



**Innovation and Technology Fund
Researcher Programme
(formerly known as Internship Programme)
*for Incubatees and Innovation and Technology Tenants of the
Hong Kong Science & Technology Parks Corporation and
Hong Kong Cyberport Management Company Limited*
Application Guide**

The Researcher Programme provides funding support for organisations/companies undertaking research and development (R&D) projects funded by the Innovation and Technology Fund (ITF) projects¹ (“RP-ITF”), start-ups selected for co-investment under the Innovation and Technology Venture Fund (“RP-ITVF”) as well as incubatees and innovation and technology (I&T) tenants of the Hong Kong Science & Technology Parks Corporation (HKSTPC) and Hong Kong Cyberport Management Company Limited (Cyberport) (“RP-SPC”) to recruit researchers to assist in the R&D work. Incubatees and I&T tenants of HKSTPC and Cyberport who are also start-ups selected for co-investment under ITVF should apply under the RP-SPC.

This guide sets out the details of the **RP-SPC**. For RP-ITF and RP-ITVF, please refer to [RP-ITF Application Guide](#) and [RP-ITVF Application Guide](#) respectively.

1. Eligibility

Applicant Company

Incubatees and I&T tenants² of HKSTPC and Cyberport, with incubation/tenancy duration covering the proposed engagement period, are eligible to apply for funding to recruit researchers to assist in R&D projects in their companies. The applicant company should

¹ R&D projects funded by the ITF include projects funded under the Innovation and Technology Support Programme (ITSP), the Partnership Research Programme (PRP), the Matching Grant for Joint Research Scheme (UIM) of the University-Industry Collaboration Programme (UICP), Enterprise Support Scheme (ESS), and the Midstream Research Programme for Universities (MRP).

² The core business activities of the applicant company should be technology-intensive and innovation-based. The applicant company’s operations should not be primarily in mass production, although small scale pilot production or high value-added production in support of product and market development and innovation may be permitted. This programme is also applicable to tenants of the Healthcare Devices Innovation Hub (HDIH), Biomedical Technology Support Center (BSC) and ICT Co-working Center of HKSTPC and Smart-Space of Cyberport. However, those tenants must fulfill the following additional conditions to be eligible for this programme:

- (a) the applicant company must have a remaining lease term/tenancy period of at least 9 months with HKSTPC/Cyberport at the time of application which should cover the engagement period;
- (b) the applicant company must have a fixed office room/space with dedicated workstation(s) for the researcher(s). Floating seats, including the Flexi-Space of Cyberport, will not be accepted;
- (c) detailed checking will be carried out by HKSTPC/Cyberport at the beginning and at the end of the engagement period, with one or two pre-arranged visits in between; and
- (d) the applicant company must provide their researcher training plan, and progress evaluation form for HKSTPC/Cyberport and ITC to understand better how the researcher has been doing the tasks assigned and whether the job is R&D-related.

state in the application the scientific/engineering R&D element the project is to study and investigate and also describe the project duties to be assigned to the researcher.

Researcher

To qualify for the RP-SPC, the researcher to be recruited must be legally permitted to work in Hong Kong; and should be a graduate³ with a Bachelor's degree or Master's degree from a local university. He/she should be a graduate in the relevant field of the research project to which he/she is to be recruited. **The researcher should not be employed by the applicant company within the past three months preceding the date of application**⁴. The recruitment of researcher should go through an open process (e.g. to advertise the position via mass media, online platform, etc.) to ensure fairness. Moreover, the proprietor, partner or shareholder of the applicant company is not eligible to be employed as a researcher under the programme.

The applicant company and the researcher shall not be receiving other employment subsidies provided by any other local public funding for the subject engagement under application.

2. Engagement Period

In order for the researcher to contribute meaningfully to the R&D project on the one hand, and have sufficient time to learn on the job on the other, the engagement period for the candidate should be **no less than 6 months**; and should not overlap with any other engagement period under the Researcher Programme or the Postdoctoral Hub. Upon completion of the engagement in an applicant company, the researcher may be engaged again under the Researcher Programme. Unless otherwise approved by the Innovation and Technology Commission (ITC), **the total engagement period under the Researcher Programme viz. RP-ITF, RP-SPC and RP-ITVF for a researcher should be no more than 36 months in total**. For the first project in which the researcher participates, the applicant company is encouraged to offer the researcher an engagement of no less than 12 months. Two researchers can be recruited at any one time to assist in the R&D work of an applicant company. The total engagement period for an applicant company should be no more than 72 months. In case the researcher recruited for a project resigns/leaves, the applicant company can recruit another researcher as replacement during the incubation/tenancy period.

3. Application Procedure

Applicant companies should register for the purpose of the RP-SPC through the Innovation and Technology Commission Funding Administrative System (ITCFAS) at the ITF website (<https://itcfas.itf.gov.hk>). For each selected researcher, the applicant company should submit a separate application via ITCFAS. New application should be submitted for employment of an additional/replacement researcher, or for transferring an approved researcher to another company. The applicant company should also provide certified copies of the following supporting documents:

³ The graduate should have successfully completed the undergraduate/postgraduate programme.

⁴ Applicant companies are strongly advised to secure ITC's approval before commencing engagement of the researchers. However, ITC would also accept applications lodged within three months after the commencement of the engagement of the researchers. In such cases, the researcher recruited should not be employed by the applicant company within the three months preceding the commencement date of engagement. For example, if an applicant company engages a researcher on 1 September, application can be lodged any time before 1 December, and the researcher recruited should not be employed by the applicant company between 1 June and 31 August.

- (a) Incubation/tenancy contract of the applicant company;
- (b) Business registration certificate of the applicant company;
- (c) Graduation certificate of the researcher;
- (d) Recruitment advertisement for the researcher; and
- (e) Employment contract of the researcher (where applicable).

On receipt of a complete application, ITCFAS will notify HKSTPC and Cyberport for conducting of preliminary vetting (e.g. to confirm incubation/tenancy status and eligibility under the RP-SPC). The applicant company will be notified if an application is not recommended for processing by ITC. Applications recommended by HKSTPC and Cyberport will continue to be processed by ITC. ITC reserves the right to request additional information and supporting documents when necessary. If an applicant company fails to respond to ITC's request for information/supporting documents within two months of such request, the application will be considered withdrawn. ITC reserves the right to decline acceptance of any recommended applications at any time at its sole discretion. Subject to approval by ITC, the applicant company can proceed with the formal recruitment of the researcher⁴.

Once the application is approved by ITC, the applicant company should comply with the conditions of funding as set out in this Guide throughout the engagement period, and keep relevant records for the engagement as required in section 7 below. The ITC and the recommending organisation (i.e. HKSTPC or Cyberport) reserve at all times the right to seek or collect additional information (e.g. researcher's attendance records) from the applicant company and the selected researcher(s) to substantiate and process the application, and monitor the approved application where necessary.

For any subsequent change to the details of the engagement (e.g. change in engagement duration, salary adjustment, etc.), the applicant company should submit a **change request** electronically through the ITCFAS (<https://itcfas.itf.gov.hk>) for prior approval by ITC.

4. Remuneration for Researchers

The ITF will provide a maximum monthly allowance of HK\$18,000 plus the employer's contribution to the Mandatory Provident Fund (MPF) (i.e. HK\$900 maximum) for each researcher who possesses a Bachelor's degree, and up to HK\$21,000 plus the employer's MPF contribution (i.e. HK\$1,050 maximum) for those with a Master's degree. **The monthly allowance shall only cover the engagement period stipulated in the approved application**, and shall be paid in full towards the actual lump sum monthly remuneration for the researcher and shall not, in whole or in part, be retained by the applicant company for whatever reasons. No other allowances, overhead or fringe benefits etc. will be payable from the ITF. The monthly allowance will be provided to the applicant company on a reimbursement basis after acceptance of the progress report by ITC (i.e. on a half-yearly basis in general) as detailed in section 7 below.

5. Role of Applicant Company

The applicant company should:

- ensure that the researcher selection process is open, fair and without prejudice to any candidates;
- ensure that the researcher is suitably guided by a supervisor, to whom the researcher can report or consult on a daily basis;
- assign to the researcher relevant R&D duties (not secretarial or administrative duties) and with an appropriate level of workload which warrants a full-time engagement;
- comply with the relevant legislative requirements concerning the employment of the researcher including the relevant entry/visa requirements for non-local graduates; and
- provide a safe working environment and arrange a proper workplace for the researcher, including allocating a fixed office room/space with dedicated workstation(s).

6. Role of Researcher

The researcher being recruited should assist in the R&D work of the applicant company on a full-time basis.

7. Reporting Requirement

The applicant company is required to submit progress report(s), signed by both the programme coordinator and the researcher, on a half-yearly basis in general throughout the engagement period. HKSTPC and Cyberport will conduct vetting of the report and recommend acceptance of it by ITC. In this connection, HKSTPC and Cyberport will visit and interview the applicant companies and researchers from time to time during the engagement period for monitoring purposes.

Both the applicant company and the researcher are required to submit evaluation reports to ITC within one month from the completion or termination of the engagement for which the researcher is recruited. In case of resignation of the researcher during the engagement period or if the applicant company intends to terminate the engagement, the applicant company should report such to the ITC immediately. The applicant company is also required to keep the relevant financial documents (e.g. copies of cheques issued to the researchers, payroll sheets, or certified receipts signed by the researchers etc.) for seven years after completion/termination of the engagement, and submit to ITC on request at any time during this period.

8. Handling of Information

Information provided by the applicant company in its application and progress/evaluation reports will be kept in confidence. It may however be disclosed to the recommending organisation (i.e. HKSTPC or Cyberport) and relevant parties to process the application, to conduct research and survey, and if the application is successful, to monitor the engagement, to exercise the Government's rights, and for other related purposes.

9. Important Notes

Inaccurate and incomplete information may affect the consideration and processing of the applications and may result in deferral or rejection. Applicant companies should note that any misrepresentation or omission of information in the applications or progress/evaluation reports may lead to rejection of the applications and/or full recovery of the monthly allowances already granted by the ITC, and possible court proceedings.

The ITC reserves at all times the absolute right to review all applications and adjust the grant approved as necessary. In the event that there is an overpayment due to error in calculation or assessment, applicant companies are required to refund the amount overpaid within one month upon notification.

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