

SAMRC - AMED Research Initiative
“Genomic Insights into the Pathogenesis of Cancer and Infectious Diseases”
Call for Collaborative Proposals

1. General Description

The South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC) and Japan Agency for Medical Research and Development (AMED) are pleased to invite proposals under the SAMRC - AMED Research Initiative (SAMRC-AMED-RI), a joint initiative in medical research and development based on the Memorandum of Cooperation dated August 28, 2024 (MoC).

The SAMRC-AMED-RI will provide funding for up to three (3) collaborative research projects that focus on the research topic “Genomic Insights into the Pathogenesis of Cancer and Infectious Diseases”.

The SAMRC will provide funding up to ZAR3 million per year (capped maximum value of ZAR1 million per grant per year) in support of the joint project undertaken by South Africa-based researchers and their teams; with 23,070,000 JPY as direct expenses up to three (3) years (capped maximum value of 7,690,000 JPY as direct expenses per grant per year) funding provided by AMED in support of the Japanese research teams and activities.

Preamble

Under the framework of the Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) dated 28 August 2024, the SAMRC and AMED intend to advance the partnership of both countries in medical research and development in accordance with the SAMRC-AMED-RI and Strategic International Collaborative Research Program (SICORP) in Japan.

SAMRC

SAMRC will provide funding for successful research proposals submitted by South Africa-based researchers.

AMED

AMED will support the Japanese components of the collaborative projects between AMED and SAMRC through the Strategic International Collaborative Research Program (SICORP). This program provides support for international joint research projects on the basis of equal partnership in countries, regions, and fields of cooperation that have been designated as particularly important by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) on the basis of intergovernmental agreements, in collaboration with funding agencies in the countries concerned.

Aim

Through the SAMRC-AMED-RI, SAMRC and AMED aim to:

- Enhance existing partnerships and develop new partnerships between South Africa and Japan in the area of cancer and infectious diseases research based on genomics research.
- Strengthen the strategic medical research relationship between South Africa and Japan.
- To seek solutions to global challenges and thereby bolster South Africa's and Japan's scientific and technological capabilities.

Research scope and focus areas:

Scope:

Genomic Insights into the Pathogenesis of Cancer and Infectious Diseases

Research focus areas:

- "Elucidation of Cancer Malignancy Mechanisms Based on Genome Comparison"
- "Identification of Novel Genetic Loci with High Cancer Onset Risk and Understanding of Their Pathogenesis"
- "Deciphering the Genetic Background Resistant to Pathogen Infection and Onset"
- "Research and Development of Prevention Techniques for Carcinogenesis Mechanisms Caused by Viral Infection"

2. Prospective Applicants

The SAMRC and AMED invite researchers based in South Africa and Japan to submit proposals under this call pertaining to Genomic Insights into the Pathogenesis of Cancer and Infectious Diseases research. This call for collaborative proposals will require a set of applicants (co-applicants) who will be serving as co-Principal Investigator (PI) based in South Africa and Japan respectively to work in partnership on research projects. South Africa-based applicants will be funded by SAMRC while Japanese- applicants will be funded by AMED. Eligibility to apply will be determined by respective national eligibility rules, as follows.

2-1. Eligibility for South Africa-based co-applicants:

Investigators who hold a post-graduate/medical qualification, preferably a PhD, MBChB or equivalent degree, in the relevant research focus area and are full-time employees or on a full-time fixed term-appointment (for the duration of the project) are eligible to apply.

This call is open to active researchers residing in South Africa and affiliated with a recognised high education or research institution such as a university, university of technology or science council.

2-2. Eligibility for Japan-based co-applicants:

The Japan-based co-applicants must be affiliated with a domestic Japanese research institution and conduct research there. Domestic research institutions on the Japanese side refer to universities, independent administrative institutions, national/public testing and research institutions, specially authorized corporations, public-service corporations, and enterprises, etc. that must satisfy predetermined requirements specified in the section 3.1 of the guidelines for Japan-based applicants.

- Any individual who satisfies any of the following conditions is also eligible to apply as Japan-based PI.
 - i. A researcher holding citizenship other than Japanese who belongs to a Japanese domestic research institution.
 - ii. A researcher who is not currently affiliated with a particular research institution, but who will be affiliated with a Japanese domestic research institution and able to conduct research there, if selected as Japan-based PI.
 - iii. Japanese researchers currently residing outside of Japan who will be affiliated with a Japanese domestic research institution and able to conduct research there, if selected as Japan-based PI.
- Japan-based PI must be able to take responsibility for the duties of the entire project for the full duration of the joint research project.
- Japan-based researchers from industry are eligible to participate in the joint research project in the Japan-based team.

3. Financial Support

In this collaborative research program, SAMRC and AMED will jointly fund up to three (3) proposals. The SAMRC will provide support for researchers based in South Africa, and AMED will support researchers based in Japan. The duration of a collaborative research project shall be no longer than three (3) years in total from the start date.

3-1. SAMRC

Budget for Collaborative Research Projects

The funding caps for each fiscal year are:

- Year 1: 1 April 2025 – 31 Mar 2026: ZAR3 million
- Year 2: 1 April 2026 – 31 Mar 2027: ZAR3 million

- Year 3: 1 April 2027 – 31 Mar 2028: ZAR3 million

Each selected project will be funded for a maximum period of three (3) years, subject to the submission of an annual report and satisfactory progress for continuation of funding. Support for research expenses: Expenditure by the project team in their country would be provided by the respective funding agency, i.e., the SAMRC would support expenditure on the South African side.

- Participation of post-graduate students would be encouraged.
- Institutional overhead will be determined in accordance with specific research and development programme related policies of each institution/government.
- While the exact nature of expenditure is not fixed, the following may **NOT** be funded from this allocation: purchase or construction of a building, rental costs for space that is owned by the institution, recruitment costs for staff, and purchase of office furniture.

3-2. AMED

Budget for Collaborative Research Projects

With cap of 7,690,000 JPY as direct expenses per year for three (3) years, the proposed budget should not exceed the funding amount of each year stipulated in 2.1 of the guidelines for Japan-based co-applicants*. The planned budget for research projects may vary each year, depending on the planned activities specific to each project.

*Proposals with the budget exceeding the funding amount of any year will not be accepted.

Please refer to specified in the section 8.2 of the guidelines for Japan-based applicants.

Contract between Japan-based co-applicant and AMED

Support will be implemented in accordance with a contract for commissioned research which shall be entered into between AMED and the Japan-based co-applicant's institution. The contract for commissioned research will be signed each year over the collaborative research period. Since the contract is agreed on condition that all administrative procedures related to the project in question shall be handled within the institution, the PI should consult with the department in charge at his/her institution.

4. Application

4-1. Common Grant Proposal

The co-applicants from South Africa and Japan shall work together to write a common research proposal (Common Grant Proposal) and submit their applications electronically as indicated in 4-2. below.

4-2. Submission

All applications must be completed in English.

South Africa-based applicants must submit the Common Grant Proposal by completing the [online application form](#). The deadline for applications is 10:00 (SAST) on 2 December 2024.

The Japan-based applicants must submit the Common Grant Proposal and the supplemental application form required in the guidelines for Japan-based applicants (Supplemental Application Form) through the e-Rad application system (<https://www.e-rad.go.jp/index.html>) no later than 17:00 Japan Standard Time on 2 December 2024. The Supplemental Application Form must be written in Japanese.

5. Evaluation of Project Proposals

Each proposal will be screened and accepted if it has complied with the eligibility criteria stipulated in section 2. and the proposed budget is within the funding amount in section 3. All accepted proposals will be reviewed by expert reviewers in South Africa and Japan. Based on the results of the evaluation in both countries, SAMRC and AMED will jointly make a mutual decision regarding funding of the selected proposals.

Evaluation Criteria

The following general evaluation criteria will apply to each application:

A. Conformity with the program's purpose

- Does the proposed activity conform to the program's aims and objectives, and be appropriate for the research fields designated by the program?

B. Scientific/technological significance and advantage

- Do the PIs in both countries have the relevant academic qualifications and topic-based knowledge or experience necessary for pursuing the proposed activities?

Do the proposed activities have originality, novelty, and innovativeness?

- Do the proposed activities contribute to the advancement of the field of medicine?

- Do the proposed activities contribute to the generation of new technologies?
- Do the proposed activities respond to societal needs?
- Are the proposed activities consistent with national policies regarding research and development in the field of medicine?

C. Appropriateness of the plan

- Are the contents and objectives of the proposed plan clear?
- Are the plans for each year detailed and realizable?
- Is the proposed plan in compliance with laws and ordinances related to bioethics or safety protocols?

D. Implementation system

- Is research and development system properly organized centered around the PIs?
- Has a sufficient collaboration network to manage the collaboration and achieve their project goals during this program's period of support.?
- Are the workplans of the applicant appropriate?
- Is the demarcation of research activities appropriately planned among researchers in both countries without unreasonable duplication and excessively unbalanced weight on certain research areas?

E. Costs

- Are the breakdown of costs and spending plan appropriate?

6. Announcement of Funding Decision

Funding decisions will be announced by the end of March 2025. The tentative start date for projects is May 2025.

Proposed timelines:

| Timeline | Activity |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| 7 October 2024 | Publication of call for proposals |
| 2 December 2024 | Deadline for proposals |
| December 2024 to Mid. February 2025 | Screening and peer review |
| March 2025 | Joint SAMRC-AMED panel meeting to make funding recommendations |
| March 2025 | Award |
| May 2025 | Launch of joint projects |

7. Responsibilities of awardees

After the proposal has been approved, successful applicant's and their affiliated institution's must comply with the funding agreement between the SAMRC or AMED (as the case may be) and the applicant's institution.

7-1. Agreement between Researchers/Research Institutes

Matters related to intellectual property rights, confidentiality, publication, commercialization should be agreed and incorporated in the collaborative research agreement (CRA) between researchers/research institutes of both countries, if not covered in the funding agreement. The CRA should be submitted to the SAMRC and AMED by the respective researchers within three months of the award start date. The SAMRC and AMED reserve the right to terminate further fund disbursements if this condition is not met.

7-2. Additional Information and Requirements for Researchers

Please see the annex sheets for such requirements:

AMED applicants will need to refer to and propose based on the guidelines and application form shown below in Japanese besides the requirements in this call.

日本側研究者向け応募注意事項 (guidelines for Japan-based applicants)

日本側追加応募様式 (application form for Japan-based applicants)

8. Contact Information

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Japan-based co-applicants should contact the following for further information:

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