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AI Health Innovation Cluster

- an initiative of the Innovation Campus Heidelberg Mannheim Health & Life Sciences
Guidance Document for Fellowship Program

The AI Health Innovation Cluster is an initiative of the Innovation Campus [Heidelberg Mannheim Health and Life Sciences](#). The cluster has the mission to advance technical developments and novel applications of AI approaches in health research. The cluster includes all partner institutions of the Heidelberg Mannheim Health & Life Science Alliance. A key element of the cluster is to attract talent to the Heidelberg/Mannheim area and to foster new research directions that are enabled by interdisciplinary and interinstitutional collaborations. This funding call will provide seed funding for projects that are aligned and directly contribute to the AIH mission.

List of spokespersons¹

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¹ Abbreviations

DKFZ: German Cancer Research Center; EMBL: European Molecular Biology Laboratory; HU: Heidelberg University; UKHD: Universitätsklinikum Heidelberg; UMM: Universitätsmedizin Mannheim; ZI: Zentralinstitut für Seelische Gesundheit, MPIMF: Max Planck Institute for Medical Research, PI: Principal Investigator

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Program Details

The fellowships awarded in the AI Health Innovation Cluster should involve a significant collaboration between two PIs at two different institutions. Each project will have a primary supervisor (coordinator), who will be responsible for hosting the fellow administratively, and one or multiple second supervisors who will collaborate on the project. The nature of the collaboration needs to be critical for the achievement of the project goals. Funded fellows are expected to gain novel experiences and bring novel stimuli to the Heidelberg-Mannheim area.

There are three kinds fellowships offered:

1. AI Interdisciplinary Postdoctoral Fellow (100% funding, 2 years): interdisciplinary projects with a research focus. Qualification for PI-track of candidates.
2. Staff Scientist Fellow (100% funding, 2 years): infrastructural needs, technical development. Qualification for a technical role, which includes a service component.
3. AI Clinician Scientist Fellow (50% funding, 1 year): research opportunity for co-funded clinical scientists (requires letter of declaration from current employer confirming 50% co-funding of the clinical position)

The projects will be proposed as follows:

Collaborative projects between two or more partners and institutions will be proposed in advance by the coordinating PI and the collaborating PI, who both need to be independent PIs according to the definition of the institution, and submitted to the cluster office (see proposal template). The projects will be reviewed and evaluated according to the criteria outlined below. For interdisciplinary postdoctoral fellows and staff scientists, selected projects will be advertised to attract fellows in an open call. For clinician scientists, the previously identified candidate will be directly invited to the selection event.

Proposals are allowed to cross-reference each other. In case of such linked proposals, a strategy must be outlined for cases where not all proposals are successful (e.g. by leveraging other funding sources). The risk of not being able to make adequate recruitments can be minimized by motivating applications of already known candidates in your groups. Proposed projects will be evaluated according the following criteria:

- The topmost criterion when evaluating projects is scientific excellence. We seek novel, disruptive research directions and solutions.
- The next criterion for the projects is that they connect two or more institutions and/or existing initiatives.
 - How are existing infrastructures used and/or further developed?
 - How are data and results being made accessible to the consortium and the involved infrastructures?
- What is the strategy for exploitation of results, e.g. by industrial partners?
- How will data and project results be made available to the larger community? It is expected that projects adhere to common open science principles, wherein specific data sharing will be required.

Projects that match the aims of the cluster will be published on the AIH web page. In parallel, the positions for fellowships will be advertised. Candidates for AI interdisciplinary postdocs and staff scientists can apply to one or multiple of the specific projects. Additionally, candidates will be able to propose their own project, which needs to meet the same criteria as predefined projects. The application process step is omitted for named AI clinician scientists. Fellowship candidates will be invited to a central selection event based on scientific quality. The criteria used for the invitation to interview and/or the final selection of the fellows by the committee are:

1. scientific excellence, including suitability to work in an interdisciplinary setting
2. match between the skills of the candidate and the selected project(s)
3. the potential for the candidate to gain new knowledge, extend their networks and foster personal career development
4. novel collaborations will be strictly prioritised, where it is aspired to attract new talent to the region. Candidates in Mannheim/Heidelberg are eligible if they gain new knowledge and experiences. Yet, at the application deadline, potential fellows may not have been part of the research group they are applying for for more than 12 months.
5. diversity of the final pool of selected candidates for shortlisting

Funding

Fellows will be employed at the institution of the coordinating PI. The fellowship comes with up to two years of funding, as well as funding for a computer and travel.

Funding amounts are as follows²:

1. **Postdoctoral Fellow**, TV-L E13 100%: EUR 75,600 per year
2. **Staff Scientist**, TV-L E13 100%: EUR 75,600 per year
3. **Clinician Scientist**, TV-Ä 50%: EUR 48,750 per year

² These numbers are based on the assumption that TVL employment applies. The contribution from the project to personnel cost may vary depending on actual salary cost at the coordinating institution.

The above-mentioned funding will be supplemented with EUR 2,000 per year for each fellow to cover for computer and travel expenses.

Complementary funding can be used to extend the position. Future calls may provide opportunities to apply for funding extensions of successful projects, subject to funding availability of the program.

In addition to the personnel resources, the implementation of bridge projects often requires cooperation with or adaptation of external infrastructures. As these are operated or developed by third parties, targeted support for integration tasks in such external infrastructures is planned for. Smaller tasks such as adapting interfaces or assigning personnel for communication can be carried out without projects being blocked by such external dependencies. This measure is to be made possible by a strategic fund, from which the projects can apply for additional funds for smaller integration tasks.

Eligibility of fellows

The core aim is to attract new talent to the Heidelberg Mannheim area. Candidates who are already employed in Heidelberg are eligible if the project fosters substantial novel interactions and the candidates gain new experiences. The respective rules for employment of postdocs at the host institution will apply.

Selection panel and funding decision

The composition of the committee will be announced prior to the interview. The committee includes members from the AI Health Innovation Cluster, as well as external members. The final composition will be approved by the MWK as funding body. The panel will rank candidates by the criteria as outlined above. The panel can enquire feedback from the PIs if required for decision making. The final decision is a list of funded projects, and if applicable, projects and candidates on a waiting list.

Outline of the procedure

1. Applications must be submitted via email to AIH-Office@dkfz.de. Applications should include a proposal following the provided proposal template, named `AIH_ProjectProposal_PostDoc/StaffScientist/Clinician_namePI`.
2. Deadline for submission: **June 15, 2022**
3. Projects will be evaluated and approved for advertisement. PIs will be notified about the outcome via email.
4. Online advertisement: fellowship positions will be advertised in the form of a public call throughout the summer.
5. Selection of candidates for interview: the selection committee will rank candidates based on the criteria stated above. Selected candidates will be invited.
6. The candidates will be interviewed in a selection event. The committee will award positions up to the maximum number of positions for which funding is available in the respective call.