

ForME – Verein für medizinische Forschung und Innovation im Kanton Aargau

Executive Summary

ForME intends to enable and promote excellent research ideas and speed up the implementation of new scientific insights in the clinic by funding protected research time for clinical practitioners who wish to actively participate in a research collaboration with scientists from the ETH Domain.

Applicants must be practicing physicians or medical specialists employed by the Cantonal hospital Aarau (KSA), the Cantonal hospital Baden (KSB), Hirslandenklinik Aarau (HKA) or by a centre or attending physician accredited by one of these hospitals. ForME funds can only be used to financially compensate the applicant's employer for their temporary absence from clinical operations. Project costs must be fully covered by the institutions involved in the joint research projects.

Applicants can choose a funding period between 6 and 24 months. For projects longer than 12 months, an intermediate report is required. Applicants will be reimbursed to a maximum of 20% in accordance with the usual rules of the employing hospital. The maximum annual limit per payment is CHF 25,000 for assistant physicians and CHF 35,000 for senior physicians.

There is no restriction in the topic of research envisaged for the project, but funding of research with direct commercial benefit is excluded.

By accepting the funding, the project team agrees to making the research results obtained in the project available to the public in an appropriate manner.

1. Call for Proposals

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Definitions

Applicant: The physician in postgraduate or continuing education, with or without a doctorate/PhD, or academic medical staff with relevant expertise employed at a partner hospital in the Canton of Aargau, who submits the proposal.

Partner Hospital: Cantonal hospital Aarau (KSA), Cantonal hospital Baden (KSB), Hirslandenklinik Aarau (HKA). Centres and attending physicians accredited at a partner hospital are assigned to the corresponding partner hospital.

Project Team: The project team consists of the Applicant, at least one scientist from a Research Partner and any additional project partners.

Project Partner Institutions: All institutions involved in an application. The Project Partner Institutions together must ensure that the project costs are fully covered. ForME only funds the protected research time of the Applicant by paying a salary compensation to the Partner Hospital that employs the Applicant.

Protected Research Time: This is the time the Applicant spends working on the project and for which the employing Partner Hospital will be compensated up to the maximum amount defined in this call. At least part of the Protected Research Time must be spent at the premises of the Research Partner. The exact percentage of Protected Research Time should be in line with the aims of the project and the role of the Applicant in the project. It is envisioned that that Applicants will spend an average of one day per week working on the project. **Research Partners:** ETH Zürich, Swiss Federal Laboratories for Materials Science and Technology (Empa), Paul Scherrer Institute (PSI)

Aim and Scope

Today more than ever, the healthcare sector needs new solutions to take advantage of the increasing digitalisation and personalisation of medicine for the benefit of patients. As the Canton of Aargau does not have its own university hospital, it is essential for the promotion of innovative solutions in prevention and therapy that the hospitals in the Canton have the means and freedom to collaborate with cutting-edge research. To this end, the cantonal hospitals of Aarau and Baden, together with Hirslandenklinik Aarau

and the ETH Domain institutions ETH Zürich, Empa and PSI, and with the support of the Canton of Aargau, founded the “*Verein für medizinische Forschung und Innovation im Kanton Aargau*”.

The aim of this funding programme is to **enable the co-design of ground-breaking research ideas between research groups in the ETH Domain and clinical practitioners to speed up the implementation time from bench to bedside.**

Practicing physicians or medical specialists with relevant expertise employed by a partner hospital in the Canton of Aargau are invited to apply for **Protected Research Time to work on a scientific project** with collaborators at ETH Zürich, Empa and/or PSI. For the temporary absence of the successful applicant from clinical operations, the employing partner hospital will receive financial compensation.

Eligible Applicants

Eligible Applicants are physicians in postgraduate or continuing education, with or without a doctorate/PhD, or academic medical staff with relevant expertise employed at a Partner Hospital in the Canton of Aargau. Centres and attending physicians accredited at a Partner Hospital are assigned to the corresponding Partner Hospital. The Partner Hospital must confirm their support for the application and guarantee the amount of Protected Research Time in a letter of commitment (see section [Application](#)).

Physicians in a senior managerial role or with a completed habilitation are not eligible to submit a proposal as an Applicant. They may be involved in a project in a supervisory capacity or as a mentor.

In addition to the Applicant, the Project Team must involve at least one scientist employed by a Research Partner. If the involved scientist from the Research Partner is not a lab/group/unit leader, the scientist must ensure full support of their line management for the project in accordance with the respective institutional regulations. This support must be explicitly confirmed in the commitment letter from the Research Partner. (see section [Application](#)). If the involved scientist from the Research Partner has a fixed-term contract (e.g. post-doc, tenure track professors/scientists), the commitment letter from the Research Partner must confirm that they will remain employed for the entire duration of the project. The expenses of the Research Partner for the project will not be recompensed by forME.

It is possible to include additional project partners in the research project. However, their expenses for the project will not be recompensed by forME.

Eligible Projects

Eligible are research projects that correspond to the aim of forME to **enable the co-design of excellent research ideas between research groups in the ETH Domain and clinical practitioners to speed up the implementation time from bench to bedside.**

Eligible research projects must involve the following Project Partner Institutions:

- At least one of the following Partner Hospitals or one of their affiliated centres/attending physicians as employer of the Applicant: Cantonal Hospital Aarau (KSA), Cantonal Hospital Baden (KSB), Hirslandenclinic Aarau (HKA)
- At least one of the following institutions as Research Partner: ETH Zürich, Swiss Federal Laboratories for Materials Science and Technology (Empa), Paul Scherrer Institute (PSI).

At least part of the project must be performed on the premises of the Research Partner.

The funding of research with direct commercial benefit is excluded. Approved projects are examined by the Cantonal Department of Education, Culture and Sport for compliance with the regulations of the Swiss Lottery Fund before the project start. Accordingly, all projects must fulfil the [criteria of application-oriented basic research as defined by the Swiss National Science Foundation](#).

The evaluation panel will not consider applications that violate the ethical principles of medical research, the rules of scientific integrity or good scientific practice. Any approved ethics committee or animal experimentation decisions relevant to the project must be enclosed with the application (see section [Application](#)).

Budget and eligible costs

Only financial compensation for the Partner Hospital amounting to a maximum of 20% of the Applicant's salary in accordance with the usual rules of the Partner Hospital employing the Applicant is eligible for funding. The **maximum annual limit per payment** is **CHF 25,000** for assistant physicians and **CHF 35,000** for senior physicians. It is expected that 5-8 salary compensations can be supported through this call.

Project costs (material resources, equipment, additional personnel, access fees, publication costs, etc.) are not eligible for funding and must be covered by the Project Partner Institutions. The application must convincingly describe how the project costs will be covered over the full duration of the project.

Only Partner Hospitals are eligible to receive salary compensations. The Partner Hospital is responsible for passing on any financial compensation to its accredited centres and attending physicians.

Duration

The duration of a project can be between 6 and 24 months. The Partner Hospital employing the Applicant must guarantee the Protected Research Time in writing (see section [Application](#)). While the exact percentage of Protected Research Time can vary depending on the project and the role of the Applicant in it, it is expected that the Applicant will be able to spend an average of approximately one day per week working on the project for the entire project duration. At least part of the Protected Research Time must be spent on the premises of the Research Partner. The breakdown of the approximate percentage of attendance time must be agreed in writing between the Project Partner Institutions before the start of the project.

Application

Applications must be submitted to grants@psi.ch until 28 October 2024 at midnight.

Applications must include the following documents:

- Completed proposal template
- CVs of the applicant and all senior members of the Project Team (template)
- Completed and signed letter of commitment template from the Partner Hospital employing the applicant (template)
- Completed and signed letter of commitment template from the Research Partner (template)
- Commitment letters from further project partners describing their commitment (financial, mentoring, laboratory space, technical support, etc.) to the project

The official templates for this call must be used for the proposal and the commitment letters (except for commitment letters from further project partners). Only complete applications submitted before the submission deadline will be evaluated.

Evaluation

The eligibility of the project proposals will be checked internally by the Management Office of ForME. Eligible projects will be evaluated by at least three members of the evaluation committee. At least one expert each comes from a Partner Hospital and a

Research Partner and every application is also reviewed by an independent expert. The evaluation committee pays attention to good practice to avoid conflicts of interest in scientific research (see separate conflict of interest regulations).

The evaluation committee decides on the merit for funding of each application according to the following evaluation criteria and the availability of resources:

a) Scientific quality of the proposed research project: scientific importance of the research question, topicality and originality, suitability of the proposed methods

b) Quality and potential of the Applicant: Expertise and ambition of the applicant. Fit of the project to the applicant's career aims.

c) Expertise of the project team: Expertise of the Project Team, support of the institutions involved, academic/medical supervision/mentoring as necessary

d) Promotion of synergies between clinic and research, to support cooperation between Partner Hospitals and Research Partners.

e) Chances of success: feasibility of the project and chances for successful completion of the aims and objectives.

Follow Up

The Applicant and the administrative contact point of the Partner Hospital at which the applicant is employed will be informed of the decision in writing. The Partner Hospital must inform its accredited centres or attending physicians accordingly.

Approved projects must start within 6 months and be completed within a maximum of 24 months from the start of the project.

By accepting the funding, the Project Partner Institutions accept the terms and conditions of the grant as stated in the funding letter. This involves the submission of a final scientific and financial report within 60 days after the end of the project. Projects with a duration longer than 12 months are required to submit an interim scientific report. Sufficient progress must be shown for the release of funds beyond 12 months.

The rights to the research results stemming from the funded project are set out in a separate agreement between the institutions involved.

By accepting the funding, the project team agrees to making the research results obtained in the project available to the public in an appropriate manner. The data sets on which the published research results are based must be made accessible in a suitable form via a recognised scientific data collection that operates according to [FAIR](#) principles. The principle of "as open as possible, as closed as necessary" applies.

Financial support provided by the “*Verein für medizinische Forschung und Innovation im Kanton Aargau*” must be acknowledged in publications and other public presentations of the project results.

Applicable regulations

- Statutes of the *Verein für medizinische Forschung und Innovation im Kanton Aargau*
- ForME funding regulations
- ForME conflict of interest regulations

Templates

- Proposal template
- CV template
- Commitment letter template for the Partner Hospital employing the Applicant
- Commitment letter template for the Research Partner(s)

Important Dates:

Proposal submission deadline	28 October 2024
Information of successful applicants	20 December 2024
Latest Project start	01 July 2025

Contacts:

Management Office ForMe
Michèle Erat and Francesco Bee
grants@psi.ch