

PIER Idea Fund

February 3rd, 2022

Within the scope of their strategic Partnership for Innovation, Education and Research (PIER), Universität Hamburg (UHH) and DESY promote cooperation across the two institutions and between the PIER research and competence fields (i.e. particle and astroparticle physics, nanoscience, photon science, infection and structural biology, theoretical physics, accelerator science, data science). For this purpose, UHH and DESY have established the PIER Idea Fund. Its aim is to enable researchers of the two institutions to identify complementary strengths and potential synergies, develop joint research projects, and establish contacts to international colleagues in their respective fields, thereby laying the basis for new externally funded research collaborations.

The PIER Idea Fund supports the first steps of research collaboration. Three formats are available:

- I. **PIER Seed Projects:** PIER Seed Projects promote innovative and unusual research ideas with a strong cross-institutional dimension. Projects must involve researchers from DESY and UHH and/or the University Medical Center Hamburg-Eppendorf (UKE) and must contribute to strengthening research collaboration between these institutions. **The funding program is particularly aimed at qualified early-career scientists (PhD students, postdocs, junior research group leaders).** It provides rapid and non-bureaucratic seed funding for the identification, initiation, development, testing and implementation of completely new research ideas, concepts or methods in the PIER research fields. Funding will focus on creative ideas, lateral thinking as well as risky research ideas with possibly high potential benefits. Funding will be granted to:
 - Analyses and studies of new hypotheses, new concepts and new methodological approaches.
 - Experimental research and development work on building prototypes, demonstration of the feasibility or viability as „proof of principle“, or identification and development of new areas of application.
 - Conceptual work and studies on an experiment, experimental set-up or device with high discovery and innovation potential and high benefit potential.
- II. **PIER Workshops:** PIER Workshops promote cross-institutional research collaboration of the two partner institutions. Their aim is to stimulate idea-finding processes and scientific exchange between DESY and UHH and/or UKE researchers. Workshops must include participants from both institutions.
- III. **PIER Short Visits:** The aim of PIER Short Visits is to foster international cooperation and exchange within the PIER research and competence fields. Recipients of PIER Short Visit grants are international researchers from the postdoc level upwards whose expertise and connections can be fruitfully integrated into the development of new ideas and/or new research cooperation in a cross-institutional context. Short visits of PhD students of international cooperation partners can be funded in duly justified cases. Besides research, recipients of PIER Short Visit grants may be involved in workshops, lectures or training of graduate students. **Please note:** Applications for PIER Short Visits have to be submitted by the inviting researcher(s). Eligible to submit an application are PIER Scientist(s), who are a member of DESY, UHH or UKE.

The different funding formats can be combined.

All activities supported within the scope of the PIER Idea Fund must have a clearly defined focus and serve as a catalyst for the development of new research ideas and joint projects with a cross-institutional dimension. Interdisciplinary collaboration is encouraged in all funding formats. The motivation for carrying out the activity must be clearly explained in the application, including how the project would contribute to strengthening research collaboration between DESY and UHH and/or UKE and how the involved partner institutions will benefit from the envisaged cooperation.

Nature and scope of funding

- I. **PIER Seed Projects:** The funding is provided in the form of a non-repayable grant, covering up to 100 percent of direct project costs. The average funding amount of previously funded projects was 40,000 Euros. The proposed project duration for which support is requested must be consistent with the nature and complexity of the proposed activity. Grants are awarded for a maximum of two years. Funds must be used within the funding period. The funding focuses on project-related expenses exclusively. Personnel costs are generally not eligible.
- II. **PIER Workshops:** Funding can cover fees for moderators and/or speakers, expenses for travel and accommodation of participants, room rental etc. The average funding amount of previously funded workshops was 5,000 EUR.
- III. **PIER Short Visits:** Short visit grants will be awarded on a competitive basis for a period of 1 week to 2 months each. The weekly/monthly rates of support are as follows:
 - Researchers (postdoc level and above): 500 EUR/week or 2,000 EUR/month.
 - PhD students: 300 EUR/week or 1,200 EUR/month

Funding is effected by means of a non-refundable lump-sum. In addition, a reimbursement of travel expenses (economy class (flight) / 2nd class (rail)) to/from Hamburg is possible upon presentation of original receipts (maximum of 1,500 EUR).

The underlying concept must have at its core a new approach and, as such, must not be the objective of an existing funding support or a separate part of a funded third-party project. The funding by PIER excludes institutional funding or covering budget deficits of a third-party project. Should the concept arise within the scope of a third-party project, the context of the project and the further third-party funding must be described in the PIER Idea fund proposal/application.

Conditions

The applicant must be registered as a PIER Scientist (members of the PIER Helmholtz Graduate School are automatically registered as PIER scientists). Only researchers whose principle affiliation (= employment contract) is with DESY, UHH or UKE are eligible for PIER funding and can apply for a seed project as main applicants. All applications must involve at least one research partner from the other institution(s) respectively (e.g. main applicant from DESY, co-applicant(s) from UHH and/or UKE; or: main applicant from UHH or UKE, co-applicant(s) from DESY). The main applicant and his/her principle research partner may not belong to the same research group. The inclusion of researchers from other research institutions on the Hamburg Bahrenfeld science campus, such as the Max Planck Institute for the Structure and Dynamics of Matter (MPSD), The

European Molecular Biology Laboratory (EMBL), the European XFEL, and others, is encouraged. Researchers from these organizations can apply for funding as co-applicants.

Procedure

Calls for PIER Seed Projects are regularly announced, usually once a year (please check the PIER website for further information). Applications for PIER Workshops and PIER Short Visits can be continually submitted to the PIER Office. Please visit the PIER website for further information on application requirements and templates. The evaluation of all PIER Idea Fund proposals is carried out by the PIER Executive Board.

Evaluation criteria that must be addressed in the proposal

The evaluation criteria are as follows:

- Scientific quality and originality of the research project
- Relevance of the project with regard to the objectives and contents of the PIER research fields
- Scientific qualification and applicant's expertise
- Support of young scientists
- Strengthening of research collaboration between DESY and UHH and/or UKE
- Potential of the project as a basis for a larger externally-funded follow-up project
- Quality of the project planning and cost plan
- Adequacy of the requested funds

Reporting

A short report has to be submitted to the PIER Office six weeks after the expiration of the funding measure. In case the report of expenditure of funds cannot be completed due to ongoing settlement procedures, missing documents will have to be filed subsequently.

Miscellaneous

PIER is a partnership between UHH and DESY. PIER is not a legal entity. The financial support of funded projects will be handled by one partner of PIER, either UHH or DESY.

The submission of an application does not establish a legal claim to funding.

Link collection

Information about PIER and its activities: www.pier-hamburg.de

Description of projects funded so far: www.pier-hamburg.de/funding/pier_seed_projects

Templates for application and report forms: www.pier-hamburg.de/templates

Registration as a PIER Scientist at: www.pier-hamburg.de/registration

Contact

PIER Office

Notkestrasse 85

22607 Hamburg

Tel.: +49 40 8998-5500

E-mail: info@pier-hamburg.de

www.pier-hamburg.de