



Innovation and Technology Fund (ITF) – Postdoctoral Hub *for ITF projects* Application Guide

To nurture and bring together more technology talent and encourage them to pursue a career in innovation and scientific research, the Innovation and Technology Commission (ITC) launched the Postdoctoral Hub in August 2018 to provide organisations/companies undertaking Innovation and Technology Fund (ITF)-funded researcher and development (R&D) projects¹ (“PH-ITF”), start-ups selected for co-investment under the Innovation and Technology Venture Fund (“PH-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) (“PH-SPC”) with funding support for the engagement of postdoctoral talent to conduct R&D work. From March 2020, the funding support is further extended to technology companies conducting R&D activities in Hong Kong (“PH-TC”).

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

1. Eligibility

Applicant Organisation / Company

All organisations/companies undertaking R&D projects funded by the ITF, including R&D Centres², designated local public research institutes³ may apply for funding support to

¹ R&D projects funded by the ITF include projects funded under the Innovation and Technology Support Programme (ITSP), the Guangdong-Hong Kong Technology Cooperation Funding Scheme (TCFS), the Mainland-Hong Kong Joint Funding Scheme (MHKJFS), the Partnership Research Programme (PRP), the Matching Grant for Joint Research Scheme (UIM) of the University-Industry Collaboration Programme (UICP), the Enterprise Support Scheme (ESS), and the Midstream Research Programme for Universities (MRP), as well as R&D projects undertaken by research centres and laboratories set up in the research clusters of the InnoHK.

² R&D Centres refer to –

- (a) Automotive Platforms and Application Systems R&D Centre (www.apas.hk);
- (b) Hong Kong Research Institute of Textiles and Apparel (www.hkrita.com);
- (c) Hong Kong Applied Science and Technology Research Institute, designated as the R&D Centre for Information and Communications Technologies (www.astri.org);
- (d) Logistics and Supply Chain MultiTech R&D Centre (www.lscm.hk); and
- (e) Nano and Advanced Materials Institute (www.nami.org.hk).

³ Designated local public research institutes refer to local universities (including all University Grants Committee (UGC)-funded institutions), self-financing degree-awarding institutions registered under the Post-Secondary Colleges

engage postdoctoral talent under the PH-ITF to assist in the ITF project. In general, the PH-ITF is only applicable to all on-going and new R&D projects funded by the ITF.

Postdoctoral Talent

To qualify for PH-ITF, the candidate must be legally permitted to work in Hong Kong; and in possession of a doctoral degree of STEM⁴-related discipline obtained from a local university. For candidate with relevant qualification obtained from non-local institution, he/she is eligible to participate in the Postdoctoral Hub if the qualification awarding institution is among the top 100 institutions for STEM-related subjects in the *latest publication* of any of the following world university ranking tables:

| Ranking tables | STEM-related subjects |
|--|--|
| Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) World University Rankings | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Engineering and Technology - Life Science and Medicine - Natural Sciences |
| Shanghai Jiao Tong University (Academic Ranking of World Universities) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Life and Agriculture Sciences (LIFE) - Natural Sciences and Mathematics (SCI) - Engineering/Technology and Computer Sciences (ENG) - Clinical Medicine and Pharmacy (MED) |
| Times Higher Education World University Rankings | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Engineering and Technology - Computer Science - Life Sciences - Physical Sciences - Clinical, Pre-clinical and Health |

For qualification obtained from other non-local institution, the candidate should provide relevant document(s) (such as the qualification assessment report issued by the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications) supporting that the specific skills possessed by the candidate or the equivalence of the qualification concerned being assessed is on the doctoral level for consideration.

The postdoctoral talent should be a graduate⁵ in the relevant field of the research project in which he/she is to be engaged.

For private company applicant, the proprietor, partner, shareholder or management of the applicant company or their relatives are not eligible to be engaged as a postdoctoral talent under the PH-ITF. The engagement of talent should go through an open process (e.g. to advertise position via mass media, online platform, etc.) to ensure fairness.

Ordinance (Cap. 320), the Hong Kong Productivity Council, the Vocational Training Council, the Clothing Industry Training Authority and the Hong Kong Institute of Biotechnology.

⁴ STEM (i.e. Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics).

⁵ The graduate should have successfully completed the doctoral programme.

2. Engagement Period

In order for the postdoctoral talent to contribute meaningfully to the R&D project, 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 his/her engagement with an applicant organisation/company for a particular ITF project, the postdoctoral talent may be engaged again under the PH-ITF, PH-SPC, PH-ITVF and PH-TC. Unless otherwise approved by ITC, **the total engagement period for a postdoctoral talent under the Postdoctoral Hub viz. PH-ITF, PH-SPC, PH-ITVF and PH-TC should be no more than 36 months in total.**

Two postdoctoral talent can be engaged at any one time to assist in an ITF project. In case the talent engaged for a project resigns/leaves, the applicant organisation/company can engage another talent as replacement during the ITF project period. The applicant organisation/company should follow its established human resources practice in the engagement of postdoctoral talent.

3. Application Procedure

Applicant organisation/company should have its ITF project approved under the ITF and a postdoctoral talent selected/identified before submission of the application form to the ITF Secretariat. Applicant organisations/companies should submit separate application for each postdoctoral talent through the Innovation and Technology Commission Funding Administrative System (ITCFAS) at the ITF website (<http://itcfas.itf.gov.hk>). Relevant supporting document(s), including certified copies of academic qualification certificate of the talent should also be attached to the application. Fresh application should be submitted for engagement of an additional or replacement talent; or for transferring an approved talent to another ITF project.

Subject to approval by ITC, the applicant organisation/company can proceed with the formal recruitment of the talent. Once approved by ITC, the conditions of funding as set out in this Guide would form part of the project agreement of the respective ITF project. Expenses of and payment to the talent would be additional to the approved budget of the ITF project and should be included in the project account for accounting and auditing purposes. No budget virement into or out of the approved funding for engagement of talent is allowed.

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

4. Remuneration for Postdoctoral Talent

A maximum monthly allowance of HK\$32,000 plus the employer's contribution to the

Mandatory Provident Fund (MPF) (i.e. HK\$1,500 maximum) for each postdoctoral talent will be provided. The monthly allowance should be paid in full towards the actual lump sum monthly remuneration for the talent who participates in the ITF project and shall not, in whole or in part, be retained by the applicant organisation/company for whatever reasons. No other allowances, overhead or fringe benefits, etc. will be payable from the PH-ITF.

5. Role of Applicant Organisation/Company

The applicant organisation/company should:

- ensure that the talent selection process is fair and without prejudice to any candidates. To avoid conflict of interest, in selecting a postdoctoral talent, the applicant organisation/company must not engage a postdoctoral talent who is the proprietor, partner, shareholder or management of the applicant organisation/company or their relatives. The applicant organisation/company or any person/staff authorised by the applicant company to handle or in any way to be involved in the selection process should declare that they have no actual or potential conflict of interest; or otherwise should not participate in the selection process;
- ensure that the talent is suitably supervised (preferably by the project coordinator/deputy project coordinator of the ITF project), to whom the talent can report or consult on a regular basis;
- assign to the talent relevant R&D duties related to the ITF project and with an appropriate level of workload which warrants a full-time engagement;
- comply with the relevant legislative requirements concerning the employment of the talent including the relevant entry/visa requirements for non-local talent; and
- provide a safe working environment and arrange a proper workspace for the talent.

6. Role of Postdoctoral Talent

The postdoctoral talent being engaged should assist in the R&D work of the funded project on a full-time basis.

7. Reporting Requirement

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

8. Return of Fund

The applicant organisation/company should return all unused fund and accrued interest to the Government **within one month** upon completion or termination of the engagement.

9. Handling of Information

Information provided by the applicant organisation/company in its application and evaluation reports will be kept in confidence. It may however be disclosed to 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.

10. Important Notes

Inaccurate and incomplete information may affect the consideration and processing of the applications and may result in deferral or rejection. Applicant organisations/companies should note that any misrepresentation or omission of information in the applications or 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 ITF approved as necessary. In the event that there is an overpayment due to error in calculation or assessment, applicant organisations/companies are required to refund the amount overpaid **within one month** upon notification.

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