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CALL FOR PROPOSALS 2024

France-Japan

INCa-AMED ASPIRE

Joint-Call for Proposals: Biology and Basic Sciences for Cancer Research

submission deadline: October 3rd 2024 - 17h00 (CEST)

☞ **for France-based applicants**

<https://projets.e-cancer.fr/> -rubrique "Descriptif du projet"

☞ **for Japan-based applicants**

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

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1 CONTEXT AND OBJECTIVE OF THE CALL

France and Japan are both committed to advancing our understanding of cancer diseases through high-quality research with the goal to continuously improve cancer control methods. Bringing together our efforts across borders is a promising strategy to enhance our impact. As such, the French National Cancer Institute (INCa) and the Japanese Agency for Medical Research and Development (AMED) are launching a call for proposals to support exceptional collaborative projects between Japan-based and France-based researchers in the field of cancer biology.

This joint initiative aims at delivering joint research funding for internationally competitive and innovative collaborative projects between researchers from Japan and France 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 France and Japan, by supporting researcher's mobility between the 2 countries. **In fact, it is required that 33% of the total requested funding should be used for the purpose of building and expanding networks with the partner country and promoting mobility.**

The objectives of the INCa-AMED 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 France and Japan;
- Promote exchange of scientists, knowledge and methodology between the 2 countries;
- Allow mutualization/access to facilities, resources and equipment available in the 2 countries;
- Foster cross-disciplinary research associating partner teams from other scientific fields to biomedical teams;
- Stimulate research on emerging and innovative topics to open new perspectives in oncology.

2 SCOPE OF THE CALL

This AMED-INCa joined call is open to all areas of basic research and scientific fields involved in the investigation of Cancer biology. It aims at supporting cutting edge research projects that address challenges in cancer biology with the goal of expanding our understanding and knowledge of cancer biological mechanisms.

Multi-disciplinary projects, which have contributions from fields other than biology, are encouraged. The biology part of the project must be significant and relevant.

3 ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

3.1 Teams' eligibility

The research project and the application are co-developed by a research consortium composed of both France-based and Japan-based teams. The French component and the Japanese components of the collaborative project can involve more than one team respectively and therefore be consortia of teams. The projects must be co-coordinated by 2 co-coordinators, one Japan-based and one France-based. Each team points out a scientific manager in the frame of the project (who can be different of the hierarchical head of the team).

Teams from the International Agency for Cancer Research (IARC) are eligible for funding in specific conditions, please refer to the "Guideline for France-based applicants"

The applicants are subjected to eligibility criteria of their respective funding agency: INCa for France-based teams and AMED for Japan based-teams (please refer to "Guidelines for France-based Applicants" or "AMED Call Supplemental Guidance").

In summary, non-compliance with the eligibility rules detailed below will lead to the rejection of the entire proposal without further review:

- Each unique project must involve a minimum of two (2) teams, one France-based and one Japan-based.
- Only collaborative France-Japan projects will be funded.
- Applications will be submitted by each co-coordinator. The France-based co-coordinator will submit the project to INCa (which is strictly identical to the project submitted to AMED) and the Japan-based co-coordinator will submit the same project to AMED. The teams and each of the individual project partners (representing research teams) will be funded by the funding organization from their country (INCa for French teams and AMED for Japanese teams) and are therefore subject to respective eligibility rules ("Guidelines for France-based Applicants" or "AMED Call Supplemental Guidance").
- Each consortium is represented by 2 co-coordinators responsible for the scientific management and for all the communications with the respective funding organization.
- Partners not eligible for funding by INCa or AMED (e.g. based outside Japan and France or not fundable according to the regulations of AMED or INCa) may participate in projects as long as they secure their own funding for the project.

- Applicants should refer to the “Guidelines for France-based Applicants” or “AMED Call Supplemental Guidance” containing all the specific INCa and AMED eligibility criteria and should contact their respective funding organisation contact points for additional clarification (see Annexe).

3.2 France-based and Japan-based co-coordination

Each project is represented and co-coordinated by 2 co-coordinators: one France-based and one Japan-based responsible for the coordination of the French and Japanese teams respectively. In addition to their scientific and technical roles, they are responsible for the coordination of the project and for implementing the collaboration between the partners in the project, the production of the required documents (scientific reports), the meetings, progresses and results communication. The co-coordinators are the contact point for all the communications with the respective funding organizations. The France-based co-coordinator will submit the co-developed application to INCa and the Japan-based co-coordinator will submit the same application to AMED.

The co-coordinators are subjected to eligibility criteria of their respective funding agency: INCa for France-based teams and AMED for Japan based-teams (“Guidelines for France-based Applicants” or “AMED Call Supplemental Guidance” for Japan-based applicants).

4 PROJECT DURATION

The duration of the projects should be of five (5) years **with no possible extension of funding or duration.**

5 TIMELINE OF THE CALL

April 23rd, 2024	Pre-announcement of the call
June 27th, 2024	Publication of the call and opening of the submission system for proposals
October 3rd, 2024 at 5 pm (CEST), October 3rd, 2024 at 5 pm (JST)	Deadline for proposal submission
Late February 2025 (TBD)	Communication of the funding decisions to the applicants
April 2025 (TBD)	Expected project start (also subject to national procedures)

6 SUBMISSION OF JOINT PROPOSALS

The INCa-AMED joint call will be implemented through a one stage submission procedure. The co-developed proposals between France and Japan-based teams should be written in English and submitted to both INCa through “[Portail PROJETS](#)” by the France-based co-coordinator and to AMED through [e-Rad](#) by the Japan-based co-coordinator.

In preparing the proposals, applicants must strictly follow the rules described in this call text and comply with INCa and AMED rules, by referring to “AMED Call Supplemental Guidance” found on [AMED website](#) for applicants based in Japan and to the “Guideline for French applicants” for French researchers. Applicants can reach their contact points for specific questions (see annexe).

The proposals must be submitted to the electronic submission system no later than the **October 3rd, 2024 at 17h00 (Central European Summer Time, CEST) for France-based teams / and October 3rd, 2024 at 17h00 (JST) for Japan-based teams**. Please note that failure to submit a valid application to both INCa and AMED 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) coordinators in February 2025. Coordinators will receive a summary of the proposal evaluation conclusions.

7 SCIENTIFIC EVALUATION COMMITTEE

The Scientific 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 (INCa and AMED project and administrative officers).

Based on the ranking list established by the Scientific Evaluation Committee, AMED and INCa will take the final decision on the proposals to be funded.

The Scientific Evaluation Committee is a panel of internationally recognized scientific experts in charge of the review and evaluation of submitted proposals. Their selection will not be restricted to France or Japan. 4 reviewers will be appointed to each project, 2 by AMED and 2 by INCa. The reviewers do not represent AMED or INCa and are appointed for their own scientific expertise; their evaluations must be based on the evaluation criteria of this call.

Reviewers are not allowed to submit or participate in proposals within this call and must sign declarations concerning absence of conflict of interest and must commit themselves to respect the applications confidentiality.

8 EVALUATION CRITERIA

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.

France-Japan Research Partnership :

- a. Competitiveness and synergy of the France-Japan research collaboration in the field of basic cancer 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 France-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 France and Japan.

Co-Principal Investigators and the research teams:

- a. Quality and experience of the co-coordinators regarding the project objectives. Young PI are encouraged to take responsibility in the submitted project;
- b. Experience of the co-coordinator 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 France and Japan;
- b. Innovation in both France and Japan;
- c. Potential impact of the project results on the scientific, industrial and company communities (intellectual property, economic and company potential, etc.) in both France and Japan (if relevant).
- d. Perpetuation of the joint research partnership and promotion of a France-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. Secured budget to allow mobility of human resources to overseas partner's lab;

9 ELIGIBILITY CHECK AND PROPOSALS EVALUATION

9.1 Eligibility check

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 application forms).

After completion of the eligibility check, INCa and AMED will reject proposals that are not considered eligible without further review. Co-coordinators of non-eligible proposals will be informed by the Joint Call Secretariat accordingly.

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

9.2 Proposal evaluation

Each proposal will be allocated to at least 4 reviewers all appointed as rapporteur. The reviewers will independently assess proposals according to the evaluation criteria mentioned above and will deliver their evaluation reports to the secretariat (via an electronic evaluation system). All reviewers will be invited to the evaluation meeting and will have access to evaluation reports. During the meeting, each

proposal will be presented by the rapporteurs and discussed on the basis of individual evaluation reports so as to reach consensus scoring. As a result of these discussions and as an outcome of the scientific evaluation meeting a ranking list of the full proposals recommended for funding will be established.

10 FUNDING DECISION

At the end of the evaluation process, based on the ranking list established by the scientific evaluating committee and on the commitment of available funds, AMED and INCa will establish a final list of the projects to be funded. The Joint Call Secretariat will communicate to all project coordinators the final decision along with an evaluation summary report. The final funding decisions are taken by INCa and AMED.

11 FINANCIAL AND LEGAL ISSUES

11.1 Available Funding

This joint call for proposals aims at funding up to 3 Japan-France collaborative projects. INCa will support the French components of the projects for up to 2 million euros and AMED will support up to 345 million JPY direct cost for five (5) years (capped maximum value of 115 million JPY per project).

11.2 Funding model and funding details

Funding will be made available by AMED and INCa according to their specific regulations, INCa will fund French teams and AMED will fund Japanese teams. Please refer to the relevant regulation in the relevant Guide for Applicants.

Funding is granted for five (5) years **with no possible extension of funding or duration**. Please refer to the Guidelines for France-based applicants and “AMED Call Supplemental Guidance” for Japan-based applicants for the specific derogatory conditions.

Each project partner (including the project co-coordinator) will get a separate funding contract/letter of grant from INCa or AMED.

Depending on the time needed for the administration of granting funds to the respective national research groups, individual projects **are expected to start by April 2025**. The official start date shall be communicated by the project coordinator to the Joint Call Secretariat (see annexe) and shall appear in the consortium agreement established in accordance to section below.

11.3 Grant payment scheme

Please refer to the “[Administrative Instruction](#)” for Japan-based co-coordinators which can be found on the [AMED website](#) and to INCa’s “Guidelines for France-based Applicants” .

11.4 Eligible expenditure

Please refer to the “AMED Call Supplemental Guidance” for Japanese applicants which can be found on the [AMED website](#) and to INCa’s “Guidelines for France-based Applicants” .

11.5 Funding for international partnership and mobility activities

33% of the total eligible cost (for both France and Japan) should be dedicated to international and mobility activities with the aim of building and extending a network between the French and the Japanese research community.

For this purpose, funding can be used to cover:

- travel expenses and related cost for researchers’ exchange/dispatch to partner’s country, partners joint meetings and expert invitation between the two partner countries, personnel costs for staff to coordinate the implementation of the travel and exchanges;
- research cost and other costs related to the hosting of the dispatched researchers in the partner’s lab (equipment, supplies, consumables etc.). These costs are included in the international/mobility cost of the hosting lab;
- workshops and seminars organisation;
- service cost for expatriates e.g translation and interpretation.

Please refer to the “AMED Call Supplemental Guidance” for Japanese applicants which can be found on the [AMED website](#) and to INCa’s “Guidelines for France-based Applicants” .

11.6 Research consortium agreement, ownership of intellectual property rights, ethical issues

In order to ensure a proper conduct of the project activities, a Consortium Agreement (CA) must be signed between the partners. The research consortium is strongly encouraged to sign this CA before the official project start date. The CA must be signed no later than six (6) months after the official project start date. A grace period may be granted by explaining the circumstances under which it is not possible to conclude the document within six months. Co-coordinators should consult Secretariat (see annex) if such circumstances arise. The CA 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 INCa-AMED joint call will be owned by the relevant organizations according to international/national/regional rules on IPR. If several participants have jointly carried out work generating new IPR, they shall agree amongst themselves (CA) as to the allocation of ownership of IPR, taking into account their contributions to the creation of those IPR as well as the European Commission's guidelines on IPR issues.

The results of the research project and IPR created should be disseminated and made available for use, whether for commercial purposes or not, in order to maximise benefit.

INCa and AMED 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.

11.7 Confidentiality of proposals

Proposals and any relating information shall be kept confidential by the scientific 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 will be published on INCa and [AMED website](#). All other project details shall remain strictly confidential.

12 REPORTING AND DISSEMINATION

The co-coordinators will be asked to submit financial and/or progress/activity reports to INCa or AMED, whether France-based or Japan-based respectively.

Please refer to the "[Administrative Instruction](#)" for Japan-based co-coordinators which can be found on the [AMED website](#) and to INCa's "Guidelines for France-based Applicants" .

Co-coordinators in Japan and in France should submit the final report to AMED and INCa respectively after completion of the period of international collaborative research. The submission should be completed within 4 months after the end of the grant to AMED and INCa. The report includes a general summary (the report format will be notified until the completion of the project) compiled jointly by both the Japanese and the French co-coordinators. In case of serious difficulties in the conduct of the research project, the co-coordinators shall promptly inform the Joint

Call Secretariat (see annexe). INCa and AMED 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 INCa and AMED under the framework of the INCa-AMED joint call initiative.

13 ANNEXES : Guide for applicants

- Guide for Japan-based applicants : https://www.amed.go.jp/koubo/20/01/2001B_00089.html
- Guide for France-based applicants : <https://www.e-cancer.fr/content/download/494094/7500001/version/1/file/AAP2024-France-Japon-Guide-du-candidat.pdf>

14 Joint Call Secretariat contact :

14.1 INCa contact for France-based teams

Scientific contact: Fotine Libanje, PhD flibanje@institutcancer.fr

Technical contacts: assistanceprojets@institutcancer.fr

14.2 AMED contacts for Japan-based teams

Scientific contact: Sayaka Ohashi, Ph.D. [amed-aspire"AT"amed.go.jp](mailto:amed-aspire)

Technical contacts: [amed-aspire"AT"amed.go.jp](mailto:amed-aspire)

Administrative contacts: [amed-aspire"AT"amed.go.jp](mailto:amed-aspire)

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