October 2024

Call for Proposals: AI for Science Moonshot

Background

Following previous initiatives undertaken by the Planning and Budgeting Committee (PBC) of the Israeli Council for Higher Education for the advancement of AI (both independently and as part of a national program, see details here), and based on the recommendations of the national program's Scientific Advisory Committee, the PBC is happy to launch a new Call for Proposals: *AI for Science Moonshot*.

The term "Moonshot" is used here to describe an ambitious and groundbreaking project aimed at achieving a goal perceived as difficult or nearly impossible, but which has the potential to revolutionize a given domain with far-reaching implications for technological and overall progress.

Program Objective

Unlike the previous programs mentioned above, which aimed to enhance institutional research capabilities in AI, the current Call for Proposals will provide financial support for a group of top researchers from at least two different public research universities who will focus on solving a central AI challenge or problem. Its aim is to encourage project(s) with the highest potential for discovery, innovation and a significant expansion of existing knowledge in core AI research, thereby positioning Israeli academia at the forefront of scientific and technological development in AI.

Budget

The maximum budget for the program is 19 million NIS for four years starting in 2025. It will provide financial support for 1 or 2 groundbreaking projects (maximum 19 million NIS per proposal), pending 25% matching funding.

Eligibility and Evaluation Process

The program is open to all Israeli public research universities. Researchers from other higher education institutions may participate and receive funding for research activities within the program.

Collaboration between researchers from at least two public research universities is required.

Universities wishing to participate in the program must send recommendations for 2-3 of their own faculty members as potential candidates for the evaluation committee for this program. Institutions unable to meet this requirement must provide explanations. These members may or may not be selected for the evaluation committee, whose final composition will be submitted for PBC approval.

Proposals will be ranked according to the following criteria:

Criterion	Explanation	Points
Innovation, Scientific Excellence, & Potential Impact	Evaluation in this criterion will comprise assessment of the innovation level and scientific excellence of the project, the centrality of the challenge/problem it intends to address/solve, and its potential to bring about significant impact/transformative change in core AI research with wide-ranging implications for academic R&D in various fields, technological developments, and socio-economic progress. The assessment will also consider the quality of the research team, and its capability to carry out the proposed project with respect to the expertise and experience required.	70
Interdisciplinarity and Collaborations	Evaluation in this criterion will comprise assessment of the extent to which the research project integrates multiple disciplines/methodologies/research tools, etc., and the scope/depth of collaboration within the research team and with additional partners (including academic and non-academic partners in Israel and abroad).	20
Project Plan and Performance Indicators	Evaluation in this criterion will comprise assessment of the overall quality of the proposed project plan, including consideration of risk factors that may affect its success, feasibility, and biennial and final success metrics (KPIs).	10

Submission Guidelines:

Proposals must be submitted in English (up to 15 pages) and address the criteria above. Proposals should include an abstract (up to one page) and provide a detailed research plan, including annual performance metrics and a yearly budget (please download and fill out the form available here). Additionally (not to be calculated within the 15p limit), please include the CVs of the research team (up to 2 pages per CV, excluding publications, which can be added separately or as a link).

Proposals must be submitted by the "submitting institution", namely one of the public research universities, which will be responsible for submission on behalf of the other partner, and for the allocation of the grant, in case of winning, and the submission of annual reports on the project's progress, including budgetary reports.

The deadline for submission of proposals is January 30, 2025

Proposals should be submitted via email toDaniel Milbauer, Strategy Program Director: danielm@che.org.il.

Grant Terms:

A Monitoring Committee will be established for the evaluation of the performance of the research project(s) according to success metrics approved for each winning proposal (KPIs). The Monitoring Committee will recommend on the continuation of budget allocations.