Frequently Asked Questions for

Industry Alignment Fund – Industry Collaboration Projects (IAF–ICP)

S/N	Question	Response
OVERVIEW		
1.	Who awards/administers IAF-ICP funding?	The IAF-ICP Strategic Oversight Committee (SOC) will jointly assess proposals from public research performers, regardless of Domain focus areas. For each IAF-ICP proposal, endorsement for award requires unanimous agreement of the SOC, comprising: • CEO A*STAR • MD EDB or MD EnterpriseSG (depending on which agency is more actively engaging the Industry Partner involved) • CEO NRF A*STAR as the IAF-ICP Implementing Agency will manage the IAF-ICP portfolio budget (including fund disbursement and monitoring of overall fund commitment and utilisation), assist research performers in scoping of proposals together with the SOC agencies (A*STAR, EDB, EnterpriseSG and NRF), document assessments and award decisions, and track progress of awarded projects.
2.	When does the IAF-ICP grant process start, and when will we be notified?	IAF-ICP is **not** operated as a grant call. Applications are accepted all year round. Applications must be complete when submitted, and must include endorsements from both the host institution's Director of Research (DOR), and the host institution's Innovation & Enterprise Office (IEO). Public research performers considering applying for IAF-ICP funding may seek guidance in preparing their proposals from the SOC agencies. In general, the IAF-ICP application may take up to 6 months from submission of full proposal to the issuance of Letter of Award, depending on whether the proposal has adequately addressed the key evaluation criteria and the time taken by the applicant to respond to queries raised during the evaluation stages. Applicants should note that proposals seeking more than S$25M will generally require a longer time from submission to issuance of LOA, as there will be additional evaluation stages.

3.	What does Industry R&D spending (IRS) mean and how do we clock them?	IRS is an investment that a company commits to spend in Singapore for R&D, and can comprise cash or in-kind contributions. Applicants should take note of the following requirements during the proposal scoping, and also during project implementation upon award of the grant: • The IRS contributions should be spent in Singapore • The IRS contributions should be directly related to the IAF-ICP 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). • The IRS contributions should be reflected in research collaboration agreements signed between the Performer and Industry Partner(s). <u>Definitions:</u> 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 ICP-level target (especially if multi-company) 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 that is submitted annually to the grantor via the Performer. For realised cash IRS, this will be verified through cash invoices and receipts.
SCOPE OF PROJECT		
4.	There have been calls for specific industries or areas for IAF-PP and other funding schemes. Is IAF-ICP open to projects in all research areas?	Meritorious proposals that meet the funding criteria and focus on the research areas within the 4 RIE2025 R&D domains will be eligible for consideration under the IAF-ICP scheme. IAF-ICP and IAF-PP are intended to fund different types of projects and thus have distinct assessment criteria and processes: • IAF-ICP for those where an industry partner is ready to provide upfront commitment of funding towards a specific set of objectives. • IAF-PP where technology may be less developed or at pre-competitive stage and industry is generally not ready to invest in it. For more information on the 4 R&D Domains under the national RIE2025 funding framework, please visit: https://www.nrf.gov.sg/rie2025-plan

5.	What are the differences between IAF-ICP and IAF-PP?	The IAF Pre-Positioning Programme (IAF-PP) is intended to develop industry-ready capabilities and integrated and multidisciplinary programmes with early industry involvement. Such programmes should have the potential to contribute to the growth of new sectors and to catalyse new activities in existing sectors. More details on the IAF-PP scheme can be found at https://www.a-star.edu.sg/Research/Funding-Opportunities/Grants-Sponsorship/IAF-PP.aspx. Unlike the IAF-ICP, the IAF-PP does not require upfront industry commitment but is expected to lead to industry projects and investment in 3 to 5 years. The differences between the IAF-ICP and the IAF-PP are summarised in the table below.

Characteristic	**IAF-ICP**	**IAF-PP**
Application is open only to public research performers	✓	✓
Provides partial funding for strategic industry projects with economic outcomes	✓	✓
Supports development of industry-ready capabilities and integrated and multidisciplinary programmes with early industry involvement	✓	✓
Requires upfront commitment from Industry Partner(s)	✓	✗
Governance	Pan-Domain	Domain-specific [1] (separate applications to MTC, HHP, SNDE, USS)

[1] The 4 R&D Domains under the national RIE2025 funding framework are Manufacturing, Trade and Connectivity (MTC), Human Health and Potential (HHP), Smart Nation and Digital Economy (SNDE), and Urban Solutions and Sustainability (USS).

INDUSTRY COLLABORATION		
6.	How can I explain about IAF-ICP to prospective Industry Partners? Are we applying for IAF-ICP together?	IAF-ICP is a scheme to encourage more research collaborations between industry players and public research performers in Singapore. The government incentivises public research performers on industry projects with an aim to build up industry-relevant research capabilities. These parties are involved to make the following contributions: • The **Government** (funding), • The **Public Research Performers** (research manpower e.g. professors or PhDs under training, equipment, facilities), • The **Industry Partners** (funding, domain experts, problem statements, proprietary data sets, etc.) Public research performers should adopt the "**project first, grant scheme second**" approach for all grant applications. This means the industry partner and public research institution should agree on a specific R&D objective and key problem statements, and on the contributions by each party for the project. The determination of suitable schemes, e.g. Gap funding, institutional core funding or IAF-ICP, should be an internal decision by the public research performers. If the IAF-ICP application is successful, the funding will be awarded to the public research performer. There will be KPIs imposed to ensure value is created and captured for ICP industry partners and the research performers. Research performers and ICP industry partners that are seeking IAF-ICP funding to fund subsequent phases will also be expected to report on the post-project outcomes of their earlier phase. Where industry partners are already requesting for incentives from economic agencies such as EDB or EnterpriseSG, these must be declared in the IAF-ICP application, and will be factored into the assessment of the IAF-ICP application. It should be noted that grants awarded by the economic agencies to industry partners are not allowed to be counted as admissible IRS contributions by the industry partners.
7.	Is the IAF-ICP proposal limited to a single Industry Partner per application?	No. The IAF-ICP proposal can include more than 1 industry partner so long as the industry partners share the common key problem statement, and are willing to collaborate with one another and the public research performer, and also contribute to the research objective of the project.

<table>
<tr><td>8.</td><td>What is the minimum contribution my Industry Partner needs to put in?</td><td>The minimum recommended ICP funding to Industry R&D Spending (IRS) leverage ratio is 1:1.5 at project level. However, if the proposal involves only Singapore-based SME(s) or startup(s), a minimum IRS leverage ratio of 1:1.0 will apply at project level.

The table below shows how much IRS is required from industry partner(s) for a S$10M ICP proposal. Please note that S$10M is not the minimum ICP budget amount required, but an example amount given for the purpose of illustrating the minimum IRS contribution leverage ratio.

<table>
<tr><th>Industry partner(s)</th><th>ICP budget</th><th>Minimum IRS</th><th>Source of IRS</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Proposal involves only one industry partner</td></tr>
<tr><td>Company is not a Singapore-based SME or startup</td><td>$10M</td><td>$15M</td><td rowspan="2">Solely contributed by single industry partner</td></tr>
<tr><td>Company is a Singapore-based SME or startup</td><td>$10M</td><td>$10M</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Proposal involves two or more industry partners</td></tr>
<tr><td>At least one company is not a Singapore-based SME or startup</td><td>$10M</td><td>$15M</td><td rowspan="2">Contributed by all industry partners; need not be equal amounts as long as the total sum meets the minimum IRS</td></tr>
<tr><td>All companies are Singapore-based SMEs or startups</td><td>$10M</td><td>$10M</td></tr>
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</td></tr>
<tr><td>9.</td><td>My Industry Partner is committing only contributions in-kind. Can I still apply for IAF-ICP?</td><td>We encourage public research performers to seek cash contributions from industry partners, even though both contributions in cash and in-kind are considered as IRS. This is to ensure greater skin-in-game and commitment.</td></tr>
<tr><td>10.</td><td>Can we include the company’s past commitments in a joint lab/R&D centre into the R&D spending?</td><td>In general, deals and commitments made prior should not be factored into new proposals seeking funding from RIE2025 IAF-ICP. Deals that expand or build on a previously established joint lab/R&D centre should be scoped and budgeted to clearly distinguish the company’s incremental commitments, over and above previous ones. Outcomes of past commitments will also be taken into consideration during the evaluation.</td></tr>
<tr><td>11.</td><td>Company is not willing to provide details on its contributions (e.g. no breakdown of EOM) either during grant application or during project implementation. What should I do?</td><td><u>Grant Application Stage</u>
The project proposal is unlikely to be approved if details on company contributions are not provided during grant application.

<u>Project Implementation Stage</u>
Industry partners should clearly document and valuate the in-kind contributions provided with sufficient details (such as itemised breakdown of such in-kind contributions for manpower, equipment, and other operating expenditures). The IA will also request declarations and verifications from the Performer that in-kind contributions to the Performer, e.g. consumables or equipment, have been received.

IAF-ICP funding may be terminated if the Industry Partner consistently falls short of the committed IRS schedule provided in the IAF-ICP application and/or the project milestones and deliverables are not progressing as planned.</td></tr>
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12.	When should the Research Collaboration Agreement with the Industry Partner be signed and submitted?	Broadly, these are the stages of discussions between the public research performer(s) and the industry partner(s) involved: • **Project scoping** to define the problem statements and research objectives • **Discussion** on IP arrangements and contributions from all parties involved, e.g. research expertise, estimation of resources required, background IP • **Development** and **submission** of the Full Proposal • **Issuance** of In-Principle Approval • **Submission** of Research Collaboration Agreement within two months from the IPA issuance. • **Issuance of Letter of Award** The Research Collaboration Agreement should document the agreement to contribute the IRS and complete the Project Milestones as per the approved proposal and as per institution's procedures and requirements. To facilitate a smoother conversion of the In-Principle Approval to the Letter of Award, the Performer is encouraged to share with the IA a draft of the RCA as soon as it is ready for signing.
APPLICATION & ASSESSMENT		
13.	Where can I download the application template?	All relevant documents and information can be found on: https://www.a-star.edu.sg/Research/funding-opportunities/grants-sponsorship/iaf-icp
14.	If my proposal gets rejected for IAF-ICP funding, can I submit it for other funding schemes e.g. IAF-PP, Central Gap? Is there an internal funneling mechanism?	It depends on the nature of the proposal. For example, IAF-ICP and IAF-PP are intended to fund different types of projects: • IAF-ICP for those where an industry partner (or group of industry partners) is ready to provide upfront commitment of funding towards a specific set of objectives. • IAF-PP where technology may be less developed or at pre-competitive stage and industry is generally not ready to invest in it. The SOC agencies will endeavour to provide feedback for rejected proposals and recommend alternate sources of funding where appropriate.
15.	If I am awarded IAF-PP funding for an R&D programme or platform which subsequently attracts Industry Partners, can I apply for IAF-ICP funding for the subsequent project?	Any request for additional funding (IAF-PP or ICP) should be justified based on the incremental merit of the project and is subject to the SOC's approval. Applicants should exclude any deliverables achieved prior in their new proposals seeking funding from RIE2025 IAF-ICP. Past performance of the PP programme will also be taken into account in the evaluation of the subsequent IAF-ICP application.

16.	How long is the application process expected to take? I need to manage the expectations of my Industry Partner.	The length of time from submission of Full Proposal to the issuance of Letter of Award could take between 2 and 6 months. This will depend on whether the proposal has adequately addressed the key evaluation criteria, i.e. potential economic impact of the proposal, and on the time the Performer takes to get back on the queries raised during the evaluation stage and the signed agreements after in-principle approval. Performer should note that proposals seeking more than S$25M may require a longer timeline, and to manage the timelines carefully such that it is appropriately resourced by the time it needs to begin tangible expenditures. IAF-ICP will only be awarded on an advancement basis for expenditures that post-date the LOA.
17.	Will a project receive support from IAF-ICP as long as it meets the minimum qualifying criteria?	Beyond simply meeting the minimum qualifying criteria, approval of funding is subject to technical and economic considerations and SOC's assessment of the project's potential for value creation and value capture in Singapore. In addition to meeting the minimum IRS contributions, the project should also achieve other desired outcomes, such as licensing revenue, no. of new R&D jobs created, and no. of new collaborations with the local ecosystem especially SMEs/startups.
18.	What are the evaluation criteria for IAF-ICP? Can you elaborate more on "technical and economic considerations, and potential for economic impact for Singapore"?	Potential for economic outcomes will be a key criterion in assessing the proposal. Examples of economic outcomes include new/differentiated products or services and for commercialisation in or via Singapore, extent of local value capture, and licensing income. Industry collaboration should allow or lead to some or all the following: i. **Research Performer:** Building up of industry-relevant and sophisticated capabilities ii. **Industry Partners:** Building up of innovation capabilities in locally based companies, resulting in increased Business Expenditure on R&D (BERD); strengthened economic positioning e.g. anchoring of product development and product charters in Singapore; greater market competitiveness iii. **Ecosystem:** New or expanded enterprises (e.g. suppliers), startups, and manufacturing activities in Singapore, new product or process innovation introduced, revenue generated or cost saved from innovation The SOC agencies recognise that not all economic outcomes may manifest within the timeframe of the collaboration. Beyond the review of yearly progress reports during the ICP support period, respective IEOs will continue to engage Performer to gather the outcomes and impacts of the project for up to two years after the end of the ICP. Please be reminded that IAF-ICP is <u>not</u> an academic grant. Performers are expected to work closely with industry partners in moving downstream towards the co-creation of new projects, solutions, and services, to create and capture value for Singapore.

19.	Are there less stringent criteria for projects with startups and/or SMEs?	All proposals will be assessed against the evaluation criteria for IAF-ICP. For projects involving local startups and/or SMEs, the SOC may consider funding projects of high potential that do not meet these minimum requirements. If you have a project involving a local startup and/or SME, you are encouraged to reach out to EnterpriseSG prior to submitting the Full Proposal to IA via IAF-ICP@enterprisesg.gov.sg. To encourage participation from SMEs and start-ups in IAF-ICP and to contribute to their market competitiveness and increasing disposition to leverage R&D for product differentiation, a pilot trial is in progress from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2024 to apply a minimum IRS leverage ratio of 1:1 for proposals that involve only Singapore-based SMEs and start-ups.
20.	Can startups and/or SMEs tap on other funding schemes if it participates in IAF-ICP? What funding schemes can startups and/or SMEs tap on to invest in R&D?	Startups and/or SMEs may tap on other funding schemes while participating in IAF-ICP. Grants received or applied for by the industry partner should be declared in the Full Proposal, and grant-funded items will not count towards IRS contributions.
PROJECT BUDGET		
21.	What is the minimum IAF-ICP funding budget for a proposal submission?	The IAF-ICP budget request should be at least S$1M or greater. Performers should take note of and accord sufficient time for the evaluation process prior to submitting their IAF-ICP proposal to the Implementing Agency.
22.	Company is contributing S$15M towards the project. Does it mean that I am entitled to S$10M IAF-ICP?	IAF-ICP is not awarded based on a matching ratio basis. Instead, Performers should apply for IAF-ICP to gap-fund the contemplated project, having a comprehensive idea of the full project budget and due consideration of all available funding sources. Approval of exact funding amount is subject to the SOC's assessment of line items and justifications in the project budget.
23.	Does IAF-ICP provide for indirect costs (overheads)?	Performers must include any indirect costs in their IAF-ICP budget request. Funding for indirect costs is subject to approval of the IAF-ICP SOC and capped at 30% of the direct costs listed in the Performer's IAF-ICP budget request.
POST-AWARD MATTERS		
24.	What is the minimum submission timeline for variation requests?	Requests should be made to the Grantor 3 months before the end of the project term, except for no-cost grant extensions, which should be made before the last 6 months of the original end of the project term. More details on variations to the Research can be found in the "Guidelines for Management of A*STAR Grants".

25.	How long does the variation request take to process? I want to avoid having retrospective variations.	The time required to process the variation request will vary depending on the nature and number of the variations in the request, and also the completeness of the supporting documents, e.g. justification and necessary approvals*, mitigation plans and catchup plans, etc. *These refer to approvals from the respective Research Offices, institutional research leadership, Steering Committee / Governing Board / Ethics Committee set up for the Research (if applicable), and the Implementing Agency.
26.	Are retrospective variations allowed?	No, retrospective or late requests to Grantor will not be allowed unless there is compelling justification. If the public research performer has proceeded with a project variation before Grantor's approval is obtained, the Grantor may claw back the ICP funding that was used to carry out the unapproved work.
OTHERS		
27.	What is the typical IP arrangement with companies for an IAF-ICP funded project?	The usual IP arrangements such as ownership will stand (e.g., SDSO, JDJO). Performers must take reference from the National IP Protocol, and consider non-exclusive IP arrangements with reasonable option period. IAF-ICP proposals should demonstrate proper IP management, downstream outcomes with its Industry Partner(s), such as licensing income and adoption of new innovations, products or processes, if the project is successful.
28.	Who are the appropriate personnel in EDB, EnterpriseSG, NRF and A*STAR that we can approach for help regarding IAF-ICP?	PIs should first approach their Research Office and/or IEO/TTO. Research Offices or IEOs can work with the SOC agencies as follows: • A*STAR for A*STAR RIs, Hospitals and AMCs • NRF for IHLs i.e. Universities, Polytechnics, and CREATE entities • EDB or EnterpriseSG for assistance on matters related industry partners
29.	Who can I reach out to if I have any queries that were not addressed?	Should you have any queries that have not been addressed in the FAQ, please contact the IAF-ICP Implementing Agency via iaf_icp@hq.a-star.edu.sg.