Call for Proposals: Bundibugyo Virus – Accelerated Development of Early-Stage Vaccine Candidates

This Call for Proposals (CfP) for the accelerated development of Bundibugyo virus (BDBV) vaccine candidates is part of CEPI's funding of urgent outbreak response activities undertaken in light of the rapidly evolving outbreak of Ebola disease caused by BDBV in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Uganda. This CfP seeks to identify the most promising BDBV vaccine candidates that could be accelerated through focused support over the coming weeks and months. The objective is twofold: first, to enable rapid generation of the preclinical, translational and manufacturing data needed to assess whether candidate vaccines could contribute to outbreak response; and second, to strengthen the longer-term pipeline of BDBV and broader filovirus medical countermeasures. Proposals are invited from developers with vaccine candidates that are in active development at appropriate stages of readiness, including those with existing pre-clinical immunogenicity, challenge, non-clinical safety, and/or manufacturing platform data that can credibly support accelerated decision-making.

Given the urgency of the current situation, the CfP is intended to surface actionable opportunities rather than long-horizon discovery efforts, while still recognizing the strategic importance of building a more resilient and diversified filovirus vaccine pipeline. Applicants are therefore encouraged to submit proposals that are scientifically robust, operationally feasible, and aligned with the urgent public health need to expand the available options for prevention and control. This call is open for proposals from 29 May 2026 to 8 June 2026.

1. Background

The Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) is an international coalition of governments, academic, philanthropic, private, public, and intergovernmental institutions whose mission is to accelerate the development of vaccines and other biologic countermeasures against epidemic and pandemic threats so they can be accessible to all people in need. Further information about CEPI and our mission can be found on our website: www.cepi.net.

In May 2026, the outbreak of Ebola disease caused by Bundibugyo virus (BDBV) in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Uganda was declared a Public Health Emergency of International Concern by the World Health Organization, reflecting the seriousness of cross-border transmission, the challenging operating environment, and the risk of further regional spread. The outbreak has emerged in a setting marked by insecurity, population movement, and constrained health-system capacity, all of which increase the complexity of outbreak control and heighten the need for rapid deployment of effective medical countermeasures. BDBV is one of the ebolaviruses known to cause severe human disease, with prior outbreaks reporting case fatality rates in the range of approximately 30–50%, and early supportive care remaining the mainstay of clinical management.

Despite major progress in filovirus preparedness over the past decade, there is currently no licensed vaccine for BDBV and no BDBV-specific vaccine candidate has yet advanced into Phase 1 clinical evaluation. Licensed vaccines are available for Zaire ebolavirus, and other candidates are being developed for Sudan virus and Marburg virus; however, available evidence suggests that protection is species-specific and that any cross-protection against BDBV is uncertain and, at present, insufficiently demonstrated to support reliance on existing products. This leaves a critical gap in the global countermeasure portfolio at a time when an accelerated and evidence-based response is urgently needed.

This disease is currently confined to Africa, and there is not yet an established commercial market for vaccines against it. We recognize that this creates uncertainty for developers. At the same time, there is a clear public health need for effective vaccines that can be deployed in outbreak response. Through this call for proposals, our priorities are to support development through the early stages, enable the availability of clinical trial material and continued development on appropriate regulatory pathways, and help create the conditions for the availability of affordable doses at sufficient scale to contribute to outbreak control.

CEPI is therefore working with Gavi, Africa CDC, WHO, and other partners to help create a more supportive pathway for development, access, and deployment. This includes collaboration to advance appropriate candidates that meet affordability and accessibility considerations for outbreak use, designing financing and other pull incentives that can be mobilized in a timely manner based on individual manufacturer requirements, and coordinating push and pull incentives to help ensure sufficient supply for outbreak response needs.

2. Scope and Objectives

CEPI will award funding to project proposals that demonstrate preclinical and/or Phase 1 BDBV vaccine proof-of-concept. In-scope activities include preclinical challenge studies, studies that support regulatory filing (e.g., IND-enabling studies), CMC development related to analytical methods, process optimization, characterization, scale-up, and/or formulation, conduct of Phase 1 studies, production of clinical trial material, and immunobridging studies.

CEPI can provide access to animal challenge models and standardized assays and reagents through its preclinical model and centralized laboratory networks. If it would be helpful, CEPI would be pleased to

support introductions and matchmaking with other developers and manufacturers, including past/current awardees, members of our Vaccine Manufacturing Facilities Network and with clinical trial sites/networks experienced in vaccine Phase 1 studies. As part of our commitment to preparation for outbreaks, CEPI has invested in animal challenge models and can facilitate access to these. CEPI also has access to regulatory networks through existing partners that are available for the outbreak response. If helpful, CEPI can also provide access to regulatory platform technology and resources, and AI capabilities, through existing partners.

3. Eligibility criteria

- Vaccine candidates that offer a realistic pathway to rapid evidence generation and, where feasible, deployment-ready manufacturing
  - Candidates based on vaccine platforms* that show pre-clinical POC (including small animal model immunogenicity data) for BDBV or other Filoviruses particularly those candidates with challenge data in relevant animal models (NHP or ferrets).
  - Vaccine candidates based on a technology that was shown to induce protective immunity after a single dose or a maximum of two doses
  - Candidates based on vaccine platforms* with prior clinical or regulatory experience and well-developed CMC processes.
- Alternatively, antigen designs that can be adopted into existing vaccine platform per the above.
- Realistic timeline to be ready to progress to Clinical Trial Application in 6-9 months. Priority will be given to projects that can realistically advance to Phase I in 3-6 months.
- Candidates that use the current BDBV wild-type glycoprotein or use a suitably designed antigen (particularly if candidates have demonstrated cross-protection to other filoviruses).
- Applicants must be legal entities, or consortia comprised of legal entities.
- Applicants must own the technology proposed or have the rights to the vaccine incorporating the proposed technology.

*Vaccine platforms are defined as technologies that present an immunogen to the immune system to elicit a desirable immune response and that employ a standard manufacturing process and quality control that can be utilized for different vaccines, ideally with minimal to no antigen-dependent modification.

While CEPI is open to applicants/developers globally, special consideration will be given to proposals from, or partnering with, groups based in Africa or with plans to conduct manufacturing in Africa.

In addition to the eligibility criteria, applicants will be required to provide information in the application form across key areas essential for CEPI's eligibility screening and assessment. Applicants must provide complete and accurate responses to enable CEPI to conduct a thorough assessment.

Standardised Reagents

Awardee shall use standardised reagents designated by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) or other CEPI partners, including any candidate standards intended to become a World Health Organisation International Standard, in order to support harmonisation and comparability of Project Results

Use of CEPI Networks

Where suitable for the Project, Awardee will use CEPI's Preclinical Models Network and Clinical Laboratory Network to perform preclinical and clinical testing and other support as may be specified in a Work Package or as otherwise agreed between the Parties.

4. Peer-review criteria

Scientific maturity

- Pre-clinical data package for BDBV and/or other filoviruses
- Any platform data on time to protection and duration of protection
- Key reagents and assays that are already available or can be rapidly established

Manufacturing readiness

- Candidates that may ultimately support scalable production (min 100K doses in 4-6 months), special consideration for (but not limited to) African manufacturing settings.
- LMIC suitability (local manufacturing, thermostability, COGs)
- Stockpiling suitability (shelf-life/stability)
- Speed-to-Phase-1
- Route/Formulation (IM, multi-dose vial)
- Awardees need to be willing to provide CTM for late stage studies likely to be sponsored by affected countries

Partner Capabilities

- Partner capability, experience, commitment and sustainability
- Candidate with a realistic pathway to market, including intellectual property rights, freedom to operate and regulatory considerations

Impact

- If successful, to what extent could the proposed vaccine create transformational and sustainable impact on BDBV and other filovirus outbreak prevention, preparedness and/or response?
- To what extent is the vaccine suitable and/or the applicant well-positioned to make the proposed vaccine available, affordable, manufacturable and/or deliverable in Africa or the Global South?
- Could the proposed vaccine be developed rapidly enough at sufficient scale to have a significant impact on the current outbreak?

R&D Strategy & Feasibility

- How well do the provided data support the intended use of the proposed vaccine?
- Are there any major problems inherent in the proposed vaccine that are unlikely to be resolved?
- To what extent do the proposed studies demonstrate the feasibility of the vaccine and address key data gaps?
- Is the proposed product development plan, including efficacy and safety studies, CMC development, and regulatory pathway feasible and rigorous based on the information provided?
- How well are potential problems identified and alternative methods or approaches addressed?

Personnel & Environment

- How appropriate is the background and experience of key personnel and the partner as a whole for the successful completion of the proposed project?

- How well do the facilities and infrastructure provide the necessary resources for the successful conduct and completion of the project (including collaborative arrangements)?
- Does the partner(s) have sufficient financial and operational stability for the next 2 years?
- How much of the vaccine development value chain can the partner do in-house or via existing partnerships? If only one portion, is the partner willing to working with CEPI-identified collaborators?
- Are applicants or their partners in Africa or the Global South?

Budget (unscored)

- Is the budget appropriate for the proposed project?

CEPI particularly welcomes applications from researchers, developers, and institutions based in the Global South, as well as from applicants of any geographic base working through meaningful partnerships that build regional research and manufacturing capacity in Africa and other low- and middle-income countries. Such partnerships strengthen not only the current emergency response but also longer-term African and Global South capacity for vaccine development and regional health security

5. Applicant guidelines and review process

Applicants should inform CEPI of their intent to apply as soon as possible by registering on CEPI's secure online portal (click on 'Register now' on the portal CfP page), ensuring to specify the relevant CfP. Applicants should use the application template for this call, which can be downloaded from the portal or the CEPI website. Proposals should include essential evidence as required in the template, and contain sufficient detail for review of the proposed technology development. Any claims made within the proposal must be supported

Step 1:

For submissions to be accepted, applications must be submitted via the portal and fulfil all the following criteria:

- **Completed application template**
- A list of **relevant publications** in the last 5 years (Section 8 in the application template)
- A maximum of **8 CVs or biosketches** (max. 2 pages per CV/biosketch) for applicants, partners, and key experts. (Section 9 in the application template).

Submission content (follow instructions in the application template and include the below):

- Provide summary of data available to inform on technology platform readiness (incl. Publications, minutes of prior regulatory meetings, links to clinical trial database etc.)
- Provide a brief summary of the current manufacturing status, including a high-level overview of the technology and manufacturing process & analytics, as well as any available supporting data.
- Provide a brief summary of preclinical work or nonclinical work to be performed under high-quality research conditions suitable for regulatory review, especially in higher order species.
- Lay out a realistic plan on critical steps and timeline estimate needed for Phase 1 readiness (Clinical trial application submitted). Antigen-designers-only can exclude Phase 1 planning.
  - Present any critical gaps for Phase 1 readiness today
  - Present potential risks for an accelerated path to Phase 1

- Present any high level critical risks and gaps for late-stage readiness(organizational quality and PV systems; MAH identified)
- Provide a high level budget estimate (given the short turn around time detailed budgets are not required at this point in time)
- Ownership/Freedom to operate (FTO) status and tentative IP model (public domain, open/non-exclusive license, retained ownership with equitable access commitments)
- State whether you intend to provide end-to-end development, or whether you have existing/required partners, or stated willingness to work with CEPI-identified partners.

Step 2:

All applicants that advance to the due diligence stage may be requested to submit the additional documents specified below:

- **Project plan**, including an MS-Project format Gantt chart for proposals over $5M
- **Detailed budget** template with budget narrative
- Signed **letters of support for all partners** confirming their agreement to participate in the proposed projects and agreeing with the content of the proposal (PDF file)

It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that all requested documents are submitted and to contact CEPI in advance of the submission deadline in case there are any issues regarding the application submission process.

Any costs incurred by applicants in the development and submission of proposals to this call for proposals will not be reimbursed by CEPI.

6. Award Conditions

Funding must reflect the proposed activities and agreed conditions of the award decision made by CEPI.

CEPI's commitment to enabling equitable access through all CEPI-supported programmes is a cornerstone of its mission. Specifically, for awards made under this announcement, equitable access outcomes will be focussed on the goals of responding to the PHEIC. These may include but are not limited to:

Stage of Funded Work	Equitable Access Outcomes
Preclinical	• Open access publication of results • Data available to inform global and regional decision and policymakers • Data shared with CEPI • Commitment to move into the clinic if data supports
Clinical	• Data sharing as outlined for pre-clinical work • Willing to supply clinical trial material for later stage studies as part of the outbreak response, including studies sponsored by others such as Ministries of Health for affected countries. • Willing to make product(s) available to LMICs in a timely and affordable manner • Open to considering working with regional partners and/or manufacturers where appropriate

Through its role as a funder of R&D for pandemic preparedness, CEPI will work with key stakeholders, including the awardee, in accordance with CEPI's Equitable Access Policy.

If you have specific questions regarding the equitable access policy, please contact CEPI at innovations.cfp@cepi.net
CEPI maintains the following research-related policies to provide further guidance to its research partners on:

- Animal research
- Clinical trials (including transparency requirements)
- Equitable access policy
- Scientific integrity/open access policy
- Biosecurity Policy (including nine requirements)

Other policies/guidance designed to support CEPI partners on general administrative issues and ensure investor requirements and industry best practices include:

- 3rd Party Code of Conduct
- Cost guidance

CEPI policies and relevant guidance are published on https://cepi.net/navigating-cepis-third-party-code-your-guide-compliance

- European Union regulatory bodies rights of review and audit plus acknowledgement of EU funding.

7. Terms and Conditions

- This CfP and any of the information contained in it does not constitute an offer or invitation on the part of the CEPI to enter into an agreement. Any prospective Awardee shall be required to enter into an agreement with CEPI.

- The information in this CfP is provided by CEPI. It does not purport to be comprehensive and has not been independently verified. While it has been prepared in good faith, no representation, warranty, assurance or undertaking (express or implied) is or will be made. All and any such responsibility or liability is expressly disclaimed by CEPI.

- CEPI will not in any circumstances be liable for any costs, expenditure, work or effort incurred by a respondent in carrying out enquiries in relation to, proceeding with, or participating in, this CfP.

- CEPI reserves the right to:
  - withdraw or change the requirements of this CfP from time to time without giving notice;
  - seek clarification or documents in respect of proposals;
  - disqualify any respondent that does not submit a proposal in accordance with the instructions in this CfP;
  - disqualify any respondent that makes any misrepresentation in relation to its proposal; and
  - choose not to make any award, not enter into an agreement, or may make only a a partial award as a result of the CfP.

- CEPI will retain the intellectual property rights in the published CfP materials. Respondents will retain ownership of all intellectual property rights contained in their proposal. By submitting a proposal, respondents agree to grant to CEPI a non-exclusive, worldwide, royalty-free license to use, reproduce, and analyse the submission for the purposes of evaluating proposals and improving our CfP process, including enhancing our internal systems and tools.

- Respondents should note that CEPI is permitted to disclose the confidential information contained within a proposal to:
  - third parties who may be involved in the assessment of the proposals; and
  - CEPI's investors to facilitate oversight and monitoring over CEPI's activities, provided that they are bound by appropriate confidentiality obligations.

- Any personal data included in a proposal shall be processed by CEPI in accordance with CEPI 'External Privacy Notice' found here: https://cepi.net/cepi-external-privacy-notice

8. Animal Welfare and Well-Being

The National Centre for the Replacement, Refinement & Reduction of Animals in Research (NC3Rs) is reviewing proposals to ensure that animal welfare standards are genuinely high and exceed the legal minima, local issues relating to poor practice are addressed, and overseas work is conducted to standards equivalent to those in the UK (https://www.nc3rs.org.uk/integrating-3rs-publicly-fundedresearch).

In this Call for Proposal, the NC3Rs will only evaluate proposals entering due diligence/contracting processes and that include projects involving the use of animals highlighted by NC3R (i.e., non-human primates (NHPs), cattle, dogs, cats, pigs, and equines). Based on the review, the NC3Rs will provide recommendations to CEPI, including advice on opportunities to implement the 3Rs, raise specific animal welfare concerns, highlight where good practice is not being adopted, and monitor the implementation of specific policies and guidance. This advice will be used during decisions on funding and when drafting the terms and conditions of grant awards.

To prepare your proposal for this review process, please consider the following guidelines:

- NC3Rs Guidelines: Non-human primate accommodation, care, and use
- Responsibility in the Use of Animals in Bioscience Research, which applies to use of any vertebrate species.
- ARRIVE Guidelines on the reporting of in vivo studies.

Implementation of the principles in these guidelines is a condition of receiving funds from CEPI.

Other information that will be considered during the review can be found on the NC3Rs website:

- Directive 2010/63/EU
- Scientific literature on applying the 3Rs in drug development.
- NC3Rs resources on best practice – including those on improving non-human primate welfare (such as the Macaque Website).

In addition, the NC3Rs has produced a PDF presentation to remind applicants of the required animal welfare standards and to provide advice on choosing appropriate contractors. Applicants contracting out animal research or collaborating with other laboratories (regardless of species) are advised to view the presentation well in advance of submitting their application.

9. Technical and administrative questions

Technical and administrative questions about this Call for Proposal should be directed to innovations.cfp@cepi.net.