***2023-2024* Interstellar Initiative**

**Application Guidelines**

***Aligning Young Stars of Science to Tackle the World's Most Critical Medical Challenges***

**Presented by The Japan Agency for Medical Research and Development and**

**The New York Academy of Sciences**

**Call for Applications**

The Japan Agency for Medical Research and Development (AMED) and the New York Academy of Sciences (NYAS) are inviting applications for the Interstellar Initiative.The Initiative aims to increase international and interdisciplinary collaboration uniting scientists within the early stages of their careers and catalyzing scientific advancement. Early Career Investigators (ECIs) worldwide are invited to apply for a competitive application review process.

The 2023-2024 Interstellar Initiative will address challenges in **basic research to elucidate the complex mechanisms of living organisms** for the benefit of all humankind. Research topics may include biological functions at all levels of analysis: for example, studies on genes and individual molecules, intracellular networks, intercellular associations in tissues and organs, and networks underlying the complex functions of entire organisms.

Up to thirty applicants will be selected and grouped into teams and asked to develop a research proposal, with guidance from mentors. All teams will consist of one member who belongs to a Japanese institution (Principal Investigator) and two members from different areas in the world.

Each team will receive a maximum funding 3 million JPY from AMED through the PI’s institution in Japan to further enhance their proposals. PIs will be responsible for managing the funding for the entire team.

**Background**

Collaboration is key to truly innovative scientific discoveries and advancement. The *Interstellar Initiative* connects ECIs with peers, in related but distinct disciplines, under the guidance of Mentors who are established scientists at the forefront of their respective academic fields. This is a remarkable opportunity for ECIs to: (i) receive expert guidance from leading senior scientists on the preparation of a compelling research proposal; (ii) network with exceptional researchers from around the world; and (iii) build international research collaborations.

**Eligibility**  
Applications are invited from ECIs who have backgrounds in the following broad categories:

1. **Biomedical Research**
2. **Life Sciences**
3. **Physical/Natural Sciences**
4. **Biotechnology/Analytical technology**

**Early Career Investigator applicants must**:

* Hold a doctoral degree or equivalent (PhD, DPhil, MD, DDS, DVM, etc.)
* Have obtained their last doctoral degree within the past 10 years\*
* Have been engaged in active research for 10 years or less since obtaining their doctoral degree or equivalent
* Hold an independent, tenure-track or equivalent faculty position at a university, private research institution, academic medical center, or national government laboratory
* Be proficient in speaking and writing in English for the purpose of professional science communication
* Have never participated in the Interstellar Initiative activities/workshops of the previous rounds.

*Note: Exceptions to these requirements may be made on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of the organizers. If you have questions about your eligibility, please contact* [interstellar@nyas.org](mailto:interstellar@nyas.org)*.*

*\*Extensions to this timeline will be made in certain cases such as of pause for family leave.*

The application includes a request for a short proposal as outlined below. In addition to application to the portal, applicants who belong to Japanese institutions should submit their application to the e-Rad portal (<https://www.e-rad.go.jp/en/>) as well.

**Proposal Guidelines**ECIs must prepare a proposal that addresses the following:

Identify a critical research question in basic research, highlighting its importance and impact, and propose a research plan for how your expertise can address this question, including how you hope to improve this proposal through participation in the *Interstellar Initiative*.

Proposals may not exceed 1000 words in length, must be in English, and must address the evaluation criteria outlined below. A supplementary figure may be included but is not required. The proposal should also include a few sentences defining the methodology, why the proposal is unique or different from existing research, and what will be known once there is an answer from the experiments.

**Evaluation Criteria:**

* + - * **Clarity:** There is a clear, well defined question. The aims are structured so that they answer a specific question.
      * **Scope**: The extent to which the proposed research question represents a challenge impacting the entire field, and not solely the interests of the applicant.
      * **Quality**: The extent to which the proposed research question is defended, and the research solution is valid and scientifically rigorous.
      * **Impact**: The extent to which the proposed research solution may influence the field.
      * **Novelty**: The extent to which the proposed research solution challenges existing paradigms and employs new methodologies or concepts.
      * **Promise**: Future prospects in the field and potential for further significant contributions to science.

**After Selection**

Successful applicants will participate in a virtual orientation in August and a three-day workshop in New York on September 13–15, 2023, where participants present the proposals developed within their teams under the guidance by mentors at the workshop.

Please note that if one of the eligibility requirements is no longer met at any point after selection until the end of March 2024, the successful applicant will be deemed ineligible and withdrawn from the Interstellar Initiative Program.

If a team member cannot be contacted for 14 days, they shall be deemed to have withdrawn from the Interstellar Initiative Program.

**Important Dates**

* April 3, 2023: The application period opens.
* May 22, 2023, 00:00 AMES?T (May 22, 2023, 13:00 PM JST): The application period closes.
* End of July 2023: Successful applicants will be notified.
* August 2023: Virtual Orientation/Networking session~~s~~ will be held.
* August-September, 2023: ECIs will be matched and grouped into teams.
* September 13-15, 2023: Interstellar Initiative workshop will be held in New York
* After the workshop, teams will continue to develop their research proposals with mentorship from senior scientists.

**Questions?**

Please email [interstellar@nyas.org](mailto:interstellar@nyas.org) with any questions.

**Interstellar Initiative ― Travel and Accommodation:**

Breakfast and lunch will be provided for the duration of the workshop. Eligible participants will receive:

* A 4-night stay at an Academy partner hotel for the September Workshop
* A $157.50 travel stipend for their transportation to and from airports and train stations for the September workshop.
* Reimbursement up to the maximum limits outlined below for economy class air travel (or train/car travel) and travel insurance for each workshop.

Airfare, Train fare, or Car Mileage/Parking Maximum Reimbursement Totals (includes travel insurance):

* From the Tri State Area (outside NYC) to NYC: Up to USD $ 168
* From East Coast USA to NYC: Up to USD $420
* From Middle USA to NYC: Up to USD $480
* From West Coast USA to NYC: Up to USD $ 630
* From Canada, Central/South America, Europe to NYC: Up to USD $880
* From Africa, Asia, Africa, Australia, Middle East to NYC: Up to USD $1,932
* From Japan: Up to USD $1,932

Please note that according to the Academy’s travel policy, participation in this workshop does not include travel reimbursements or accommodation for individuals who are local to metro New York City.