

Seeded Partnerships for Advancing Research & Knowledge (SPARK) Guidelines - 2026 Session

The SPARK program is jointly launched by the **Executive Scientific Division** through the **Department for Scientific Programming and Incentive Actions (SPAIS)** of Institut Pasteur, and the **Pasteur Network (PN)**.

I- OBJECTIVES

The SPARK program aims to:

- **Foster a cohesive community of early-career scientists** across the Pasteur Network, including Institut Pasteur (Paris);
- Encourage **innovative, interdisciplinary research projects** aligned with the Strategic Plan **Pasteur 2030** and the **scientific pillars of the Pasteur Network**;
- Reinforce **equitable and sustainable collaboration** between Pasteur Network members to maximize **research impact, training opportunities, knowledge exchange, and networking**;
- Contribute to **sustainability, talent development, entrepreneurship, societal engagement, equity, diversity, and inclusion**.

II- PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The SPARK program is a single, Pasteur Network-wide initiative. SPARK is implemented through two complementary funding tracks (SPARK-IPP and SPARK-PN), reflecting different funding sources and strategic objectives, while bringing together all awardees into one shared scientific community with common goals, expectations, and collective activities.

III- PROGRAM STRUCTURE: TWO TRACKS, ONE COMMUNITY

The SPARK program is implemented through two funding tracks:

- **Track 1 "SPARK-IPP":** Institut Pasteur (Paris) – Pasteur Network Track
Funded by Institut Pasteur (Paris), this track aims to reinforce strategic scientific collaboration between Institut Pasteur and a defined group of Pasteur Network members listed in Annex 1. Particular attention is given to partnerships that strengthen scientific capacity, sustainability, and long-term collaboration with institutes operating in low- and middle-income country contexts.
- **Track 2 "SPARK-PN":** Pasteur Network Track
Funded by the Pasteur Network, this track is open to early-career scientists from all Pasteur Network members and supports collaborative research projects fully within the Network.

While eligibility conditions, funding sources, and evaluation processes differ between tracks, all funded projects are part of one SPARK community and are subject to shared scientific expectations, reporting requirements, and collective activities.

4.1 Scientific Scope

Projects must be aligned with the priorities of the Strategic Plan Pasteur 2030 (**SPARK-IPP**) and/or the scientific pillars of the Pasteur Network (**SPARK-PN**). Projects should explicitly provide a rationale and how they align with the above.

Projects are funded for 24 months, with a scientific review at 12 months to assess progress.

4.2 Eligibility of Coordinators and Teams Leaders*

- **Institut Pasteur (Paris): scientists with a permanent status:**
 - New team leaders (G5, U5, groups within units created in the last 5 years)
 - Or with max 10 years of experience at the IP Paris campus
- **Other Pasteur Network members:**
 PhD scientists up to 10 years post-PhD, holding an independent or semi-independent position, with a proven source of research funding. Employment contracts must cover the full duration of the project plus an additional six months. Extensions for documented career breaks may be considered.

Note: Coordinators awardees of the SPARK 2025 call are not eligible to apply.

4.3 Consortium Composition

Projects must involve **2 or 3 teams from different** Pasteur Network members.

For SPARK-IPP: one team from Institut Pasteur Paris and one team among institutes listed in Annex 1 are mandatory. If a third team is added, it should preferably be from the list in Annex 1 but does not exclude (if specific expertise is required) participation of other members of the Pasteur Network

For SPARK-PN, all Pasteur Network members are eligible.

	SPARK-IPP	SPARK-PN
Consortium	2-3 teams from different PN members: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 team IP Paris • 1 team institute (listed in Annex 1) • 1 team other institutes (optional) 	2 to 3 teams from different PN members (IP Paris not mandatory)
Coordinators & Team Leaders	Early career scientists (Eligibility of coordinators and Teams Leaders*)	

The participation of non-Pasteur Network partners (e.g. hospitals, clinics, primary care institutions) is permitted; however, no funding will be provided to these entities.

Evidence of feasibility, scientific expertise, and complementarity of the consortium is required.

All SPARK awardees, regardless of track, are required to participate in:

- Regular online “work-in-progress” meetings focused on peer exchange, scientific discussion, and mutual learning;
- One annual SPARK meeting, held virtually by default and in person subject to funding availability.

These activities are integral to the SPARK program and aim to foster a durable community of early-career researchers across the Pasteur Network.

VI- FUNDING

A budget of €75,000–€100,000 per project for a period of 24 months. No overhead costs are eligible. Eligible costs include:

- Travel (coordination meetings, training, and field missions – economy class only);
- Consumables and reagents;
- Subcontracting (maximum €10,000 per project);
- Small equipment (maximum €3,000 per project), excluding standard IT equipment, which is expected to be covered by institutional baseline resources.

Funding cannot be used for personnel costs, except for field mission-related expenses (e.g. supervision of sampling or sampling activities).

A detailed and justified budget is required with the proposal submission.

VII- ENGAGEMENT AND VISIBILITY

As experts in their field, SPARK awardees are expected to contribute to the visibility and outreach activities of the Pasteur Network and their home institutions. This may include participation in communication or philanthropic engagement activities related to their project, when relevant.

VIII- EVALUATION PROCESS

Projects will be evaluated using common scientific criteria, including:

- Relevance to global, regional, and local public health challenges;
- Scientific rigor and clarity of the research hypothesis and methodology;
- Quality, complementarity, and added value of the consortium, including the establishment of new collaborations within the Pasteur Network.

The evaluation process will be implemented separately for each track:

- SPARK-IPP projects will be evaluated under the scientific leadership of Institut Pasteur (Paris);
- SPARK-PN projects will be evaluated under the leadership of the Pasteur Network.

IX- APPLICATION PROCESS & TIMELINE

Applications must be submitted online via the dedicated application platform:

<https://spais.aap.pasteur.fr/public.aspx>

Timeline:

- Proposal submission deadline: 20 May 2026 at 13:00 (Paris time)
- Notification of funding decisions: October 2026
- Project start date: January 2027

X- REPORTING

The project coordinator will serve as the single point of contact for the consortium and is responsible for scientific and administrative coordination.

A progress review will take place during the annual SPARK meeting. A final scientific report and a financial report are required no later than 26 months after the project start date.

XI- ETHICAL AND REGULATORY COMPLIANCE

All activities must comply with applicable ethical principles and regulatory requirements in the countries where the research is conducted.

Proposal including experiments on animals: Partners of the project must comply with all applicable laws & regulations related to animal experiments:

- For Institut Pasteur (Paris), please refer to information available on the specific web page of the Animal experimentation ethics committee: [here](#)
- For the other PN members that use laboratory animals for research, please contact your Institutional Animal Care Officer.

No project involving human biomedical research or animal experimentation may start without appropriate ethical and regulatory approval. **Funds will be transferred upon provision of proof of clearance.**

XII- ANTI-CORRUPTION

Applicants and partners undertake to comply with all applicable laws, regulations, and internal rules of Institut Pasteur and the Pasteur Network, including anti-bribery regulations.

XIII- CONTACT

For any question about this call, do not hesitate to contact us at the following address: spark@pasteur.fr

Department for Scientific Programming and Incentive Actions (SPAIS):

- Mallory Perrin-Wolff: Head of SPAIS
- Sandra Corre: Coordinator of SPARK program
- Cécile Vacher: Administrative contact

Pasteur Network:

- Kathleen Victoir: Senior Scientific Officer
- Hyunjae Kim: Administrative and Financial officer

For any question about potential innovation:

- Institut Pasteur Paris staff should contact the DARRI at darri@pasteur.fr and copy spark@pasteur.fr
- Pasteur Network partners should contact any Technology Transfer Office of any PN institution of your choice within the consortium.

ANNEX 1 : LIST OF ELIGIBLE INSTITUTES FOR SPARK-IPP

- Centre Pasteur in Cameroon
- CERMES Niger
- Institut Pasteur de Bangui
- Institut Pasteur de Côte d'Ivoire
- Institut Pasteur de Dakar
- Institut Pasteur de Guinée
- Institut Pasteur de Madagascar
- Institut Pasteur d'Algérie
- Institut Pasteur du Maroc

- Institut Pasteur de Tunis
- Oswaldo Cruz Foundation (Fiocruz)
- Institut Pasteur de Sao Paulo
- Institut Pasteur du Cambodge
- Institut Pasteur du Laos
- Institut Pasteur in Ho Chi Minh City
- National Institute of Hygiene and Epidemiology (NIHE)
- Pasteur Institute in Nha Trang

ANNEX 2 : FAQ

Why is SPARK organized as a single call with two tracks (SPARK-IPP & SPARK-PN)?

SPARK is one program with two complementary funding mechanisms. This structure balances strategic partnerships with network-wide inclusiveness while maintaining a unified scientific community.

Why are some institutes eligible for SPARK-IPP and others not?

SPARK-IPP is a targeted partnership mechanism and is not intended to subsidize research in high-income countries. Eligibility reflects a strategic focus on strengthening scientific capacity and sustainability in more resource-constrained contexts.

Are high-income country institutes excluded from SPARK?

No. High-income country institutes are fully eligible for SPARK-PN and are encouraged to participate as partners or coordinators where they provide clear added value. For SPARK-IPP, Institut Pasteur Paris and at least one team must be from an institute listed in Annex 1. If a third team is added, this should be by preference from the list in Annex 1 but does not exclude participation of other members of the Pasteur Network.

Is there a hierarchy between SPARK-IPP and SPARK-PN projects?

No. All projects are evaluated using the same scientific criteria. Separate evaluation processes reflect funding governance, not scientific ranking.

Can I submit an applied research project or does it need to be fundamental (basic research)?

For SPARK-PN, basic research and applied research addressing a public health problem within the scope of the Pasteur Network strategic pillars using appropriate methodology are permitted.