

Interstellar Initiative Beyond Supplementary Application Guidelines

Interstellar Initiative Beyond

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

Call Opens: May 10, 2024

Call Closes: July 5, 2024 (1:00pm Japan Standard Time)

The Japan Agency for Medical Research and Development (AMED) is inviting applications for the Interstellar Initiative Beyond. Joint applications are invited from Interstellar Initiative alumni: anyone who has ever participated in the Interstellar Initiative, co-presented by AMED and the New York Academy of Sciences. It is AMED's sincere hope that the partnerships established through Interstellar Initiative Beyond will lead to the development of long-term collaborative research programs that will be successful in competing for international grants (e.g., HFSP).

Background

Collaboration is key to truly innovative scientific discoveries and advancement. There is a critical need to support the intersection of ideas across international boundaries and disciplines, in particular among early career investigators (ECIs). The Interstellar Initiative has connected more than 300 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.–

Objectives

Specific objectives that underpin Interstellar Initiative Beyond are:

- To foster partnerships among Japan-based and international investigators in potential fields of collaboration
- To promote knowledge or methodology exchange
- To enable complementary access to facilities / resources / equipment
- To provide an opportunity for interdisciplinary research and catalyze further synergy

It is expected therefore that collaborative project applications will be jointly planned and submitted.

Scope

The 2024-2025 Interstellar Initiative Beyond will support research in areas of Frontier Science to tackle the most critical biomedical challenges. The scope of this call includes elucidation and understanding of mechanisms underlying diverse life phenomena which may lead to the resolution of critical biomedical challenges.

Funding

AMED will fund up to five collaborative research proposals jointly planned by Interstellar Initiative alumni until the end of the 2024 fiscal year (the end of March 2025) to intensify their collaborative activities. Each team will receive a maximum award of 2.0 million JPY (direct cost), which will be provided to teams via their Japan-based investigator (PI), under a contract between AMED and the institution to which the PI belongs. Funding will become usable upon conclusion of contract.

All funded researchers/research institutions are strongly recommended to conclude a Collaborative Research Agreement (hereinafter referred to as “CRA”) before their project starts, in order to ensure optimal understanding and coordination among the collaborating scientists working on each project. The CRA should, with due respect to the intellectual property and data handling policies of the researchers’ institutions, include the treatment of intellectual property rights, handling of confidential information, publication of research results, warranty and indemnification, and access to and transfer of relevant materials. AMED will not become involved in any conflicts that may arise within teams.

GUIDANCE FOR APPLICANTS

I. GENERAL GUIDANCE

AMED invites applications from teams of Interstellar Initiative alumni, which should be composed of two to four* alumni members and include a single Japan-based Principal Investigator (PI).

- The PI must work together with their alumni team members to complete the “Joint Application Form” in English. The Joint Application Form includes a request for a short proposal, as outlined in “III. PROPOSAL GUIDELINES”.
- The PI must electronically submit the Joint Application Form, on behalf of their team, to AMED through the online application system “e-Rad” (<https://www.e->

rad.go.jp/en/) by 1:00pm [Japan Standard Time] on July 5, 2024.

(*) NOTE: If strongly needed, it is acceptable to recruit a researcher from outside the alumni community as the fourth member. That personnel must meet the eligibility for the application to the interstellar initiative. If you have any question, please contact AMED before you apply.

II. ELIGIBILITY

Applications are invited from teams of Interstellar Initiative alumni (researchers who have previously participated in the Interstellar Initiative, co-presented by AMED and the New York Academy of Sciences until FY2023), each of which must hold an independent, tenure-track or equivalent faculty position at a non-profit academic institution: a university, private research institution or national government laboratory. Teams with 2 members from the same institution are not eligible to apply: different branches or campuses of the same university or organization are counted as the same affiliation. PIs belonging to Japanese institutions who have been awarded in the past Interstellar Initiative Beyond cannot apply for the 2024 round.

Interstellar Initiative Beyond requires that teams further develop their research proposals for application to larger grants offered for international, multidisciplinary team research (see Joint Application Form). Applications without future plans for submission to such international grants are not eligible. Successful applicants may receive mentoring with mentors a specified number of times during the contract period and submit progress reports.

III. PROPOSAL GUIDELINES

Teams of Interstellar Initiative alumni must prepare a proposal that addresses the following:

Identify a critical research question in a specific field, highlighting its importance and impact, and propose a research plan including how the members' expertise can address this question.

Proposals may not exceed 2000 words in length, must be in English, and must address the evaluation criteria outlined below. Supplementary figures may be included but are not required.

Evaluation Criteria:

- Fit to grant opportunity: The proposed research fits to the specific international grant opportunity that the team intends to apply for following Interstellar Initiative Beyond.
- Clarity: The proposed research addresses a clear, well-defined question, and aims are structured in order to answer this specific question.
- Scope: The proposed research question represents a genuine challenge impacting the research field and is not based solely on the interests of the applicants.
- Quality: The proposed research question is defended, and the proposed research activities are valid and scientifically rigorous.
- Synergy: The proposed research is synergistic in the sense that the collaboration offers unique opportunities for outcomes that could not be achieved by any individual alone.
- Impact: The proposed research will have a significant effect on the wider research field and beyond.
- Novelty: The proposed research challenges existing paradigms and employs new methodologies or concepts.
- Promise: The proposed research will lead to future prospects in the field with potential for further significant contributions to science.

Proposals should address the above criteria and include a few sentences defining the methodology, why the proposal is unique or different from existing research, and what are the expected outcomes and new knowledge/understanding to be derived from the research.

IV. ANNOUNCEMENT OF DECISION

Decision will be notified by AMED in August 2024.

V. REPORTING and EX-POST EVALUATION

After the program is completed, ex-post evaluation will be conducted by a review committee.

VI. CONTACT INFORMATION

For questions, please contact:

interstellar@amed.go.jp

Interstellar Initiative Secretariat

Department of International Strategy

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