In accordance with its Funding Guidelines dated January 1, 2022 (as amended), the FWF has issued the following Application Guidelines for the program

Research Groups Pre-Proposal

April 1, 2024

Discovering what matters.

Contents

1 General Information

1.1 Program objective

Research Group funding is mainly intended to support joint multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary projects conducted by outstanding researchers. The medium-term research collaborations focus on complex topics in mixed teams of researchers at Austrian research institutions.

1.2 What types of projects can be funded?

Applications can be submitted for funding for **collaborative, multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary[1] projects** intended to generate scientific/scholarly findings. The project is limited in duration to a period of 60 months.

All Research Groups should pursue research goals that in most cases go beyond established disciplinary boundaries, requiring collaboration between multiple researchers with different specializations. Owing to the multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary nature of the research questions involved, these projects can only be worked on jointly from different perspectives, leading them to open up new and unorthodox fields of research. Research Groups establish research on an innovative topic in Austria for the first time or expand or supplement existing key research focuses at research institutions.

Aspects of a Research Group project that go beyond the realm of science and scholarship may be mentioned in the pre-proposal, but they will not impact the funding decision.

1.3 Definition of terms

Explanations of the terms used in the Application Guidelines can be found in the Definition of Terms (PROFI mode). In addition, some terms specific to Research Groups are explained below:

---

[1]   "Interdisciplinary" refers to an integration-oriented collaboration between researchers from at least two disciplines, working towards common goals and outcomes, in which disciplinary perspectives are combined into an overall view. For further information, please see Evaluation IDR, Embedding IDR, Management IDR.

Term	Definition
Consortium	Group of subproject heads who jointly design and implement the Research Group
Subproject head (corresponds to "consortium member")	The 3–5 researchers conducting the project, including the coordinator, who together form the consortium These are established researchers and/or junior researchers. Each researcher must lead exactly *one* research subproject; project leadership cannot be shared.
Subproject, research	Research unit in the Research Group, which is described and budgeted by the individual subproject head and can only be implemented in association with the other research subprojects of the Research Group; One subproject head must be assigned to each subproject.
Coordinator	Aside from the general definition, the Research Group coordinator must also lead both a research subproject and the Research Group coordination project.
Coordination project	In addition to the research subprojects, the Research Group also includes one administrative subproject, called the coordination project. This subproject is for the administration of project-specific travel expenses and other resources necessary for the coordination of the project and is headed by the coordinator.
Statutes	Agreement between the subproject heads. Statutes must be drawn up during the second stage, i.e. the full-proposal stage; they specify the tasks and responsibilities of the coordinator, regulate the cooperation between the subproject heads, and describe the decision-making processes.

1.4 Submission

1.4.1 Submission deadline

The deadline for submission (i.e. approval of the application by the research institution) is **September 30, 2024 (2:00 pm local time Vienna/Austria).** All proposals must be submitted online using the elane digital application portal. Project funding is administered through the research institutions (PROFI mode), this means the application must be approved for submission by both the coordinator and the applying research institution (= lead research institution).[2] All forms required for the application must be completed online; other required documents such as the project description, including annexes and any additional documents, must be uploaded as files before the application can be approved for submission by the research institution. For additional information, please see the elane user manual.

1.4.2 Who is eligible to apply?

All Austrian **research institutions** are eligible to apply.[3] The intended project must be carried out in Austria or under the auspices of the applying Austrian research institution. The application is submitted by the research institution where the coordinator works. The research institution appoints the coordinator to carry out the project.

The research question addressed by the Research Group is to be explored more deeply or newly consolidated at Austrian research institutions. The Research Group will be concentrated at one location or link several subproject heads at different locations throughout Austria.

The consortium for which funding is requested must consist of **between 3 (minimum) and 5 (maximum) researchers**, each leading a research subproject. One-third of the consortium members should belong to the underrepresented gender. The composition of the consortium is one of the deciding factors in the review and evaluation process.[4] Consortium members should be internationally outstanding researchers and/or junior researchers from all academic disciplines, especially from the humanities, social sciences, and cultural studies.

Subproject heads must have appropriate academic qualifications (see section 1.5) and sufficient time resources to carry out a subproject. The research institution must provide the necessary infrastructure.

The subproject head must be employed at the lead or partner research institution at the time the project is scheduled to begin. Their salary is financed either by the research institution or by the project as a grant-salaried researcher (see section 2.3.1.1). If the subproject head is

---

[2]   Approval for submission by the research institution may be waived by the research institution if it has authorized the coordinator to approve it themselves.

[3]   Research institutions must be registered in the FWF's research institution portal.

[4]   See also Background information target ratio.

employed part-time at the start of the project, project funds can be used to increase the extent of employment to full time. All research institutions that employ subproject heads must be listed as either the lead research institution or as a partner research institution on the title page of the application.

In addition, an international researcher who is predominantly working abroad during the project may act as a subproject head if they are employed at the lead or partner research institution at the time of application and for the entire duration of the project. The extent of employment at the lead or partner research institution not funded by the FWF must be at least 25%.[5]

All researchers in the consortium act as subproject heads, with one subproject head acting as the coordinator. The coordinator represents the Research Group to the public, leads their own subproject, and manages the coordination project. The coordinator of a Research Group project may not simultaneously be the coordinator or spokesperson of an ongoing project or pending proposal for any of the following programs: Clusters of Excellence, Emerging Fields, #ConnectingMinds, Special Research Areas, Young Independent Research Groups, Doctoral Programs, doc.funds, doc.funds.connect

1.4.3 Can multiple applications be submitted simultaneously?

There is no limit to the number of applications that can be submitted by a research institution.

Each subproject head may only participate in one Research Group. If a subproject head is already acting as a subproject head of a Research Group project, they may not participate in a further Research Group pre-proposal. This applies to both the application and the implementation phases of a Research Group. Within a Research Group, each researcher must lead exactly *one* research subproject.

Please note that for **subproject heads**, the number of ongoing/approved projects in the Principal Investigator Projects, International Programs, Clinical Research, and Arts-Based Research programs is limited to a maximum of three projects. For further information on restrictions concerning the permissible number of applications and ongoing projects, please see Restriction on the number of projects. It is not possible to apply for Erwin Schrödinger funding while acting as a subproject head in a Research Group.

---

[5]   Proof of employment must be submitted to the FWF with the application.

1.5 What are the requirements for subproject heads?

1.5.1 General requirements

The publication records of all subproject heads over the last five years must be internationally visible and commensurate with the expected career path in their field. The following criteria apply for the assessment of an applicant's publication record and initiation of the review process:

- **Quality assurance:** Most relevant in assessing the applicant's publication record are those publications that have been subject to a quality assurance procedure in line with international standards (peer review or an equivalent procedure; in the natural and life sciences, peer review is expected). Journals must usually be listed in Web of Science, Scopus, or the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ). For journals not listed in those databases, or for monographs, edited volumes, contributions to edited volumes, or other publication types, the subproject head must provide a link to the publisher's website which contains a description of the applicable quality assurance procedure. Should no such description be available, the subproject head is responsible for providing evidence that the publication has been subject to a quality assurance procedure in accordance with the standards of the field.

- **International visibility:** Most of the subproject head's publications must have a wider than national reach. In the natural sciences, life sciences, and social sciences, most of the publications listed must be in English.

- **Number/scope and quality** of the publications must be commensurate with the researcher's expected career path and the respective discipline. At least two publications must be quality-assured and internationally visible publications with a substantial and independent contribution on the part of the subproject head. At least one publication with first, last, or corresponding authorship is required, with the exception of publications in journals (or disciplines) that rank authors alphabetically. If any such publications are included in the required document *PI_publication.pdf* (see section 2.2.4), the subproject head's contribution must be specified.

If there is any uncertainty about general application requirements (see sections 1.5.3 and 1.5.4), the FWF recommends that the subproject head contact the FWF Office or the FWF Equal Opportunities and Diversity in Research Funding unit in good time before submitting the application to confirm that all requirements are met and that any career interruptions can be accounted for. In cases of doubt, the appropriate decision-making bodies of the FWF shall decide on applicants' eligibility.

1.5.2 Equal opportunities, diversity, and inclusion

The FWF Strategy for Equal Opportunities and Diversity of Researchers applies. This means that breaks or delays in subproject heads' research careers that have led to publication gaps, unorthodox career paths, or limited international research experience can be taken into consideration. For further details on accounting for career breaks, please refer to the information sheet on career interruptions.

1.5.3 Consideration of career breaks

The FWF will take justified, documentable career breaks (e.g. due to pregnancy, childcare,[6] caregiving obligations,[7] military or civilian service, flight, and asylum) into consideration when assessing eligibility to apply.

1.5.4 Inclusion of the disabled and chronically ill

The FWF will also take any exceptions to and interruptions of typical career paths due to disability and/or long-term or chronic illness into consideration when determining whether an applicant meets the application requirements.

1.5.5 Data protection notice

When assessing eligibility, all personal data provided to the FWF by a subproject head on a voluntary basis that relates to the information provided in sections 1.5.3 and 1.5.4 shall be taken into consideration exclusively to their benefit (compensation of disadvantages). Relevant information (without sensitive or personal data) can be included in an individual's academic CV, making it available to the reviewers. A general explanation, including the duration of the interruption or delay, is sufficient. Please complete the required form and give your explicit consent to data processing on the last page. If you wish to submit further supporting documents in addition to those listed in the form, please submit them directly to the FWF office. These will not be visible to your research institution. This information is only used to check the application requirements and is not made available to reviewers.

1.6   What types of funding can be requested?

Project-specific costs are eligible for funding. These include personnel and non-personnel costs that are necessary for carrying out the project (up to €1,500,000 for 5 years including 5% general project costs; benchmark: €300,000 per year) and that go beyond the resources

---

[6]   Childcare includes parental leave periods, if applicable.

[7]   Immediate family members and/or persons living in the same household: Spouses, registered partners, parents, children, adopted, step, and foster children, siblings, parents-in-law, and children-in-law.

provided by the infrastructure of the research institution. The FWF does not finance the infrastructure or basic equipment of research institutions.

For information on applying for personnel costs for the subproject head's own salary, please see section 2.3.1.1.

Please note that exaggerated cost projections may be grounds for rejection, even if a proposal is otherwise excellent.

Multiple funding is not permitted (see FWF Funding Guidelines).

2 Application

2.1 Sections of the application

A complete application must include the following sections:

2.1.1 Academic abstract

The academic abstract must be written in English, may not exceed 3,000 characters (including spaces, no formulas or special characters) and will be used to inform potential reviewers about the project. The abstract must use the English headings provided below and be entered into the designated form on elane.

- Wider research context / theoretical framework
- Hypotheses / research questions / objectives
- Approach / methods
- Level of originality / innovation
- Added value
- Primary researchers involved

Where alternatives are indicated between slashes, please select the alternative that applies to your project.

2.1.2 Project description

- Title page: Project title, lead research institution (address and head), name and institution address of the coordinator, list of collaborating research institution(s) (address and head), including details of the subproject heads employed there (name and institution address)

- Table of contents

- Project description:

  No more than 25 pages for projects with five subproject heads

  No more than 24 pages for projects with five subproject heads

  No more than 23 pages for projects with five subproject heads

  (consecutively numbered, not including the title page and table of contents), including where applicable a list of abbreviations, headings, figures, captions, tables, footnotes, etc.

  The **following contents** are expected:
  - Description of the innovative multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary research proposal (no more than 14 pages)
  - Human potential (presentation of the team on no more than 3 pages, and individual descriptions per person on no more than 1 page each)
  - Wider impact (no more than 1 page)
  - Organization and funding (no more than 2 pages)

The project description must also include Annexes 1–3 and Annex 4 if applicable, on additional pages:

- Annex 1: List of literature cited in the application (*References*) on no more than 5 pages

- Annex 2: Information on the lead research institution and any partner research institutions and a plausible justification of the funding requested (coordination project and each research subproject)

- Annex 3: CVs and descriptions of previous research achievements

- Annex 4 (optional): Collaboration letters from national and international cooperation partners (no more than 1 page per letter)

The entire project description, including these annexes, must be uploaded as one file entitled *Proposal.pdf*. The FWF will send this document to the reviewers.

2.1.3 Additional documents

- Required:

  - Two publications written by each subproject head must be named, documenting that they fulfill the general requirements to act as subproject head (publication record, see section 1.5.1)

  - Publication list for internal FWF use to assess eligibility to apply and to check for conflicts of interest with potential reviewers (see section 2.2.4)

- Where applicable:

  - Additional files in the case of resubmission: If the application is a revised version of a previously rejected application (see section 2.4), a response to the reviews and an overview of all changes made in the resubmitted application must be uploaded *(Overview revision)*.

  - Cover letter accompanying the application (optional)

  - List of up to 3 researchers (optional) – including, if applicable, reviewers of a rejected proposal – who are to be excluded from the review process (see section 3.2), with a brief justification

Any additional documents (e.g., recommendations for potential reviewers, letters of recommendation, forthcoming publications) will not be considered in further stages of the application process.

2.1.4 Forms to be completed

- Required: *Research institution assignment* form, *Contact* form, *Application* form, *Program-specific data* form for each subproject head, *Cost breakdown* form, *Academic abstract* form, and *Co-authors* form
- Where applicable: *Other cooperation* form

2.2　Application content and form

2.2.1 Application language

To allow applications to be reviewed by international experts, all applications must be submitted in English **without exception**.

2.2.2 Project description: Scope and formatting requirements

The continuous text in the project description, Annexes 1–3, and the additional documents specified in section 2.1.3 where applicable, must be written, without exception, in 11 pt. font with 1.5 line (15–20 pt.) spacing and at least 2 cm margins. A standard, easily legible font must be used for the body text. The formatting requirements (font type and size, line spacing, and margins) of the project description also apply for the additional documents, except for documents not prepared by the subproject head, such as collaboration letters.

Citations in the text and the list of works cited (*References*) in the application must be in line with the conventions of the respective discipline, preferably according to a widely used style guide (e.g., Chicago Manual of Style, APA Publication Manual). Researchers are free to

choose the citation conventions or style guide they prefer, but they must apply them consistently throughout the application. If available, a <u>DOI address</u> or another <u>persistent identifier</u> should be used for the literature cited.

2.2.3 Project description and annexes

The project description must be based on the aspects indicated in <u>sections 2.2.3.1</u> to <u>2.2.3.4</u> (on no more than 25/24/23 pages for 5/4/3 subproject heads, respectively). Annexes must be attached as described in <u>section 2.2.3.5</u>.

2.2.3.1 Proposed research

(no more than 14 pages)

- Current state of research the Research Group plans to build on
- Innovative, multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary research approaches in the proposal
- Outline of the Research Group's common goals and research questions; if taking an interdisciplinary research approach, this should include descriptions of:
    - Description of the common language (coherent and consistent terminology)
    - Description of the research areas to be investigated
    - Description of the relevant research challenges
    - Description of the merging of the various disciplinary theories to be combined into a common theoretical approach
    - Description of the shared methodologies used
    - Description of how a synthesis will be formed – common language, theoretical basis, individual contributions

- Concise presentation of the innovative and cutting-edge nature of the research topic and the significance of the research findings to the international scientific community The most important national and international cooperation arrangements are to be mentioned; the individuals involved should be named, as well as the subject of the intended cooperation arrangement(s), and how they contribute to the project. All of the national and/or international cooperation arrangements that were stated as essential in the project description should be listed on the *Other collaborations* form (one form must be completed for each cooperation partner) and may be confirmed by a collaboration letter.

- Description of the thematic coherence and the expected innovation value through the collaboration in the Research Group

- Any potential sex-specific and gender-related aspects[8] of the proposal must be detailed. To what extent are sex-specific and gender-related aspects considered in the proposal? How will they be integrated into the research approach? These questions must be briefly addressed, even if the researchers do not feel that the project involves any such aspects.

- All potential ethical, safety-related, and regulatory aspects[9] of the proposal and how applicants plan to deal with them must be described in a separate section. Grounds must be provided for why the researchers believe the project does not raise any such issues, if this is the case.

2.2.3.2 Human potential

- For the consortium (on no more than 3 pages):
  - Cooperation and communication structure within the team
  - Team structure, including the percentage of junior researchers
  - Percentage of women
  - Internationalization strategy to connect with the international research community
  - The situation of junior researchers[10] at the research institution(s)

- For each subproject head (individual description per person on no more than 1 page):
  - Qualifications
  - Expertise and research potential
  - Experience with multi- or interdisciplinary projects
  - Available capacity and academic vision
  - International collaboration(s)

2.2.3.3 Wider impact on research in Austria

(no more than 1 page)

Science communication Please list planned publications and conference participations as well as visibility strategies for the Research Group in the international scientific community, in compliance with the FWF's Open-Access Policy; also strategies to increase the program's visibility to the Austrian public.

---

[8] Positioning and thoughts on the research approaches in the project in terms of sex-specific and gender-related aspects could include: Is the research approach likely to produce sex-specific and gender-related findings? If so, what findings? How and where are these integrated into the research approach? (For information on determining the relevance of sex-specific and gender-related issues please see the FWF website.)

[9] For instance, the European Commission's Ethics for Researchers or The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity can serve as a guide here.

[10] If the pre-proposal is approved, the full proposal (i.e., the second stage of the procedure) must include information on conditions for researchers and junior researchers. Ideally, these are provided by the research institution and contain the following points: Number of researchers and of junior researchers, objectives for the advancement of women, objectives for the advancement of junior researchers at the research institution(s); including sources and references to relevant documentation

2.2.3.4 Organization and financing structure

(no more than 2 pages)

- Overview table showing the total costs requested, broken down into the categories personnel, equipment, supplies, travel expenses, and other costs

- Outline of the Research Group's internal communication, cooperation, and information structures in order to define the decision-making process on financial and personnel matters

- Description of the gender-appropriate working environment as well as a description of measures for ensuring an appropriate work-life balance[11]

As part of the full proposal, it will be necessary to draw up statutes regulating the internal cooperation between the subproject heads; these statutes must be brought to the attention of the lead research institution and the partner research institution(s).

2.2.3.5 Annexes to the project description

Annexes are not included in the maximum page limit for the project description and must be attached to the project description in the specified order.

Annex 1: List of literature cited in the application (*References*) on no more than 5 pages

Annex 2: Financial aspects

The template for the description of projected costs can be found in Appendix A.

- Information on the lead research institution for the coordination project and lead or partner research institution for each individual research subproject:

  - Existing project participants (not financed by FWF project funds) (usually the subproject head and project staff at the research institutions)

  - Available infrastructure

- Details of the funding requested for the coordination project and each research subproject:

  - Brief explanation of why the project staff requested is needed (type(s) of requested position(s), job descriptions, extent of employment, and duration of involvement in the project)

---

[11] If the pre-proposal is approved, detailed descriptions of the planned measures must be submitted with the full proposal. Further explanations on the costs that can be requested will be given during Proposers' Day if the applicants are invited to submit a full proposal.

- Concise justifications for non-personnel costs (equipment, materials, travel expenses, and other costs) ; if funding for equipment is requested, applicants must explain why this does not constitute part of the basic equipment of the given research environment (see also section 2.3.2).

Annex 3: CVs and description of previous research achievements

The academic CVs and research achievements (for all subproject heads and any key postdocs to be funded from the project) must be described on no more than 3 pages per person using the guidelines, structure, and English headings provided below.

Required contents for academic CVs

- *Personal details*: Personal data (name, researcher unique identifier(s) such as ORCID, research ID, etc., no photos), address of research institution, and relevant websites; please also provide a publicly accessible link to a list of all the researcher's publications.

- *Education:* List of academic milestones

- *Position(s)*: List of academically relevant positions (with the extent of employment in the case of part-time employment)

- *Career breaks* (if any): List of career breaks or delays (see also sections 1.5.3 and 1.5.4)

- *Net research experience* (optional): The length of time (in years and months) that has actually been used in net total for research – calculated in such a way as to be equivalent to full-time employment – and broken down into the time before and after completion of the applicant's doctoral degree. This is intended to make it easier for the reviewers to assess the researcher's qualifications in terms of academic age.

- *Research interests:* Description of the main areas of research and the most important research results achieved to date

- *Academic publications:* List of no more than ten of the most important published or accepted academic publications (journal articles, monographs, edited volumes, contributions to edited volumes, proceedings, etc.); for each publication, either a DOI address or another persistent identifier should be indicated, if available. Pursuant to the Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment journal-based metrics such as journal impact factors, Article Influence Scores, or the h-index should not be included. Reviewers will be instructed to disregard these metrics.

- *Additional research achievements:* List of no more than ten of the most important research achievements apart from academic publications, including achievements such as freely accessible research data including software and codes, awards, contributions to conferences, keynote lectures, significant research projects, peer review activities, promotion of junior researchers, exhibitions, interactions with society (including citizen science or transdisciplinary activities), science communication, knowledge transfer,

licenses, or patents. If available, a persistent identifier or link to the respective research achievement must be provided.

Annex 4 (optional): Collaboration letters

Collaboration letters (each no more than 1 page) from national and international cooperation partners who are named in the project description as being essential for the implementation of the project and whose role is plausibly described; subproject heads are not collaboration partners.

2.2.4 Additional documents

The following two separate uploads are required:

Publication output

- *PI-publication.pdf*: Two publications written by each subproject head must be named, documenting that they fulfill the general requirements to apply (see template *PI-Publication*). The FWF will determine eligibility to apply based on these publications.

- *Publication_lists.pdf:* List of all academic publications published in the last 5 years[12] (categorized into "quality-assured publications" and "other publications") for all subproject heads and key postdocs who are to be funded by the project, in *one* PDF document; this publication list helps the FWF to determine if there are any potential conflicts of interest with reviewers. It will not be forwarded to the reviewers.

2.3 Eligible project-specific costs

When requesting funding, the regulations of the respective research institution and the FWF guidelines apply. The requested funds must be summarized in the elane *Cost breakdown* form.

If the research institution(s) for which funds are requested is entitled to deduct value-added tax (VAT), the funds should be applied for without value-added tax (net). This applies to the lead research institution and partner research institutions.

VAT is an eligible expense only if the research institution(s) is/are not entitled to deduct it and it is demonstrably and finally borne by the research institution(s). Recoverable VAT is ineligible for funding, even if it is not reclaimed or recovered by the funding recipient.

Funding may only be requested for the cost categories specified below.

---

[12] Publication lists must include: all authors, complete titles, journal, year, and page numbers. For each publication, if available, either a DOI address or another persistent identifier should be indicated; for publications with more than 20 authors, an "et al." citation can be used.

2.3.1 Personnel costs

Funding may only be requested for staff needed in addition to existing personnel resources for the realization of the project and only to the extent required for the project.

Full- or part-time employment contracts (*Dienstverträge*, DV) and contracts for marginal employment (*geringfügige Beschäftigung*, GB) are available for project staff. The FWF's standard personnel costs apply. These include a fixed percentual increase set by the FWF for subsequent years to compensate for wage increases.

Employment contracts for doctoral students may not exceed 75% employment (up to 30 hours per week). A part-time (50%) employment contract of 20 hours/week for student employees may be requested for researchers who have not yet completed a graduate degree program in the relevant subject area.

2.3.1.1 Grant-salaried positions

The FWF understands "grant-salaried" to mean that the subproject head's salary is financed by the funds of the research project.

Applying for funding (including partial funding) of one's own position is possible for every subproject head, regardless of whether they are employed on a fixed-term or permanent basis at the time of application. The senior postdoc salary rate[13] applies for the subproject head's own position (pro-rated accordingly in the case of partial funding).

Women subproject heads whose own position is funded to the extent of at least 50% have the additional option of applying for up to €2,000 per year in the category of "Other costs" for personal coaching and further training measures that directly contribute to the researcher's career development. Coaching is understood to mean person-centered counselling and support processes in a professional context. Continuing education activities eligible for funding include courses on scientific – in particular, subject-specific – skills (e.g., courses on methodological skills) and personnel development measures such as those offered at some research institutions (e.g., in teaching, academic writing, writing funding applications, especially in English, personnel management and project management, conflict- and problem-solving skills, academic organization, and vocational training and other seminars directly related to career development, including programs for the advancement of women).

2.3.2 Equipment costs

Funding for equipment may only be requested if it is specifically required for the project and if it is not part of the existing infrastructure of the participating research institutions.

---

[13]   The senior postdoc rate can only be requested to fund the subproject head's own position; the postdoc salary rate applies for project staff members at the postdoc level.

"Infrastructure" is defined to include all equipment (and components thereof) that a modern research institution needs to conduct basic research in the relevant discipline at an internationally competitive level. This means that equipment such as computers, laptops, etc. are considered part of the standard infrastructure and no funding will be approved for these items.

Equipment eligible for funding includes:
- Scientific instruments
- System components
- Self-constructed devices (generally assembled from smaller pieces of equipment and materials)
- Other durable goods
- Intangible assets such as concessions, industrial property rights, and licenses derived from such rights

Equipment with an acquisition value in excess of €250,000 can only be financed through depreciation. Only the percentage of costs that are incurred during the project period can be requested and financed. The depreciation rules of the research institution acquiring the equipment apply.

If funding is requested for a piece of equipment which is required specifically for the project, the lead research institution confirms upon submission that they have verified that no comparable equipment that could be used or shared is available within a reasonable distance, and that third-party (co-)financing options have been explored. The research institution that owns the equipment must also ensure that any possible costs arising from the use, maintenance, and repairs of the equipment are covered.

The coordinator is to instruct their research institution to order the equipment and effect payment accordingly. The principles of economy, efficiency, and expediency apply to any acquisition. The procurement guidelines of the research institution and the provisions of the [Federal Procurement Act 2018](#) (*Bundesvergabegesetz*) as amended apply.

In order to determine the equipment costs (incl. VAT, unless the research institution is entitled to deduct input tax) to be requested, vendor quotes must be obtained before the application is submitted pursuant to the research institution's procurement guidelines. Vendor quotes are submitted to the FWF only upon request.

2.3.3 Material costs

"Materials" is defined as consumables and small items of equipment (cost per item less than €1,500 incl. VAT).

The calculation of funds requested for project-specific material costs should be justified based on the project's schedule, work plans, and experimental schedule. Experience from previous projects should be considered when making the calculations.

2.3.4 Travel costs

Funding may be requested for project-specific travel and accommodation, field work, expeditions, etc. The project description must include a detailed itinerary, broken down by project staff members. This plan must indicate which staff members will be travelling, the destination, for what purpose, when (in which year of the project), for how long, and how much the travel will cost.

When planning travel in connection with a project, researchers should always carefully consider whether travel is absolutely necessary or whether the relevant information can be exchanged virtually.

If a project requires travel, transportation by train is generally preferred to travel by air as a contribution to environmental sustainability. Funding can be requested for any resulting extra costs such as an additional overnight stay. When travelling by air, it is strongly recommended to make a CO_2 offset contribution,[14] which can also be requested as part of the travel expenses or funded through the budget for general project costs. A carbon offset contribution can be requested for up to 15% of the ticket price.

Travel expenses for researchers from Austrian and international research institutions other than the lead research institution and the partner research institutions can only be granted in exceptional cases. Grounds for the exception must be provided in detail.

Travel and accommodation costs are generally calculated according to the lead or partner research institution's individual travel expenses policies. If no such policies are in place at the research institution, the federal regulations governing travel costs (*Reisegebührenvorschrift des Bundes* 1955, RGV) as amended apply.

2.3.5 Costs as part of national and international collaborations

In the case of cooperation arrangements, costs arising within the context of a research cooperation at the respective research institution are to be borne by that research institution. This does not apply to cooperation arrangements with scientists or scholars from developing countries (see section 2.3.6).

Funds may only be transferred directly to a cooperation partner (in Austria or abroad) upon presentation of an invoice and only if they are in payment for clearly defined commissions or services and immediately necessary to carry out the Austrian project.

---

[14]   The amount of a CO_2 offset contribution for flights can be calculated, for example, using Climate Austria's CO_2 calculator.

2.3.6 Other eligible costs

- Independent contractor agreements (costs for work of clearly defined scope and content carried out by individuals, provided that they are cost-efficient and justified in the context of the research project)

- Costs for the preparation, archiving, open access, and reuse of research data in repositories in accordance with the FWF's Open-Access Policy for Research Data

- Costs that cannot be included under personnel, equipment, materials, or travel costs, for example:
  - The use of research facilities, e.g., costs for the project-specific use of available equipment (project-specific "equipment usage time") or large research facilities
  - Any laboratory animals necessary for the project
  - Project-specific work carried out outside the researcher's research institution (e.g., for analyses carried out elsewhere, interviews, sample collection, etc.)
  - Disposal of project-specific hazardous waste
  - Cooperation arrangements with researchers in developing countries
  - Equality measures: The Research Group can budget a maximum of €10,000 per year for equality measures; these costs must be described and justified in the full proposal.

The procurement guidelines of the research institution and the provisions of the Federal Procurement Act 2018 as amended apply.

2.3.7 General project costs

The approved grant sum includes 5% general project costs that are permitted for funding but cannot be requested individually using the abovementioned cost categories. They are subject to the FWF's Funding Guidelines and the costs must be eligible for funding. These include, for example, costs for conference travel, dissemination activities, and minor unforeseen costs necessary for the project.

Overhead costs for the research institution are not included in general project costs.

General project costs are to be entered in the appropriate field in the *Cost breakdown* form and calculated as 5% of the total funding requested. No justification for general costs is needed in Appendix A.

2.3.8 Publication costs

Publication costs cannot be requested as part of the application process. Information on funding options for publications resulting from FWF-funded projects can be found on the FWF website under Funding Portfolio: Communication.

2.4   Resubmitting a previously rejected application

A resubmission is defined as the revision of an application addressing the same or similar research questions as a proposal the FWF has previously rejected, regardless of the program category. If an application is submitted on the same or a very similar research question and if, in the view of the applicant, this application is not a resubmission but a completely new project, this must be explained in a separate accompanying letter to the FWF Office. For example, changes in research methods alone are not sufficient for a proposal to qualify as a completely new project. In cases of doubt, the appropriate decision-making bodies of the FWF shall decide.

Resubmissions must show changes from the rejected application. If an application was rejected for the standardized grounds for rejection C3, C4, or C5, these changes need to be substantial (based on the comments in the reviews). If no such changes are made, the FWF's decision-making bodies will return the application to the applicant without review. When resubmitting an application, the following documents must be uploaded before the specified deadline:

• An accompanying letter containing an overview of all changes made in the resubmitted application must be submitted to the FWF *(Overview revision)*. This overview will not be passed on to the reviewers.

• A response to all reviews of the rejected application must be provided, even if one of the reviewers is to be excluded from reviewing the resubmitted application (see section 3.6). This response, consolidated in *one* document, will be forwarded to all reviewers assessing the resubmission and should address the recommendations and criticisms included in the previous reviews as well as describe the resulting changes made.

While there is no time limit for the resubmission of a rejected application, the respective application requirements and the call-specific application deadlines do apply. Resubmissions must be submitted as described in section 2.1, i.e. as a separate, new application and not as a supplementary application to the previously rejected proposal.

2.5 File formats, file names, and online forms

Overview of all documents and forms to be submitted

2.5.1 All applications must include the following parts:

a) Files:

• *Proposal.pdf* (project description, including Annexes 1–3 and where applicable 4, with PDF bookmarks, at least for the major sections)

- *PI_publication.pdf* (two publications written by each subproject head must be named, documenting that they fulfill the general requirements to apply)
- *Publication_lists.pdf* (publication lists for the last 5 years of all subproject heads and key project staff to be financed by the project at postdoc level and higher, categorized into "quality assured publications" and "other publications")

b) Forms:
- *Research institution assignment*
- *Contact*
- *Application*
- *Program-specific data*
- *Cost breakdown*
- *Academic abstract* (in English)
- *Co-authors*
- *Other cooperation* (if applicable; for national and international cooperation partners)

2.5.2 File uploads, if applicable

- *Cover_letter.pdf* (= accompanying letter; optional)
- *Negative_list.pdf* (= reviewers who should be excluded; optional)
- *Overview_revision.pdf* (for resubmissions, overview of all changes made in the resubmitted application)
- *Revision.pdf* (= for resubmissions, response to all reviews of the previously rejected application)

The coordinator must finish preparing the applications in time to allow the lead research institution sufficient time to approve the applications for submission by **September 30, 2024 (2:00 pm local time, Vienna/Austria).**

3   Processing and Decision on the Application

3.1   Submission and requests for changes

All of the documents specified above must be uploaded in full to elane. Once an application has been officially submitted, the research institution and the coordinator can make no further changes to the application themselves. All applications approved for submission by the lead research institutions and received by **September 30, 2024 (2:00 pm local time, Vienna/Austria)** will be checked for completeness and formal accuracy by the FWF Office. If the FWF Office, however, identifies issues with the application that it considers to be rectifiable, it will notify the research institution and the coordinator, giving them the opportunity to correct the problems within a period of 10 working days. The requested

changes are to be submitted as a supplementary application on elane and approved by the lead research institution if necessary. If the **requested changes** are not submitted before the specified deadline, the decision-making bodies at the FWF will return the application without review.

Similarly, applications will not be reviewed if they have been previously rejected by the FWF and resubmitted without appropriate revisions (see section 2.4).

Once the review process has begun, no further changes can be made to the application. The FWF must be notified immediately of any changes to the consortium during the review process; such changes require the FWF's approval.

3.2   Excluding reviewers

A list of up to 3 potential reviewers who should not be consulted to review the proposal due to a possible conflict of interest can be uploaded as an additional document. The coordinator must give reasons why they wish to exclude these reviewers. If the reasons for exclusion are professionally and academically sound, the FWF will generally fulfill the coordinator's request and exclude those reviewers from the review process. A detailed description of the FWF's policy on conflicts of interest can be found in the General Principles of the Decision-Making Procedure.

Please note that the FWF does not wish to receive, nor will it consider a list of potential reviewers from subproject heads.

3.3   Number of reviews required

For the evaluation of the pre-proposal, a minimum of 3 independent reviews are required for a positive decision.

3.4   Decision-making process

A detailed description of the decision-making process, the criteria for selecting international reviewers, and detailed rules concerning conflicts of interest and the composition of juries and review panels can be found in the General Principles of the Decision-Making Procedure.

The **review process** for Research Groups usually takes about 14 months.

In the spring of the year following submission of the proposal, the Scientific Board will decide on the pre-proposal on the basis of the reviews obtained. If the Board reaches a positive decision, the researchers will be invited to submit a full proposal. This full proposal must be submitted within eight weeks. The applying research institution and the coordinator will be informed of the FWF's decision in writing.

The full proposal is reviewed by international experts (the second stage of the procedure). Appropriate information will be provided in a timely manner. The FWF Scientific Board will decide on the awarding of funding in November of the same year based on the reviews. Decisions will be communicated in writing to the lead research institution and the coordinator.

3.5   Grounds for rejection

The reasons for rejecting an application are assigned to one of five categories (C1–C5) and communicated to the coordinator and the lead research institution; the coordinator is also sent anonymized copies of the reviews. A detailed description of the reasons for rejection can be found in the General Principles of the Decision-Making Procedure.

3.6   Reviewing resubmissions

If the application is a **resubmission** of a previously rejected proposal, the FWF will generally contact those reviewers who provided constructive criticism on the previous application. Reviewers who gave entirely positive or negative comments will generally not be contacted for a repeat review. Resubmissions are, however, usually also evaluated by new reviewers.

3.7   Proposal bans

Applications that are rejected for reason C5 will be barred for 12 months (from the date the applicant was officially notified of the decision) and cannot be resubmitted during that period.

Applications that have been submitted 3 times to the same program and rejected for reasons C3 or C4 (with the "3 times" referring to the original application and 2 resubmissions) are also barred for 12 months (from the date the applicant was officially notified of the decision). Rejections for reasons C1 or C2 do not count towards this total. In general, only topics are banned, not researchers or applying research institutions.

4   Compliance with Legal Requirements and Standards of Research Integrity

4.1   Legal regulations

Please note that the lead research institution and all persons involved in the project must comply with all legal requirements and safety provisions (e.g., Federal Disabilities Act, Federal Equal Treatment Act) and all embargo and sanction regulations (e.g. Dual-Use Regulation (EU) 2021/821) that apply for the implementation of the project and must obtain

all the necessary permits (e.g., from the Ethics Committee, the Animal Testing Commission, the National Heritage Agency, or the relevant foreign authorities).

4.2   Academic integrity

The Guidelines for Good Scientific Practice of the Austrian Agency for Research Integrity (OeAWI) apply.

Where a breach of these standards is suspected, the ombud of the respective research institution is responsible for investigating the issue. Research institutions are required to report any cases of suspected serious violations of the standards to the OeAWI. The FWF reserves the right to suspend, in part or in whole, any procedures related to applications or ongoing projects until this check or investigation has been concluded. For more detailed information, please see FWF procedure in cases of suspected violation of the standards of good research practice.

5   Data Protection and Publication of Project Data and Results

5.1   Data protection

Pursuant to Art. 6 (1) item a of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), in conjunction with § 2g of the Austrian Research Organization Act (*Forschungsorganisationsgesetz*, FOG), the FWF processes and publishes personal data (e.g. the title of the submitted project, research institution, academic abstract, PR summaries) necessary for the administration of the funding by the FWF – while safeguarding business and trade secrets – for the purposes of research policy (e.g., presentation of the development of basic research in Austria, economic analyses, funding impact reports, etc.) and for public relations work (publication of excerpts in the FWF annual report, on the FWF website, in press releases, media collaborations, etc.). If necessary, these data are also transmitted to third parties (e.g., for the preparation of research policy studies, on the basis of supervisory duties, in particular §§ 2d and 3a of the Research and Technology Funding Act [*Forschungs- und Technologieförderungsgesetz*, FTFG], to bodies and agents of the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research and, in particular, pursuant to § 3 [2], § 4 [1], and § 13 [3] of the Court of Audit Act 1948 [*Rechnungshofgesetz* 1948 RHG], to the Austrian Court of Audit as well as to bodies and institutions of the European Union in accordance with European legal provisions). Transmission of data is also based on § 6 (1) item c of the GDPR in conjunction with § 2g of the FOG.

Further information on the data privacy rights of the applicant or applying research institution as well as the contact details of the FWF's data protection officers is available here.

5.2   Publication of project data and results

Proposal summaries must be submitted to the FWF when the grant agreement is returned. Please note that if a grant is awarded, a PR proposal summary in German and English will be published on the FWF website, as well as the grant amount and later, PR results summaries of the project's findings in German and English. The coordinator must ensure that these texts are worded in such a way that legitimate interests of secrecy for reasons of national defense and patent law are safeguarded and business secrets are protected appropriately. Guidelines for writing PR summaries can be found on the FWF website.

In addition, the FWF requires a data management plan (DMP) for all approved projects. This plan should also be sent to the FWF when returning the grant agreement. The template for the DMP can be viewed and downloaded on the FWF website.

The guidelines specified in the grant agreement on acknowledging the FWF as the funding institution and the FWF's Open-Access Policy apply for any publication of project results (e.g., academic publications, research data, conference papers, and media reports).

6 Appendices to the Application Guidelines

6.1 Appendix A: Information on the research institution(s) and description of financial aspects

Information on the lead research institution and the partner research institutions and the description of project finances must be presented **in English,** categorized into coordination project and subprojects, and appended to the project description as Annex 2. Costs must be broken down and adequately justified for each point below. The list of and justification for the requested funds must correspond to the costs indicated in the *Cost breakdown* form. The description should be structured as follows:

(a) Details on the lead research institution and the partner research institution(s)

- Existing personnel (not financed by the FWF, usually the subproject heads and research personnel at the research institution(s))
- Existing infrastructure

(b) Information on the funding requested:

- Explain briefly why the personnel requested is needed for the project
  (number and type of requested positions, job descriptions, extent of employment, and duration of involvement in the project)
- Explain briefly why the non-personnel costs requested are justified (equipment, materials, travel, and other costs). If funding for equipment is requested, applicants must explain why this does not constitute part of the basic equipment of the given research environment – see section 2.3.2.

Please list and provide justifications for the following:

Personnel costs:

Equipment costs:

Material costs:

Travel costs:

Other costs (including independent contractor agreements):

6.2 Appendix B: Notes and questions for reviewers in the Research Group funding program[15]

In all of its programs, the FWF actively supports equal opportunities and equal treatment. The review of a proposal must not put researchers at a disadvantage for non-research-related reasons such as age, gender, etc. For example, the review of applications should not focus on the researcher's actual age, but on the relation between the researcher's previous research achievements and the length of his/her research career.

Our commitment to equal opportunities also means taking breaks or delays in researchers' careers into consideration (e.g., due to parental leave; long-term or chronic illness; disability; caregiving responsibilities; etc.) which may have resulted in gaps in a researcher's publication record, unorthodox career paths, or limited international research experience. Please also see our information for reviewers on Unconscious bias in the decision-making process.

Only the researcher's ten most important academic publications and their ten most important additional research achievements are to be considered when evaluating the application. As a signatory to the Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment, the FWF also emphasizes that, in assessing research performance, reviewers should refrain from using journal-based metrics such as journal impact factors, Article Influence Scores, or the h-index.

Please review the current proposal[16] based on the following nine assessment criteria: 1) Degree of innovation and potential, 2) research quality, 3) multi- or interdisciplinary approach, appropriate methodology and implementation of the project, 4) research qualifications of the subproject heads and gender ratio, 5) effects of the implementation of the internationalization strategy, 6) importance of the project for the career development of the junior researchers involved, 7) organization of the Research Group, 8) ethical, sex-specific, and gender-related aspects, and 9) final assessment. For each of these criteria except 8) we ask you for both written comments and a rating on a scale from "outstanding" to "poor." Please be aware, however, that the FWF's funding decision will be based primarily on reviewers' written assessments rather than the ratings assigned.

Please keep in mind that sections 1 and 2 will be forwarded to the researchers in full and in anonymous form.

---

[15] Further information can be found on our website: FWF's mission statement and values and the Application Guidelines for FWF Research Groups.

[16] The project proposal must meet the FWF's formal requirements. Please bear these in mind when writing your review. (Important formal requirements: Project description incl. figures and tables, on no more than 25/24/23 pages for 5/4/3 subproject heads, respectively; list of relevant literature cited, no more than 5 pages; academic CVs and description of previous research achievements of all researchers, incl. their 10 most important publications, no more than 3 pages each.) For further information, please see Research Groups (fwf.ac.at).

Section 1 (forwarded to the subproject heads in full)

1) Degree of innovation and the proposal's potential to change existing paradigms both in and beyond the research fields involved

2) Research quality of the proposal

3) Multi- or interdisciplinary approach, appropriate methodology and implementation of the project

4) Research qualifications – based on academic age – of the subproject heads as well as the gender ratio among the subproject heads

5) Effects of the implementation of the Research Group's proposed internationalization strategy

6) Significance of the project for the career development of the junior researchers involved

7) Organization of the Research Group

8) Ethical, sex-specific, and gender-related aspects

   Ethics: Have ethical considerations been addressed satisfactorily?

   Sex-specific and gender-related aspects: Subproject heads are required to address any relevant sex-specific and/or gender-related elements inherent in research questions and/or research design. Please assess whether the treatment of these components is adequate.

9) Final evaluation in terms of key strengths and weaknesses and final funding recommendation

   What is your overall impression of the proposal? Specifically, what would you consider its key strengths and weaknesses? Please give reasons for your answers, taking as much space as you need.

Section 2 (optional remarks to the researchers)

If you are in favor of the project being funded, you may want to add to the formal assessment in section 1 by making further and perhaps more informal comments or suggestions here. However, please note that these remarks, too, may also have an impact on the FWF's funding decision, especially if they amount to substantive criticism of the project.

Section 3 (confidential remarks to the FWF)

Please use this space to make any comments that you do not want communicated to the coordinator. Feel free to also give us feedback about the review process and your interactions with us.