



Interstellar Initiative

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**

Event description:

The Interstellar Initiative — presented jointly by the **Japan Agency for Medical Research and Development** and the **New York Academy of Sciences** — recognizes the world's most promising Early Career Investigators and connects them with peers, in related but distinct disciplines, providing a platform for them to develop a solution to a major research question. The aim is to foster interdisciplinary collaboration and thereby catalyze discovery.

The 2021-2022 Interstellar Initiative will address challenges in the area of Healthy Longevity. It will focus on exploring molecular, cellular, genetic, physiological, social, and behavioral determinants of healthy longevity, and the relationship between aging and diseases such as cancers, neurodegenerative, cardiovascular, hormonal disorders, and other chronic age-related conditions with the ultimate goal of improving healthspan and preventing pathological aging.

Participation in this two-part workshop is by application only. Applications are invited from Early Career Investigators who have backgrounds in five broad categories: 1) Clinical Research; 2) Life Science; 3) Physical Science; 4) Technology and 5) Allied Health. The deadline for application submission is May 24, 2021 (EDT).

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 scientists (ECIs). The *Interstellar Initiative* connects ECIs with peers, in related but distinct disciplines, under the guidance of Mentors who are established scientists at the peak of their respective disciplines. This is a remarkable opportunity for investigators 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.

How it Works

Applications will be accepted from ECIs in broad disciplines. ECIs accepted into the *Interstellar Initiative* will be grouped in teams of three and participate in a **virtual** three-day conference hosted by the New York Academy of Sciences from September 10–12, 2021, where they will be tasked with developing a research proposal, guided by mentors. All teams will include one member from Japan. Participants will be expected to present the proposals developed within their teams at the conference, and top teams will be recognized with a non-monetary award at the close of the event. **All teams will receive a modest funding award from AMED** through the Japanese team member's institution to further enhance their proposals, leading up to a second two-day workshop at the New York Academy of Sciences*, on February 24–25, 2022. Proposals will be refined at this second workshop and prepared for submission to international funding agencies.

Interstellar Initiative participants will be reimbursed for all eligible travel expenses. For details, visit our Travel and Accommodation page.

**Note that those unable to travel to New York will be able to participate virtually. At this time, the second workshop is planned to be convened in person. We continue to monitor public health guidelines and travel restrictions and will make updates to the program if necessary with the safety of all participants in mind. An update regarding whether the February workshop will be held virtually or in person will be made by November 1, 2021.*

Important Dates



- *Early March 2021*: The application period opens.
- *May 24, 2021, 11:59 PM EDT (May 25, 2021, 12:59 PM JST)*: The application period closes.
- *July 2021*: Investigators selected to participate in the *Interstellar Initiative* are notified.
- *August 2021*: Virtual Orientation and Networking session for accepted participants and mentors
- *July 2021–early September, 2021*: ECIs matched and grouped into teams.
- *September 10 – 12, 2021*: *Interstellar Initiative* conference convenes *virtually*.
- *September 2021 – February 2022*: Teams continue to develop their research proposals.
- *November 1, 2021*: *Announcement whether February workshop will be virtual or in person.*
- *February 24 – 25, 2022*: Follow up workshop convenes in New York City

Questions?

Please email interstellar@nyas.org with any questions.

Call for Applications:

The application portal will open in March 2021. The application includes a request for a short proposal as outlined below. In addition to application to the portal, applicants in Japan should submit their application to e-Rad portal (<https://www.e-rad.go.jp/en/>) as well.

Eligibility

Applications are invited from Early Career Investigators who have backgrounds in five broad categories:

- 1) **Clinical Research** (e.g., physician scientists and others with translational interests);
- 2) **Life Science** (e.g., biomedical scientists);
- 3) **Physical Science** (e.g., physicists, chemists, and mathematicians); and
- 4) **Technology** (e.g., engineers, computer scientists)
- 5) **Allied Health** (e.g. epidemiologists, nutritionists, nurses, behavioral scientists)

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

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.

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

Proposal Guidelines

Early Career Investigators must prepare a proposal that addresses the following:

Identify a critical research question in healthy longevity 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.

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.

The proposal should address the above and 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



Interstellar Initiative — Travel and Accommodation:

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

- A 3-night stay at an Academy partner hotel for the second Workshop (February 2022).
- A \$150 travel stipend for their transportation to and from airports and train stations for the second workshop.
- Reimbursement up to the maximum limits outlined below for economy class air travel (or train/car travel) and travel insurance for the second workshop.

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

- From the Tri State Area (outside NYC) to NYC: Up to USD \$160.00
- From East Coast USA to NYC: Up to USD \$400.00
- From Middle USA to NYC: Up to USD \$480.00
- From West Coast USA to NYC: Up to USD \$600.00
- From Canada, Central/South America, Europe to NYC: Up to USD \$8800.00
- From Africa, Asia, Africa, Australia, Middle East to NYC: Up to USD \$1,840.00

Submit all receipts to interstellar@nyas.org. Please note that according to the Academy's travel policy, participation in this conference does not include travel reimbursements or accommodation for individuals who are local to metro New York City or from industry.