Health + Life Science Alliance Heidelberg Mannheim

Alliance Industry Program

Joint projects between companies and the Alliance to strengthen the translation of research results into applications and products

Call

Purpose

The Alliance Industry Program aims to systematically strengthen the integration of industry partners into the innovation campus and further expand the region's innovative strength.

The focus is on specific projects in the fields of cancer and cardiovascular research, neuropsychiatric disorders, genomics, synthetic immunology, molecular engineering, medical technology, novel applications of AI concepts and deep tech in health and life sciences.

The active involvement of industrial players in the Alliance's interinstitutional ecosystem is intended to accelerate the region's economic development and achieve stronger networking between academic research and industry in the long term.

Funding is provided exclusively for pre-commercial research projects (e.g., research up to proof of concept, in vitro/in vivo), for example in the following areas:

- Target validation and prioritization
- Assay development for drug screening
- Development of preclinical models
- Validation of biomarkers or companion diagnostics
- Development of novel methods and technologies
- AI applications, App development, software tools…

The initiative allows industry access to academic excellence, high-caliber research infrastructure, and proximity to academic innovations. The academic partner benefits from practical research with translational potential, additional resources, and a stronger third-party funding base.

Funding measures

The industry program comprises two funding lines:

(1) **Postdoctoral Translation Funding** and (2) **Match-Making Funding**

These funding measures are in line with the Alliance's principle of providing seed funding for joint projects that have the potential to develop into long term collaborations and foster the transfer of knowledge into applications and products.

A defined project proposal can only be submitted for one of the two funding lines.

1. Postdoctoral Translation Funding

The Postdoctoral Translation Funding creates a unique platform for Alliance postdocs who want to combine their scientific excellence with industrial practice and applications. The

candidates will experience unique co-mentoring from the industry partner and expanded career options in science and product development.

The Alliance supports postdocs at Alliance institutions who already work or intend to work in industrial collaborations **with up to €25,000 for consumables per year for up to two years.**

Prerequisite: The industry partner commits to covering the postdoctoral researcher's salary at an Alliance institution **in full for up to two years**. The academic partner provides infrastructure, laboratories, and covers additional consumables costs for the project duration.

2. Match-Making Funding

Research projects between Alliance researchers and industry partners are funded if the industry partners commit to actively investing in the project **for up to two years**.

Re-applications for further development of previously awarded projects are generally not possible.

The project funds are provided proportionally by industry and the Alliance – with projects receiving a maximum of €200,000 from the Alliance over a period of up to two years. An industry contribution of at least 50% of the Alliance's share is required.

This means that, with maximum funding of €200,000 for up to two years from the Alliance, industry partners must contribute at least €100,000 as direct cash to the Alliance academic partner institution.

Projects with higher direct industry contributions are desirable and will be given priority during the review process.

Important:

Overhead costs cannot be funded.

Costs incurred at the industry partner side involved in the project are not considered as direct contribution.
Only direct financial contributions of the industry partner to the participating Alliance institutions are considered eligible contributions.

Investment costs are eligible for funding if the necessity for the project is sufficiently demonstrated, i.g., if the project specifically concerns technological development, the relevant equipment is purchased and housed at the Alliance institutions, and a benefit beyond the project is guaranteed.

Application

Alliance researchers and industry partners are called upon to work together on project proposals, submission needs to done by the principal investigator of an Alliance institution. Funding recipients are exclusively PIs at Alliance institutions.

Applications are evaluated on quarterly basis, with the next deadline on January 15, 2026.

By submitting the application, the applicants confirm the accuracy of the information provided and ensure the consent of the partners involved. Only complete applications will be accepted. Applications should be submitted in English.

Project proposals

The targeted promotion of the call to relevant interest groups – in particular researchers, industry partners, and existing collaborations – will primarily be carried out by the TTOs, BioRN and other drivers of the regional innovation ecosystem.

Proposals may arise from previous pitch or innovation formats organized between academic research and industry partners.

Researchers should discuss potential project ideas directly with their responsible TTO. In these cases, the TTOs will review the project ideas with regard to internal IP related aspects and the Alliance's funding criteria and, in close consultation with the researchers and participating industry partners, support the preparation and submission of the final funding application to the Alliance office.

Selection criteria

Applications involving more than one Alliance institution (joint projects) will be given priority in the review process.

Applications will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

1. Scientific and innovative strength of the applicant(s)

- Demonstrable academic track record (CV, publications, patents, project management skills, etc.)
- Implementation expertise of the applicants (industry experience, previous grants, previous collaborations with industry, etc.)

2. Innovation potential of the project

- Degree of novelty and relevance of the planned research or technology
- Potential and time frame for translational application (e.g., new products, processes, or therapies)
- Contribution to raising the profile of the Alliance institutions in the defined technology fields

3. Feasibility and prospects of success

- Clear work packages and distribution of roles
- Realistic planning within the financial and time frame
- Clear goals or endpoints that increase the value of the project, i.e. bring it closer to the market/ a product
- Will the contract be set up within four months of the funding approval so that the project can start promptly thereafter? The timeframe should be taken into account when submitting the application. A cooperation agreement template exists.

4. Already secured third-party funding related to the project (Alliance partner)

- Funding already acquired related to previous work for the project (funding body, type, volume, start and end date)
- Assessment of the leverage effect of Alliance funding on existing resources

5. IP regulations and legal framework

- Transparent regulation of intellectual property rights (IPR) between the participating partners // See cooperation agreement template that has been developed

- Transparency in dealing with cell or gene therapy procedures and, if necessary, ethical review

6. Outline of the industry partner how the endpoint of the proposed project could be further developed into a product and brought to market, involving the academic partner beyond the funding period

- Convincing presentation of a sustainable cooperation model between the industrial and academic partners beyond the funding period
- Willingness to continue beyond the project duration to develop a product or application

7. Financial participation of the company

- Amount and type of financial/cash contribution from the industrial partner to the Alliance institution to perform the project on academic side
- Planned in-kind contributions from the industrial partner, e.g.:

  - Active research contributions (personnel)
  - Technical co-mentoring
  - Access to proprietary technologies, data, or platforms
  - Provision of material resources or expertise

Selection process

A committee composed of industry and academic representatives, as well as experts from the transfer/translation ecosystem will review the project proposals; COI rules will apply.