

## **GUIDANCE TO UNITAID GRANT IMPLEMENTERS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC (VERSION 2)**

### **I. About this Guidance**

1. People in all parts of the world continue to face serious challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Unitaid remains firmly committed to continuing its ongoing work and to contributing to global efforts to tackle the spread of COVID-19, together with our grant implementers and the international community more broadly.
2. This Guidance is an update to earlier guidance that Unitaid shared in March 2020. It provides Unitaid grant implementers direction on how to manage the financial and operational impact of the pandemic on project implementation. It applies with immediate effect through 31 December 2020. We rely on our lead grant implementers to ensure that third-party sub-implementers and contractors are aware of this Guidance.
3. As the situation is evolving, we will continue to monitor and assess the pandemic and will periodically prepare and circulate updated Guidance as the situation requires.

### **II. General measures to ensure staff safety and business continuity**

4. Unitaid strongly encourages its grant implementers to consider and take prompt action to mitigate the potential negative consequences of COVID-19 in Unitaid project countries. Particular attention should be given to health worker protection, communication to affected communities and maintenance of essential services.
5. During implementation of Unitaid project activities, grant implementers must follow any relevant World Health Organization guidance on COVID-19 preparedness and response. Furthermore, Unitaid requires that our implementers strictly adhere to the policies and laws of the local and national authorities with respect to COVID-19 in Unitaid project countries.
6. We value the efforts of our grant implementers to ensure the safety of their staff, as well as sub-implementer staff and contractors supporting Unitaid projects. Human health and well-being are a priority for Unitaid and, within the context of the pandemic, all implementers are encouraged to be especially attentive to the needs of staff at higher risk of exposure or severe illness from COVID-19.
7. In light of this, grant implementers may use funds from current Unitaid project budgets to buy personal protection equipment (“PPE”) and consumables, for example masks and hand hygiene products, that are reasonably required for staff supporting Unitaid activities. We recognise some grant implementers have already procured PPE. Guidance on future procurement is presented in Section VII below.

### **III. Periodic situation reports**

8. Unitaid knows its grant implementers will make their best efforts to monitor and maintain business continuity and operational readiness during these extremely difficult times, with a view to minimizing disruptions to the implementation of projects. We appreciate grantees informing us of any key project activities that are being delayed (or likely to be delayed) due to COVID-19.
9. Unitaid is highly appreciative of the regular updates on COVID-19 impact that our grant implementers are providing both during project team discussions and through our monthly assessment of COVID-19 disruption. Our teams will continue their close engagement with implementers throughout this period.

10. We encourage grant implementers that have any questions about this Guidance or about Unitaid support during the COVID-19 pandemic to reach out immediately to their Unitaid project team for a rapid response.

#### **IV. Continued funding of critical project activities**

11. During this challenging period, Unitaid continues to operate virtually and will ensure continuity of funding to sustain project activities throughout its project portfolio.
12. If critical activities are delayed or interrupted, Unitaid will support and fund programmatic and grant management costs to maintain operational readiness during this period, with a view to project implementation activities being resumed later. Specifically, fixed running costs will be eligible for continued funding by Unitaid if project implementation activities are unavoidably suspended during this period due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
13. Fixed costs in the current approved budget that are eligible for continued funding during this period include a) staff costs, even for staff who are unable to continue work on the project as a result of the pandemic; b) general administrative costs, using recovery rates agreed in the approved budgets; and c) any other significant costs reasonably required to maintain ongoing critical activities.
14. Activities that a) are not essential to achieving specific time-sensitive deliverables committed to under the grant or b) cannot be feasibly implemented given local/national policies related to COVID-19 should be postponed to the extent possible, in order to mitigate the risk of losses and ensure resource deployment is focused and allows the prioritisation of critical project activities

#### **V. Insurance and mitigation of financial losses**

15. Unitaid grant implementers will take all reasonable steps to mitigate unnecessary expenses and losses to their Unitaid-funded project(s). Implementers are expected to actively seek reimbursement (including through any relevant insurance policies) before claiming costs from Unitaid. In the event such necessary costs cannot be successfully reimbursed through insurance, Unitaid will cover costs arising from commitments entered into in good faith prior to the escalation of the COVID-19 pandemic. This may include, for example, event cancellation costs (e.g. travel-related costs) or commodity losses (e.g. expired stock).
16. In the event that costs are reimbursed by Unitaid and insurance payments (or other financial support from national governments) covering the same costs are subsequently received, grant implementers are to promptly inform Unitaid of the amount received, and these costs will be offset against future disbursements.

#### **VI. Unitaid-supported research studies**

17. Grant implementers are to promptly inform Unitaid of any modification, suspension and/or re-initialization of research studies. This will allow Unitaid to quickly inform the WHO Ethical Research Committee (ERC) when needed. Grant implementers must also inform and consult with their institutional review board and any relevant local research ethics committees.

#### **VII. Support for procurement of COVID-19 related PPE**

18. The following overarching principles for acceptable procurement of COVID-19 related PPE complement Unitaid's existing *Financial Guidelines for Unitaid Grantees*<sup>1</sup>:
  - *Focused*: Unitaid will fund procurement of PPE for grant implementer staff and third-party staff who are directly involved in Unitaid project implementation, in order to promote their health and

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<sup>1</sup> <https://unitaid.org/assets/Financial-guidelines-for-Unitaid-Grantees.pdf>

well-being and sustain project continuity in line with project goals and objectives. Indirect staff are exempt from this support.

- *Complementary*: Unitaid will fund a share of the incremental costs of PPE procurement. Grant implementers are asked to explore other sources of PPE funding that can complement Unitaid support, such as leveraging other institutional funding or donations from organizations supporting the global and/or national response to COVID-19.
- *Reasonable*: The type and quantity of PPE to be procured must be commensurate with the level (and expected duration) of potential staff exposure to COVID-19.<sup>2</sup>

19. The following describes the process for procuring COVID-related PPE using Unitaid funds:

- Before a grant implementer can execute a new PPE procurement (i.e. procurement after 01 August 2020), they must complete and submit a *PPE Request Form* to the Unitaid Secretariat. Unitaid will consider these requests on a case-by-case basis. Your Unitaid project team will share with you the *PPE Request Form* and an indicative list of PPE products that are eligible for procurement.
- Any approved budgets for PPE procurement for use during project activities will be considered as eligible project costs and will be covered through available project funding.
- The *PPE Procurement Request* will a) explain the rationale for the new procurement, b) present an inventory of any existing stock of PPE that was previously procured with Unitaid funds and c) describe the planned procurement (i.e. the PPE products and quantities to be procured and period during which the PPE is planned to be used).
- Each grant implementer is responsible for ensuring that any procurement of PPE using Unitaid funds—including but not limited to the selection of products and procurement channels—complies with the terms and conditions of its Grant Agreement with Unitaid, Unitaid’s guidance on Quality Assurance of Health Products<sup>3</sup> and the World Health Organization’s standards and specifications for PPEs<sup>4</sup>. Please contact your project team for guidance/support in identifying a possible supply partner or PPE sourcing platform, as required.
- Grant implementers must ensure that the details of PPE procurement are well documented. Unitaid reserves the right to review the process and its associated documentation at a future date.
- Lastly, each grant implementer must report the costs of any PPE procured in its 2020 semiannual financial report to Unitaid—reporting these costs separately from other health commodities (i.e. as expense group: *Health Commodities*, expense type: *PPE goods*).

#### VIII. Moving forward

- Unitaid is currently embarking on a systematic approach to course corrections for grants that have been disrupted by COVID-19. Your project team will be in touch with you to identify any required changes (e.g. extensions, reprogramming) and to plan the approach and timeline for your grant.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/331498>

<sup>3</sup> [http://unitaid.org/assets/UNITAID\\_Procurement\\_Guideline\\_August-2014-1.pdf](http://unitaid.org/assets/UNITAID_Procurement_Guideline_August-2014-1.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.who.int/medical\\_devices/priority/COVID\\_19\\_PPE/en/](https://www.who.int/medical_devices/priority/COVID_19_PPE/en/)