

Call for Tenders

Evaluation of the 1000 Ideas Program

Vienna, May 27, 2025

Discovering
what
matters.

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1 Client and Awarding Office

Austrian Science Fund (FWF)
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Georg-Coch-Platz 2
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This call for tenders has been prepared in accordance with (i) the [FWF's Rules](#) on Quality and Transparency for Evaluations and (ii) the [Evaluation Standards](#) in Research and Technology Policy developed by the Austrian Platform for Research and Technology Policy Evaluation ([fteval](#)). These standards apply to all companies and organizations submitting tenders.

The FWF

The Austrian Science Fund (FWF) is Austria's leading organization for the funding of basic research. The purpose of the FWF is to support the ongoing development of Austrian science and basic research at a high international level. In doing so, the FWF makes a significant contribution to cultural development, to the advancement of our knowledge-based society, and to prosperity and the creation of value in Austria. Further information on the FWF's responsibilities, and the values to which it is committed, can be found on the FWF's website at <http://www.fwf.ac.at/en/>.

2 Contract Objectives

The object of the contract to be awarded is an evaluation of the FWF's program [1000 Ideas](#). The evaluation should focus on the following key questions:

- 1 To what extent have particularly original or high-risk research ideas been implemented in the 1000 Ideas program to date, i.e., have some 1000 Ideas projects led directly to groundbreaking new findings or laid the groundwork for such findings?
- 2 Does the program meet the requirements to classify as seed funding for high-risk projects, i.e., i) are these projects unlikely to be funded under conventional funding programs and ii) are the results achieved likely to result in further funding?
- 3 Are there qualitative differences in the outputs generated in the 1000 Ideas program as compared to FWF's Principal Investigator Projects?
- 4 Have 1000 Ideas projects failed and how were the failures dealt with?

- 5 Is the FWF's selection procedure for this program (including the lottery procedure and double-blind review process) suitable for identifying radically new, particularly original, or high-risk research ideas? To what extent could the procedure be improved?
- 6 Is a separate program necessary to achieve the stated objectives or could they also be integrated into another existing program? What adaptations might be necessary?

The final evaluation report is expected to be delivered by March 2026. The budget for the study is limited to **€70,000**. The deadline for tenders is July 4, 2025.

3 Background

Mission and objectives

Because they can be difficult to fund, it is often hard for researchers to take the first step when it comes to radically new, particularly original, or daring research ideas that go beyond the common understanding of science and scholarship. This is where the 1000 Ideas program comes in. The project's chances of successful implementation are not as important as having the "courage to fail," which is an integral component of the program. The key aim of the program is to tackle novel, forward-looking topics that are highly relevant for science, research and, ideally, society. They should exhibit the potential to transform existing research domains and/or fundamentally challenge established paradigms in science and research. Funding is provided exclusively for projects in the field of basic research. Projects that include application-oriented aspects will be evaluated and decided upon based solely on the quality of the basic research presented in the proposal. One single researcher is responsible for heading the 1000 Ideas project at an Austrian research institution (hereinafter referred to as the applicant, principal investigator, or PI). The principal investigator can collaborate with associated research partners, national, and/or international collaborators as part of the project. In addition to any legal regulations, FWF's own regulations on international collaborations also apply (see the FWF website for more information). The 1000 Ideas program provides seed funding for radically new, particularly original, or daring research ideas that are not currently supported by existing funding programs. An exploratory phase, limited in duration, is intended to provide initial evidence of the feasibility of the proposal and the underlying research idea.

Funding can be requested for projects that investigate radically new, especially original, or daring research ideas at an early stage. The project must be clearly defined and include a convincing description of the aims and methods. Additionally, the project must be highly relevant for science or (arts-based) research and fall in the domain of basic research. Projects that include application-oriented aspects will be evaluated and decided upon based solely on the quality of the basic research presented in the proposal.

One unique aspect of the FWF's funding approach – in contrast to many funding organizations in other countries – is that it adheres strictly to a **bottom-up principle** in its

funding decisions. The FWF views its financial and administrative support as an extension of the possibilities for ground-breaking academic research rather than as a means to promote specific research topics, domains, or geographical areas (as it would be the case in a top-down oriented approach). This bottom-up principle is also consequently applied to the 1000 Ideas program.

Funding decisions are made by the [Scientific Board](#), based on an international review process and the recommendations made by the 1000 Ideas jury. The jury defines a pool of applications considered eligible for funding. Some of these are directly recommended for funding. A comparable number of applications are then selected at random from the remaining pool of eligible applications. The entire process is double-blind.

The program's history

The 1000 Ideas Program was first established by the FWF in 2019 and has since then pursued the goal of promoting original, high-risk, or transformative research at an early stage. The FWF also broke new ground in terms of the selection process, implementing a double-blind selection process and a lottery system for this program.

Since the first call for proposals, a 1000 Ideas Call has been held annually, with the exception of 2022, when the call had to be suspended for budgetary reasons. In the first four rounds of calls, a total of 1,112 applications were submitted and 85 were approved. By the end of the year, approximately 85 Final Project Reports from completed projects will be available.

The fifth call for proposals for the 1000 Ideas Program is currently being processed, with a decision on the submitted applications and the approval of around 18 projects expected by late June 2025.

4 Focus of the Evaluation and Methods

This evaluation of this program is intended to focus on the program's effectiveness and how well the projects it funds contribute to achieving the program's objectives. The results of the evaluation will serve as a basis for further calls for applications, but also as possible input for improving, terminating, or restructuring the program.

The successful bidder should use methods that provide a comprehensive picture of the 1000 Ideas program's effectiveness in achieving its objectives from the perspective of all stakeholders involved. The evaluation report should contain well-founded recommendations based on appropriate qualitative and quantitative methods. Specifically, the contractor should conduct a survey of applicants and reviewers/jury members, conduct interviews, or set up focus groups with relevant representatives of the research institutions. It should apply suitable and targeted research methods to examine the observations/opinions of the participating researchers as well as representatives of the universities (and possibly also

other research policy stakeholders) with regard to the program. The FWF also encourages the contractor to propose other specific methods and/or approaches.

5 Availability of Data and Relevant Documents

Documents	Availability
Public Program Documents	
Application Guidelines	1000 Ideas Application Guidelines
Funded Projects (abstracts and teams)	Research Radar
Funding Statistics	FWF Dashboard
Internal Program Documents	
Applications	Available upon contract
Short Review Statements	Available upon contract
Final Project Reports of Funded Projects	Available upon contract

Other sources

Links to other sources (e.g., Annual Reports) are listed at the end of this document ('Further Reading').

6 Deliverables, Meetings, and Presentations

- 1) Mid-term report (presentation)
- 2) Final evaluation report (written report max. 50 pages)
- 3) Executive summary of no more than five pages
- 4) One-page summary
- 5) If possible, a research publication in a peer-reviewed journal on a topic of the evaluators' choice (related to the evaluation) after the evaluation is finalized

Meetings and presentations:

- 1) Kick-off workshop
- 2) Mid-term presentation
- 3) Discussion of final report (draft version)
- 4) Presentation of the final report

7 Schedule

Call for tenders:	May 27, 2025
Deadline for tenders:	July 4, 2025
Invitation to hearings:	July 21, 2025
Hearings:	August 18, 2025
Decision:	August 25, 2025
Kick-off workshop:	September 8, 2025
Mid-term report and presentation:	January 2026
Final report (draft) and presentation:	March 2026
Public presentation of final report:	April 2026

8 Price and Payments

Prices must be fixed amounts which are not subject to change and which include reimbursement for all costs including travel and subsistence expenses. The price must be presented as a lump sum; separately reimbursable expenses will not be accepted. The estimated travel and subsistence expenses considered necessary by the bidder in order to carry out the study must be indicated separately (for informational purposes only).

The price quoted in the tender must be in euros. Bidders from countries outside the euro zone are also subject to this requirement. The price quoted may not be adjusted for exchange rate fluctuations at any time. It is up to the bidder to select an exchange rate and to bear the potential risks or benefits arising from any variations.

The total price for the services offered (including travel and subsistence expenses) is expected to be approximately **€70,000** *excluding* VAT. The costs are a relevant criterion for the final decision by the FWF.

Payments: Three payments will be made under the terms of the contract. The first payment (corresponding to 20% of the contractually agreed price) will be made after conclusion of the contract. The second (interim) payment (corresponding to 50% of the contractually agreed price) will be released after approval of the interim presentation and made within 30 days of the approval date. Should the interim presentation not be approved, the contractor shall have 20 days to respond to suggested changes and to submit a revised document. Once the FWF approves the final deliverables, the contractor may request the final balance due (30%).

9 Deadline for Tenders / Communication of Decisions

Tenders must be submitted as a PDF document by July 4, 2025, 10:00 am CET to Tina Olteanu, tina.olteanu@fwf.ac.at.

The FWF expressly welcomes submissions from international bidders. Hearings will take place in Vienna or on a virtual platform with the shortlisted bidders. The final decision will be made by the FWF based on the suggestion of a panel. The panel will be made up of members of the FWF Executive Board and staff members from the departments Strategy – National Programs and Strategy – Policy, Evaluation, Analysis.

Criteria are (i) competences of the evaluation team: knowledge of the Austrian science system, and experience and knowledge in research assessments; (ii) utility (to which extent will the evaluation outputs and recommendations help the FWF to meet its needs); (iii) feasibility and appropriateness of the approach with respect to the aims of the evaluation; and (iv) appropriateness of the costs.

Important note: The FWF requests bidders with recent activities in international research, research management, or research funding in Austria and/or bidders recently commissioned by Austrian national ministries or other stakeholders to contribute to creating Austria's Research, Technology, and Innovation policy to declare potential conflicts of interest.

Conflict of interest: Tenders from institutions which appear as host or partner institutions of 1000 Ideas applications cannot be accepted due to potential conflicts of interest.

Contact person

For details regarding the tender:

Tina Olteanu

Phone: +43 1 505 67 40 8310

tina.olteanu@fwf.ac.at

10 Transparency of the Tender¹

The tender will be published on the FWF website and distributed via the FWF newsletter and fteval. Invitations have also been sent to the following institutions:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Convelop Cooperative Knowledge Design GmbH</u> <u>Karin Grasenick, Markus Gruber</u> Hilbergasse 1/I, A-8010 Graz • <u>DZHW – Deutsches Zentrum für Hochschul- und Wissenschaftsforschung</u> <u>Bernd Kleimann, Frank Dölle</u> Lange Laube 12, D-30159 Hannover • <u>Fraunhofer ISI</u> <u>Susanne Bühner-Topcu</u> Breslauer Straße 48, D-76139 Karlsruhe • <u>IGES Institut GmbH</u> <u>Dr. Friederike Haaß</u> Friedrichstraße 180, D-10117 Berlin • <u>IHS – Institute for Advanced Studies</u> <u>Bianca Brandl</u> Josefstädter Straße 39, A-1080 Vienna • <u>Joanneum Research</u> <u>Michael Ploder</u> Sensengasse 1, A-1090 Wien • <u>KMU Forschung Austria</u> <u>Peter Kaufmann, Thomas Oberholzner</u> Gusshausstraße 8, A-1040 Vienna • <u>NIFU</u> <u>Liv Langfeldt</u> P. O. Box 2815 Tøyen, NOR - 0608 Oslo • <u>Prognos AG</u> <u>Thomas Stehnken</u> Goethestraße 55, D-10623 Berlin • <u>RAND Europe</u> <u>Salil Gunashekar</u> Westbrook Centre/Milton Rd, Cambridge CB4 1YG, UK • <u>Rathenau Instituut</u> <u>Eefje Cuppen</u> Anna van Saksenlaan 51 2593 HW Den Haag 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>SPRU - Science and Technology Policy Research</u> <u>Ben Martin</u> University of Sussex. Sussex House Jubilee Building Jub-363 Brighton, BN1 9RH, UK • <u>Technopolis Group</u> <u>Katharina Warta</u> Technopolis Group Limited 3 Pavilion Buildings, Brighton, BN1 1EE, UK • <u>The University of Manchester</u> <u>Jakob Edler, John Rigby</u> Harold Hankins Building-9.08 Manchester Business School Manchester, M13 9PL, UK • <u>University of Twente</u> Science, Technology, and Policy Studies (STePS) <u>Klassjan Visscher</u> PO Box 217, NL-7500 AE Enschede • <u>VDI/VDE IT</u> Institut für Innovation und Technik <u>Ernst Andreas Hartmann</u> Steinplatz 1, DE-10623 Berlin • <u>WPZ Research GmbH</u> <u>Brigitte Ecker</u> Mariahilfer Straße 115/16, A-1060 Vienna • <u>ZSI – Centre for Social Innovation</u> <u>Klaus Schuch</u> Linke Wienzeile 246, A-1150 Vienna
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¹ Any institutions in Austria that are considering submitting a research proposal to the 1000 Ideas program should please refrain from bidding.

11 Further Reading²

Austrian Research System

Bundesgesetz zur Förderung der Forschung und Technologieentwicklung (Forschungs- und Technologieförderungsgesetz – [FTFG](#))

Austrian Research and Technology Report [2024](#)

(The Austrian Research and Technology Reports are status reports provided to the Austrian parliament on the nation's federally funded research, technology, and innovation. These reports draw on current data to present an overview of specific trends in research, technology, and innovation (RTI) and show how Austria ranks internationally in selected categories.)

FWF Annual Reports

Including mission statement, overview of grants, numbers of applications and approvals, funding requested/approved; [German](#) or [English](#) from 2010 onwards.

Principles of the FWF Decision-Making Procedure

The document [General Principles of the FWF Decision-Making Procedure](#) provides a brief overview of the application process, from the submission of proposals to the peer review process and the final funding decision. The process described in the document forms the basis for all FWF programs. In certain programs, exceptions to the general decision-making principles are possible; these exceptions are described in separate documents.

Evaluation Reports and Studies

The FWF provides access to all program evaluations, studies on FWF ex-ante peer review, outcomes of FWF projects, and many more interesting topics in the [publications section](#) of its website. Of specific interest is the [Accompanying process evaluation of FWF's Emerging Fields](#)

Statistics

- [FWF Research Radar](#)
- [FWF Dashboard](#)

² The FWF does NOT expect evaluators to consider all of these suggestions in their report. Some of the listed documents are available only in German.