

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, to develop international, multi-disciplinary research projects addressing a major research question. The aim is to foster collaboration between disciplines and thereby catalyze unique discovery.

The 2022-2023 Interstellar Initiative will address challenges in the area of Basic Research to elucidate the complex mechanisms of living organisms for the benefit of all humankind. Research topics may include biological functions at all levels of analysis: for example, studies on genes and individual molecules, intracellular networks, intercellular associations in tissues and organs, and networks underlying the complex functions of entire organisms.

Participation in this two-part workshop is by application only. Applications are invited from Early Career Investigators who have backgrounds in four broad categories: 1) Biomedical Science; 2) Life Sciences; 3) Physical/Natural Sciences and 4) Biotechnology/Analytical technology. The deadline for application submission is May 24, 2022 (EDT).

Background

Collaboration is key to truly innovative scientific discoveries and advancement. The *Interstellar Initiative* connects Early Career Scientists (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. 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 the 4 broad disciplines above. ECIs accepted into the *Interstellar Initiative* will participate in a three-day workshop at the New York Academy of Sciences* from September 12–14, 2022, where they will be grouped into teams and asked to develop a research proposal, with guidance from mentors. All teams will include one member from Japan.

Participants present the proposals developed within their teams at the workshop, 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 virtual workshop, on February 23–24, 2023. 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.

** 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 September workshop will be held in person or virtually will be made by June 1, 2022.*



Important Dates

- *March 9, 2022*: The application period opens.
- *May 24, 2022, 11:59 PM EDT (May 25, 2022, 12:59 PM JST)*: The application period closes.
- *June 1, 2022*: Announcement on whether September workshop will be in person or virtual.
- *July 2022*: Investigators selected to participate in the *Interstellar Initiative* are notified.
- *August 2022*: Virtual Orientation and Networking session for accepted participants/mentors
- *July–August, 2022*: ECIs matched and grouped into teams.
- *September 12 – 14, 2022*: *Interstellar Initiative* workshop convenes in New York City.
- *September 2022 – February 2023*: Teams continue to develop their research proposals.
- *February 23 – 24, 2023*: Follow up workshop convenes virtually

Questions?

Please email interstellar@nyas.org with any questions.

Call for Applications:

The application portal will open in March 9, 2022 EDT (March 10, 2022, JST). 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 the e-Rad portal (<https://www.e-rad.go.jp/en/>) as well.

Eligibility

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

- 1) **Biomedical Research**
- 2) **Life Sciences**
- 3) **Physical/Natural Sciences**
- 4) **Biotechnology/Analytical technology**

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 basic 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. The proposal should also 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.



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.

Interstellar Initiative — Travel and Accommodation:

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

- A 4-night stay at an Academy partner hotel for the September Workshop
- A \$150 travel stipend for their transportation to and from airports and train stations for the September workshop.
- Reimbursement up to the maximum limits outlined below for economy class air travel (or train/car travel) and travel insurance for each 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

Please note that according to the Academy's travel policy, participation in this workshop does not include travel reimbursements or accommodation for individuals who are local to metro New York City.