

Imperial Confidence in Concept (ICiC) Scheme

2021

Imperial College
London

MRC
Medical Research Council

NIHR
Imperial
BCR

wellcome trust
ISSF

The ROYAL MARSDEN
NHS Foundation Trust

AstraZeneca

Rosetrees Trust
Supporting the best in medical research

YUHAN

Call for Proposals

ICiC provides pilot funding to bridge the gap between discovery research and well-developed applications for [MRC Developmental Pathway Funding Scheme \(DPFS\)](#) support, or similar translational funding schemes.

We aim to 'pump-prime' the translation of novel therapeutics, including repurposing of existing therapies, devices and diagnostics, toward clinical testing within the Imperial Academic Health Sciences Centre (AHSC). Funding is provided by the Imperial College London Joint Translational Fund, which comprises of contributions from:

- EPSRC Impact Acceleration Account
- MRC Confidence in Concept
- NIHR Imperial Biomedical Research Centre Therapeutic Primer Fund
- Rosetrees Trust
- The Royal Marsden Hospital NHS Foundation Trust Fund
- Wellcome Trust Institutional Strategic Support Fund

Multi-disciplinary proposals and those with external collaborations are strongly encouraged - particularly with the Francis Crick Institute, MRC London Institute of Medical Sciences or commercial partners.

Industry and other Partners

This scheme also provides an opportunity for applications to collaborate with some of our industry partners through the ***AstraZeneca (AZ) Innovation Fund***, ***Boehringer Ingelheim (BI) Innovation Catalyst Fund*** and the ***Yuhan Innovation Fund***.

All three industry partner funds support drug discovery research by facilitating the development of new technologies and the exploration of disease biology. All projects must have a PI from both Imperial and the relevant partner and be investigating new science or demonstrate proof of concept for new technology capabilities with the primary objective of seeding larger funding applications.

In 2021 the **AZ Innovation Fund** will support one proof of concept collaborative project. Key areas of interest to AZ in this round are:

- a) The science and technology of molecule delivery to cells, tissues, organs and patients
- b) Complex model systems of disease or toxicity
- c) Multiparametric cellular measurement of drug engagement
- d) Technology to monitor patient response to drug treatment through the course of disease
- e) Novel aspects of oncology, respiratory or cardiovascular disease – new chemistry, targets or diagnostic opportunities

In 2021, the **BI Innovation Catalyst Fund** will support up to three proof of concept collaborative projects. BI's areas of interest are:

- a) Emerging Therapeutics Concepts - new and disruptive ideas in uncharted therapeutic spaces to treat diseases for which there are no effective therapies, including rare diseases.
- b) New Therapeutic Technologies: Capture emerging technologies/modalities that will change medical practice e.g., exosomes and extracellular vesicles.
- c) Gene Therapy: Novel therapeutic concepts/targets, which are amenable to AAV-based gene therapy. Technology advancement in the field of tissue selective AAV capsid variants with translational potential to man; innovative technology, which allows spatio-temporal control of cargo expression, increased cargo size or modulation of immune response to AAV capsids and/or DNA cassettes; human tissue/organ models for translational screening or characterization of AAVs.
- d) Regenerative Medicine: Focus on biology underlying endogenous mechanisms & master switches to regenerate tissues. The proposed therapeutic concept should be supported by preclinical in vivo data with a clear translational path to patients. Therapeutic fields of interest include, but are not limited to, tissue such as bone, cartilage, spinal cord and thymus.

In 2021, the **Yuhan Innovation Fund** will fund up to three proof of concept collaborative projects. Yuhan Corporation's areas of interest are:

- a) Potential therapeutic candidates with novel mode of action. Potential first in class candidates are of particular interest
- b) Modalities include small molecules, antibodies (or antibody-like proteins), fusion proteins, peptides, miRNA, siRNA, etc.
(Tissue-specific delivery platform technology that can be applied to any of the modalities described above)
- c) Therapeutic areas of interest include oncology, metabolism (NASH/fibrosis), immunology and CNS/neurology

Royal Marsden Collaborations

The ICiC scheme also encourages Royal Marsden researchers to put forward collaborative bids with an Imperial College London co-applicant (or vice versa) in translational research, and specific areas of interest include (but are not limited to):

- Early diagnosis of disease
- Surgery
- Imaging
- Data science
- Microbiome

If you are looking for collaborators in these areas, please contact confidenceinconcept@imperial.ac.uk and cancerbrc@rmh.nhs.uk

Key points for all ICiC applications

- Is the project at the correct stage for ICiC funding? If in doubt, discuss this with the ICiC contact (details below) before progressing with your application
 - Our Translator in Residence will also be of help (details below)
- Projects must be completed within 12 months, and have 2-3 defined and realistic milestones
- If ethics approvals are needed, they must be in place *before* the project start date
- IP/market competitiveness should be discussed with the relevant Imperial Industry Partnerships and Commercialisation (IPC) team or Royal Marsden contacts (details below) before an application is submitted
- Translational aims and routes to the clinic/market must be clearly defined
- Be aware of the competition in the area and ensure you have freedom to operate
- Costs must reflect the needs of the project and be fully justified
- No-cost extensions cannot be granted

Scope of ICiC projects

Applications for projects that aim to progress the development of novel therapeutics, medical devices or diagnostics are invited.

Please note that multidisciplinary applications are strongly encouraged, as well as those investigating using artificial intelligence in healthcare, engineering applied to health, and multidisciplinary infection research. We also encourage applications that engage with the [NIHR Imperial BRC](#).

Examples of types of projects eligible for this scheme include:

- a) Generation of a prototype of a medical device
- b) Validation of diagnostic assays, platforms or algorithms
- c) Studies aimed at preliminary *in vitro* or *in vivo* proof-of-concept for a novel or re-purposed therapeutic treatment
- d) Synthesis of specific antibodies and/or compounds for proof-of-concept studies
- e) Optimisation and profiling of a novel therapeutic
- f) Validation studies for the proposed target/approach

Funding and grant rules

- The ICiC scheme is managed by the Faculty of Medicine Research Strategy Team
- Projects must be costed with full economic costs, but the final awards will only provide 100% of directly incurred costs
- Typical total budgets (for directly incurred costs) from £50K to £80K will be considered
- Projects should run for 6-12 months, with timelines and milestones provided
- Projects must commence by March 2022
- All projects must be ***completed*** by 31 March 2023
 - ***No-cost extensions cannot be granted***
- Imperial IPC Faculty teams will cover costs of protecting arising Intellectual Property (IP) in line with its normal policies

Eligibility

Any researcher from Imperial College London or Imperial AHSC, who has a contract with the College (but not ICHT alone), which extends to at least the end of the proposed project, may apply - if they have departmental approval.

Royal Marsden researchers are encouraged to put forward an application. To note, these must be with an Imperial College London co-applicant.

Application and selection process

1 - Application

Applications close **4pm, Wednesday 20 October 2021**

Applications must be submitted via this [online portal](#).

There are two parts to the application, Part A is an online form we are using to gather various pieces of information on your project, and Part B requires various documentation to be uploaded via the online portal.

Part A – PI details, ethics and IP ([complete online](#))

- PI and co-investigator details
- Details of collaborators
- Details of industry partners (if applicable)
- Project title, modality and research area
- IP Information
- Home office licence
- Ethics

At the end of this online form, you will be asked to upload the material below

Part B – Research plan details and approvals ([upload via online form](#))

1. Project plan form ([form available here](#))
2. The Worktribe summary statement
 - a. Plus Royal Marsden costs (where applicable)
3. Email of costings approval from all Departments involved
 - a. Plus Royal Marsden (where applicable)
4. HoD approval email
 - a. Plus Royal Marsden Clinical Research Lead approval (where applicable)

Please include PI surname included at beginning of all file names

Approvals

- All applications require approval from the Head of Department.
- In the case of Royal Marsden, applications require approval from the relevant Clinical Unit Research Lead at Royal Marsden **and** the Imperial co-investigator's Head of Department.
- An email signifying approval will suffice and must be attached via the online portal.

The Worktribe summary statement approved by your Department must be uploaded to the online portal as part of the application (and please state your Worktribe PA number on all correspondence).

- However, they should not have been formally submitted, but **must be** approved by the appropriate department prior to submission of the application. **JRO approval is not required at this point.**
- An e-mail signifying departmental approval will suffice and must be attached via the online portal. All Departments with costs involved in the project must provide approval.
- This includes applications which have Royal Marsden collaborators (see below). The Imperial co-applicant must submit costs on behalf of the Royal Marsden counterpart.

Guidance on costing an application on Worktribe can be found [here](#)

Budget

Costings must be drafted with your Department on Worktribe, with 'Internal Scheme' picked as the funder. Costing should be submitted with the application form as FEC projects, with the summary reflecting the 'charity' rule. Although indirect costs must be included in the

budget, only directly incurred costs will be supported through ICiC funding (at 100%).

Applications with Royal Marsden collaborators **must seek approval from both Royal Marsden and the Imperial department and include the approved costs from both institutions on the Worktribe summary statement**

- ***Applicants are encouraged to discuss collaborative project budgets with the relevant contacts (see below) asap***

For all applications, if potential staff have already been identified for positions on a project, please provide details on both the Worktribe costs **and** the application. This will enable faster recruitment and contract amendment, reducing potential delays in starting.

Assessment criteria

In line with new College-wide processes being developed, there will no longer be a triage meeting and full rebuttals requested from PIs. However, PIs will still be able to respond to reviewers' queries ahead of the funding meeting (see below).

Applications will be reviewed by the selection panel, and applicants will be invited to respond to reviewers' questions before the funding meeting as required.

Projects will be assessed on:

- strength of rationale
- quality of science
- un-met medical need
- future commercial opportunity
- IP position
- likelihood of project leading to the development of a full proposal to be submitted to the MRC DPFS/DCS award scheme (or similar)

If ethics and/or Home Office approvals are required for the projects, priority will be given to those applications that already have these in place.

PIs will receive any additional queries **by Wednesday 24 November 2021** and rebuttals must be returned by **Wednesday 1 December 2021**. Rebuttals that are not returned by the deadline will not be sent to the panel ahead of the funding meeting.

The selection panel will meet on 15 December to make final funding decisions.

Award notification & commencement of work

Applicants will be notified of the outcome by the end of December 2021.

Award letters will be provided in **January 2022**.

Work must commence **by March 2022**, otherwise the funding will be withdrawn.

It is recommended that PIs do not plan to commence projects before February 2022.

Project reporting and management

Grant-holders will be required to submit up to three project reports per year: August/Sept, Feb/March and May/June. These will be used to keep the ICiC Panel up to date with regards to progress, and any issues or deviations in terms of deliverables, budget or timings. In addition, information from these reports will be used to complete the annual Researchfish return, and end of grant reports required by the funders.

Payments will be dependent on meeting milestones, and failure to meet milestones could result in termination of the project.

NOTE: Due to the short nature of the grants, no-cost extensions cannot be supported.

Contacts

Imperial

- **General queries:** confidenceinconcept@imperial.ac.uk, or Kimberley Trim k.trim@imperial.ac.uk
- **Industry collaboration and Imperial IP-related queries:** Vjera Magdalenic-Moussavi and Stephanie Morris (directorIPC.medicine@imperial.ac.uk)
- **Costing queries:** Julie Williams (j.williams@imperial.ac.uk), or Scott Wheatley (s.wheatley@imperial.ac.uk)
- **Translator in Residence:** Richard Rutter (a.rutter@imperial.ac.uk)

Royal Marsden Hospital

- **Application queries:** cancerbrc@rmh.nhs.uk, 020 3186 5415 or 020 7808 2603
- **IP-related queries:** Alan Stuttle (alan.stuttle@icr.ac.uk), 020 8722 4559
- **Costing enquiries:** cancerbrc@rmh.nhs.uk

AZ Innovation Fund

- Jonathan Wingfield (Jonathan.Wingfield@astrazeneca.com)

BI Innovation Catalyst Fund

- Laura Corradini (laura.corradini@boehringer-ingelheim.com)

Yuhan Innovation Fund

- Jisoo Lim (jlim6830@yuhan.co.kr)

Please refer to the accompanying Frequently Asked Questions on the [ICiC application webpage](#) for more information.