



## **H3Africa Consortium Affiliate Membership**

### **Policy Guideline**

#### **Background**

H3Africa provides a forum for trans-continental biomedical and genomic research initiatives that aim to provide significant insights into improved health for Africans. Through its combined resources, generated by non-communicable and infectious disease research, H3Africa has the ability to explore the rich biological, cultural and behavioral diversity across the continent.

The vision of H3Africa is to create and support a pan-continental network of laboratories, biorepositories and most importantly, a critical mass of skilled researchers to apply leading-edge research to the study of the complex interplay between environmental and genetic factors that determine disease susceptibility and drug responses in African populations. Data generated from this effort is intended to inform strategies and policies to address health inequities and ultimately lead to health benefits in Africa and the world.

A formal affiliate membership structure is necessary to ensure that researchers and research groups, whose goals align with H3Africa, can join forces to promote biomedical research and the translation of findings to a clinical setting on the continent. Affiliate membership is open to academic, research, for-profit and non-profit organizations, and industrial partnerships interested in forming robust collaborations to facilitate research, sharing of resources and strengthening of research capacity, in support of the Consortium. Each application will be evaluated based on the criteria below. All members of H3Africa, including its affiliates, are held accountable for rigor in the conduct of research and to the ethical principles of beneficence, non-maleficence, and respect for autonomy through its policies and guidelines.

#### **Overview Summary:**

The procedure for obtaining affiliate membership will include:

- I. Completion of an application form by the individual or group for affiliate membership (AM) to the H3Africa Consortium. Applicants should indicate their research interests and note which H3Africa working groups (WGs) they wish to join. Each applicant needs to choose to be actively involved in at least one of the H3A WGs that aligns with the nature of the contribution they plan to make to the Consortium.
- II. Review of the application will be done by the AM Sub-Committee, that reports to the SC. This review process is expected to take no more than 60 days and will be facilitated by the Coordinating Center (CC). The AM Sub-Committee could potentially include prior and current Chairs and Co-Chairs of the H3Africa Steering Committee (SC) and WGs.

- III. WG Affiliate Membership: In the application process, AM applicants will need to choose at least one WG with which they wish to be affiliated. Once they are accepted as AM they will also have an opportunity to join other WGs.
- IV. Once a decision has been made regarding acceptance, rejection or deferral of an application for membership, the SC will be informed at the next scheduled meeting. An acceptance/rejection letter or a letter requesting additional information will be sent to the AM applicant by the CC.
- V. Any issues or concerns that arise with an AM, should be brought to the attention of the AM Sub-Committee.

### **Affiliate Membership (AM) Description**

H3Africa affiliate members will become formally integrated into the H3Africa Consortium and the WGs they join and will be held accountable to high research standards and an inclusive philosophy to work together to raise the quality of genomics research in Africa. Being an affiliate member of H3Africa means that the AM adds value to the work of the Consortium and will have potential collaborative opportunities, which could include access to diverse phenotypic/clinical data and access to high quality biospecimens for future research. Such research must be in line with the informed consent provided by the participants and the agreements with the IRBs who approved the studies. For example, it could lead to the conduct of discovery and replication studies to identify genetic associations in African populations.

Affiliate members will not become members of the H3A Steering Committee and will not have voting rights. They are encouraged to join H3A Consortium meetings, however this will be at their own cost. They would use the H3Africa policies and mechanisms to apply for access to data and are strongly encouraged to work collaboratively with other H3Africa members. They will need to adhere to the H3Africa Publications Policy regarding authorship.

Affiliate members are expected to contribute meaningfully to advancing the goals of H3Africa. This can come in different forms and may include some of the following elements:

1. Research resources that complement the H3Africa studies and datasets
2. Analytical skills that are rare or absent among the H3Africa Consortium members
3. Novel analysis methods appropriate for African population data
4. Project proposals for studies to enhance the research and impact of H3Africa
5. Financial support to facilitate training and other research activities to help build genomic research capacity on the continent

Benefits of membership:

- Belonging to a pan-African genomics research initiative
- Access to collaboration opportunities within the H3Africa Consortium
- An opportunity to leverage resources (data and samples) to support the sustainability of evidence-based biomedical research in Africa
- Access to Consortium courses, tools and guidelines to enhance skills and capabilities

The role of affiliate members in promoting the objectives of the H3Africa Consortium will be assessed from time to time. This will result in a decision on renewal of affiliate membership with the H3Africa Consortium.

### **Criteria for Participation**

Affiliate member entry criteria will vary depending on the group/individual seeking membership and there are different categories of AMs, determined by their proposed contribution.

**Table 1: Affiliate Member Categories and Criteria**

Affiliate member category	Criteria
Research Group	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Actively working on genomic related research in African populations (or populations of African origin)</li> <li>2. Have a track record in genomics and/or commitment to collaboration and training component to their research</li> <li>3. Provide a description of the resources they could contribute Including: Study cohorts and associated data and samples, training programs, equipment platforms, analysis tools, etc.</li> </ol>
Individual Researcher	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Indicate how their skills will advance the H3Africa Consortium and African genomic research</li> <li>2. Demonstrated expertise and experience in those skills</li> </ol>
Clinical affiliate	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provide access to patient groups through their clinics, and work together on funding applications to support future genomic studies</li> <li>2. Willingness to participate in grant writing and to facilitate research data collection and provide intellectual inputs</li> <li>3. Able to obtain the required IRB approvals, and other necessary approvals to participate in research</li> </ol>
Non-academic organization	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Indicate the purpose of their organization and how it would support and advance the core objectives of H3Africa</li> </ol>
Private Industry	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Demonstrate how their research would benefit African researchers/patients</li> <li>2. Declare their intent with regard to being AM (pre-competitive research, product development, patent application)</li> </ol>

## **Affiliate Membership (AM) Responsibilities**

Affiliate Members are required to commit in writing to the following:

- Adherence to the policies and guidelines of the H3Africa Consortium (including data access and use agreements)
- Agree to share their data and biospecimens (under specific quality metrics) as outlined in the H3Africa Consortium Data Sharing, Access, and Release Policy
- Agree to be active participants in H3Africa Consortium activities and attend virtual meetings regularly and in-person meetings when possible
- Maintain confidentiality of information prior to publication
- Acknowledge the H3Africa Consortium in an appropriate manner in presentations, grant applications and publications
- Protect the privacy and dignity of the research participants (being mindful of potential stigmatization)
- Ensure that the name and reputation of H3Africa is not brought into disrepute

It should be noted that being an AM does not indicate automatic access to all funding opportunities and resources of the H3Africa Consortium. On a case-by-case basis, each opportunity for access to resources will clearly indicate eligibility criteria.

## **Intellectual Property and Authorship**

### **Intellectual Property:**

Intellectual property should be developed and used in a way that maximizes global health benefit, and should specifically indicate benefit to Africa and Africans. All members of the H3Africa Consortium will seek to manage intellectual property and develop appropriate licensing terms in a way that helps to ensure equitable access to resulting health products and technology.

### **Authorship:**

Authorship on joint papers under the H3Africa Consortium will be consistent with H3Africa Publication Policy and the International Committee of Medical Journals Editors (ICMJE) recommendations.

## **Affiliate Application Process**

To become an AM of the H3Africa Consortium and a WG, an electronic application form should be completed providing information on the nature of the proposed contribution of the AM. The application form should be submitted to the H3Africa CC where it will be processed and submitted for review by the AM Sub-Committee. Once approved, an affiliate membership agreement will be entered into between the applicant and the H3Africa Consortium.

Affiliate Application Form:

1. Identify the affiliate membership category (see Table 1)
2. Provide a concise summary of the contribution to the H3Africa Consortium, including the intended research to be conducted
3. Indicate which WGs you wish to join (Drop down menu with descriptions of the working groups and free text to indicate how the AM will contribute to the objectives of the WG)

4. Provide evidence that proposed projects are consistent with participants' informed consent and that the research has received appropriate IRB approvals
5. Provide evidence of funding (if appropriate), in the form of a statement from an authorized Institutional Official stating that funds are available to conduct the proposed research
6. Provide statements of agreement to meet affiliate membership responsibilities