



International

# Human Frontier Science Program

Organization

HFSP Funding opportunities for postdoctoral scientists and  
collaborations of independent investigators

University of Cambridge Funders' Fair - 14 March 2024

Dr. Barbara Pauly  
Director of Fellowships



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# International Collaboration in Life Science Research

Supported by



Republic of Korea  
New Zealand  
Norway  
Singapore  
South Africa  
Switzerland  
United Kingdom  
United States of America

Australia  
Canada  
European Commission  
France  
Germany  
India  
Israel  
Italy  
Japan





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# HFSP's Mission

## HFSPO promotes and funds basic research

- innovative, cutting-edge research extending the frontiers of the life sciences
- focused on the elucidation of the sophisticated and complex mechanisms of living organisms (no applied projects)

## HFSPO attaches the highest importance to

- scientific merit
- internationality (especially intercontinentality)
- interdisciplinarity





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# Elements that distinguish HFSP

**No “red tape”:** Independent HFSP budget allowing for unrestricted international collaboration

**No geo-tagging:** Financial contributions to HFSP’s annual budget in a “common pot”

**Putting Ideas First:** HFSP Research means bottom-up investigator-driven approaches

**Not for profit:** Intellectual property resulting from HFSP remains with inventors

**“HFSP Culture”:** Independent, impartial scientific peer review by international and interdisciplinary review committees.

**Our Shared Values:** Equity, inclusion, diversity, inclusion, freedom of research, open science



## Basic Research in the Life Sciences: molecular level to ecosystems & including higher cognitive functions!

- Scientific research at the frontiers of knowledge
- Competition of ideas: high-risk, high-gain wanted!
- **I**nterdisciplinarity: integration of different research fields (material science, chemistry, physics, mathematics, etc.)
- **I**nnovative, original projects that hold promise for the future
- **I**nternational (intercontinental) collaborations
- Scientific excellence
- **Any frontier research topic in the life sciences**

3 *iii*

You are  
expected to  
shine but  
allowed to fail!



# Research that is not supported

## HFSP does **not support** research projects that are:

- Applied and translational:
  - clinical and pharmaceutical research (human participants, diagnostics, therapy development)
  - applied technology or applied engineering
  - studies concerned with improving agricultural production and yield
- Mostly environmental/conservation or agricultural/forestry research (unless about complex basic mechanisms of life), studies of bioremediation
- Data collecting, observational studies (-omics without functional questions)
- Research in for-profit environments (but collaboration are possible)

**Many projects still lead to patents and applications – this is fine, but should not be the primary aim**



# Overview HFSP Support 2023

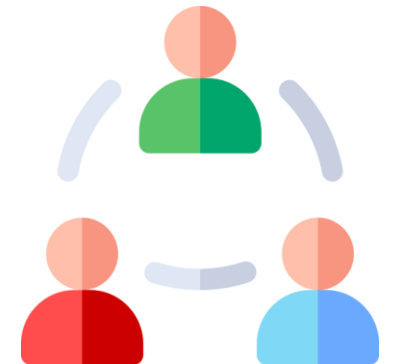
## Postdoctoral Fellowships (600 scientists applying for ~ 65 awards/year)

- PhD in biology („Long-Term“)
- PhD in physics, chemistry, etc. („Cross-Disciplinary“)
- Research abroad in a new country – 3 years support
- Salary support (plus child allowance, some support for travel etc)



## Research Grants (~2200 applicants in ~700 proposals > 100-120 awardees in ~33 projects)

- International researcher teams (all “Research Grants”)
- Starting investigators (Research Grants - Early Career“)
- One team – one project– 3 years support
- About \$120.000 p.a. per laboratory





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# HFSP Postdoctoral Fellowships

## For PhD candidates that...

- ...are driven by adventurous new ideas (**high-risk, high-gain** wanted)
- ...intend to expand their work beyond the scope of the PhD project
- ...are willing to leave their scientific comfort zone and propose a significant change of fields/topics
- ...are motivated to move to a **new research environment & country**
- ...want to experiment with **new methods and approaches**
- ...aim to disrupt existing paradigms and established ways of thinking





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# HFSP Postdoctoral Fellowships

- **Long-Term Fellowships:**

- for applicants with a PhD in a biological field
- to embark on a new project in a different field in the life sciences

- **Cross-Disciplinary Fellowships:**

- for applicants with a PhD from outside the life sciences (e.g. in physics, chemistry, mathematics, engineering or computer sciences)
- no prior training or research experience in the life sciences
- want to move to biological research



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# HFSP Postdoctoral Fellowships

## Application criteria

Applicants must....

- ...propose to work in a new country and with a new supervisor
  - Citizen of a HFSP Member? -> Choose to go anywhere in the world
  - Not from a Member country? -> Choose a lab in any Member country
- ...apply within 3 years of PhD
- ...have at least one first-author paper (or preprint, at LOI stage)
- **no preliminary results needed on the new project**



# HFSP Postdoctoral Fellowships Success Rate & Funding

- Award includes 3 year salary support plus travel, child and parental leave allowances
- **Career building:** HFSP fellowship can be deferred for up to one year
- Option to use 3rd year for **repatriation** to home country
- Success rate ~ 10 – 15%

Country	Currency	yearly living allowance Year 1	Yearly living allowance Year 2	yearly living allowance Year 3	Yearly child allowance (per child)	Yearly R/T allowance
India	INR	2,678,868	2,723,520	2,768,160	267,887	507,036
Japan	JPY	6,898,740	7,013,712	7,128,696	689,874	784,692
Korea	KRW	68,281,452	69,419,484	70,557,504	6,828,145	8,395,260
UK	GBP	65,772	66,864	67,956	6,577	5,640
USA	USD	59,460	60,456	61,440	5,946	7,200



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# HFSP Postdoctoral Fellowships

## 2-stage application process

### 1. Letter of Intent

1. Submission deadline **14 May 2024**  
(~600)
2. Triage (~ 10% not in scope & formal)
3. Initial review by Review Committee members
4. Ranking by scores
5. Top ~ 20% of Lol will receive an invitation to submit a full application
6. All others will be notified

### 2. Full Proposal

1. Submission deadline **September 2024**
2. Reviewed by 2-3 external experts
3. Reviewed by the initial Lol Review Committee members
4. Scoring w/o cut off
5. Meeting of the full Review Committee in January to discuss all full applications and establish the final ranking
6. Notification **late March 2025**

**Review process and list of committee members available on  
<https://www.hfsp.org/funding>**



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# HFSP Postdoctoral Fellowships

## Developing an application

### Important in a successful application

In your **Curriculum Vitae**, give evidence of your ability to

- think independently and beyond conventional approaches
- adopt new approaches and methodology

Propose a **Research Project** that

- is clearly **your idea** (conceptual input from supervisor is OK)
- is creative, **frontier** and basic research, challenges existing paradigms, addresses barriers to progress in the field
- will introduce you to **new fields, theory and methodology** (a clear departure from your previous research)





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# HFSP Postdoctoral Fellowships

## Developing an application

### **Do not propose a project**

- that is only an incremental step forward
- that is the logic next step after your PhD (you need to be willing to significantly change your field of research)
- that is a mainstream project in your host's lab
- that represents the next logical step for your host supervisor
- that fails to make clear *your* intellectual contribution

**Review process and list of committee members can be found on  
<https://www.hfsp.org/funding>**



# HFSP Postdoctoral Fellowships

## Writing the Letter of Intent

### The Letter of Intent is a very short format

- The letter of Intent is the critical step in the HFSP selection process
- Win the reader in your first sentence (don't say "malaria is killing millions every year")
- Simple language and style can be very convincing (reviewers are generalists and read many applications)
- Ask someone from outside the field to read it – are abbreviations needed or can they be replaced? Are concepts clear?
- Do not write "this is interdisciplinary, international and innovative" - that should be clear from the text
- Do not waste space to say how fantastic a project this is. Focus on the novelty/frontierness of the science itself



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# HFSP Postdoctoral Fellowships

## Next Call for Applications

Award year 2025:

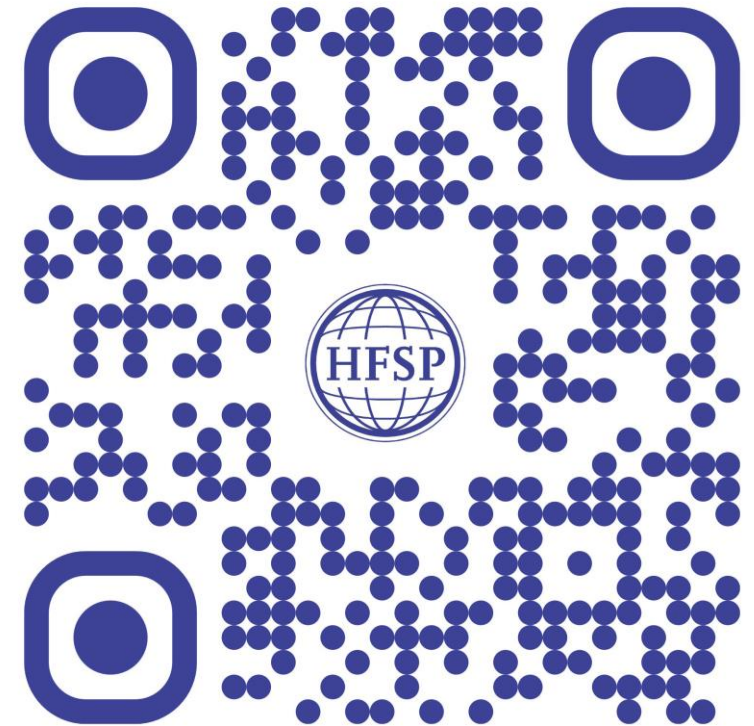
Application site opens March 2024

Application deadline: **14 May 2024**

Award announcement: end-March 2025

Look here:

<https://www.hfsp.org/funding/hfsp-funding/postdoctoral-fellowships>





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## Awardees meetings

Initiated in 2001 and held once annually  
in a different HFSP Member country

Next year's awardees meeting  
will take place in June 2024 in  
the National Academy of the  
USA in Washington

## Additional activities





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# Additional activities

## Nakasone award

- In honour of former Japanese prime minister Nakasone
- Annually awarded to a scientist who has made a major ground-breaking discovery
- Nominations by scientists:

**You** can nominate candidates for this award, watch out for the call next year!



2023 Nakasone awardee  
Rotem Sorek





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# HFSP Contacts & Helpful Resources



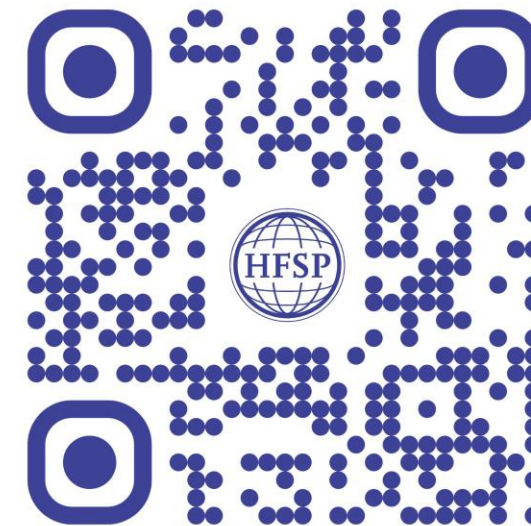
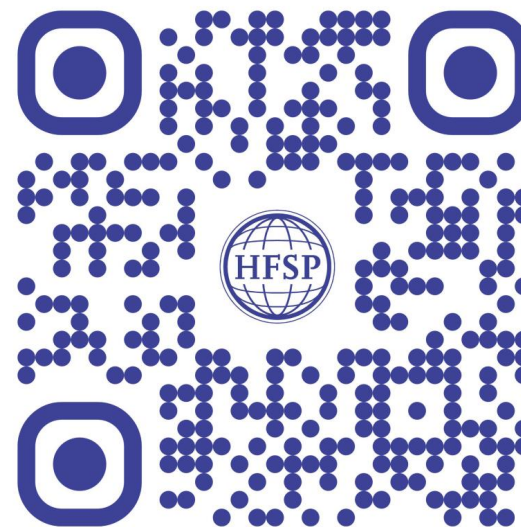
HFSP Secretariat, Strasbourg

**Fellowship Awards:**  
*[fellow@hfsp.org](mailto:fellow@hfsp.org)*

**Research Grants:**  
*[grant@hfsp.org](mailto:grant@hfsp.org)*

**Website:** *[www.hfsp.org](http://www.hfsp.org)*

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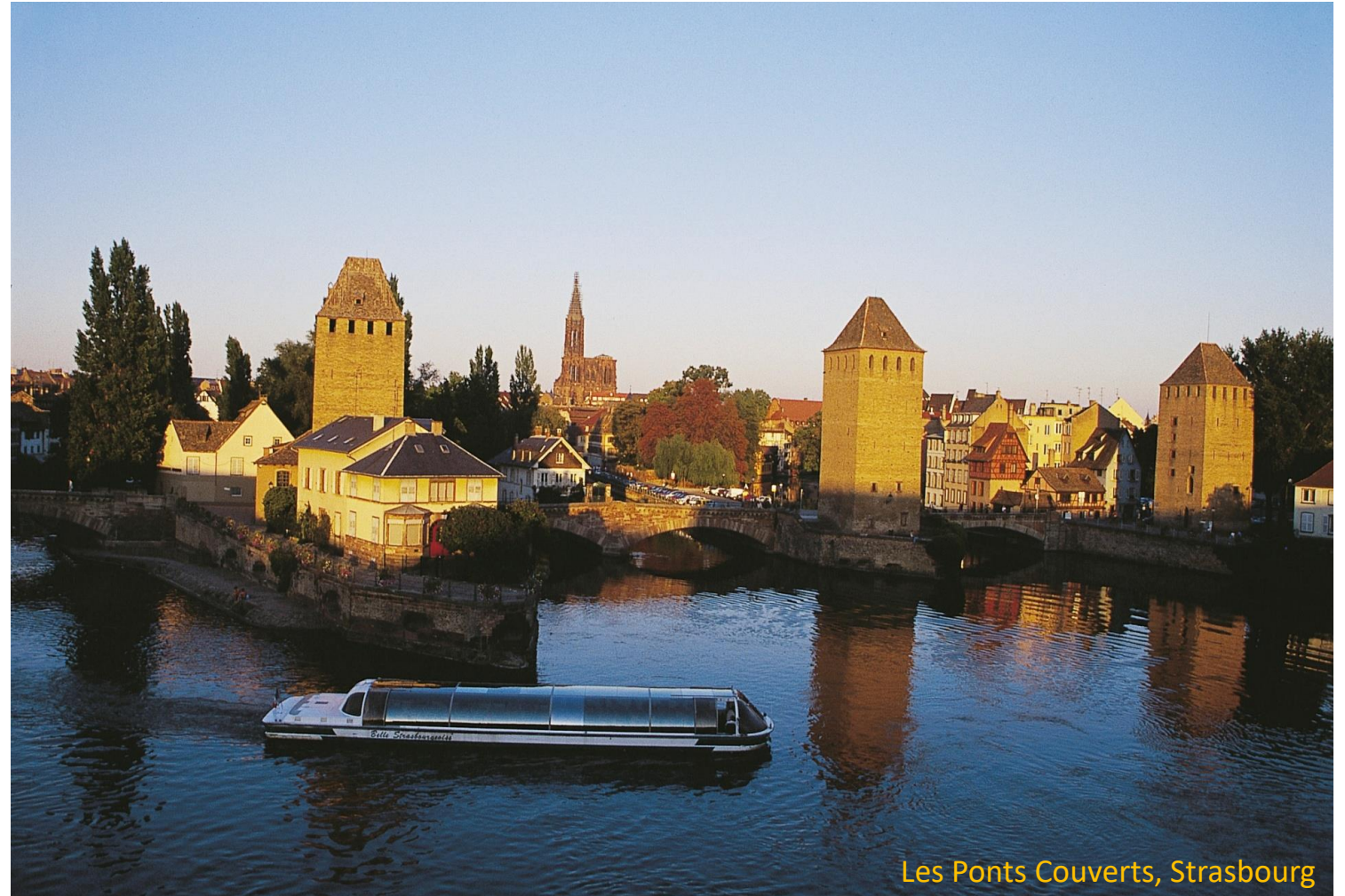


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# Thank you! – Questions?



HFSP Secretariat, Strasbourg



Les Ponts Couverts, Strasbourg