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VaxTrac Receives \$100,000 Grand Challenges Explorations Grant for Innovative Global Health Research

VaxTrac announced today that it has received a US\$100,000 Grand Challenges Explorations grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The grant will support an innovative global health research project conducted by Mark Thomas, Executive Director titled “VaxTrac Pilot Program 1 Narnaul, India.”

VaxTrac’s project is one of 65 grants announced by the Gates Foundation in the fifth funding round of [Grand Challenges Explorations](#), an initiative to help scientists around the world explore bold and largely unproven ways to improve health in developing countries. The grants were provided to scientists in 16 countries on 5 continents.

To receive funding, Mark Thomas showed in a two-page application how VaxTrac’s idea falls outside current scientific paradigms and might lead to significant advances in global health. The initiative is highly competitive, receiving more than 2,400 proposals in this round.

Every year 2.5 million children die from diseases that could have been easily prevented with the proper delivery of safe and affordable vaccines. In some regions as much as 50% of vaccines purchased never reach the children in need. This is caused by the poor vaccine distribution network and the ineffective tracking and reporting system.

VaxTrac employs low-cost netbook computers outfitted with fingerprint scanners. When a child is immunized, their fingerprints are scanned and a key representing their biometric information is stored in a database. On subsequent visits, the child’s finger serves as the key to their immunization record. VaxTrac helps control waste in vaccine distribution by dramatically reducing the incidence of redundant vaccinations associated with lost paper vaccine cards.

“We needed a system that would permanently link each child to their immunization record,” says Heath Gross, VaxTrac Founder. “I considered a number of biometric solutions but in the end the one that made the most sense was fingerprints.”

“These are bold ideas from innovative thinkers, which is exactly what we need in global health research right now,” said Dr. Tachi Yamada, president of the Gates Foundation’s [Global Health Program](#). “I’m excited to see some of these daring projects develop into



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life-saving breakthroughs for those who need them the most.”

About Grand Challenges Explorations

[Grand Challenges Explorations](#) is a five-year, \$100 million initiative of the Gates Foundation to promote innovation in global health. The program uses an agile, streamlined grant process – applications are limited to two pages, and preliminary data are not required. Proposals are reviewed and selected by a committee of foundation staff and external experts, and grant decisions are made within approximately three months of the close of the funding round.

The next round of Grand Challenges Explorations will open in March 2011. More information, including grant application instructions and a list of topics for which proposals will be accepted, will be available at www.grandchallenges.org/explorations.

VaxTrac is a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing developing countries with the technologies and services needed to maximize the effectiveness of their vaccination programs. VaxTrac was established in 2006 with the goal of improving vaccine coverage by leveraging biometric technologies in order to build a more effective immunization tracking registry. Today, the VaxTrac system is also being designed to enable real time vaccine supply management and vaccine strategy management tools. For more information visit www.vaxtrac.com or contact Heath Gross at hgross@vaxtrac.com.