

6th Call for EKFZ Interdisciplinary Innovation Projects MedTech **(Deadline: January 8, 2024)**

1 General information

The EKFZ supports Interdisciplinary Innovation Projects (IIPs) in the field of digital health, especially in the fields of AI; new sensors, implants & devices and connected care. IIP funds are institutional seed funds designed to quickly build new collaborations and test new ideas of physicians and high-tech specialists. IIPs support the road to a “proof-of-concept” that allows these teams to go on to acquire third-party or industry funds to translate their ideas into clinical practice.

The funding will help to develop a novel generation of tech-savvy Clinician Scientists on campus. Therefore, a convincing commitment of a Clinician Scientist (CS) and the host clinical institution are central to the IIP concept. A full-time lab rotation of at least 18 months for the CS is thus compulsory. The participation of high-tech talents is also very welcome.

The cooperation with the non-university partners of the EKFZ (Dresden Fraunhofer Institutes, Helmholtz Center Dresden-Rossendorf, NCT/UCC Dresden, Leibniz IPF and IFW) are highly encouraged as these institutions have pledged additional in-house resources to the EKFZ agenda, that will benefit the IIPs.

2 Project criteria

2.1 Principal Investigators (PIs)

IIPs are an open instrument and not restricted to the original applicants of the EKFZ grant. Projects are led by at least two PIs.

- a) Clinical PI: An experienced clinician with scientific track record in the respective field at the University Hospital Dresden / Faculty of Medicine representing the medical need and providing the needed clinical mentorship.

- b) High Tech PI: A high-tech specialist at the TU Dresden or one of the Dresden Fraunhofer Institutes and/or of the HZDR/NCT/UCC Dresden or similar.

Additional principal investigators or mentors from the clinician or high-tech specialist categories are optional.

In order to **promote young scientists** in the EKFZ, opportunities should be offered to them to participate in existing courses offered by chairs and institutions. These could be lectures, seminars, workshops, journal clubs, etc.. Both clinical and high tech- PIs should specify which (existing or individually designed) education courses can be offered to the young scientists of the EKFZ in order to further educate themselves in the respective subject. Ideally, participation in the education courses are open to all interested talents.

2.2 Scientific criteria

Only projects with excellent scientific quality, high originality and demonstrable clinical relevance will be funded. IIPs have to meet the following criteria (See also document 'Evaluation criteria'):

Eligibility criteria:

- Projects have to meet proven clinical needs and are led by a clinician with a strong scientific track record for the topic. The existing clinical problem should be presented accordingly.
- High-tech expertise beyond the state of the art from the Dresden campus (TUD and cooperating institutions) is used to address this medical need. This excludes most projects with standard technologies (e.g. established App-frameworks, expansion of use for existing products).
- The technology should be ready for medical application – e.g. the basic physics and technology challenges should be solved or the basic technology questions need to be specific for medical applications.
- Projects of proof-of-concept, applied research and experimental development are eligible for funding.
- Ideally, the project should also address societal needs (e.g. impact on quality of life, high costs of care, regional differences in quality) and adequately involve the target group(s) (e.g. health care professionals, patients, people in need of care and relatives) in the research project.
- It is a plus if the project and the research idea addresses sustainability issues.
- We encourage especially young and new teams with exciting and courageous ideas for application. The lack of a common track record is no obstacle to the application.

Exclusion criteria:

- Projects that have already developed a functional demonstrator or prototype are generally no longer eligible for funding.
- Clinical studies are excluded from funding.

- Excluded from funding are projects that have current or past funding from EKFZ or third-party agencies (such as DFG, BMBF, SAB etc.) for the specific research tasks applied for.
- Project ideas that have been declined twice in former IIP calls will not be considered for funding.

2.3 Clinician Scientist

The training of a new generation of Clinician Scientists with high-tech expertise is one of the key agendas of the EKFZ. Thus:

- The Clinician Scientist of the project must be named in the application and be familiar with the project for consideration of the proposal. The Clinician Scientist candidate must state his motivation for working on this IIP in his/her CV.
- The full release of a physician from clinical obligations for active research in the project for at least 18 months with 100 % laboratory and project work is mandatory and must be assured by the clinical host and mentoring department. In individual cases, it is possible to change the exemption to 24 months with 75% lab time. The CS should usually work in the hosting high-tech laboratory for this time.
- If required for the project, a psychologist can also take on the role of Clinician Scientist if he or she has completed or is completing training as a psychotherapist.
- The convincing integration of the Clinician Scientist into the high-tech team is mandatory. Clinician Scientists with exclusively/mostly clinical tasks cannot be funded.
- The involvement of junior or intermediate stage Clinician Scientists (pre- or early postdoc phase) is ideal.
- Funding for this position may be provided through EKFZ project funds itself or through other funds (e.g. programs such as EKFK or MSNZ).
- Active participation and contribution in the EKFZ's offers for the promotion of young talent is expected.

2.4 High-tech talent

Ideally, a high-tech talent (PhD student, early Postdoc stage, max. E13/3) in engineering, computer science or similar discipline should be involved to foster the development of interdisciplinary teams and thinking. Talents should be named in the application, but specific recruiting is also possible. As for the Clinician Scientist, active participation and contribution in the EKFZ's offers for the promotion of young talent is expected

3 Funding framework

The EKFZ funding is based on the following framework:

- Funding will be provided for two years (01.07.2024 – 30.06.2026).
- For each project a total project volume of 400 k€ is available over the entire project period (two years). The funds can be used for all project-related costs, e.g. personnel

costs, consumables, travel funds or small investments, the distribution is flexible within the project period. Please explain in detail the requested funds per partner in the application. A financial project plan needs to be submitted at the time of application. Changes to this plan are possible, but must be approved by the EKFZ Project Office.

- Additional financing of projects from other intramural sources (own contribution) is welcome and encouraged and may be supportive.
- Cooperation with external and non-academic partners is possible. The maximum amount of EKFZ funds that are spent at the respective institutions depends on the categories:
 - Non-university partners: Projects can also be combined with additional funding of the Fraunhofer institutes IWS, IWU, FEP, IKTS, and IPMS and/or of the HZDR/NCT/UCC Dresden. To access this committed funds, a consensus between the project team and the institution needs to be established. Up to 50 % of project funds can be spent at the collaborating institutions.
 - SMEs (preferably regional ones) can be project partners and receive funding in joint development (e.g. joint IP) projects of up to 25 % of the total project volume. A collaboration agreement between the project partners of the TU Dresden and the SME must be presented before funds can be allocated to the SME.
 - External academic partners (only regional ones) can be involved if justified by specific technical or clinical skills or existing IP and may receive up to 25 % of total project funds.
- Projects, partners, titles, funds and review results will be public within the center.
- A cost-neutral extension of the project for 6 months is possible upon request.

4 Templates & Deadlines

The templates for the proposal can be found [here](#). The project description shall not exceed eight (8) A4 pages (font Arial, font size 11 pt, standard margins). The bibliography and signature page do not count toward the 8 pages.

All persons involved in the project and named in the project team have to submit a CV. The Clinician Scientist must submit his/her CV on the special CV *Template Clinician Scientist*.

In this call, the deadline is January 8, 2024 with a planned start of projects on July 1, 2024. For this selection round, we expect to fund between 2-3 projects.

5 Duties of project teams

The EKFZ funds are to be used according to the criteria of good scientific and clinical practice and must meet the ethical and non-profit standards of the TU Dresden and the Else Kröner-Fresenius Foundation. Specifically:

- Results generated during IIPs must be made accessible to the public through scientific publications primarily in peer-reviewed journals and platforms.
- Potentially patentable results from the EKFZ funding are treated according to the procedures of the TU Dresden. The assertion of intellectual property rights needs to be communicated to the Else Kröner-Fresenius Foundation and is coordinated by the EKFZ Project Office.
- Cooperation of project teams with the public relations, outreach and dissemination activities of the EKFZ and TU Dresden is expected.
- A project report must be submitted to the EKFZ Project Office no later than 6 months after completion of funding.

6 Support and Project Advice

The EKFZ Project Office will be happy to answer any questions you may have (0351-458-18589, ekfz@tu-dresden.de).