

The HZI-MI4 Scientific Travel Exchange Program (STEP)

About the program

This program integrates the expertise of the Helmholtz Centre for Infection Research (HZI) and the McGill Interdisciplinary Initiative in Infection and Immunity (MI4) in the field of personalized infection research. HZI and MI4 have partnered to establish a joint Scientific Travel Exchange Program (STEP), which will provide principal investigators from HZI and MI4 the opportunity to exchange trainees at the PhD level or higher to share expertise and intensify collaboration. STEP will allow for international research and training opportunities for up to 3 months at the partner institution.

The goal of this program is to foster scientific excellence through collaboration. It is anticipated that data generated through these collaborations will allow researchers to pursue more comprehensive joint external research funding. The program encourages trainees to conduct research abroad by covering the cost of the international experience. Eligible trainees are postdoctoral researchers working at HZI or McGill and doctoral researchers with a research project at an HZI or McGill department who have been approved by their primary supervisor to take part in this exchange program. A limited number of awards are available each year on a first come, first served basis.

About the partner institutions

MI4 is a community-wide network of over 200 world-class investigators with diverse expertise, of which nearly 100 are clinician-scientists. The investigators focus on innovative, collaborative, and policy-relevant research to develop new solutions for infectious and immune diseases and deliver these solutions to the patients and populations who need them most.

HZI is Germany's largest academic institution dedicated exclusively to infection research. 60 research units at six sites investigate bacterial and viral pathogens of high clinical relevance, elucidate their interaction with the host's immune system and explore new ways to prevent and combat infections. To promote clinical and pharmaceutical innovation, HZI scientists perform translational research in close cooperation with the university medicine and industry.

Successful STEP awardees will have the following available to their trainees: access to state-of-the-art core facilities for sequencing, imaging and omics approaches, cutting-edge expertise in a number of areas related to the field of personalized infection research and computational resources for leveraging the large amounts of data being generated.

Value

In 2023, applications are invited for up to 5 awards for McGill Researchers with eligible trainees exchanging to HZI and 5 awards for HZI Researchers with eligible trainees exchanging to McGill. Each award is worth up to \$10,000 CAD or 7,500 €.

Award values will depend on the research taking place, its duration, and the availability of funding at the time of application. The budget can include up to \$2,500 CAD or 1,900 € in research operating costs.

Note that trainees' activities abroad funded by this program must be at least 2 weeks in length and cannot exceed 3 months. The 3 months should be used for one activity.

Deadline

HZI and MI4 will be accepting completed applications on a rolling basis.

Eligibility

- The planned research activity in the partner lab is in the area of personalized infection medicine.
- The research applicant must have a graduate trainee in good academic standing.
- The research applicant at the partner institution must approve the chosen graduate trainee to take part in the exchange program.
- The primary supervisor/research applicant must participate in a research collaboration with the partner lab abroad.
- The trainee going abroad must be a postdoctoral researcher working at HZI or McGill or a doctoral researcher with a research project at an HZI or McGill group.
- The activity must take place in Germany at HZI or Canada at McGill University.
- Conference travel is NOT eligible.

Eligible Costs

- Travel to foster collaboration (should not exceed 2nd class for rail travel and economy class for air travel)
- Visitor fees
- *Per diem* costs to cover accommodation and reasonable out of pocket expenses during travel
- Research operating costs up to \$2,500 CAD or 1,900 € in the host lab

Non-eligible Costs

- Salaries of principal investigators and students
- Student fees or tuition fees
- Honoraria for guest lecturers
- Equipment costs
- Publication costs

Review Process

An *ad hoc* Joint Review Panel composed of HZI and MI4 evaluators will conduct a quality and scientific review of applications according to the following criteria:

- Quality and originality of the proposed activities
- Requirement for the proposed work to be carried out in the partner lab
- Alignment with HZI and MI4 priority areas
- Evidence that the proposed research might lead to a continuing collaboration between the partner laboratories
- Demonstrated potential for enhancement of training for trainees
- Reasonable budget

How to Apply

Please complete the following [application form](#).

Once you have completed the form, please send your completed application package in one PDF file to the appropriate party.

For HZI applicants: Please email applications to Birgit Grün (HZI-MI4-STEP@helmholtz-hzi.de)

For MI4/McGill applicants: Please email applications to Kendra Tonkin (mi4programmgr.med@mcgill.ca)

Be sure to include the following:

- **Statement of proposed research activity and anticipated outcomes**, including how it may lead to joint applications to external research funding organizations in the future. The added value of the joint effort must be clearly demonstrated.
- **Supporting statement from partner PI** (must be institutional letterhead)
- **A budget including justification of all costs requested**. Please calculate costs using the current exchange rate.
- **Biosketch of participating research applicants**, including a maximum of 5 significant relevant and recent publications.
- **Biosketch of selected graduate candidate**.

To find suitable research partners, please consult these pages: [HZI](#) and [MI4](#).

Reporting

At the end of the travel exchange, a brief report detailing achievements/future directions is required. This could include highlighting key results, potential impact, student mobility, presentations at conferences, abstracts, and publications.

HZI-MI4 STEP recipients are required to complete a short survey and provide proof of travel (i.e. boarding pass, not airfare tickets) within one month of their trainee's return. Researchers who fail to complete this step will see their award withdrawn.

All changes in travel plans must be reported to HZI and MI4 immediately. Failure to report changes may result in the withdrawal of the award.

Any publications arising from this exchange must acknowledge the support from this program. Should a project cease for any reason, including project end, unspent funds will be returned to the partnership.

Contact

Please contact HZI-MI4-STEP@helmholtz-hzi.de and mi4programmgr.med@mcgill.ca for more information.