



University Medicine Zurich

Call for UMZH Technology Initiatives

1. Background

The University Medicine Zurich (UMZH) constitutes a network of six partner institutions, namely the University of Zurich (UZH), ETH Zurich (ETH), the University Hospital Zurich (USZ), the Balgrist University Hospital (Balgrist), the University Children's Hospital Zurich (KISPI) and the University Hospital of Psychiatry Zurich (PUK), with the aim to bundle the expertise available in Zurich, to align the strategies of the UMZH institutions, and to explore new strategic and thematic priorities.

The UMZH institutions agreed on an umbrella strategy and proposed precision medicine as the first strategic and thematic priority. Our vision is to establish Zurich as a hub for precision medicine.

The UMZH institutions will approach their mission primarily by creating central infrastructures, supporting existing research centers in the focus area, and awarding competitive grants. These three pillars form the basis for the first multi-year investment plan from 2023-2026, with the main investments going towards building infrastructure and platforms, as a basis for further development of precision medicine in Zurich.

In this context, we now launch the second call for «UMZH Technology Initiatives».

2. Call

The UMZH grants for Technology Initiatives are intended to either kick-start new clinical technology platforms or to boost and expand an existing platform in alignment with the overarching goal of UMZH to connect institutions. The added value for UMZH is seen not only in the cooperation between the institutions, but also in embedding technologies into existing structures and in generating technical interfaces.

The call is open to Faculty Members from all UMZH institutions and welcomes submissions from all areas of precision medicine. UMZH Technology Initiatives are selected through a competitive evaluation process.

The range of financial support is up to CHF 1 million for a maximum duration of two years to kick-start the technology initiatives.

3. Requirements for UMZH Technology Initiatives

With this new program for Technology Initiatives, UMZH intends to support technology platforms beneficial for several or all UMZH institutions. According to the first strategic and thematic priority of UMZH, the platforms shall boost precision medicine in Zurich. There are no further restrictions regarding the field of use.

A clear added value for UMZH must be shown. At least one of the four University's hospitals (USZ, Balgrist, KISPI, PUK) must be involved and take the lead. Preference is given to initiatives involving at least two UMZH institutions. If only one institution is involved, the benefit for UMZH must be shown otherwise.

The grants are intended to:

- kick-start a new clinical technology platform or
- expand an existing platform in order to include other UMZH institutions and potentially also external partners.

The technology platforms are based on the definition of a "research infrastructure", which includes the following criteria:

- The research infrastructure makes a significant contribution to the development of a field of knowledge or research (added value for science and innovation).
- The research infrastructure is used intensively by researchers in Zurich (importance for UMZH).
- Access to the research infrastructure (including fees) will be regulated and established for the research community (mid-term goal after the two-year kick-off phase).

Furthermore, the platforms shall be innovative, competitive, and aligned with existing local and national structures. Sustainability is key. Applicants must show that it is feasible to establish the platforms within two years and that they are sustainable thereafter.

4. Funding

Funding from UMZH amounts up to CHF 1 million for a maximum of two years per technology initiative.

The grants are indented as investments to build-up and establish the platforms. Salaries for personnel involved in establishing the platforms as well as investments into infrastructure, devices etc. are allowed. UMZH funds shall not be used to cover running costs. After two years, the platforms must be self-sustaining or further supported by the institutions. A concept for sustainability of the platform in the interest of research and health care in Zurich must be given. Matching funds (also in kind) are expected from the participating institutions.

5. Application

Submission deadline for applications: June 1st, 2024.

Applications should be submitted by email in English using the application forms provided on the UMZH webpage: <https://www.medicine.uzh.ch/en/Network-UMZH/Call.html>

Please send your application to: umzh@medicine.uzh.ch

6. Evaluation Process and Start of the Technology Initiatives

Timeline:

1. Application deadline: June 1st, 2024
2. Formal check by the UMZH Managing Office
3. Evaluation by the External Advisory Board of UMZH, including also independent expert opinions
4. Oral presentations of pre-selected and top-ranked projects and interviews with the applicants upon invitation: October 28, 2024 (prospective date)
5. Final decision by a sub-group of the Coordination Committee of UMZH and members of the Executive Board of UZH in November/December 2024
6. Earliest starting date of the project: January 2025

Evaluation Criteria:

- Scientific/technical quality
- Advancement of and added value for precision medicine
- Platform character based on the definition of a "research infrastructure"
- Innovation, competitiveness, context of the platform, alignment with existing local and national structures
- Added value for UMZH / beneficial for several UMZH institutions (interfaces)
- Feasibility and sustainability (implementation plan)
- Commitment by lead institution (in a second evaluation step for top-ranked projects)