middle-income country.

3.4 Criteria

- Partnerships should demonstrate a clear understanding of the needs and priorities of the southern partners in LMICs.
- Higher priority is given to partnerships in countries with official Government links through Irish Aid and/or the HSE:
 - Irish Aid key partner countries providing bilateral support to the health sector (Mozambique, Ethiopia, Tanzania)
 - Other Irish Aid key partner countries (eg Zambia, Malawi, Uganda, Liberia)
 - Countries in which HSE is engaged with through formal agreements (eg Mozambique, Sudan, Zambia)
- Preference is given to partnerships with greater potential to achieve impact: Contribute to better health outcomes, health systems strengthening and universal health coverage
- Coherent with Irish Aid development policy, 'A Better World'
- Grant funding should achieve value for money. Having co-funding is considered an advantage.
- Successful partnerships should be willing to monitor their partnership using the ESTHER Pilot Effect Tool and produce a case study.

3.5 Grant Amount

- Maximum for individual grant: €6,000

Application forms and criteria can be found on the **ESTHER Ireland** website on www.esther.ie.

All applications and queries should be sent to the ESTHER Ireland secretariat at grants@esther.ie.

4. Partnership Characteristics

Partnership Defined;

A partnership is a collaborative relationship between two or more parties based on trust, equality and mutual understanding for the achievement of a specific goal. Partnerships involve risks as well as benefits, making shared accountability critical.

4.1 Definition from the WHO APPS Programme.

Characteristics of *strong* partnership proposals.

- ✓ Built on existing links with institutional commitment.
- ✓ Demand-driven and needs based.
- ✓ Country-owned, and aligned with country partner priorities.
- ✓ Clear goals, results focused with a strong potential for impact.
- ✓ Guided by the need for sustainability.
- ✓ Evidence of mutual accountability, and transparency in the intended use of available resources

Characteristics of *weaker* partnership proposals

- ✗ One-sided benefits, reciprocity unclear.
- ✗ Unclear partner capacity and experience.
- ✗ Institution involvement not well articulated.
- ✗ Over ambitious with little attention to sustainability.
- ✗ Overly project focussed rather than partnership focussed
- ✗ Inconsistent budget with weak focus on goals or results
- ✗ Many applications are not supported by the necessary documents

The partnership scheme *will* fund;

- ✓ Needs assessment
- ✓ Travel
- ✓ Accommodation
- ✓ Communications
- ✓ Workshops for partnership development
- ✓ Subsistence allowance at local rates ([ESTHER Website](#) for guidelines)
- ✓ Publication and development of webpages to enhance partnerships
- ✓ Monitoring and reporting costs

The Partnership scheme *will not* fund;

- ✗ Salaries or “top ups”
- ✗ First class business travel
- ✗ Fundraising activities
- ✗ Backstopping other grants
- ✗ University fees
- ✗ Volunteer funding
- ✗ Consultants
- ✗ Office Space
- ✗ Sitting allowances (for training attendees)
- ✗ Entertainment costs

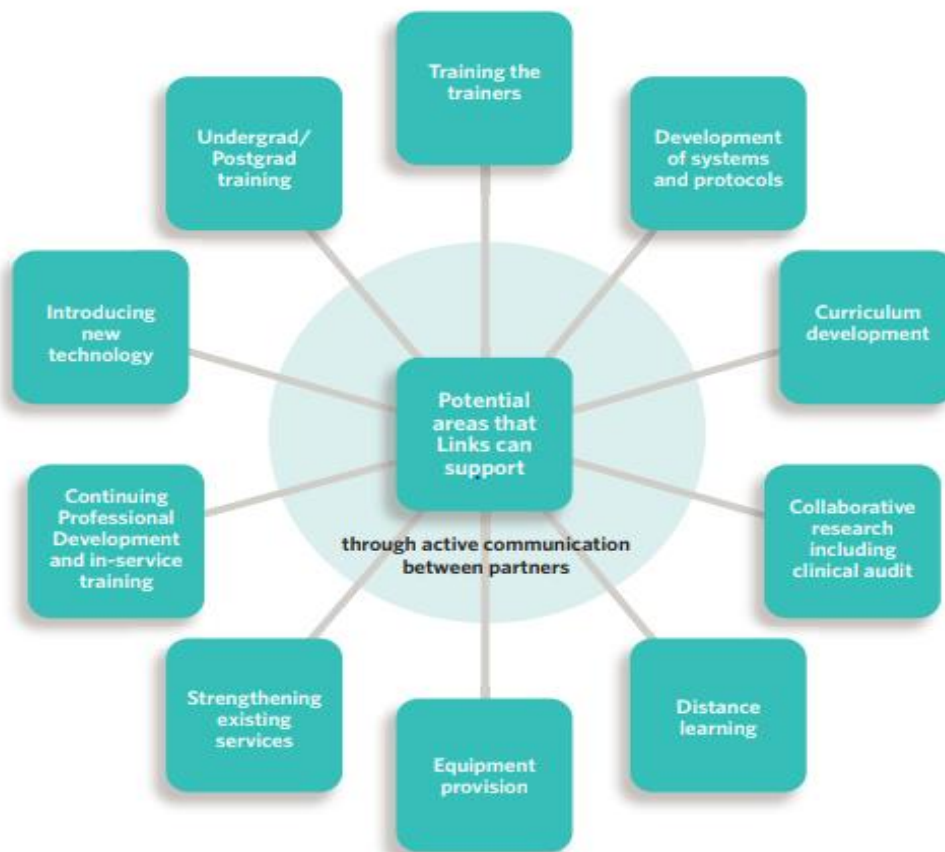
4.2 Examples of funded schemes

To date ESTHER Ireland has supported the development of partnerships in a variety of intervention areas, which include:

1. Physiotherapy	7. Leprosy
2. Nursing & Midwifery	8. Paediatric Cancer
3. Children’s Palliative Care	9. Cancer Research & Education
4. Health care education & research	10. Mother & Child Health
5. Health care equipment	11. Community Health
6. Health Systems Research	12. Surgical Training

There are many areas that a partnership might focus on including learning, training, exchange visits, research, and teaching.

Ultimately, the creation of a sustainable partnership should aim to make a contribution to achieving a particular health outcome which has been identified as a priority by the southern partner and their National Health Plan.



Source: THET International Health Links Manual