



CALL FOR RESEARCH PROJECT PROPOSALS

ASEAN Science, Technology and Innovation Fund (ASTIF) Call 2026

"ASEAN Grand Challenge: AI-Enabled Competitive and Resilient Region"

The ASEAN Committee on Science, Technology and Innovation (COSTI) invites institutions from ASEAN Member States (AMS) to submit project proposals for funding under the ASEAN Science, Technology and Innovation Fund (ASTIF) Call 2026, with a total budget of USD 1,200,000, to catalyse collaborative research and innovation on Artificial Intelligence (AI) across the region, in line with the ASEAN Plan of Action on Science, Technology and Innovation (APASTI) 2026–2035.

1. Theme and Priority Areas

Proposals must fall under one of the following four priority categories:

Category	Priority Area
Category 1	AI for Health, Bioeconomy and Food Security
Category 2	AI for Space, Earth, Ocean and Climate Intelligence
Category 3	AI for Advanced Materials and Energy Transition
Category 4	AI for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME) Productivity and Workforce Development

Proposals should clearly define the regional problem being addressed and demonstrate relevance across multiple AMS.

2. Eligible Activities

Eligible activities under this Call include:

- Collaborative research or development of models or AI-enabled tools or solutions;
- Technology demonstration or proof-of-concept of AI solutions;
- Development or enhancement of shared infrastructure and data systems for AI research and development.

3. Funding Tracks

Proposals may be submitted under one of two tracks:

- Open Competitive Call Track** – Open to higher education institutions, public research organisations, government agencies, non-profit organisations, private sector companies, start-ups, and other legally registered organisations engaged in science, technology and innovation (STI) activities in AMS.
- COSTI Sub-Committee Track** – Open to entities serving as national focal points for COSTI Sub-Committees in each AMS. Proposals under this track must be endorsed by the respective COSTI Sub-Committee prior to submission.

4. Eligibility

Mandatory Requirements (Both Tracks)

- i) Applicants must be legally registered entities based in an ASEAN Member State. Individual applicants are not eligible under either track.
- ii) The project team must comprise members from at least two ASEAN Member States (AMS).
- iii) All proposals must be submitted through the National COSTI Focal Point of the AMS serving as the project lead.
- iv) Maximum project duration: 24 months.
- v) There is no fixed budget cap, but requested budgets must be limited to eligible expenditure categories (see Section 6).

Encouraged Elements (Not Mandatory)

- i) Proposals involving more than two AMS in the project team are encouraged.
- ii) Projects that include team members from Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Viet Nam, and Timor-Leste (CLMV-TL) serving as co-leads alongside non-CLMV-TL AMS.
- iii) Collaboration with Dialogue Partners (through co-funding, technical expertise, infrastructure sharing, capacity-building support, data contributions, or other forms of collaboration) is encouraged.
- iv) **COSTI Sub-Committee Track only:** Proposals involving collaboration among two or more COSTI Sub-Committees are encouraged, with one Sub-Committee identified a Lead Sub-Committee and one or more Co-Implementing Sub-Committees.

5. Documents Required with the Proposal

All applicants must submit the documents under (i) and (ii), together with the additional document required for their applicable track under (iii) or (iv).

- i) The proposal, prepared using the Standard ASTIF Call Template. Proposals submitted using any other template will not be considered.
- ii) A formal letter from the applicant's institution, signed by its authorised representative (e.g., Head of Institution or a duly delegated officer), confirming that the proposal is submitted on behalf of the institution.
- iii) **Open Competitive Call Track:** a valid certificate of registration or equivalent legal document confirming the applicant's legal status.
- iv) **COSTI Sub-Committee Track:** a formal letter of endorsement from the relevant COSTI Sub-Committee, signed by the Chair of the Sub-Committee.

Where any original document under (ii), (iii), or (iv) is not in English, it must be accompanied by a certified English translation.

6. Eligible Expenditures

Budgets must be prepared in accordance with the following categories of eligible and non-eligible expenditures, adapted from the ASTIF Grant Guideline.

Category	Eligible Expenditures	Non-Eligible Expenditures
1. Programme and Activity Costs	• Airfare, per diem, and costs associated with meetings, workshops, and seminars • Consultant and expert fees • Equipment required for research and development, provided adequate justification is given; projects should, where possible, make use of existing durable equipment rather than procuring new items • Materials, supplies, and consumables required for the research • Other direct research-related costs, including computer services, intellectual property right applications, and facilities or resources in support of the research • Note: Per diem rates follow the UN Daily Subsistence Allowance (DSA). For capacity-building participants, only accommodation, meals, and local transport are fundable, rather than the full per diem rate.	• Journal publication fees, including open-access journal fees • Costs associated with attending a conference or workshop for the purpose of presenting a paper or poster
2. Operational Costs	• Administrative costs (e.g., office supplies) • Personnel costs, such as service fees and allowances for professional staff engaged in the approved project • For research and development (R&D) staff salaries, funding may only be allocated to incremental costs (i.e., the cost of newly hired R&D personnel for the project) • On average, total salaries and stipends must not exceed 30% of the total project budget	• Overhead costs for project administrative staff (i.e., costs to support existing R&D personnel) • Salaries of locally engaged general service personnel • Office rental and the purchase of supporting office equipment (e.g., printers, photocopiers)
3. Contingency Fund	May only be used for expenditures arising from unexpected events. Use of the contingency fund must be consulted on in advance, with an explanation and justification provided.	Not applicable

7. Key Dates

Activity	Timeline
Proposal submission window	1 August – 16 October 2026
Evaluation and selection (by the Project Appraisal Group)	1 November 2026 – 31 January 2027
Announcement of selected projects on astnet.asean.org/astif/	15 February 2027
Agreement signing	1 – 31 March 2027
Project implementation period	1 April 2027 – 31 March 2029
Mid-term review	1 April 2028
Final reporting and dissemination	31 March 2029

The mid-term review and final reporting dates above reflect the overall ASTIF Call 2026 cycle, based on the indicative implementation period of 1 April 2027 – 31 March 2029. Actual mid-term review and final reporting dates for individual projects will be specified in the project's grant agreement, based on its approved implementation period.

Applicants under the COSTI Sub-Committee Track must obtain Sub-Committee endorsement during the proposal preparation period, prior to submission in the August–October window.

8. How to Submit

Proposals must be submitted through the National COSTI Focal Point of the AMS serving as the project lead, for onward submission to the ASEAN Secretariat.

ASEAN Member States	Focal Points	E-mail Contacts
i. Brunei Darussalam	Dr. Chua Lee Hoon	leehoon.chua@mtic.gov.bn
	Mr. Sanusi Hussin	Sanusi.hussin@mtic.gov.bn
ii. Cambodia	H.E. Dr. Try Sophal	try.sophal@misti.gov.kh cc: costi.project@misti.gov.kh
iii. Indonesia	Dr. Masdalina Pane	masd002@brin.go.id
iv. Lao PDR	Dr. Somsack INTHASONE	somsacki@nuol.edu.la
v. Malaysia	Mr. Muhammad Imran Bin Mohammad Mazlan	imranmazlan@mosti.gov.my
vi. Myanmar	Dr. Soe Htet Wai	mostfrdasean@gmail.com
vii. The Philippines	Ms. Charlene U. Basig	cubasig@dost.gov.ph cc: itcu@dost.gov.ph

ASEAN Member States	Focal Points	E-mail Contacts
viii. Singapore	Ms. Yap Xiao Jun	yap_xiao_jun@a-star.edu.sg
ix. Thailand	Dr. Plaiphon Seupsook	plaiphon.s@mhesi.go.th
	Ms. Thanaporn Nuannukun	thanaporn.n@mhesi.go.th
x. Timor Leste	Mr. Filipe Couto	filipeabraao27@hotmail.com
	Ms. Dália Mesquita	dalia_mesquita@yahoo.com
xi. Viet Nam	Ms. Vu Thi Tu Quyen	vtquyen@mst.gov.vn
	Ms. Truong Hanh Hoa	thhoa@mst.gov.vn

9. Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be reviewed by a Project Appraisal Group (PAG) based on:

- i) Relevance to the Call theme, priority categories, and APASTI objectives
- ii) Clarity of the regional problem to be addressed
- iii) Regional collaboration and impact
- iv) Degree of cross-sectoral and cross-Sub-Committee collaboration
- v) Technical and financial soundness
- vi) Clear contributions from AMS and/or partners
- vii) Clear deliverables
- viii) Sustainability

As part of the evaluation process, applicants may be contacted to respond to written queries from reviewers or to present/clarify their proposal, prior to final selection.

10. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

i) Can Dialogue Partners receive ASTIF funding directly?

No. Only ASEAN-based institutions may receive and administer ASTIF funds. Dialogue Partners may still participate in and add value to a project through co-funding, in-kind support, technical expertise, infrastructure or data sharing, or capacity-building support, but ASTIF funds themselves must be received and managed by an ASEAN-based lead or participating institution.

ii) Is there a cap on the Contingency Fund?

The ASTIF Call 2026 does not impose a fixed percentage cap on the Contingency Fund. As a general reference, past ASTIF guidance has typically limited contingency requests to around 10% of the combined Programme and Activity Costs and Operational Costs subtotal. Regardless of amount, any request to utilise the contingency fund must be justified and consulted on in advance, and may only be used for expenditures arising from unexpected events.

iii) Does the Call support proposals of different scales?

Yes. To promote inclusive participation, the Call will support proposals of varying scales, including large-scale regional initiatives, medium-scale multi-AMS pilot projects, and small seed grants under the COSTI Sub-Committee Track.

iv) Can capacity-building activities be proposed as standalone components?

No. Capacity-building activities (e.g., training, workshops, and personnel exchanges) may be proposed, provided that they are integrated into Eligible Activities (i), (ii), or (iii) under Section 2, rather than submitted as standalone components.

11. Enquiries

For any enquiries regarding the ASTIF Call 2026, please contact the National COSTI Focal Point of your country, using the email subject line “[ASTIF Call 2026]”.