

Request for Applications (RFA)

Title of Competition: HIV Cure-Related Research in Africa

Reference Number: HV-04-2024

Competition Opens	January 15, 2024
Submission Deadline	April 15, 2024
Announcement of Results	July 1, 2024
Grant Amount	Awards of no more than \$150,000 for direct costs for one year. Indirect costs are limited to 8% of the award budget.
Tentative Award Period	September 3, 2024 – September 3, 2025
Eligible Applicant(s)	Research institutions located in Africa
Eligible Project Scope	Grants will be awarded to research institutions located in Africa to expand knowledge on HIV persistence and post-treatment control in people living with non-subtype B HIV within the region. The goal of the funding opportunity is to support HIV cure-related research in areas of Africa in which there is a high proportion of people living with HIV.
How to Apply	Proposals must be emailed to health@crdfglobal.org by no later than the submission deadline.
Program Contact	Kesina Kum (kkum@crdfglobal.org)
Technical Contact	Karl Salzwedel (karl.salzwedel@nih.gov) Elizabeth Church (elizabeth.church@nih.gov)

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BACKGROUND

CRDF Global is currently accepting proposals from research institutions located in Africa for the Competition titled 'HIV Cure-Related Research in Africa' (the Competition). This Competition is organized and administered by CRDF Global, on behalf of the National Institutes of Allergies and Infectious Diseases (NIAID).

NIAID conducts and supports basic and applied research to better understand, treat, and ultimately prevent infectious, immunologic, and allergic diseases. For more than 60 years, NIAID research has led to new therapies, vaccines, diagnostic tests, and other technologies that have improved the health of millions of people in the United States and around the world. For more information, visit: <http://www.niaid.nih.gov/>.

CRDF Global is an independent nonprofit organization founded in 1995. In the past 25 years, CRDF Global's work has expanded to address ever-changing global concerns, but the commitment to ensuring the success of the organization's partners remains the same. CRDF Global is a leading provider of flexible logistical support, program design and management, and strategic capacity building programs in the areas of higher education, CBRNE security and nonproliferation, border security, cybersecurity, global health, technology entrepreneurship, and international professional exchanges. With offices in Arlington, VA; Kyiv, Ukraine; Amman, Jordan; and Manila, Philippines, CRDF Global's diverse staff and networks of local community and government stakeholders deliver tailored programs that meet specific regional needs in over 100 countries across the globe.

For more information visit <http://www.crdfglobal.org>.

Goals & Objectives

As a result of implementation of grants under this Request for Applications, the following goals and objectives will be pursued:

- (1) Support HIV cure-related research in areas of Africa in which there is a high proportion of people living with HIV.
- (2) To expand our understanding of the persistence of non-subtype B HIV in people on antiretroviral therapy (ART) and the mechanisms of post-treatment control of viremia following cessation of ART.

SCOPE

Problem statement

Most cure-related HIV research to date has focused on subtype B virus, which constitutes the majority of infections in North America, South America, Australia, and Western Europe, with the highest prevalence in cisgender men who have sex with men (MSM). However, subtype B represents only about 12% of the estimated 39 million people living with HIV globally. Subtype C virus constitutes the highest proportion of infections (47%), with the highest prevalence in cisgender women living in Sub-Saharan Africa. Almost 70% of all people living with HIV worldwide live in Sub-Saharan Africa and over 50% are cisgender women.

Little is known about differences between subtype B HIV and other, more prevalent subtypes with respect to the biology of HIV persistence on ART, the frequency, and mechanisms of post-treatment control of HIV, and the response of non-subtype B viruses to curative strategies under development. Some evidence suggests that the frequency of viremic control in the absence of ART may be higher in females and in some populations in which non-subtype B virus is predominant. Additionally, one study of replication-competent persistent reservoirs in subtype C infection in Uganda demonstrated a smaller overall reservoir size as compared to individuals with subtype B virus in the U.S. More studies involving non-subtype B virus and people living with HIV in Africa are needed to better understand how these populations might respond to curative strategies currently under development for durable control of HIV in the absence of ART and/or reduction of persistent viral reservoirs.

CRDF Global is soliciting research proposals that will expand our knowledge of HIV persistence and post-treatment control in people living with non-subtype B HIV in Africa. Proposals may propose basic, translational, preclinical, or clinical research studies using existing human samples or samples derived from separately funded HIV cohorts or clinical trials to analyze and compare non-subtype B HIV persistence and post-treatment control.

Eligible Scope of Projects

For the purposes of this Competition, applicants should propose projects in the following areas, but not limited to:

- (1) Developing and optimizing assays to quantify the levels of full-length, intact HIV proviral DNA in individuals living with non-subtype B HIV and to determine the proportion of intact, rebound competent, and defective provirus.
- (2) Understanding the virology of the rebound-competent persistent proviral HIV reservoir
 - a. Establishment, tissue and cell type distribution;
 - b. Dynamics, including the clonal proliferation of cells harboring HIV provirus and their decay over time.
- (3) Studies of the innate and adaptive immune responses to HIV in people living with non-subtype B on ART and the relation of these responses to the rebound-competent viral reservoir, including the sensitivity of the intact reservoir to circulating autologous antibodies and existing T cell responses.
- (4) Frequency and mechanism of post treatment control in for people living with non-subtype B HIV

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

All applicants and proposals must meet **each** of the following eligibility criteria:

- (1) Applicants must be associated with a research institution located in Africa, and awards will only be made to African institutions.
 - a. Proposals must include at least **one** Principal investigator from an institution located in Africa.
 - b. Collaborative projects involving investigators and institutions from other African sites are encouraged.
 - c. Collaborative projects involving investigators and institutions from U.S. sites are eligible however, a U.S. partner is not required. U.S. institutions can request up to **\$25,000 USD** of the total proposal budget.
 - d. Proposals may have **up to three** sites from different institutions as collaborative teams under the proposal.
- (2) Research budgets are limited to \$150,000 direct costs for one year. Indirect costs are limited to 8% of the award budget. Funds may be used for salaries, equipment purchase and maintenance, laboratory supplies, reagents, clinical sample acquisition and transport, training, or travel to collaborating institutions or scientific conferences.
- (3) All applicants must submit one proposal.

NOTE:

CRDF Global reserves the right to decline review and evaluation of the proposals which do not meet eligibility requirements stipulated above.

REVIEW OF PROPOSALS

Review Process

All proposals and information contained therein will remain confidential prior to the award and will be screened for eligibility and completeness upon receipt by CRDF Global. All eligible proposals will be subjected to a technical review process by experts in the appropriate fields. The experts will use the criteria described below to evaluate the merit of each proposal and make award recommendations. CRDF Global will select finalists based on the proposal's overall rating and these recommendations. Each proposal will be evaluated independently and therefore should not be part of, nor depend on the success of other proposals submitted to this competition.

CRDF Global will conduct a review of eligible proposals in accordance with local legislation and established policies of the organization. Following these reviews, CRDF Global will select proposals for award and notify PIs and/or designated contact point of award results via e-mail. CRDF Global will email each Applicant to inform them of the decision no later than **July 8, 2024**.

NOTE:

All awards are subject to the availability of funding from program sponsors. All decisions by CRDF Global are final.

Evaluation Criteria

The following evaluation criteria will be applied while review and evaluation of each proposal:

1. Proposal's Relevance and Potential Impact	10 points
<ul style="list-style-type: none">The probability that the project will result in new knowledge in one or more research topics or have a positive impact on health of the population in areas of Africa.	
2. Applicant's Research Capacity	5 points
<ul style="list-style-type: none">The expertise of the investigators and other participants, including the strengths and weaknesses of each partner (applicable to proposals with collaborator).	
3. Clarity, Feasibility and Sufficient Details of Suggested Activities	5 points
<ul style="list-style-type: none">The technical soundness of the proposed work, the project's management plan, and adequacy of the resources available, both technical and financial.	
4. Technical Merit	5 points
<ul style="list-style-type: none">How well the individual elements of the project plan fit with the overall project goals.	
4. Cost Effectiveness	N/A
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Reviewers will consider whether the budget and the requested period of support are fully justified and reasonable in relation to the proposed research but will not give scores for these items and should not consider them in providing an overall rating.	
TOTAL SCORE	25 points

PROPOSAL PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION

Full Proposal Submission

All proposals must be submitted no later than **April 15, 2024, (23:59) U.S. Eastern Standard Time (EST)**.

All proposals must be submitted electronically, using CRDF Global's proposal package template, through email.

Proposal application materials submitted to CRDF Global must be prepared in English and compiled in the proposal package template. Acceptable file formats are MS Excel (.exsm), MS Word (.docx), and Adobe Acrobat (.pdf).

All proposals must be submitted electronically, using CRDF Global's proposal package template via email: health@crdfglobal.org

Email's subject line should indicate RFP# and name of the applicant in the following format provided with an example:

“HV-04/2024_RedCrossAssociation”.

Proposal application materials submitted to CRDF Global must be prepared in English and compiled in the proposal package template. Acceptable file format for proposal package is MS Excel (.exsm) and pdf when directly requested in instructions.

At the conclusion of the electronic submission process, applicants will receive a confirmation message from CRDF Global.

Proposal package template contains the following sections (tabs):

- (1) Proposal Cover Page
- (2) Institutional Data Form
- (3) General Project Information
- (4) Scope of Work
- (5) Budget
- (6) Budget Narrative

Additional, as specified below:

- A. Project Narrative
- B. References Cited
- C. Curriculum Vitae (CV) or NIH Biosketch

Full Proposal Package

(1): Proposal Cover Page

One per Principal Investigator/Institution including:

- Project title
- Signature from the Principal Investigator (PI)
- Signature from the Primary Signatory (individual who would be responsible for negotiating contractual and financial terms in the case of an award)

(2): Institutional Data Form

One per Principal Investigator/Institution including:

- Information on the Principal Investigator
- Information on the Institution
- Information on the Primary Signatories (individuals who would be responsible for negotiating contractual and financial terms in the case of an award)

This document is a **requirement** for **projects funded by CRDF Global**.

(3): General Project Information

General Project Information provides an overview of the project which will be implemented by the investigators within the project. This includes:

- Project title and basic information about the project
- Project Abstract
 - One concise paragraph summarizing all relevant aspects of the project, with particular emphasis on the objectives, methods, and potential results (not more than 350 words).

- Project Goals and Objectives
 - Overview of the final impact or high-level result that the investigator(s) intends to achieve by implementing the project.
- Confirmation of work with human and/or animal subjects, or work with recombinant DNA
 - **Research Involving Human/ Animal Subjects:** CRDF Global is committed to ensuring that projects involving human or animal subjects are protected from research risks in conformance with CRDF Global policies. All projects recommended for award and funded by CRDF Global that involve human or animal subjects will undergo review by the CRDF Global Bioethics Review Committee (BRC) prior to award request. Grant recipients will not be authorized to begin work until IRB approval is provided to CRDF Global. Activation of a grant agreement is contingent on submission of complete IRB documentation and approval to CRDF Global. Project Leaders should apply to their institutional review boards (IRBs) for necessary bioethics approvals, as soon as feasible. Investigators will be required to submit proof of their institution's IRB approval **within 6 weeks** of award selection notice.
 - For further guidance on research involving human/animal subjects please visit: <https://www.crdfglobal.org/funding-opportunities/#forms-resources>.

(4): Scope of Work

One Scope of Work per proposal, describing specific milestones to be accomplished by the teams during project implementation.

Please note the following when preparing the Scope of Work:

- Milestones are discrete activities that allow the grantee to achieve the overall objectives described in the project narrative. Milestones should reflect realistic accomplishments that can be verified by CRDF Global and NIAID.
- Milestones must be verifiable through submission of documentation or other deliverables (e.g., photos, purchase orders, training materials, reports, or other tangible proof that the activities occurred).
- Payment may be predicated on completion of deliverables in the milestone plan.
- Each milestone should be clearly described and include a corresponding deliverable.
- The amount of funding requested (on a semi-annual basis) should be included in the Milestone Plan.

(5): Budget

One for **each** team involved. The budget should cover the entire award period. PIs should refer to [Allowable Costs & Budgeting](#) for information to be listed in the budget.

(6): Budget Narrative

One for **each** team involved explaining all budget items in the corresponding project team budget.

ADDITIONAL SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

The following documents should be prepared and submitted separately from the main proposal file.

(A): Project Narrative

A maximum of **five pages** including any graphs, diagrams, and figures. The following must be described in the Project Narrative:

- The specific aims, and objectives, approach, milestones, and measurements of success that will be used.
- A clearly defined project timeline, noting all project tasks and goals to be accomplished, including how to address potential pitfalls/delays with alternatives or contingency plans.
- A brief monitoring and evaluation plan.
- How the individual and combined competencies of the investigator(s)/institute(s) will enable the project to be carried out, and what relevant prior work has been completed.
- The anticipated results of the project and how they address the CRDF Global [evaluation criteria](#).
- How the project compares to current research conducted in the topic area.
- Facilities, equipment, and other resources available at the institutes directly applicable to the project including those from secondary collaborators. This should address the adequacy of the resources available to perform the effort proposed. The description should be written narratively and not include any financial information.
- Requested equipment to be utilized in the project.

Please note that **patentable** ideas, trade secrets, privileged or confidential commercial or financial information, disclosure of which may harm the proposer, should be included in the proposals only when such information is necessary to convey an understanding of the proposed project. Such information must be clearly marked in the proposal and appropriately labeled as:

"The following is (proprietary or confidential) information that (name of proposing organization) request not to be released to persons outside of CRDF Global, except for purposes of review and evaluation."

Please be reminded that the Project Narrative must be **self-contained** and that URLs providing information related to the proposal should not be used. CRDF Global expects strict adherence to the rules of proper scholarship and attribution. The responsibility for proper scholarship and attribution rests with the authors of a proposal; all parts of the proposal should be prepared with equal care for this concern. **All contributing authors, including any Principal Investigators and team participants, should be named and acknowledged at the bottom of the Project Narrative section** (example: Contributing Authors: NAME (Institute #1 PI), NAME (Institute #2 PI)).

(B): References Cited

Reference information for the Project Narrative. Each reference must include the names of all authors (in the same sequence in which they appear in the publication), the article and journal title, book title, volume number, page numbers, and year of publication. Identify the website address if the document is available electronically. While there is no page limitation for the References Cited, this section must only include bibliographic citations and not be used to provide parenthetical information outside of the Project Narrative.

C. Curricula Vitae (CV)

This is required. One for **each** Principal Investigator (PI) and Team Participant compiled **in one file**.

- PI CVs should be no more than five (5) pages.
- Please ensure you have provided a full CV for each team member listed in the **Budget Narrative** in the main proposal file.
- Team member CVs should be no more than two (2) pages.

- Each CV should include the individual's name, title, educational background, current and previous institutional affiliations with dates, area of expertise, and his or her scientific publications of relevance to the project. Please visit the following sites for writing a Curriculum Vitae (CV):
 - <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/2590/biosketchsample.pdf>
 - https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/job_search_writing/resumes_and_vitas/writing_the_cv.html

ALLOWABLE COSTS & BUDGETING

Grant Ceiling. The maximum total award is up to **\$150,000 USD** disbursed over the grant's period of performance.

No-Cost Extensions. Awardees may be eligible for a no-cost extension **up to** one-year, which may be requested within the final quarter of the one-year award period. Funds will be administered directly to the institutions involved.

In the case of an award, a project budget may be subject to revision by CRDF Global staff.

CRDF Global will disperse award funds using a cost-reimbursable award mechanism for actual expenses incurred.

CRDF Global will work with individual award recipients/institutions for any financial resource issues that may arise from the applicable funds disbursement policy.

The following costs are permitted under CRDF Global's guidelines for this Competition:

1. **Personnel Costs:** Personnel costs are defined as payments made to individual team participants for work performed on the project (i.e., labor costs). Include all benefits and fringe costs within the labor rate. They may not exceed the applicant institute's rates and must be documented in the proposal's budget narrative.

Student stipends are permissible and may include fringe benefits or tuition remission. For planned students not yet identified, clearly indicate their participation and request for support in the Budget Narrative.

2. **Equipment, Supplies and Services (ESS):** This includes support for research equipment, including computers and telecommunications devices and/or services, subscriptions to scientific journals, reagents, and other supplies/materials to be used in the research. In general, materials, supplies, and services must be specifically described and justified in the Budget Narrative.

Budget items should be listed individually – items listed generally as “supplies” or “services” will NOT be accepted. Each line item should be calculated based on actual costs.

Funds may also be requested for the costs of documenting, preparing, publishing or otherwise making available to others the findings and products of the work conducted under the award.

3. **Travel:** Transportation and per diem support for travel of grant-team participants in connection with the project should be requested and described in the Budget Narrative. Travel funds may be used for international and/or domestic travel according to project activities, if applicable.

The following cost guidelines should be used in preparing the travel portion of the budget:

- a. International Transportation. CRDF Global-supported travelers must purchase the lowest-cost applicable round-trip airfare from their home country. Travelers must comply with the provisions of the Fly America Act.
- b. Travel Allowances. Applicants should refer to the following travel allowance guidelines when preparing their travel budget:

For travel in the U.S., visit: <http://www.gsa.gov/portal/category/21287>.

For non-U.S. travel, refer to

https://aoprals.state.gov/content.asp?content_id=184&menu_id=78.

These are the *maximum* allowances for covering lodging, meals, and incidental expenses. Health insurance is mandatory for all travel under CRDF Global awards and should be included in the budget in addition to the travel allowance.

- c. Visa Fees: Applicants may use project funds to cover the cost of visa fees.

4. **Indirect Costs (IDCs):** Applicants may request indirect costs/overhead expenses on all direct costs except for equipment, capital expenditures, rent, student tuition, participant support costs¹ and sub-awardees expenses (after the first \$25,000). Total direct costs minus these items is considered the “modified total direct cost” (MTDC) amount for which the IDC rate should be applied. IDCs combined with the total direct costs cannot exceed the funding total allowed to request. Below are helpful calculations:

- **IDC \$ = IDC% × MTDC \$**
- **Maximum Total Grant budget = total direct costs \$ (including MTDC) + IDCs \$**

Indirect Costs: U.S. Institutions with a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rates Agreement (NICRA) may request up to their approved NICRA rate. If an institute requests IDCs at their NICRA rate, documentation for these rates should be provided in the budget narrative. U.S. institutions without a negotiated indirect cost rate may request the de minimis rate of 10%.

Foreign institutions without a NICRA and who wish to request Institutional Support should apply the de minimis rate of 8% of MTDC.

List of ineligible goods:

The following goods cannot be budgeted by the applicants within the scope of this Competition:

1. Weapons and explosives;
2. Alcohol beverages;

¹ Participant Support costs include stipends or subsistence allowances, travel allowances and registration fees paid to or on behalf of participants or trainees (but not employees) in connection with meetings, conferences, symposia or training projects, scholarships/fellowships.

3. Illegal and/or restricted substances, such as drugs;
4. Surveillance equipment;
5. Luxury goods and jewelry;
6. Gambling equipment;
7. Sports equipment;
8. Bad debts;
9. Entertainment and related goods;
10. Fines and penalties;
11. Fundraising, lobbying and PR costs.
12. Foreign taxes, duties, fees or other levies;
13. Pre-Agreement costs (costs incurred before the Agreement was signed if they were not approved by the Agreement Officer in advance).

CRDF GLOBAL POLICIES AND APPLICANT RESOURCES

General Terms and Conditions

CRDF Global's General Terms and Conditions are incorporated herein by reference. Please follow the link below to access these Terms and Conditions.

Link: <https://www.crdfglobal.org/funding-opportunities/#forms-resources>

Applicants must review applicable Terms and Conditions prior to submission of their proposals under this Competition.

Program Support Information

For further information about this program, please contact the program manager below. **Inquiries by e-mail are strongly encouraged and will result in a prompt response.**

Administrative Inquiries: CRDF Global

Kesina Kum
1776 Wilson Blvd., Suite 300
Arlington, VA 22209
Email: kkum@crdfglobal.org

Technical/Scientific Inquiries: Division of AIDS/NIAID/NIH/DHHS

Karl Salzwedel
5601 Fishers Lane,
Rockville, MD 20852
Email: karl.salzwedel@nih.gov

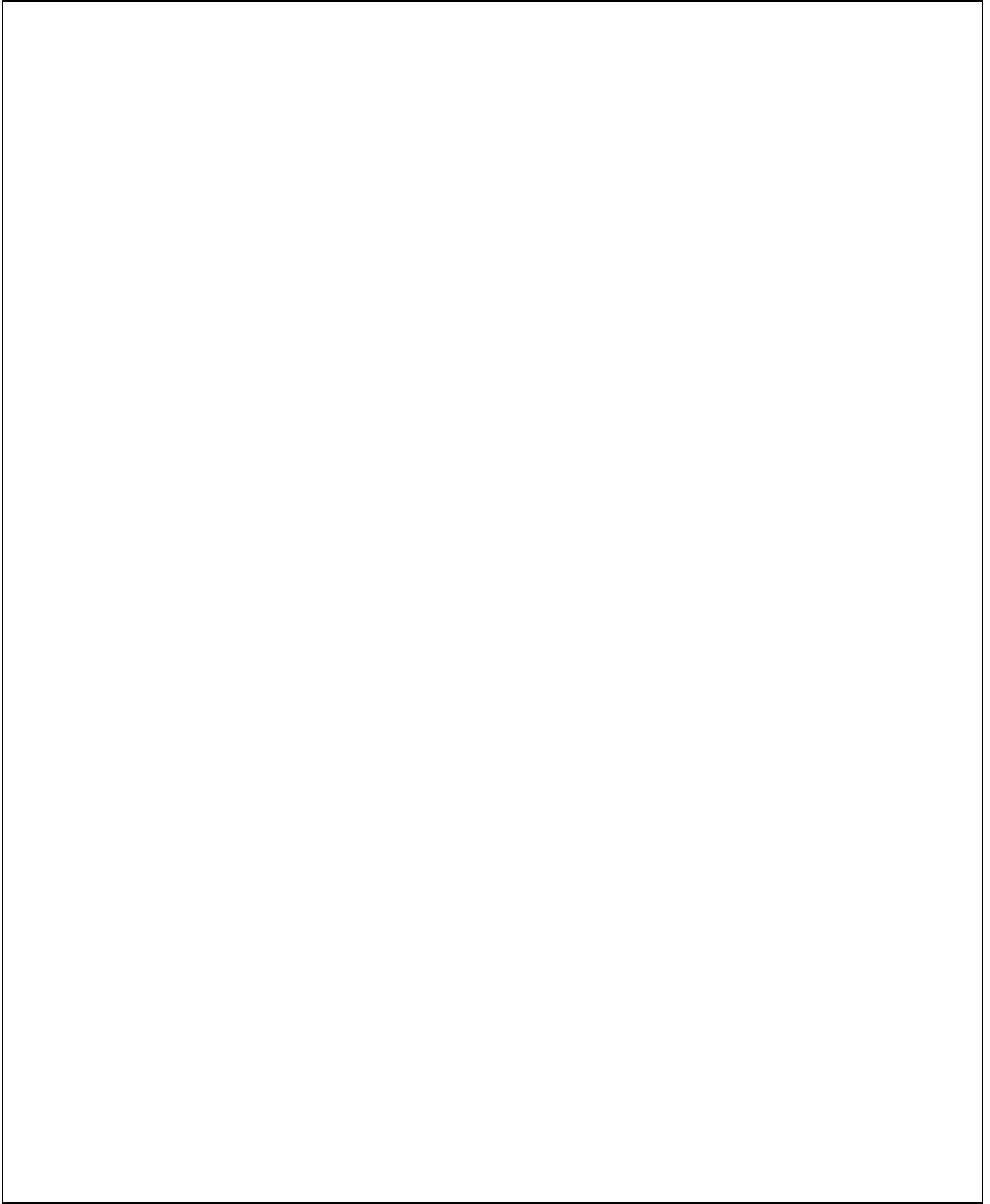
Elizabeth Church
5601 Fishers Lane,
Rockville, MD 20852
Email: elizabeth.church@nih.gov

APPENDIX A: ADDITIONAL SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

PROJECT NARRATIVE

(Narrative should not exceed 5 pages and text should be Arial font size 10 within 1-inch margins.)

Empty rectangular box for project narrative content.



REFERENCES CITED

(This section must only include bibliographic citations and not be used to provide parenthetical information outside of the Project Narrative.)

CURRICULA VITAE (CV) OR NIH BIOSKETCH

(Please visit the following sites for writing a CV/biosketch:

<https://grants.nih.gov/grants/forms/biosketch.htm>;

https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/job_search_writing/resumes_and_vitas/writing_the_cv.html)