



A4L_BRIDGE

Alliance4Life Bridging the Research and Innovation Gap in Life Sciences

HORIZON-WIDERA-2023-ACCESS-03 - 10113653

D9.1 Eligibility criteria for joint research proposals

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1. SUMMARY

Deliverable D9.1 defines the eligibility criteria and operational framework for the Seed Fund established under the A4L_BRIDGE project. The Seed Fund aims to stimulate the creation of small, collaborative research projects among the Alliance4Life BRIDGE member institutions, fostering scientific excellence, mutual trust, and the preparation of joint proposals for Horizon Europe and other international funding schemes.

The document outlines the objectives of the Seed Fund, eligible applicants, project composition requirements, financial rules, and the evaluation and selection process. Only consortia composed of at least two A4L_BRIDGE beneficiaries are eligible to apply. The total available budget for the Seed Fund is EUR 187,500, with individual project grants ranging between EUR 10,000–15,000 (direct costs) and a maximum duration of 18 months.

Eligible costs follow Horizon Europe's Annotated Grant Agreement rules, with a strong focus on supporting mobility, networking, and collaboration activities. Personnel costs must not exceed 25% of the total budget. The deliverable also specifies the evaluation criteria based on scientific quality, consortium strength, feasibility, potential for future funding, and sustainability.

The Seed Fund is publicly announced and fully implemented through the Virtual Research Centre (VRC) online platform, accessible at <https://research.alliance4life.com/seed-fund/>. The VRC serves as the central hub for submitting applications, finding partners, and accessing all templates and documents related to the call.

The deliverable thus ensures transparent, harmonized, and sustainable implementation of the Seed Fund across all A4L_BRIDGE partner institutions, supporting the project's goals.

2. CALL DOCUMENTATION



Seed fund call Alliance4Life BRIDGE



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1. Call for projects

The Seed Fund of the A4L BRIDGE project aims to support the launch of small collaborative scientific projects emerging from the activities of the Virtual Research Centre (VRC). The goal is to enable partners to test initial joint ideas, build mutual trust, obtain preliminary results, and create a foundation for larger consortia and proposals under Horizon Europe or other international funding schemes.

2. What is the Alliance4Life Seed Fund Call?

Alliance4Life is a consortium 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_BRIDGE 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 SAS), Slovakia
- Medical University of Lodz (MUL), Poland
- University of Zagreb School of Medicine
- 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. It provides an opportunity to form consortia with fellow researchers and professionals from partner institutions. 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 two partner institutions – beneficiaries of the A4L_BRIDGE project – with the recommended involvement of participating companies or other institutions, creating 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.

3. Who can apply?

Only a consortium consisting of at least two partners – beneficiaries of the A4L_BRIDGE project can apply to the Seed Fund. Individual applications are not accepted.

Researchers, including Ph.D. students from partner institutions/universities, as well as industrial partners or other universities/institutions outside of A4L, can join the project as Associated Partners¹ (*see application form*).

The Principal Investigator, as well as other participants (except for the possible associated partners) shall have an affiliation with one of the A4L_BRIDGE institutions.

The PI is responsible for the project coordination and for monitoring the overall implementation of the project. The PI and the local coordinators must hold an employment contract at one of the A4L_BRIDGE member institutions covering the entire duration of the envisioned project as a minimum. In case of changes in the PI (both internally or in case he/she leaves the University) during the project, the University proposes a replacement that needs to be approved and documented internally by the institutions and the A4L_BRIDGE Scientific Committee.

4. What kind of proposals are eligible?

Idea

The proposal can be submitted in various fields specified in the VRC (<https://research.alliance4life.com/seed-fund>). 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).

- Neurobiology
- Cardiovascular Diseases
- Metabolism and endocrinology of skeletal muscle
- Membrane Biochemistry
- History of Medicine and Medical Humanities
- Cancer biology and targeted therapy
- Translational Education and Training in Biomedical Sciences

Didn't find a topic that fits your project idea? You are welcome to create a new research area in the VRC and thus expand the scope of Seed Fund project opportunities. For more information on how to establish a new VRC section, please visit:

<https://research.alliance4life.com/departments/create-new-department>

Collaboration

A consortium shall be formed by at least two partner institutions – beneficiaries of the A4L_BRIDGE project (and, if relevant, one or more industrial partners or other institutions and universities)². The partners must select one coordinating organisation. The number of participants is not restricted; however, it should be in line with the budget and planned costs.

¹ Non-members of Alliance4Life are not eligible for funding

² Non-members of Alliance4Life are not eligible for funding

The Seed Fund will be implemented within the A4L_BRIDGE project through a maximum of two calls for proposals. Projects funded under the first call will not be eligible to apply in the second call. If sufficient high-quality proposals are selected in the first call, the organisers reserve the right not to launch the second call.

5. How much funding can be received?

The total amount of available funding for the whole Seed Fund is 187,500 EUR (150,000 EUR as direct costs, plus an additional 25% for indirect costs). The Seed Fund may be awarded up to 15,000 EUR, ideally between 10,000-15,000 EUR (of direct cost) per project for a period of a maximum of 1,5 years.

The budget should be planned by Horizon Europe cost eligibility criteria defined by the Annotated Grant Agreement for the 2021-2027 Work Programme (Version 2.0 (1 April 2025) link.

Eligible costs of the Seed Fund include:

- A. Personnel costs (scientific, administrative)
- B. Travel, accommodation, and subsistence expenses: airfare (economy class), train, bus, lodging, meals, visas, etc.
- C. Other goods and services (consumables and supplies)
- D. Publications (related to collaborative research costs, including Open Access fees (only if published by October 2027 in Gold Open Access -NO hybrid journals-))

Personnel costs should not exceed 25% of the total budget. 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.

Project proposals that have successfully passed through the selection process will be supported by the A4L BRIDGE project funded by the European Union's Horizon Europe Widening participation and spreading excellence programme under grant agreement No. 101136453.

Seed Fund projects will be pre-financed by each university from its own resources. Upon approval of the final report, the allocated funding will be transferred to the respective university.

6. Application process

To apply for the call, please visit the Seed Project Landing Page (<https://research.alliance4life.com/seed-fund>), log in or register on VRC (<https://research.alliance4life.com/user/login>), and complete the application form on VRC by the deadline (31 December 2025).

Before submitting their application, researchers can also post their project idea on the VRC to attract interest from potential partners.

The following documents must be attached to the application:

- Seed fund **Application form**

- **letter of intent** from each project partner must be included, signed by the person responsible for resources (e.g. Head of Departments) (according to the provided template)
- **budget form** according to the provided template
- **CV** of the Principal Investigator (PI)

Each proposal should clearly describe the expected outcomes (such as scientific publications, knowledge sharing, etc.) and include a realistic plan for how the collaboration will continue after the end of the project. Applicants are encouraged to propose projects that could later be submitted to Horizon Europe or other international funding schemes. The application should specify which calls or funding programmes the project intends to target in the future.

7. Deadlines

Publication of the call	October 6, 2025
Deadline	December 31, 2025
Evaluation and notification	February 28, 2026
Start of the projects	All projects must be implemented between 01 March 2026 and 31 August 2027
Completion of implemented projects	31 August 2027
Final report	31 October 2027

8. Selection Criteria

The proposals will be evaluated according to the following selection criteria (maximum 100 points):

1. Scientific quality and originality (max. 30 points)
 - Clarity and relevance of the research question
 - Level of innovation and interdisciplinarity
2. Collaboration and consortium strength (max. 20 points)
 - Level of cooperation between CEE partners
 - Added value of intersectoral and/or international collaboration
3. Feasibility and implementation (max. 20 points)
 - Realistic work plan, timeline, and budget
 - Appropriateness of team expertise and resource allocation
4. Potential for future funding (max. 20 points)
 - Clear link to future Horizon Europe or other international calls
 - Strength of the project's strategy for follow-up funding
5. Sustainability and long-term vision (max. 10 points)
 - Plans for continued collaboration after the project ends
 - Potential for lasting partnerships or institutional impact

9. Selection Process

The selection will take place in three steps:

1. **Administrative check** – A formal review to ensure the application is complete and meets all basic requirements. The relevant Alliance4Life institution will also confirm the applicant's employment status.
2. **Expert evaluation** – Each proposal will be assessed and scored by independent experts.
3. **Final approval** – The Scientific Committee will approve the final list of projects, based on the ranking provided by the expert panel and the available budget.

10. Final report

All funded projects have to be completed by August 31, 2027. The supported consortia are obliged to provide the Final Report about the project implementation and completion no later than October 31, 2027.

The final report must be completed using the official template available on the website (<https://research.alliance4life.com/seed-fund>) and must include all necessary attachments.

Together with the final report, partners must upload a financial statement evidencing the recorded costs charged to the A4L project account.

11. Publications and Acknowledgements

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

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12. Contact

For general information regarding the Seed Fund call or in case of any questions, please contact Ivana Kugler (ivana.kugler@ceitec.muni.cz) using 'A4L_seed fund' identifier in the subject line.

3. APPLICATION FORM

A4L_BRIGE Seed Fund Call

Application form

Project name:	
Acronym:	
Duration of the project:	
Starting date:	
Requested funding amount (EUR)	
VRC research areas (link):	

Key words:

Applicants

1. Principal Investigator / coordinator

Name:	
Position	
University	
Phone number	
E-mail	

2. Alliance4Life_BRIDGE partner University/ies

Role (<i>beneficiary 1,2,3...</i>)	Institution	Participant name	Position of the participant (<i>Researcher, PhD student, Master's student, etc...</i>)	Participant contact
Beneficiary 1				
Beneficiary 2				
Beneficiary 3				

3. Associated partner/s

Role (Associated partner 1,2,3...)	Institution	Participant name	Position	Participant contact
Associated partner 1				
Associated partner 2				
Associated partner 3				

Project Description (max 10 A4 pages)

Abstract/Summary (max. 500 words)

1. Scientific quality and originality

Ambitions and Objectives

Expected results and impact

2. Collaboration and consortium strength

Describe the consortium composition (capacity and contributions to the project)

3. Feasibility and implementation

Methodology

Timeline and work plan**Ethic Evaluation****4. Relevance for Horizon Europe / other international funding****Expected objectives of the proposed project submitted under Horizon Europe or another international scheme****Please specify the call to which you intend to apply for a grant.****5. Sustainability and long-term vision****Sustainability plan** *(how the cooperation will continue)*

Attachments

- Letter(s) of intent - according to provided template, signed by relevant persons from all partner institutions
- Budget form - according to provided template
- CV of PI - with evidence of the quality and impact of publications listed below; achievement of awards and other outputs of relevance/recognitions; degree of success in previous national or international projects)

4. LETTER OF INTENT

HEADED PAPER OF THE UNIVERSITY

To the Scientific Committee

The University of xxxx is pleased to submit this letter in support of the application entitled **title of the seed project**, which will be submitted by Prof./Dr.of the University of(as PI)

I, the undersigned xxxx, as Head of the interested Department (*or another official representative of the university*), guarantee that the PI/local coordinator holds an employment contract at this University covering the entire duration of the envisioned project (till XXX).

I therefore confirm our commitment in supporting the project with the resources (human resources, instruments, etc.) as indicated in the project proposal.

If the proposal will be approved, this University will take full responsibility of:

- monitoring and manage the project and the people involved
- respecting the financial rules and regulations as indicated in the call
- in case of change of the PI/local coordinator during the project (e.g. transfer to another institution), proposing a replacement.

Best regards,

.....
SIGNATURE

Place, date

.....
SIGNATURE of A4L Board member

Place, date

5. BUDGET SHEET

BUDGET (max 15.000 €)					
A. DIRECT PERSONNEL COSTS	Partner 1	Partner 2	Partner 3	Partner 4	Total
Employees (or equivalent)	- €	- €	- €	- €	- €
SENIOR SCIENTISTS					- €
JUNIOR SCIENTISTS					- €
TECHNICAL PERSONNEL					- €
ADMINISTRATIVE PERSONNEL					- €
OTHERS					- €
					- €
B. DIRECT PURCHASE COSTS	- €	- €	- €	- €	- €
Travel, accommodation and subsistence					- €
Consumables and supplies					- €
Meetings, seminars, workshops					- €
Publication fees - only if published by XXX in Gold Open Access (NO hybrid journals)					- €
Other (shipment, insurance, translation, etc.)					- €
					- €
					- €
TOTAL DIRECT PERSONNEL COSTS AND PURCHASE COSTS (A+B)	- €	- €	- €	- €	- €
C. INDIRECT COSTS (25% * (A+B))	- €	- €	- €	- €	- €
D. TOTAL COSTS (A+B+C)	- €	- €	- €	- €	- €