



Seed Fund 3rd call

Alliance4Life_ACTIONS

The project “Alliance for Life Sciences: From Strategies to Actions in Central and Eastern Europe” received funding from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No. 964997.

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1. What is the Alliance4Life Seed Fund Call?

Alliance4Life is a cooperation of 12 life science institutions and universities located in 11 Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries. The following Alliance4Life's member institutions are at the same time beneficiaries of the A4L_ACTIONS project, from which the funding will be provided:

- Masaryk University (MU) Czechia
- St. Anne's University Hospital Brno/ International Clinical Research Center (ICRC) Czechia
- Biomedical Research Center of the Slovak Academy of Sciences (BMC SAV) Slovakia
- Medical University of Lodz (MUL) Poland
- School of Medicine - University of Zagreb (UZSM) Croatia
- University of Tartu (UT) Estonia
- Vilnius University (VU) Lithuania
- Latvian Institute of Organic Synthesis (LIOS) Latvia
- University of Ljubljana (UL) Slovenia
- Semmelweis University (SU) Hungary
- Medical University Sofia (MUS) Bulgaria
- Carol Davila University of Medicine and Pharmacy Bucharest (UMFCD) Romania

The Seed Fund aims to foster scientific collaboration among Alliance4Life's member institutions and partner companies. It provides an opportunity to form consortia with fellow researchers and professionals from partner universities and companies. The Seed Fund shall be used to develop scientific ideas from the CEE region and initiate project proposals to be submitted later to Horizon Europe or other international grant schemes.

The Seed Fund aims to support short-term collaborative research projects formed by at least three partner institutions – beneficiaries of the A4L_ACTIONS project plus participating companies – a preliminary consortium for future international grant applications.

Financial support will only be provided to beneficiaries of the A4L_ACTIONS project, i.e., the participating industrial partners cannot be funded.

2. Who can apply?

Only consortium consisting of at least three partners – beneficiaries of the A4L_ACTIONS project can apply to the Seed Fund. Individual applications are not accepted.

Researchers, including Ph.D. students (from partner universities or industrial partners) can join the project as a participant from an institution (see *Application form*).

The Principal Investigator, as well as other participants (except for the possible industrial partners) shall have an affiliation with one of the A4L_ACTIONS institutions.

3. What kind of proposals are eligible?

Idea

The proposal can be submitted in various life science fields / health research (cancer, AI in life sciences/ health areas, non-communicable diseases, metabolic disorders, etc.). The main criterion regarding the proposal is the originality of the scientific idea, interdisciplinarity, and the potential to form a competitive consortium, which would then apply to Horizon Europe (see also the selection process described below).

Collaboration

A consortium shall be formed by at least three partner institutions – beneficiaries of the A4L_ACTIONS project (plus by one or more industrial partner(s) if relevant). The partners have to select one coordinating organisation. The number of participants is not restricted; however, it should be in harmony with the budget/planned costs.

The Seed Fund will be used within the framework of the A4L_ACTIONS project via maximum of three calls for proposals. The proposal of a collaboration that will be granted from the first call will be eliminated from the second and third calls.

4. How much funding can be received?

The total amount of available funding for the whole Seed Fund is 150,000 EUR. Maximum of 7 projects will be funded within the first round of submission and 3 projects during the second and third rounds altogether.

The list of the previously funded projects can be downloaded from the A4L_ACTIONS project website: <https://alliance4life.ceitec.cz/seed-fund-information/>

The Seed Fund may be awarded up to 15,000 EUR, ideally between 10,000-15,000 EUR per project.

The budget should be planned by Horizon Europe cost eligibility criteria defined by Annotated Grant Agreement for the 2021-2022 Work Programme.

Eligible costs of the Seed Fund include:

- A. subcontracting costs
- B. travel costs and allowances
- C. other goods and services

Travel costs and allowances should cover at least 50% of the project's total cost. This Seed Fund Call aims to create and reinforce a well-functioning consortium. Therefore, the central part of the allocated budget should be used for meetings, conferences, and travels between the partners.

Personnel costs are not eligible and should be covered entirely by the participant institution.

The call reimburses 100% of the eligible costs for each beneficiary individually, ex-post within one final payment.

5. Selection process

Upon eligibility, the proposals will be evaluated based on the following aspects:

Originality

The proposal shall clearly outline the novelty and originality of the initial concept. Innovative ideas that go beyond the state of the art are encouraged.

Feasibility

The soundness of the scientific methodology and feasibility of the work plan shall be described in the proposal. The budget of the project shall be briefly explained.

The focus of the Seed Fund is to support short-term “seed” projects. Therefore, a feasible work plan should consider that the project's duration is 7 months or less by planning achievable goals for such a time range, but the completion of project implementation cannot be later than February 1, 2024.

Composition of the consortium

During the proposal evaluation, it is advantageous if an industrial partner joins the forming consortium, although it is not a criterion for the application. Please, note that these industrial partners cannot receive payment from the Seed Fund.

Partnership

The role of the participating institutions needs to be specified individually, outlining how the synergy and complementarity among partners can create a well-functioning consortium that provides the necessary background for a successful project.

Potential for submission to Horizon Europe or other international calls

Although the Seed Fund aims to support short-term projects for potential submission to Horizon Europe or other international calls, the project's sustainability and partnership are essential. Therefore, the long-term goals of the consortium should be briefly introduced as well as potential further partners (i.e. institutions or companies outside the A4L_ACTIONS project) that would be relevant for joining the Horizon Europe proposal.

Despite that, the main objective of the Seed Fund is to support a consortium that can later foster a successful Horizon Europe project, other international funding schemes (that suit the purpose and composition of the consortium) can be introduced in this section as a future submission goal. However, planning for a Horizon Europe application is an advantage during the evaluation process.

Based on these criteria, external reviewers will evaluate the proposals.

Each proposal will undergo two evaluation steps:

1. Administrative check – formal check of the application
2. Peer review – at least one evaluator will evaluate each application. The evaluators will be selected based on the Database of Experts created by Focus Group 1.

6. How to apply for the grant?

For the submission of a proposal, a complete and signed *Application form* shall be sent to the following e-mail address not later than the closure of the call: project@semmelweis-univ.hu.

The *Application form* shall include the abstract of the proposed work, a short bio of the participants, and the budget plan for the action. Only complete and signed *Application forms* will be evaluated.

7. Deadlines

The submission of proposals will be open a maximum 3 times after each mini-conference and match-making session.

After November 25, 2023, without the approval of the projects the applicants can start the submitted projects at their own risk. The submission of the project does not mean the approval of the project. In case the final decision leads to the refusal of the project, the applicant is responsible for any financial or other consequences of starting the project without prior approval.

Schedule of the third call period:

Publication of the call	October 26, 2023
Deadline	November 24, 2023
Evaluation and notification	December 23, 2023
Earliest start of the projects	November 25, 2023
Completion of implemented projects	February 1, 2024
Final report	March 1, 2024

8. Final Report

All funded projects must be completed by February 1, 2024. The supported consortia are obliged to provide the Final Report about the project implementation and completion no later than by March 1, 2024.

9. Publications and Acknowledgements

Publications resulting from work undertaken on Alliance4Life's Seed Fund have to include an acknowledgement according to the following pattern:

The A4L_ACTIONS project funded from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No. 964997 is gratefully acknowledged for the financial support of the publication [title of the publication].

Or in a short version: For the publication [title of the publication] we acknowledge A4L_ACTIONS, supported by European Union's Horizon 2020 under grant agreement No. 964997.

10. Contact

For general information regarding the Seed Fund call or in case of any questions, please contact project@semmelweis-univ.hu using 'A4L_seed fund' identifier in the subject line.