

With You, Every Step of the Way

Research Contribution: Request for Proposals (RFP)

Issued by: Medela

Overview

Medela advances maternal and infant health by turning science into care. We are committed to supporting parents and clinicians along their breastfeeding journey by eliminating barriers and increasing access to breast milk, lactation education, and breastfeeding-supporting products globally. Through Medela Cares, our CSR platform, we amplify our efforts in improving long-term health and societal impact through partnerships with like-minded organizations. These are research groups, health institutions, non-profit organizations and breastfeeding advocates around the world that share our goals focusing on education, training, and advocacy in maternal and neonatal care, combatting maternal and infant mortality and morbidity.

Purpose

Across many settings, breastfeeding support is fragmented and uneven, with the steepest gaps in underserved communities. Families face limited access to trained support, inconsistent care pathways across pregnancy–postpartum–return to work, workplace and policy barriers, and under-resourced data systems. These gaps in breastfeeding care and support contribute to poorer maternal and infant health outcomes.

Research shows that breastfeeding significantly lowers risks of morbidity and mortality for both infants and mothers by providing crucial nutrients and antibodies, boosting infant immune systems, aiding postpartum recovery, and reducing long-term risks of chronic diseases. Early initiation of breastfeeding within the first hour of birth is vital for reducing newborn mortality and infection, with non-breastfed infants having substantially higher risks of death from diarrhea and other infections.

To support community-based initiatives that enhance breastfeeding outcomes while improving maternal and infant mortality and morbidity, Medela is inviting research project and program proposals that focus on real-world, evidence-based interventions that strengthen breastfeeding ecosystems within diverse communities.

This RFP will fund community-anchored research and implementation projects that directly close those gaps by:

- Producing actionable evidence (clear baselines, outcomes, and equity measures);
- Building sustainable support systems (e.g., workforce capacity, referral pathways, digital/clinic–community tools, and workplace enablers);
- Delivering measurable improvements in breastfeeding initiation and duration, and in timely access to skilled lactation care;
- Codifying and sharing what works so it can be replicated and sustained.

Aligned with Medela Cares (Society pillar) and the campaign *With You, Every Step of the Way*, we will prioritize proposals that strengthen local capacity, embed equity by design, and show a credible path to scale and durability beyond the project period.

The Award

Investing in the Future, together step by step: Medela will provide a research contribution of up to CHF 20,000 for a project or program targeting community-based breastfeeding support, innovation or research. In the case of multiple awardees, the funding may be shared.

Eligibility Information

Proposals are welcome from:

- Community-based (non-profit) organizations
- Public health institutions with a strong community focus.
- Researchers, clinicians, and breastfeeding advocates working in community (non-profit) settings

Eligible applications should demonstrate:

- Strong relevance to breastfeeding/human lactation support, also to fight maternal and infant mortality and morbidity
- High potential for a scalable and sustainable implementation of the outcomes well into the future.
- Goals that align with Medela's mission and focus on improving health outcomes through advancing human milk and lactation research and practice
- Local involvement, with main operating offices based in the community served and, ideally, community members directly engaged in the project
- Demonstrated evidence by principal investigator of prior contributions and a track record of service in the field of lactation support, innovation, or research

Exclusions: While recognized as vital, humanitarian aid programs will not be eligible, nor will the contribution be used for 'matching' or 'topping-up' grants for programs already in place. Preference will be given to organizations that function in locations where Medela serves and operates, specifically Europe, Greater China, North America. However, proposals from other regions may be considered if they meet the outlined criteria and demonstrate strong impact.

Key Dates

Campaign Kick-off & RFP Launch | October 27, 2025

Web announcements/LinkedIn/Social Announcements | from October 27, 2025

Announcement EU Symposium | November 13 & 14

Proposal Submission Deadline | December 19, 2025,

Jury Review Period | December 19 – January 31, 2026 |

Notification of Award | February 2026

Project Start | February 2026 |

Project Completion & Final Report Due | December 2026

Dissemination: During the evaluation process, throughout the project period, and beyond, Medela will showcase the funded project(s) via global campaign activations, including PR, and on Medela-owned channels.

Funding Overview

Total Grant Amount: CHF 20,000 (approx. USD \$25,000)

Funding source: Medela AG

All contributions are awarded at Medela's sole discretion, based on an independent internal decision-making process informed by the jury's advisory evaluation.

Proposal Requirements

Applications should include:

1. Project summary (300 words max)
2. Community context & needs assessment
3. Project objectives & methodology
4. Sustainability strategy
5. Stakeholder engagement plan
6. Evaluation framework
7. Budget & timeline
8. Applicant CVs and organizational background

Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be reviewed and evaluated by a voluntary expert jury of maternal, lactation and public health professionals and scored based on:

- Relevance to theme and real-world breastfeeding challenges
- Community impact and inclusion
- Innovation and long-term impact
- Scientific rigor and evaluability
- Alignment with Medela's mission and values

The expert jury will review and score all eligible proposals according to the outlined criteria. The jury serves in an advisory capacity only and does not make funding decisions.

Medela retains sole and independent authority over all final selections and grant allocations, taking into consideration the jury's input, the project's relevance to the identified needs, and its alignment with Medela's mission and values.

Jury Composition

To reflect breastfeeding advocacy and a support ecosystem, a diverse, equity-centered panel of 5–7 members is suggested with both lived and professional expertise, ideally including:

The jury's role is strictly advisory. While their expertise guides the review and scoring process, all final funding decisions rest solely with Medela.

- Researchers/clinicians in maternal and neonatal health
- Community-based breastfeeding advocates
- Public health or NGO representatives
- Community leaders/representatives with lived experience

**Submission Instructions**

All proposals must be submitted electronically here: medicalaffairsglobal@medela.com

Your idea could be the next step in enhancing breastfeeding outcomes and building lasting support systems for families – reducing maternal and infant malnutrition and mortality. Because every step forward, no matter how small, creates lasting impact

Learn more about the campaign here: medela.com/EveryStep