

**NUCLEIC ACID THERAPEUTICS INITIATIVE (NATi)
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

Scope

1. 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 currently excluded.

2. Will you fund clinical trials?

NATi currently does not fund clinical trials.

Application

3. 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.

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

An email endorsement by the Director of Research (DOR) from the Lead Investigator's Host Institution is mandatory.

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

Please contact the NATi Coordinating Office at enquiry@nati.sg at least 7 days before the closing date of the call. Requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Assessment

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

Please refer to the Information Deck for the evaluation criteria.

7. 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).

8. 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.

9. Is industry collaboration required? What documentation should I submit to demonstrate industry support at the point of application?

Industry collaboration is highly desirable. Applicants should demonstrate alignment with industry needs. This can be indicated with supporting documentation in the form of:

- *A ready-to-sign research collaboration agreement (RCA) with an industry partner*
- *Letter(s) of support from industry partner(s) ideally with clearly defined conditions for cash commitment, e.g. scope of collaboration, amount of industry research and cash to be committed, etc)*
- *A practical industry engagement plan to generate industry R&D spending*

Other forms of documentation can be proposed and provided.

Collaborations

10. 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 IEOs and 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.

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

NATi can only fund public-sector researchers in Singapore.

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

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

Project Management

13. What is the stage-gate model? Why is NATi adopting it?

Stage-gating is a structured approach to facilitate resource allocation based on the project's viability. The stage gates serve as decision points to evaluate whether a project should progress to the next stage. This model has been commonly adopted by organisations, such as Wellcome Leap and the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), to speed up innovation without compromising research quality.

14. How will the stage gates and go/no-go points affect my research?

Regular meetings will be organised to review progress. Projects which fall short of the stated deliverables and milestones may be subject to adjustment, revision or termination.

15. Do I need a project manager for my team?

It is highly encouraged to assign a project manager to monitor and manage the progress of the project. This project manager can be part-time or full-time, depending on the specific needs of the project, and will work closely with the project management team from the NATi Coordinating Office.

Funding

16. 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.

17. Is there a minimum funding amount?

The scope of the proposal to address the problem statement(s) should determine the minimum budget.

18. 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

19. Why does NATi require the usage of electronic laboratory notebooks?

Good electronic laboratory notebooks provide longevity and traceability of experimental data, along with strict controls for data access and protection. This is paramount for successful technology transfer and downstream drug development. Applicants are strongly encouraged to budget in tools and systems for data depository and digitisation for integration and analysis.

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

Please direct additional enquiries to enquiry@nati.sg.