The ASPIRE League Partnership Seed Fund
Guidelines for Applicants

> **Deadline: April 30, 2022**

The ASPIRE League was set up in 2009 as a consortium of five leading science and technology universities in Asia with a vision to promote innovation in the region through the advancement of science and technology.

About the Seed Fund

In 2019, the ASPIRE League launched the **ASPIRE League Partnership Seed Fund** to foster deeper research collaboration within the League by building on the research strengths of member universities to create greater impact. The scheme encourages researchers from member universities to collaborate on research topics of mutual interest, with the aim to subsequently make joint external funding applications and build valuable long-term relationships.

For the 2022 cycle, the participating universities are:
- Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology (KAIST)
- Nanyang Technological University (NTU)
- Tokyo Institute of Technology (Tokyo Tech)
- The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST)

The Seed Fund is open to faculty members of ASPIRE League member universities only. In the spirit of the Seed Fund, each proposal should try to engage as many participating universities as possible; the minimum is two for an application to be considered. Tsinghua University (Tsinghua) will not be able to participate in the 2022 cycle. However, faculty from participating universities may invite Tsinghua faculty to join their respective proposals. An invited Tsinghua faculty member may join a proposal using his/her own funds.

How to Apply

Any interested faculty member of a participating university may initiate an application by inviting a faculty member(s) from another participating university(s) to participate in a proposal. If multiple faculty members from a single university are involved in the same proposal, they should select from among themselves a "Lead Collaborator," who will be the group's coordinator.

The Lead Collaborators from participating member universities of each project should identify from among themselves the Principal Investigator (PI).

The PI will be responsible for submitting the proposal on behalf of the group. The PI should also work with other Lead Collaborators to develop a concrete plan including deliverables, with the project period between 12 and 18 months.

Transfer and Use of Funds

For each adopted project, each participating university will award the stipulated funding (between US$5,000 and US$8,000) directly to its own researcher(s).

The funding is intended to support participating university's own faculty members for travel costs related to the project, or to organize symposiums/workshops locally. It does not cover salaries, honorarium, equipment, scholarships, conference attendance fees, or tuition fees. Under the present extraordinary and challenging circumstances, applicants will be asked to provide budget plan for two scenarios, namely (A) a plan under normal conditions (no travel constraints), and (B) a plan under constrained conditions (caused by COVID-19). The eventual use of the funds will be dependent on the prevailing situation. For Plan (B), participating universities may exercise flexibility on the use of funds according to each institution's guidelines. See "Application Submission and Deadline" on P.2 for details.

The use of funds will be governed by each participating university's respective rules and regulations. In principle, the funding must be spent within 12-18 months from the date the research project commences; the actual period shall be governed by the respective participating university's regulations.

Eligibility
Full-time faculty members from all disciplines of participating universities are welcome to apply.

Application Submission and Deadline
Only one application should be submitted per proposal. Only the PI should submit the application form (attached). Each application should include the following information and supporting documents, and be sent in a PDF file to **aspireseedfd@ust.hk**:
- Project title, objectives and potential impact; activities to be undertaken.
- Expected outputs, e.g. anticipated papers, applications for external funds, etc.
- A clear budget plan, e.g. costs for flights, accommodation, etc., with a clear breakdown of the proposed cost to be borne by each participating university. It is expected that a similar level of activity will take place at each participating university and applicants are advised, where possible, to split the overall project costs more or less equally among the universities involved.
- In view of the current COVID-19 pandemic, use of the approved project funds may be constrained and funds may need to be directed toward an alternative use(s). Thus, for this year's application please indicate in the budget plan how the seed fund will be used under two scenarios – (A) normal conditions (no constraints), and (B) constrained conditions (caused by COVID-19). The budget for Plan (B) should not exceed Plan (A). The eventual use of the funds will be dependent on the prevailing situation. For Plan (B), participating universities may exercise flexibility on the use of funds according to each institution's guidelines.
- CVs of the PI and Lead Collaborator(s) together with their selected list of publications.
- A support letter from the head of the home department/school (if required by the applicant's university).

The submission deadline is **April 30, 2022 (Saturday)**.
Applicants will be notified of the results in August 2022.

Evaluation Criteria
Each proposal will be considered by a joint assessment process and evaluated on the following criteria (with equal weighting):
- Quality of proposed activities
- Impact of proposal (including academic gain)
- Ability to leverage future external funding

Reporting
An Interim Report should be submitted by May 31, 2023 for the ASPIRE Forum held in July 2023. A Final Report outlining the activities undertaken and the actions moving forward should be submitted within one month of the project's completion. The PI should submit both reports to **aspireseedfd@ust.hk**

Intellectual Property
Researchers participating in the Seed Fund will be bound by the intellectual property terms as set out in the ASPIRE League Memorandum of Understanding, signed by the five member universities. The IP terms are as follows:
> "The member universities shall respect each other's rights to intellectual property. Further, the intellectual property rights (IPR) that arise as a result of any ASPIRE League activities such as joint research projects shall be determined between the relevant universities on a case-by-case basis in such a manner as being consistent with laws and regulations of related countries and the IPR policies of the universities."

For Enquiries:

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