

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for Call for Proposals (CFPs)

Q1. Has the ATscale informed the governments of the selected countries about their selection and next steps?

A1. Yes, ATscale held a virtual kick-off call to update the government counterpart about the grant cycles, including grant amounts, timelines, the process of selecting implementing partners through Call for Proposals, and the country's missions.

Q2. What is the overall scope of the grant for programme implementation?

A2. The overall scope of the funding that will be supported in the country covers two key areas: 1) scale-up integrated vision, hearing, and physical mobility screening and eyeglasses, hearing aids, and mobility aids provision to school-age children and 2) create a favorable environment for wider AT sector development. Details are provided below:

1. Scale-up integrated screening for eye, ear, and physical mobility and provision of eyeglasses, hearing aids, and mobility aids in school-age children - 85% to 90% of grant:

The funding focuses on supporting the effective expansion of eye, ear, and physical mobility screening and provision of eyeglasses, hearing aids and mobility aids interventions into government-led programmes. The proposed approaches should be government-owned, based on proven models, and integrated into public health, social, and education systems that leverage the strengths of both the public and private sectors. While it is not anticipated that full-blown nationwide scale-up can be achieved within this three-year funding envelope, the countries should be able to demonstrate quick outcomes in the selected geography for scale-up, ideally from year 1, and the clear pathway to achieve national scale-up in the medium term based on the lessons learned and increased government ownership in due course.

2. Creating a favourable environment for AT - 10% to 15% of grant: The funding also aims to build a conducive environment in the selected countries for wider AT investments. Therefore, a small part of the grant can also go towards creating a favourable environment in the country through key strategic activities focused on the wider AT ecosystem. This may range from conducting national AT assessments, a priority assistive product list, product standards and specifications, investment cases, and national AT procurement guidelines. It may also include developing a costed national AT strategic plan to address policy gaps, advocacy and awareness raising campaigns, etc., and can be implemented over three years.

Q3. What elements of screening and provision of eyeglasses, hearing aids, and mobility aids will the grant cover?

A3. Elements covered by the grant may include addressing enabling ecosystem barriers through interventions aiming at, for example, raising awareness at political and governance levels, strengthening policy and financing mechanisms, strengthening human resource capacity, service provision, supply chain (including procurement of eyeglasses, hearing aids, mobility aids, diagnostic equipment, and/or screening devices), data and information systems, etc.

Q4. Who are the expected beneficiaries of the grant?

A4. The expected beneficiaries of the grant will be school-age children (5-18 years of age). However, ATscale is flexible with the age group (5-18 years) as the formal school entry or exit age could vary from country to country.

Q5. Who are the direct and indirect beneficiaries of the grant?

A5. The direct beneficiaries are school-age children in and out of school screened through the programme, irrespective of screening outcomes. The programme should cover both mainstream and special needs schools. The indirect beneficiaries include family members or caregivers of the children referred for further diagnosis after screening, receiving eyeglasses and/or hearing aids, mobility aids, providers, community health workers, other personnel trained, and people reached through advocacy and awareness generation activities or campaigns under the program. More details will be provided during the agreement stage.

Q6. How to reach out-of-school children?

A6. ATscale acknowledges varied contexts across countries and believes in an evidence-based bottom-up approach to finding the best solution for reaching out-of-school children. Common approaches to reach out-of-school children include community outreach programmes, integration with other community-based health and nutrition programmes for children, peer education and support groups, home visits, mobile care, telehealth, door-to-door campaigns, partnerships with community leaders and community-based organizations, etc.

Q7. How will funding be channeled to the government, and what role will the non-government implementing partner play?

A7. Funding will be channeled to the government through the non-government implementing partner, which could be an NGO, a UN agency, or a consortium. The selected

implemented partner(s) will facilitate the disbursement and management of funds while working closely with the government to execute programs and initiatives effectively.

Q8. What is the process for selecting an implementing partner, and how will the government be involved?

A8. Since the ATscale partnership is hosted by the United Nations Office of Project Services (UNOPS), ATscale is mandated to follow UNOPS policies. Implementing partners will be selected through a competitive call for proposals (CFP). Interested partners will submit proposals to ATscale, and a government focal point from the respective country will be involved in the evaluation process. This ensures alignment with the country's priorities and consultations with relevant stakeholders.

Q9. What role is expected of the government in guiding partners interested in responding to the CFP?

A9. In the CFP stage, the government is expected to lead and provide guidance to all interested partners regarding government priorities and interventions designed based on the country's context. This involves sharing insights, needs assessments, and strategic directions to ensure that proposed interventions align with national goals and strategies.

Q10. How will the government lead the programme implementation throughout the grant cycle?

A10. The government is expected to lead the programme implementation through the support of the selected implementing partner(s). The government will assign a focal point to coordinate with in-country partners and ATscale. A multi-sectoral and inter-ministerial committee is expected to be set up with all relevant partners (NGOs, UN agencies, and OPDs), with the government leading the committee. The implementing partner will play a secretariat role for the committee. The committee will provide strategic directions, oversee the programme implementation and be responsible for decision-making about the programme.

Q11. What is the duration of the grant cycle, and what factors will determine its continuation beyond three years?

A11. The initial grant cycle spans three years. Continued support beyond the initial grant cycle may be possible, but it is contingent upon the country's performance and available resources at ATscale. Factors such as the effectiveness of interventions and the country's progress will influence the decision to extend support beyond the initial grant cycle.

Q12. How will co-financing or in-kind contributions be calculated and reported?

A12. For the purpose of estimating co-financing and in-kind contributions, ATscale will look at the elements of ‘additionality’ to the financial and/or in-kind contributions. The government may commit to additional co-financing and/or in-kind resources beyond existing/ongoing partner investments by sources such as United Nations agencies, international NGOs, and other development partners. Since the domestic budget allocation mechanism differs across countries, the actual reporting of co-financing and in-kind contributions should be discussed with the government focal point.

Q13. How should the applicant procure eyeglasses, hearing aids, and mobility aids and how should the budget be estimated?

A13. Multiple channels may be used to procure eyeglasses, hearing aids, and mobility aids. Regardless of the procurement channel, the assistive products must meet the International Organization for Standardisation quality standards or their equivalent.

Based on procurement resources available, such as the UNICEF Supply Catalogue, the average cost of hearing aids should not exceed USD 150 per child (based on an average of 1.5 hearing aids per child). Similarly, the average cost of eyeglasses should not exceed USD 20 per child (based on an average of 1.5 eyeglasses per child). This does not include the cost of shipment, storage, and distribution.

Through global procurement and market-shaping mechanisms, UNICEF has already signed long-term agreements with hearing aid suppliers. A similar initiative is also underway for eyeglasses, screening, and diagnostic hearing equipment. These long-term agreements will likely be in place by February 2025 for the interested countries to use. ATscale also allows local procurement, providing that the procured assistive products meet the quality and cost criteria described above.

Q14. Are there other partners or resources available to support such initiatives?

A14. When seeking support for additional resources or procuring eyeglasses and hearing aids, applicants should thoroughly research and identify potential partner organizations aligned with the government and programme’s priorities. Applicants may leverage ATscale’s network (e.g., UNICEF for supply catalogue, Vision Catalyst Fund for eyeglasses donations, Peek Vision for information management, etc.) and multilateral agencies (development banks, international institutional donors), other regional and local resources (foundations, corporates) available in the countries. These opportunities may vary from country to country. If found useful, ATscale suggests proactively connecting with partners to understand the potential for collaborations and sharing knowledge and expertise as relevant to the interest of the programme.

Q15. In addition to the virtual session, is it possible to speak with someone at ATscale in the country?

A15. ATscale is discussing the mission details with the governments of the selected countries. ATscale has proposed to the governments that an information session be held for all related partners during the mission. If interested, this offers an opportunity for the applicants to meet ATscale representatives in the country and ask any queries related to CFPs. For more information, please reach out to the country's government. If you want to know the details of the government focal point, please contact us bids@atscalepartnership.org.