

Aim

Immunotherapy has revolutionized the treatment of cancer in recent years. But despite often spectacular therapeutic successes many patients still do not benefit from this type of treatment. Why this is, how to predict responders and how to overcome resistance for the individual patient are among the most pressing questions of cancer research. The Helmholtz Institute for Translational Oncology Mainz (HI-TRON Mainz) takes up such questions in order to develop pioneering biomarker-based personalized immunotherapy for cancer treatment based on a deep understanding of patient-specific mechanisms of response and resistance to immunotherapy.

In order to expand and develop innovative ideas, HI-TRON Mainz is opening a new call for Kick-Start Seed Funding projects. The funding program aims at facilitating the rapid transfer of scientific findings into clinical applications and to make use of the synergies between scientists based in Mainz and Heidelberg. The HI-TRON Mainz Kick-Start Seed Funding Program provides seed funding to cross-institutional projects with a clear clinical translational focus and path towards implementation in patient care. HI-TRON Mainz will also support bringing together basic scientists and clinician scientists for joint translational Kick-Start Seed Funding applications. Proposed projects are expected to be highly innovative, aligned with the priority areas of HI-TRON and its platforms and may focus on diagnostic and therapeutic aspects of cancer immunotherapy in the areas of biomarker development and identification and validation of new therapeutic targets.

Funding Criteria

- Project proposals describe translationally relevant, **international cutting-edge science** related to **personalized immunotherapy** of cancer. In addition, project applications outline the contribution to **the strategic excellence** of HI-TRON Mainz.
- Project proposals must be exclusively **HI-TRON Mainz** projects or must be **multidisciplinary and multi-institutional, demonstrating an outstanding potential for synergies among** research groups and/or clinical departments from **the University Medical Center Mainz, Johannes Gutenberg-University Mainz, TRON gGmbH and DKFZ**.
- Principal or independent Investigators of the University Medical Center Mainz, the Johannes Gutenberg-University Mainz, TRON gGmbH and DKFZ are eligible to apply.
 - Proposals with at least one PI from Heidelberg and Mainz are preferred.
 - If PIs have employment relationships with multiple institutions, all affiliations must be listed.
 - Applications must be supported either by an excellent track record of the applicant and/or by an excellent preliminary data basis.
 - Proposals by young investigators are explicitly encouraged.
 - Issues of diversity and equality will be considered.
- Projects that have a predominant focus on basic science without a clear translational focus will not be funded.
- Projects that are predominantly of commercial interests and pursue development strategies of companies will not be funded.
- In case of funding and according to data protection regulations, handling of pseudonymized clinical and research data as well as biomaterials generated during the study must be aligned with the recommendations of the respective HI-TRON Mainz task forces and the

DKFZ Clinical Trials Office. Whenever it is possible and reasonable, the HI-TRON Mainz infrastructure should be used for the implementation of the projects.

Funding Modes and Duration

The HI-TRON Mainz Kick-Start Seed Funding Program provides seed funding for the initiation of new joint projects within HI-TRON Mainz and its founding partners, the University Medical Center Mainz, Johannes Gutenberg-University Mainz, TRON gGmbH and DKFZ. Funding may be requested for up to 2 years and can be extended upon positive evaluation. The maximum funding per project is 200.000 € over two years.

Proposal Templates and Evaluation Procedure

- Applicants must submit the full project form in English (maximum of three pages per project description). Short proposals must provide a concise description of the Kick-Start Seed Funding project and any information required to judge the quality and feasibility of the project. Note that only proposals that comply with the specific limitations on page numbers will be considered.
- Evaluation of Kick-Start Seed Funding project proposals will follow a two-step procedure:
 - Members of the HI-TRON Mainz Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) and further external experts named by the Management Board of DKFZ will evaluate and prioritize the short proposals.
 - Applicants, who are successful in the first evaluation step will be invited to submit a full proposal (i.e. detailed description of methods and implementation plan, which will be used to keep track of the deliverables; max. 10 pages; templates will be provided). The HI-TRON Mainz SAB will evaluate the full proposals and make a funding recommendation to the Steering Committee of HI-TRON Mainz for the best projects.

Timelines

01.08.2020	Call for proposals
01.10.2020	Deadline for submission of short proposals
01.12.2020	Request for full proposals
01.02.2021	Deadline for submission of full proposals
01.04.2021	Start of funding for the 1st stage of financing

Contact

HI-TRON Mainz Kick-Start Seed Funding Program 2021

Helmholtz Institute for Translational Oncology Mainz (HI-TRON Mainz)
German Cancer Research Center (DKFZ)
Hitron-mainz@dkfz.de