

Call for Expressions of Interest “Safer Childbirth Cities” Initiative to Support Locally Created Solutions to Improve Maternal Health and Reduce Disparities

Merck for Mothers is launching a new multi-city initiative to reduce maternal mortality, improve health outcomes and narrow disparities in maternal health, and is seeking Expressions of Interest from eligible city-based organizations across the country. The Safer Childbirth Cities initiative will support U.S. cities with a high burden of maternal mortality and morbidity to implement evidence-informed interventions and women-centric, innovative approaches to reverse the country’s increase in pregnancy and childbirth-related deaths and life-threatening complications.

Expressions of Interest are due Wednesday, October 31, 2018. In November, *Merck for Mothers* will select a limited number of applicants to submit a full proposal to the Safer Childbirth Cities initiative in early 2019. *Merck for Mothers* expects to award a number of grants between \$500,000 and \$1 million in the first half of 2019.

Our vision is that these grants will catalyze multi-sectoral partnerships and additional investment in making these cities safer and more equitable places to give birth.

Background

Merck for Mothers is a \$500 million initiative to improve the health and well-being of women during pregnancy and childbirth. Merck is applying its business and scientific expertise to the challenge of ending preventable maternal deaths and is working in more than 30 countries around the world, including the United States. Our approach is to collaborate with partners to design innovative models to improve maternal health outcomes, test their effectiveness and feasibility and, if successful, advocate for them to be scaled.

The U.S. is one of the only high-income countries where maternal mortality is on the rise. In addition, racial disparities in maternal health outcomes are stark and persistent. A Black woman is three-four times more likely to die from a pregnancy or childbirth complication than a White woman. *Merck for Mothers* is taking a focused, yet comprehensive approach to reduce maternal mortality and morbidity in the U.S. and tackle these persistent racial disparities.

For the past few years, we have been [catalyzing efforts to improve maternal health](#) by addressing the leading contributors to maternal mortality: poor data on why women are dying; inconsistent clinical responses to obstetric emergencies; the rise in chronic conditions, including obesity, hypertension and diabetes; and limited awareness of the problem. We are working at the policy, hospital and community level to improve access to quality maternity care.

Safer Childbirth Cities Initiative

Merck for Mothers seeks to reduce maternal mortality and improve maternal health outcomes by supporting cities to become models for women to have a healthy pregnancy and safe childbirth. The goal of the Safer Childbirth Cities initiative is to foster locally responsive solutions that help high-need cities become safer – and more equitable – places to give birth. Selected city-based organizations will develop and implement tailored solutions to address challenges to reducing maternal mortality and morbidity in their communities.

We envision that each city will mobilize a partnership or coalition of women’s health advocates, community leaders, public health officials, hospital administrators, community-based health providers and others to improve surveillance, clinical care, address social determinants of health and provide community-based support for all pregnant women and new mothers. Proposed projects will help cities establish specific maternal health goals based on identified community needs, advance evidence-informed solutions to meet these goals and track progress.

Expressions of Interest

Merck for Mothers is seeking brief Expressions of Interest from city-based organizations to address maternal mortality and morbidity in their municipality.

We are interested in supporting locally-based organizations that:

- Are working in a city confronting a significant and documented maternal health challenge
- Are actively engaged in efforts to improve maternal health
- Have a track record in working across sectors to address public health problems
- Have experience and mechanisms in place for integrating community voices and solutions into policies and programs
- Are targeting efforts to reduce disparities in maternal health outcomes and address the social determinants of health.

Please prepare a clear, concise response (three pages maximum) that answers the following questions:

1. What are the characteristics of the maternal mortality and morbidity problem in your community?
2. What has your city done to date to reduce maternal mortality and morbidity?
3. Which organizations do you expect to involve to make your city a model for healthy pregnancy and safe childbirth. Please describe your current relationship with these organizations and how you would collaborate with them to improve maternal health?
4. What activities would you prioritize for *Merck for Mothers* funding?
5. What makes your organization and your city a strong candidate to receive a Safer Childbirth Cities grant?

Following the review of Expressions of Interest, *Merck for Mothers* will identify a group of finalists and invite them to submit a full proposal.

Eligible Organizations

The following activities and organizations (including partner organizations) are not eligible for *Merck for Mothers* funding support:

- Activities or organizations that directly influence or advance Merck's business (commercial) or marketing interests, including purchase/influence of purchase of Merck products
- Political organizations, campaigns and activities
- Engagement/payments of government officials and city agencies (which in many cases could include hospital employees in government-run facilities)
- Payments/incentives/benefits going to health care providers
- Capital expenses, including construction and renovation of facilities owned by the government, and endowments. This includes computers. It also includes any equipment with a life beyond the life of the project
- Purchase of supplies or equipment unrelated to this project or program
- Payment of staff salaries or other costs not involved in this project or program
- Organizations that discriminate on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, religion, age, national origin, veteran's status or disability
- Funding of recipient's activities may not constitute more than fifty percent (50%) of the recipient's total funding in any given calendar year

Submission of Expressions of Interest

Applicants should submit Expressions of Interest via email to CSTMFORMOTHERS@merck.com by **October 31, 2018**. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that files are complete and transmitted by the deadline. The applicant bears full responsibility for data errors or omissions.

Review & Notification Process

A selection committee will review all Expressions of Interest and notify applicants in **November 2018**.

After Expressions of Interest are reviewed, selected organizations will be invited to submit a full proposal. Full proposals will be due **January 14, 2019**.

Issuance of this call for expressions of interest does not constitute an award commitment on the part of *Merck for Mothers*, nor does it commit to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of applications. Further, *Merck for Mothers* reserves the right to reject any or all applications received.

Summary of Key Dates

Expressions of Interest Call Issued	October 1, 2018
Expressions of Interest Due	October 31, 2018
Notification for Invitation to Submit a Full Proposal	November 2018
Full Proposals Due	January 14, 2019

[Responses to Frequently Asked Questions](#)