
Lymphoma Challenge

CALL for Research Proposals

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1 Program Overview

ETH Zurich announces a program called “Lymphoma Challenge” to fund research involving an interdisciplinary team aiming to investigate hematologic malignancies and relevant premalignant with regard to their etiology, pathogenesis, diagnosis, prognosis and therapy.

The generous support of Dr. Walter & Edith Fischli allows to attract young talents and to foster collaboration between basic and clinical scientists, with the intent to bring together competences and enhance the transfer of basic research findings to clinical usefulness. The overarching goal is to address open clinical issues and major challenges in (bio)medicine, as well as the development of novel therapies by means of innovative scientific approaches.

Starting 2021, an annual call for research proposals will be issued, managed by ETH Zurich. The program is intended to provide support for research projects, typically at the postdoctoral / clinical resident level over an initial two-year period. An additional year may be available after application for extension and a peer-reviewed selection process.

2 Call Topics

Applications are sought proposing novel approaches to the prevention, diagnosis or treatment of hematological malignancies, lymphomas and related pre-malignant conditions. Proposals should be based on molecular, cellular or integrated systems findings, be conceptually innovative and test novel hypothesis. The application should have a clear link to clinical translation of the studies proposed and the results expected.

3 Eligibility Requirements

Lymphoma challenge is a tandem program to foster interdisciplinary research in hematological malignant and pre-malignant conditions. Grant applications must therefore be a collaborative and interdisciplinary proposal from an ETH Zurich research group *and* a partnering clinical institution for funding of a junior scientist typically at the postdoctoral / clinical resident level.

The following eligibility criteria must be fulfilled:

- The research proposal must be submitted by an ETH Zurich professor as project leader, holding at least a 50% position for the intended duration of the project.
- The project partner from a hospital institution in Switzerland must have a doctoral degree, be independent and may have a faculty position at a university or medical school.
- Each interdisciplinary team must consist of at least 3 members: the project leader from ETH Zurich, a team principal from the partnering institution and one to two junior investigator(s), typically at the postdoctoral / clinical resident level.
- Other project partners are welcome but cannot receive funding from this program.
- Applicants may only submit one new proposal or one application for renewal per call.

4 Funding Availability

Two projects per year will be supported to a combined maximum of CHF 800'000. Each project can initially be financed up to a maximum of CHF 400'000 for a period of two years.

Follow-up funding up to CHF 200'000 can be requested through a renewal application for one additional year, the decision will be made on a per project basis. Maximum funding duration per project is 3 years.

Eligible costs must be directly linked to the project and must be justified in the proposal. The funding granted may include:

- postdoctoral salaries (standard salary rates are applicable)
- cost for consumables / research supplies
- contractual agreements
- service / usage fees for facilities / technology platforms
- travel expenses
- costs to harmonize datasets (patient data, omics data).

Construction and equipment cost as well as the salaries of the project leaders at ETH Zurich and the partner institution(s) are not eligible for funding. Indirect costs cannot be rewarded.

Upon project approval, funds will be allocated at the start of the project for the entire duration of the project.

5 Deadline for the Call for Proposals

The deadline for submitting proposals is **30 June** each year.

Notification of the decision will usually be given within three to four months of the submission deadline. Projects may start immediately after approval and at the latest within four months after the reception of the decision letter.

6 Submission Procedure

Applications and supporting documentation must be written in English. The applications must be submitted electronically and **as a single file in pdf-format** to lymphomachallenge@ethz.ch.

Applications should contain the following:

- i. A cover sheet in which the project leader from ETH Zurich and the team principal from the partner institution is clearly identified and basic information is given (name, position, department name, institution name, address, email, responsibility center at ETH Zurich) and in which the title of the project, funds requested and key words are indicated.
- ii. An executive summary, including specific goals (1 page max.)
- iii. The scientific proposal, including the scientific / clinical question, the state of research, the research plan, expected milestones, as well as a list of literature references. The research plan should include the scientific approach, such as study design and analytical methods and contain sufficient technical details so that the reviewers understand the potential and limitations of the approach. The scientific proposal must not exceed 5 pages, excluding references (A4, single line spacing, 10-point Arial font or equivalent).
- iv. A clear statement (maximum one page) explaining the combined expertise and added value of the planned collaboration, the expected impact and timeline to clinical application together with plans for future funding and strategic vision.
- v. A budget outlining the requested funds and justification. In addition, available resources for the realization of the project should be indicated.
- vi. Indication of whether the application has also been sent to other funding sources and whether or not obtained funding would be complementary.
- vii. CVs and publication lists for the past five years must be submitted for all senior team members and the junior scientist if already known.

ETH Zurich strives to promote gender equality in scientific research. Gender must be consistently taken into account from the proposal to the research and dissemination phase if it involves humans as research objects and must be considered in the experimental design, data collection, analysis and interpretation of the outcomes. If the gender dimension is not being considered, a justification must be supplied why it is not being addressed.

If applicable, relevant ethical, legal and social considerations should be included in the proposal. The prospective research must also comply with the existing ethics regulations and adhere to the principles of research integrity valid at the ETH Zurich.

Specifications for renewal applications:

Follow-up funding up for one additional year can be requested through a renewal application. The aim of an extension is to support projects with promising results that require more time for the translational part, with a particular focus on clinical application in the third year. For the submission, the specified format outlined in the submission procedure must be followed. Relevant parts of the original application may be incorporated as needed.

7 Grant Review Process and Evaluation Criteria

All proposals will be appraised by a scientific evaluation committee that is chaired by Prof. Bernd Bodenmiller. The committee includes faculty members from ETH Zurich and representatives of hospitals in Switzerland that are leading experts in the field of lymphoma research. It will make a funding recommendation to the attention of the Vice President Research of the ETH Zurich, who makes the final funding decision.

The decision on funding is thereby based on a strict, quality-based evaluation process. The main criteria considered in the scientific evaluation are:

- Relevance and strategic fit to the Lymphoma Challenge program and prospective impact
- Scientific excellence assessed according to:
 - Originality / novelty of research objectives
 - Suitability and quality of research approach
 - Feasibility (incl. resources, organization and management of the study)
 - Competence and relevant experience of the applicants in the proposed project
- Added value with respect to the combined contributions from the partners, i.e. interdisciplinarity and translational nature of the collaboration.

8 Reporting

A scientific and financial report must be submitted annually indicating project status. A final report is due upon completion of the project, including all relevant outcomes (publications, patents, presentations at international conferences, etc.).

Contact: For further information, please contact:
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