

**NUCLEIC ACID THERAPEUTICS INITIATIVE (NATi)
T SERIES CALL FOR PROPOSALS
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

Definitions

RNA: ribonucleic acid
mRNA: messenger RNA
siRNA: small interfering RNA
ASO: antisense oligonucleotide
DNA: deoxyribonucleic acid
TTO: Technology Transfer Office
IEO: Innovation and Enterprise Office
LOI: Letter of Intent
RCA: Research Collaboration Agreement
IPA: In-Principle Approval

General

Eligibility

1. Who is eligible to apply for the T-Series Call for Proposals?

- a. The Lead Investigator and Co-Investigators as defined in Grant Terms and Conditions should:
 - i. Hold a primary appointment in a Singapore publicly funded research institution or an institute of higher learning (IHL). The Lead Investigator must hold a primary appointment of at least 0.7 FTE in Singapore.
 - ii. Lead a laboratory or research programme which carries out research in Singapore
 - iii. Possess track record of leadership ability in coordinating research programmes and providing mentorship to research teams as well as having productive research outcomes. A track record in securing IRS will be advantageous.
- b. Exceptions to the above eligibility criteria will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Please submit a request to the NATi Coordinating Office.
- c. Collaborators as defined in Grant Terms and Conditions are not eligible to receive NATi funding. Companies can participate in NATi projects only as collaborators. There are no exceptions.

2. I am a postdoctoral fellow. Can I apply to be a Lead Investigator/Co-Investigator?

Please submit a request to the NATi Coordinating Office at enquiry@nati.sg before or during your submission. Requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

3. Can funding be given to international collaborators? Are overseas universities eligible to receive funding?

No, NATi can only fund public-sector researchers in Singapore.

Scope

4. What is the difference between T01 and T02?

T01 funds rapid preclinical development of an RNA vaccine or therapeutic in response to an ongoing disease outbreak, whereas T02 funds strategic research projects with industry partners that can help to accelerate the development and commercialisation of RNA drugs

and RNA therapeutics-related technologies in Singapore. Both calls are meant to nimbly capture emerging opportunities that are strategic to Singapore.

5. What nucleic acid modalities will NATi cover?

NATi will focus on mRNA, siRNA, ASO and novel RNA modalities for vaccine or therapeutic purposes. Other modalities, such as DNA modalities, gene editing and small molecules targeting RNA are excluded.

6. Will NATi fund clinical trials?

NATi currently does not fund clinical trials.

Assessment

7. What are the criteria on which proposals will be evaluated?

Please refer to the Information Deck for the evaluation criteria.

8. Who are on the evaluation panel?

The identities of the reviewers are kept strictly confidential. NATi is governed by the Cell and Gene Therapy Steering Committee appointed by the Human Health and Potential Executive Committee (HHP EXCO) and supported by a Scientific and Business Advisory Board (SBAB).

9. If the proposed project results in commercial value but the benefits are accrued to an overseas entity, will the project be supported?

The case for value capture in Singapore should be clear for a project to be supported.

Funding

10. What are indirect costs? Should this be included in the funding quantum?

Indirect costs are incurred for common or joint objectives and therefore cannot be identified readily and specifically with a particular sponsored research project. Indirect costs contribute to the ability of the institutions to support such research projects, e.g. providing research space, research administration and utilities and not through the actual performance of activities under the sponsored projects. Indirect costs will be 30% of direct costs awarded.

11. Is there a minimum funding amount?

No, there is no minimum funding amount. The maximum funding amount for each call is stated on our website.

12. Can proposals exceed the maximum funding duration?

Proposed projects should be completed within the maximum funding duration. Variations will be considered only if there are compelling reasons. Awarded projects and platforms will be considered for funding renewal if they have met or exceeded approved milestones and deliverables.

Others

13. Can one proposal have 2 Co-Lead Investigators with complementary skillsets?

NATi projects are expected to be agile. It is preferred that one investigator takes the lead, i.e. one Lead Investigator.

14. Is endorsement by my institution necessary for proposal submission?

An endorsement by the Director of Research (DOR) from the Lead Investigator's Host Institution is mandatory. This can be via email or whatever system that your institution uses.

15. Who can I reach out to for further clarification and enquiries?

Please direct additional enquiries to enquiry@nati.sg.

T01-Specific

Outbreak Response

16. What is considered an outbreak?

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO)¹, a disease outbreak is the occurrence of disease cases in excess of normal expectancy. The number of cases varies according to the disease-causing agent, and the size and type of previous and existing exposure to the agent.

To be considered for NATi's funding, the submission should address an outbreak that presents a significant public health risk to Singapore and can be effectively managed using RNA therapeutics and/or vaccines.

17. What are the key considerations to enable a rapid response?

The use of existing manpower, equipment and platform technologies is strongly encouraged to achieve the speed required. The investigators involved should be driven by speed without compromising quality. Milestones, outcomes and downstream receptacles should be clearly articulated to accelerate clinical translation and effectively address the outbreak.

Application

18. When will the outcome of the application be communicated to applicants?

T01 is a one-step process, where the initial submission is a full proposal. The outcome of review will be communicated to the Lead Investigator within 2 – 3 months of full proposal submission. After final budget review, successful applicants will be issued In-Principle Approval and subsequently a Letter of Award.

T02-Specific

Industry Partnership

19. When should the Research Collaboration Agreement (RCA) with the Industry Partner(s) be signed and submitted?

Submission to NATi should contain a ready-to-sign RCA that has not been fully executed. If and after NATi issues an award, the RCA should be fully executed within two months from notification of In-Principle Approval (IPA).

20. How will Intellectual Property (IP) be managed?

¹ <https://www.who.int/teams/environment-climate-change-and-health/emergencies/disease-outbreaks>

NATi will observe the National IP Protocol. Please approach your IEO or TTO for more details.

21. Is there a preference on the type of company?

There is no preference as long as the value capture for Singapore can be articulated. Examples of value capture include number of new R&D jobs created, licensing revenue, etc.

22. Is the T02 proposal limited to a single Industry Partner per application?

No. All industry partners should be party to the same Research Collaboration Agreement (RCA) and contribute to the same project. The RCA will be a critical component in the consideration of an award.

23. Can one company submit multiple proposals?

NATi only funds public sector research performers. Hence, only public sector research performers can apply for NATi funding. The same industry partner may collaborate with more than one research performer in more than one submission. Each submission should be accompanied by a unique RCA.

24. What level of business development support can I expect from the NATi Coordinating Office?

The NATi Coordinating Office works closely with the Biomedical Sciences Industry Partnership Office, Economic Development Board, Enterprise Singapore and various Innovation & Enterprise Offices (IEOs) and Tech Transfer Offices (TTOs) to engage potential industry partners and investors. If you have technologies ready for co-development, licensing, spin-off and other forms of commercialisation, we can help to identify industry collaborators, NATi will also organise symposia and other events for networking and community building opportunities.

Industry R&D Spending (IRS)

25. What does IRS mean and which IRS contributions are admissible?

IRS is an investment that a company commits to spend in Singapore for R&D and can comprise cash and/or in-kind contributions.

In-kind contributions from Industry Partner should be for the purpose of conducting R&D activities in Singapore under the collaboration. These activities can be conducted at the Public Performer's premises or the Industry Partner's research premises in Singapore.

Applicants should take note of the following requirements during the proposal scoping, and also during project implementation upon award of the grant:

- IRS contributions should be spent in Singapore,
- IRS contributions should be directly related to the R&D project,
- Indirect costs may be recognised as exceptional IRS, capped at 20% of the total admissible direct research contributions by the Industry Partner(s).
- IRS contributions should be reflected in research collaboration agreements signed between the Performer and Industry Partner(s).

- Changes in IRS contribution during project implementation would require NATi's approval.

Definitions:

Committed IRS: IRS that a company formally pledges to put in for the collaboration with the Performer. This amount will be included in the proposal at the time of submission.

Target IRS: Expected realised IRS from the Industry Partner(s) as recorded in the Letter of Award. Target IRS can refer to both project-level (especially if multiple companies are involved) and company-level target.

Realised IRS: Actual IRS that the Industry Partner(s) has provided to the Performer during the project. The realised in-kind IRS amount will be provided in the signed declaration by the Industry Partner(s) that is submitted annually to the grantor via the Performer. For realised cash IRS, this will be verified through cash invoices and receipts.

26. Is it possible to clock a service agreement as IRS to a T02 project?

Only RCAs will be considered in the submission and in the clocking of IRS.

27. Does licensing revenue count towards IRS?

No, but it will be considered as a favourable outcome due to the project.

28. How strict is NATi on the matching of total grant request to cash contributions from the industry partner?

NATi expects at least a match of 50% of total grant request to cash contributions but would consider exceptions justified by significant economic value capture the project could bring to Singapore. Examples of value capture include number of new R&D jobs created, licensing revenue, etc.

29. How can I find out more about IRS admissibility?

Please contact us at enquiry@nati.sg.

Application

30. When will the outcome of the application be communicated to applicants?

T02 is a 2-step application process. Applicants will be required to submit a Letter of Intent (LOI) in the first stage. The outcome of the Letter of Intent (LOI) review will be communicated to the Lead Investigator within 2 – 3 weeks of LOI submission.

Shortlisted applicants will be invited to submit a full written proposal, and the Lead Investigator may be invited to present. The outcome of review of all full applications will be communicated to the Lead Investigator within 2 – 3 months of proposal submission. After final budget review, successful applicants will be issued In-Principle Approval and subsequently a Letter of Award.