

# **CALL FOR PROPOSALS 2025**

## **Japan-Switzerland**

## **AMED-SNSF ASPIRE**

### **Joint-Call for Proposals**

**A maximum of 3 joint projects will be funded.**

**Submission deadline: July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2025**

☞ for Japan-based applicants

- <https://www.e-rad.go.jp/>

☞ for Swiss-based applicants

link to the website (to be inserted once the website is ready)

# 1. CONTEXT AND OBJECTIVE OF THE CALL

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Japan and Switzerland invite proposals for research focusing on age-related changes in the immune system, particularly age-related inflammation (inflammaging). The aim of this joint research is to elucidate the mechanisms by which a reduced immune response due to ageing increases the risk of infectious and inflammatory diseases. Bringing together our efforts across borders is a promising strategy to enhance our impact. As such, the Japanese Agency for Medical Research and Development (AMED) and the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) are launching a call for proposals to support exceptional collaborative projects between Japan-based and Swiss-based researchers in the field of inflammaging related health research.

This joint initiative aims at delivering joint research funding for internationally competitive and innovative collaborative projects between researchers from Japan and Switzerland to promote transnational expertise synergy and mutualization. AMED will support this activity under the ASPIRE (Adopting Sustainable Partnerships for Innovative Research Ecosystem) fund.

These collaborative research projects will also allow the establishment and maintenance of sustainable partnerships between Japan and Switzerland, by supporting researcher's mobility between the 2 countries. **In fact, it is required that at least 33% of the total requested Japanese funding should be used for the purpose of building and expanding networks with the partner country and promoting mobility. The Swiss partners are encouraged to match this amount in their budget allocation.**

The objectives of the AMED-SNSF joint funding call are to:

- Support projects that are original in their subject and approaches, ambitious and feasible in their objectives;
- Support collaborative projects within new or pre-existing partnerships to foster sustainable research links between Japan and Switzerland;
- Promote exchange of scientists, knowledge and methodology between the two countries;
- Allow mutualization/access to facilities, resources and equipment available in the two countries;
- Foster cross-disciplinary research;
- Stimulate research on emerging and innovative topics to open new perspectives in inflammaging.

## 2. SCOPE OF THE CALL

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Call Topic: Mechanisms and Modulation of Inflammaging

This AMED-SNSF joint call focuses on investigating the causes and biological mechanisms of chronic, low-grade inflammation associated with ageing, commonly referred to as “inflammaging”. The collaboration seeks to elucidate how cellular, molecular and systemic factors contribute to inflammaging and to develop targeted interventions to mitigate its impact on age-related diseases. By fostering interdisciplinary collaborations, the project aims to identify novel therapeutic pathways to enhance healthy life expectancy and improve the quality of life of ageing populations.

This joint call is open to all areas of basic research and scientific fields involved in the investigation of inflammaging-related health research. It aims to support cutting-edge research projects that address challenges in inflammaging-related health research, with the goal of expanding our understanding of the biological mechanisms underlying inflammaging.

The call seeks to bridge cellular and molecular research with systemic health outcomes. The collaboration encourages comprehensive approaches to alleviating inflammaging by targeting specific pathways, including miRNA regulation, inflammasome activation, immune cell ageing and gut microbiota modulation. These approaches are expected to provide valuable insights into managing chronic inflammation to prevent or delay the onset of multiple age-related diseases, thereby improving life expectancy and quality of life.

## 3. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

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### 3.1 Teams' eligibility

The research project must be joint research by a research team comprising Japan-based and Swiss-based researchers.

The proposal must be jointly prepared by two applicants; one from the Japan-based team and one from the Swiss-based team.

The applicants are subjected to eligibility criteria of their respective funding agency.

Eligibility criteria in Japan: Please refer to “[AMED Call Supplemental Guidance](#)” for Japan-based teams.

Eligibility criteria in Switzerland: Applicants requesting funding must meet the eligibility requirements of the SNSF. The [SNSF Funding Regulations](#), the [General implementation regulations](#) and the [Regulations on Project Funding](#) are applicable or applicable mutatis mutandis where not stated otherwise. All applicants may only submit one proposal per call and must be based in Switzerland. Project partners as described in Article 11, Paragraph 2 of the [SNSF Funding Regulations](#) are not entitled to receive funds from the SNSF if their affiliated institution is located in Japan. Applicants can submit a proposal for a JRP under the present call even if they hold or have applied for

another SNSF grant. Moreover, grantees may submit proposals to all SNSF funding schemes during the funding period of a JRP. In either case, substantial thematic overlaps must be avoided, and applicants must be in a position to make substantial contributions to each of the research projects (cf. Article 17 of the [SNSF Funding Regulations](#)). Please note that the present call is not in conflict with the restrictions applicable to the SNSF's national project funding in accordance with Article 13 of the [Regulations on Project Funding](#).

**Non-compliance with the eligibility rules will lead to the rejection of the entire proposal without further review:**

- Each unique project must involve at least two applicants, one Japan-based and one Swiss-based, responsible for the research management and for all the communications with the respective funding agency.
- Only collaborative Japan-Switzerland projects will be funded.
- Proposals will be submitted by each corresponding applicant individually. The Japan-based applicant will submit the project to AMED (which is strictly identical to the project submitted to SNSF) and the Swiss-based applicant will submit the same project to SNSF. The teams will be funded by the funding agency from their country (AMED for Japan-based teams and SNSF for Swiss-based teams) and are therefore subject to respective eligibility rules.
- Researches not eligible for funding by AMED or SNSF (e.g. based outside Japan and Switzerland or not fundable according to the regulations of AMED or SNSF) may participate in projects as long as they secure their own funding for the project.
- Researchers from third countries, who make a partial contribution to the project without being responsible for the project can be included as project partners (in the Swiss part), but costs must correspond to no more than 20% of the overall Swiss budget. However, please note that researchers who are located in Japan cannot be included as project partners.
- Japanese applicants should refer to the "[AMED Call Supplemental Guidance](#)" containing all the specific AMED eligibility criteria and should contact their respective funding agency contact points for additional clarification.

## 4. PROJECT DURATION

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The duration of the projects should be of five (5) years for Japan-based researchers and four (4) years for Swiss-based researchers.

## 5. FINANCIAL AND LEGAL ISSUES

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### 5.1 Available Funding

This joint call for proposals aims at funding up to three Japanese-Swiss collaborative projects. AMED will support up to 345 million JPY direct cost for five (5) years (capped maximum value of 115 million JPY per project) and SNSF will support the Swiss components of the projects for up to CHF 625'000 per project (the total budget on the Swiss side is CHF 1'875'000). It is strongly recommended that this collaboration is mutually beneficial for Japan-based and Swiss-based researchers and that the research cost is comparable.

### 5.2 Funding model and funding details

Funding will be made available by AMED and SNSF according to their specific regulations, AMED will fund Japan-based teams and SNSF will fund Swiss-based teams.

Funding is granted for five (5) years **for Japan-based researchers and four (4) years for Swiss-based researchers**. Please refer to the “[AMED Call Supplemental Guidance](#)” for Japan-based applicants and “Guidelines for Swiss-based applicants” (see Annex) for the funding modalities and specific derogatory conditions.

Japan-based and Swiss-based PIs will get a separate funding contract/letter of grant from AMED or SNSF. In Switzerland, the decision letters will not be subject to appeal.

Depending on the time needed for the administration of granting funds to the respective national research groups, individual projects of a research team are expected to start by December 2025 on the Japanese side. The Swiss side has until March 2026 to begin working on the project. Project start dates are tentative and subject to change.

### 5.3 Grant payment scheme

Please refer to the “Administrative Instruction” for Japan-based PIs which can be found on the AMED website. The payments on the Swiss side will follow the usual SNSF procedure. In principle, the budgets for JRPs are transferred in annual instalments to the affiliated institution of the corresponding applicant in Switzerland at the beginning of a project year.

### 5.4 Funding for international partnership and mobility activities

At least 33% of the total eligible cost should be dedicated to international and mobility activities with the aim of building and extending a network between the Japan-based and the Swiss-based research community. The Japan-based PI will consult with the Swiss-based PI and coordinate to ensure that the mobility costs are at least 33% of the total costs of the Japanese budget. The Swiss side is encouraged to follow this approach. If the total mobility costs for both the Japanese and Swiss applicants do not reach 33% of the total budget for both countries, the Japanese applicant must cover the Swiss applicant’s mobility costs to meet the 33% requirement. These expenses can include the costs of organizing workshops/seminars etc, travel of researchers to the partner country and related expenses, personnel costs for staff involved in travel and exchanges, and research and other costs related to hosting researchers from the partner country. Please see table below for more detail of the costs chargeable in this 33%:

Main Item	Definition
Research costs (equipment/supplies) when hosting researchers	Research facilities/equipment/prototypes, software (ready-made goods), purchasing costs for reagents/materials/consumables for use in research
Travel costs for personal exchanges and joint meetings	Travel costs of Swiss research participants, travel costs for invited participants such as external experts
Personnel costs/ services costs for expatriates	Personnel costs for those traveling: personnel costs for researchers, etc., employed to conduct the relevant contracted research (including personnel costs for PIs) and related costs e.g. interpretation/translation
Other costs for international partnership and mobility activities	Costs for implementing the relevant contracted research other than the above. Examples: conference costs, equipment leasing costs, Equipment repair costs and subcontract costs.

Please refer to the “[AMED Call Supplemental Guidance](#)” for Japan-based applicants which can be found on the AMED website.

## 5.5 Collaboration research agreement, ownership of intellectual property rights, ethical issues

In order to ensure a proper conduct of the project activities, a Collaboration Research Agreement (CRA) must be signed between the partners. The research team is strongly encouraged to sign this CRA before the official project start date. The CRA must be signed no later than six (6) months after the official project start date. If CRA cannot be signed within 6 months, the PI should consult the Secretariat (see annex). The CRA must address the following issues: governance structure and decision-making process, responsibilities between the partners and subsequent liability, reporting, ownership and use of research results, intellectual property rights (IPR), publications, confidentiality.

Results and new IPR resulting from projects funded through the AMED-SNSF joint call will be owned by the relevant organizations or persons according to international/national/regional/institutional rules on IPR. If several participants have jointly carried out work generating new IPR, they shall agree amongst themselves (CRA) as to the allocation of ownership of IPR, taking into account their contributions to the creation of those IPR and national guidelines on IPR issues.

The results of the research project and IPR created should be disseminated and made available for a broad and most beneficial use according to the objective of the call.

AMED and SNSF shall have the right to use documents, information and results submitted by the research partners and/or to use the information and results for their own purposes, provided that the owners' rights are kept.

Any ethical issues, arising for instance if a research project includes a study on patient samples, should be addressed at the proposal submission stage, and subsequent authorisation presented at the latest, upon request by the funding organisations, before the process of grant negotiation.

## 5.6 Confidentiality of proposals

Proposals and any relating information shall be kept confidential by the evaluation committee members. Proposals shall not be used for any purpose other than the evaluation and subsequent monitoring of the funded projects.

Proposals will be required to include a publishable summary, which will clearly identify the main goals of the project. If a proposal is funded, this information as well as the name of the researcher, the funds accorded to the project, and the start- and end date of the project will be published on AMED and SNSF website. All other project details shall remain strictly confidential.

## 6. SUBMISSION OF JOINT PROPOSALS

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The AMED-SNSF joint call will be implemented through a one stage submission procedure. The co-developed proposals between Japan and Swiss-based teams should be written in English and submitted to both AMED and SNSF, to AMED through [e-rad](#) by the Japan-based PI and to SNSF through ["mySNF"](#) by the Swiss-based PI.

In preparing the proposals, applicants must strictly follow the rules described in this call text and comply with AMED and SNSF rules, by referring to ["AMED Call Supplemental Guidance"](#) found on AMED website for applicants based in Japan and to the "Guideline

for Swiss-based applicants” (see annex) for Swiss-based researchers. Applicants can reach their contact points for specific questions.

The proposals must be submitted to the electronic submission system no later than **July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2025 at 17h00 (JST) for Japan-based teams/ and July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2025 at 17h00 (Central European Summer Time, CEST) for Swiss-based teams**. Please note that failure to submit a valid proposal to both AMED and SNSF by the respective deadline will invalidate both submissions.

The decision on the results of the proposal evaluation meeting will be communicated to all (successful and unsuccessful) applicants in November 2025. Applicants will receive a summary of the proposal evaluation conclusions.

## 7. TIMELINE OF THE CALL

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<b>January 2025</b>	<b>Pre-announcement of the call</b>
<b>April 2025</b>	<b>Publication of the call and opening of the submission system for proposals</b>
<b>July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2025 at 17h00 (CEST) July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2025 at 17h00 (JST)</b>	<b>Deadline for proposal submission</b>
<b>November 2025 (TBD)</b>	<b>Communication of the funding decisions to the applicants</b>
<b>December 2025 (TBD)</b>	<b>Expected project start (also subject to national procedures) in Japan</b>
<b>March 2026 (TBD)</b>	<b>Expected project start in Switzerland</b>



## **8. ELIGIBILITY CHECK**

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All proposals will be examined to ensure that they meet the call's formal criteria (date of submission, countries representation, inclusion of all necessary information in English, adherence to the proposal forms).

After completion of the eligibility check, AMED and SNSF will reject proposals that are not considered eligible without further review. Applicants having submitted non-eligible proposals will be informed by AMED and SNSF respectively.

If the proposal is incomplete, or if the proposal is submitted only to AMED or SNSF, AMED and SNSF will not accept the proposal.

## **9. EVALUATION COMMITTEE**

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The Evaluation Committee will manage the evaluation of proposals and the final selection of research projects for funding, with the support of the Joint Call Secretariat (AMED and SNSF project and administrative officers).

Based on the ranking list established by the Evaluation Committee, AMED will take the final decision on the proposals to be funded and SNSF will follow AMED's decision.

The Evaluation Committee is a panel of internationally recognized scientific experts in charge of the review and evaluation of submitted proposals.

## 10. EVALUATION CRITERIA

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Proposals will be assessed according to the following criteria:

### **Scientific quality and vision of the project:**

- a. Excellence regarding the state of the science/the art;
- b. Relevance of the project with regard to the scope of the project;
- c. Positioning of the project at the national and international level;
- d. Relevance, novelty and originality of the project;
- e. Clarity of the objectives and overall plan of the project.

### **Japan-Switzerland Research Partnership:**

- a. Competitiveness and synergy of the Japan- Switzerland research collaboration in the field of basic inflammaging related research;
- b. Strength, sustainability and added value of the partnership;
- c. Clarity, appropriateness and feasibility of the governance arrangements and division of roles between Japan and Swiss-based research teams;
- d. Strategy to foster knowledge and methodology exchange between the partner teams;
- e. Plan for building and expanding the international collaboration in an equally beneficial manner to both Japan and Switzerland.

### **Principal Investigators and the research teams:**

- a. Quality and experience of the PIs regarding the project objectives. Young PI are encouraged to take responsibility in the submitted project;
- b. Experience of the PI in international research communities and with co-investigators from foreign institution;
- c. Excellence of the associated teams participating in the project and their team heads;
- d. Quality of the research partnership, relevance to project objectives and ability to generate results: expertise, complementarity and/or multidisciplinary of the teams collaborating in the project.

### **Methodology and feasibility:**

- a. Quality of the proposed methodology: design, feasibility and technological relevance;
- b. Technical resources: access to technological platforms, data processing centres, biological resource centres associated with clinical data, etc.;
- c. Compliance with ethical rules and regulations;
- d. Quality of the coordination between the partners (meetings plan, preparation of monitoring reports, communication, etc.);
- e. Appropriateness and justification of the time schedule proposed regarding the project objectives.

## **Support for early career researchers**

- a. Appropriateness of plans for cultivating next-generation researchers;
- b. Promotion of international mobility for next-generation researchers;
- c. Experience of Principal Investigators in human resources development for young researchers.

## **Impact of the project:**

- a. Scientific, technical and/or medical impact in both Japan and Switzerland.
- b. Innovation in both Japan and Switzerland;
- c. Potential impact of the project results on the scientific, industrial and company communities (intellectual property, economic and company potential, etc.) in both Japan and Switzerland (if relevant).
- d. Perpetuation of the joint research partnership and promotion of a Switzerland-Japan research network beyond completion of the project.

## **Financial feasibility:**

- a. Suitability of human resources allocated to the project;
- b. Appropriateness and justification of requested funding according to the proposed work plan;
- c. Clarity of the breakdown and justification of the proposed international and mobility activities and costs;
- d. Planned budget to host human resources from overseas partner lab;
- e. Planned budget to allow mobility of human resources to overseas partner's lab;

# **11. REPORTING AND DISSEMINATION**

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The PIs will be asked to submit financial and/or progress/activity reports to AMED or SNSF, whether Japan-based or Swiss-based respectively.

AMED reporting: Please refer to the “Administrative Instruction” for Japan-based PIs which can be found on the AMED website for details concerning the procedure in Japan).

SNSF reporting: The main applicant in Switzerland is responsible for the reporting to the SNSF. Standard SNSF regulations apply for both the financial and the scientific reports.

PIs in Japan and in Switzerland should submit the final report to AMED and SNSF respectively after completion of the period of international collaborative research. The submission should be made to AMED and SNSF within the timeframe specified by AMED and SNSF after the end of the grant. The report includes a general summary (the report format will be notified until the completion of the project) compiled jointly by both the Japan-based and the Swiss-based PIs. The PIs shall inform AMED and SNSF of serious difficulties in the conduct of the research project. AMED and SNSF will decide upon the proper actions to be taken.

Funding recipients must ensure that all results (publications, etc.) arising from the project include a proper acknowledgement that the project is collectively supported by AMED and SNSF under the framework of the AMED-SNSF joint call initiative.

## 12. Joint Call Secretariat contact

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### **AMED contacts for Japan-based teams:**

Sayaka Ohashi, Ph.D.

Department of International Strategy,

Japan Agency for Medical Research and Development

Website: Japan Agency for Medical Research and Development

E-mail: amed-aspire“AT”amed.go.jp (Replace “AT” with @)

### **SNSF contact for Swiss-based teams:**

Dr. Isabelle Fellner

International Co-operation division

Swiss National Science Foundation

Wildhainweg 3,

P.O. Box CH-3001 Berne

Website: <http://www.snsf.ch>

E-mail: [international@snf.ch](mailto:international@snf.ch)

Telephone: +41 (0) 31 308 24 49

## **ANNEXES : Guide for applicants**

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**Annex 1:** Guidelines for Swiss-based applicants

**Annex 2:** [AMED Call Supplemental Guideline for Japan-based applicants \(in Japanese\)](#)

## Annex 1

### Guidelines for Swiss-based Applicants: Eligibility, Funding, and Submission at the Swiss National Science Foundation

#### 1 Eligibility

The Swiss applicants must meet the eligibility requirements of the SNSF. The [SNSF Funding Regulations](#), the [General implementation regulations](#) and the [Regulations on Project Funding](#) are applicable or applicable mutatis mutandis. Please note that private companies are not eligible for funding.

#### 2 Funding Modalities

A maximum amount of CHF 625'000 is allocated per project for the Swiss side. Article 7 of the [Regulations on Project Funding](#) defines the eligible costs:

- salaries of scientific and technical staff in research projects within the scope of the salary ranges and rates prescribed by the SNSF;
- salaries of the Principal Investigators based in Switzerland cannot be covered;
- material costs that are directly related to the research work, namely material of enduring value, expendable items, field expenses, travel expenses, third-party charges, cost of computing time and data as well as of providing open access to research data;
- direct costs incurred through the use of research infrastructure linked to the research work;
- costs for the organisation of conferences and workshops in connection with the funded research;
- costs for national and international cooperation and networking activities carried out in connection with the funded research.

As of 1 April 2018, fees for open access publications are no longer eligible costs within SNSF grants and have to be requested separately via *mySNF*. The SNSF considers applications for Book Processing Charges (BPS) as of 1 April and for Article Processing Charges (APC) and Book Chapter Processing Charges (BCPC) as of 1 October 2018. Please visit [www.snf.ch/oa](http://www.snf.ch/oa) for further information.

Swiss applicants may not apply for their own salaries.

Grants will be managed according to standard SNSF rules.

Researchers from third countries, who make a partial contribution to the project without being responsible for the project can be included as project partners (in the Swiss part), but costs must correspond to no more than **20% of the overall Swiss budget**. However, please note that researchers who are located in Japan cannot be included as project partners.

### 3 Submission

Swiss applicants must submit the application via the online submission system [mySNF](#). After logging in to mySNF, the correct funding instrument must be chosen (Programmes (national and international) > Bilateral Cooperation (Initiative of the State Secretary for Education, Research and Innovation) > Strategic Japanese-Swiss Science and Technology Programme (SJSSTP) > Strategic Japanese-Swiss Science and Technology Programme: AMED 2025

A Data Management Plan (DMP) is requested for approved grants according to the requirements issued by the SNSF. Funds can only be released once the DMP has been submitted. Missing or inaccurate statements in the DMP need to be added/revised at the latest before the release of the payment of the second instalment. A definitive and updated version of the DMP must be provided by the end of the project grant. For more details on the DMP format requirements and procedure see: [Data Management Plan \(DMP\) - Guidelines for re- searchers \(snf.ch\)](#)

**For more information, please contact:**

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