FWF

Austrian
Science Fund

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

FWF ASTRA Awards

effective as of July 1, 2024, version 1

Discovering
what
matters.

Contents

Please note: Key terms used in these Application Guidelines are explained in the document Definition of Terms.

1   General Information

This document has been prepared in German and English for your convenience. In the event of a dispute, the German version shall prevail.

1.1   Program objective

The highly endowed FWF ASTRA Awards offer outstanding researchers the conditions they need to conduct long-term research projects at a top international level, consolidate their individual research profiles, and acquire the necessary qualifications for academic leadership positions.

ASTRA has the following key objectives:
- Funding excellent, innovative research, including through the development or establishment of new research fields and/or approaches
- Attracting and retaining internationally visible researchers to help increase the international attractiveness of Austrian research institutions
- Supporting outstanding women researchers
- Supporting the consolidation of the principal investigators' academic careers and the achievement of the qualifications needed for academic leadership positions, especially senior faculty positions
- Establishing long-term career prospects through the integration of researchers and their research fields at the research institutions, creating sustainable added value for both researchers and research institutions

The advancement of women is a priority at the FWF: Half of the FWF ASTRA Awards are awarded to women (see also section 3.4) and female principal investigators benefit from additional features aimed specifically at women, including measures to improve the visibility of successful female researchers and strengthen their networks, as well as tenure packages where appropriate (see section 2.3.8) and child allowances (see section 2.3.9).

1.2   What types of projects can be funded?

Funding may be requested for projects in basic research or in the field of arts-based research that are clearly defined, innovative, convincingly described in terms of objectives and methods, and limited in duration.

Projects in the field of clinical research that are precisely defined in terms of objectives and methodology and limited in duration and budget are also eligible for funding; results of this research must not be linked to any direct commercial interests. For requirements specific to clinical projects and to the project description for clinical research, please see the Clinical Research program page and the Application Guidelines. A positive opinion or confirmation of fundamental approval from the ethics committee responsible is required for clinical research and must be included with the application.

Proposals featuring one or more of the following attributes are considered innovative basic research: (i) research on new ideas and/or an investigation of new research questions, (ii) the development or application of new research methods, new technologies, or original approaches to solving research questions, or (iii) the application or modification of existing methods, technologies, or approaches to new research questions. Please note that next logical steps or the incremental further development of published data is not considered to be innovative or original.

Funding for a total **project duration** of **60 months** can be requested.

1.3   Submission

The deadline for submission (i.e. approval of the application for submission by the research institution) is **October 3, 2024 (2:00 pm local time Vienna).** All proposals must be submitted online using the elane digital application portal. Project funding is administered through the research institutions (PROFI); this means the application must be approved for submission by both the applicant and the respective research institution (= lead research institution). 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 in full before the application can be approved for submission by the research institution. For additional information, please see the elane user manual.

1.3.1   Who is eligible to apply?

All Austrian **research institutions** are eligible to apply.[1] The intended project must be carried out in Austria or under the auspices of the applying Austrian research institution. Applications are submitted by the research institution where the project is to be carried out. The research institution must provide the necessary infrastructure.

The FWF ASTRA Awards are aimed at successful, internationally visible researchers from all disciplines, including arts-based research, who already have experience with independent research work (see section 1.4.1). Since the advancement of women researchers is an explicit objective of the program, research institutions are urged to encourage highly qualified women to apply.

The principal investigator must be employed at the Austrian research institution applying for funding 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 principal investigator is employed part-time at the start of the project, project funds can be used to increase the extent of employment to full time.

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

1.3.2 Can multiple applications be submitted simultaneously?

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

Applicants are subject to restrictions on acting both as applicant and principal investigator in other projects. For more information, please see: Application and project number limit. The following also applies to ASTRA:

- It is not possible for one person to serve as the principal investigator in several ASTRA projects/applications.

- Parallel submissions to the FWF career programs Erwin Schrödinger and ESPRIT are also prohibited.

- Parallel submissions of applications with identical content in other FWF programs are also prohibited. The only exception is an application that is substantially identical in content to an application submitted under the Elise Richter or Elise Richter PEEK program. If both applications are approved, one of the two projects must be withdrawn.

- An ASTRA application based on a previously approved/ongoing FWF-funded project is permissible, even if the previously approved/ongoing project overlaps with the proposed ASTRA project with regard to content; see also the relevant requirements for the project description (section 2.2.3). Should the application be approved, the ongoing funding must be transferred to the ASTRA project (or the Merit Award, if applicable, see section 3.5) and terminated with the start of the ASTRA or Merit Award project.

1.4 Who is eligible to apply?

1.4.1 General requirements

The following **application requirements** and **exclusion criteria** apply to principal investigators:

- Applicants must have a doctoral degree, awarded at least 2 and not more than 9 years previously, as of September 30 of the year of submission. This period is calculated based on the date of the candidate's successful thesis defense exam. For degrees without a thesis defense exam, the date the candidate's dissertation was officially accepted applies. In the field of arts-based research, researchers who do not hold a doctoral degree can also apply. The prerequisite for eligibility is proof of at least 2 to a maximum of 9 years of relevant experience in arts-based research according to international standards.

- In addition, the applicant's **publication record** 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 applicant 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 on the website, it is the applicant's responsibility to provide evidence that the publication has been subject to a quality assurance procedure in accordance with the standards of the field.

- **International visibility:** The majority of the applicant'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 or exceed the researcher's expectable career path and the respective discipline. At least two publications must be quality-assured and internationally visible publications with a substantial and independent contribution by the applicant. 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 applicant's contribution must be specified.

- Only for applications in the field of arts-based research: If **forms of artistic practice** and their critical reflection are presented, these must be accessible to the public and the evidence for this must be appropriately documented. Their quality must be documented in a verifiable manner, making them comparable with research results published in internationally renowned journals. To be accepted as part of an ASTRA proposal, the arts-based research dimension as well as the underlying research questions must be described individually in a brief statement. This is to be written by the applicant and included in the publication or works list. Where appropriate, a list of all lectures and talks (in galleries, theatres, or similar forums) about the artistic work are also to be included (see section 2.1.3).

- Principal investigators who already hold a permanent professorship (or an equivalent leadership position at a non-university research institution) at the time of application or who have already accepted an appointment to a permanent professorship are not eligible to apply.

- Researchers can submit a maximum of two applications to the ASTRA program. For this reason, applicants should bear in mind that, according to the definition of the target group, they should already have experience in independent research work, i.e. have acquired competitive third-party funding after their doctorate, gained extended (at least

3 months of continuous) research experience abroad, or published academic papers without a dissertation supervisor.

If there is any uncertainty about general application requirements or about accounting for career interruptions (see section 1.4.3 and 1.4.4), the FWF recommends that the applicant 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.

1.4.2 Equal opportunities, diversity, and inclusion

The FWF Strategy for Equal Opportunities and Diversity of Researchers applies. This means that breaks or delays in applicants' 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.

1.4.3 Consideration of career breaks

The FWF will take justified, documentable career breaks (e.g. due to pregnancy, childcare,[2] caregiving obligations,[3] military or civilian service, flight, and asylum) into consideration when assessing eligibility to apply.

1.4.4 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.

1.4.5 Data protection notice

When assessing eligibility, all personal data provided to the FWF by an applicant on a voluntary basis that relates to the information provided in sections 1.4.3 and 1.4.4 above shall be taken into account exclusively to the applicant's benefit (compensation of disadvantages). 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

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

[3] 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.

visible to your research institution. All information provided in this regard is used solely to check the application requirements and is not made available to reviewers.

Relevant information, without sensitive or personal data, can be included in an individual's CV, making it available to the reviewers. A general explanation, including the duration of the interruption or delay, is sufficient.

1.5 What types of funding can be requested?

Project-specific costs of **at least €500,000 up to a maximum of €1 million** are eligible for funding. These include personnel and non-personnel costs that are needed to carry out the project and that are not included in the infrastructure provided by the research institution. The FWF does not finance the infrastructure or basic equipment of research institutions.

In addition, funding may be requested for project-specific work at associated research institution(s) where associated research partner(s) work. Associated research partners are researchers working on a project-specific basis at other Austrian research institutions (associated research institutions) and who are making a significant scientific/scholarly contribution to the project. The *Associated research partner* form must be completed for these researchers, if applicable. Funds are disbursed from the lead research institution to the associated research institution(s).[4] Associated research institutions report directly to the FWF to account for funds used at their institution.

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

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 (arts-based) 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.

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[4] Associated research institutions must be registered in the FWF's research institution portal. Once a proposal has been approved, the lead research institution must enter into a collaboration agreement with the associated research institution.

- Wider research context / theoretical framework
- Hypotheses / research questions / objectives
- Approach / methods
- Level of originality / innovation
- Key project participants

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

2.1.2 Project description

Project descriptions are limited to 20 consecutively numbered pages, including the table of contents (required), and where applicable, a list of abbreviations, headings, figures, captions, tables, footnotes, etc.

The project description must also include Annexes 1–4 and Annex 5 if applicable, on additional pages:

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

- Annex 2: Details of the lead research institution and any associated research institutions and a plausible justification of the funding requested

- Annex 3: Academic CV and description of previous research achievements of the applicant

- Annex 4: Career plan drawn up by the applicant and the research institution along with a letter of support from the research institution where the project is to be carried out, signed by the dean, the head of the institution, the group leader, or the like

- Annex 5 (optional): Collaboration letters from national and international cooperation partners (max. 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 the applicant must be named, documenting that the applicant fulfills the general requirements to act as principal investigator (publication record, see section 1.4.1)

- List of publications and works where applicable for internal FWF use to assess eligibility to apply and to check for conflicts of interest with potential reviewers (see section 2.2.4)

- Alternative project plan (see section 2.2.5) in the event that the proposal is not selected for an FWF ASTRA Award but is eligible for a Merit Award corresponding to a three-year Principal Investigator Project with a maximum of €450,000 in funding (see also section 3.4 and 3.5). If the applicant is not interested in a Merit Award, this document should state only that no Merit Award will be claimed.

- Where applicable:

  - Results or final project report: If the project submitted is the continuation of an FWF-funded project (follow-up application), a report on previous results or a final project report and a list of publications resulting from the project must be uploaded (no more than 6 pages).

  - Additional documents in the case of resubmission: If the application is a revised version of a previously rejected application (see section 3.4), 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 4.2), 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, *Cost breakdown* form, *Academic abstract* form, and *Co-authors* form
- Where applicable: *Associated research partner* form, *Other cooperation* form

2.2 Application content and form

2.2.1 Application language

To allow applications to be reviewed by international scientific, scholarly, or arts-based research experts and to facilitate the decision-making process of the international jury, applications must be submitted in English.

2.2.2 Project description: Scope and formatting requirements

The project description may not exceed 20 pages. It must contain a table of contents with page numbers. Optional elements, such as a list of abbreviations, figures, figure legends, tables, footnotes, etc., must also be included in the 20-page limit.

The continuous text in the project description, Annexes 1–4, the publication lists, 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 form 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 applicant, 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). The choice of citation conventions or style guide is up to the applicant, but must be implemented consistently throughout the application. If available, a DOI address or another persistent identifier should be used for the literature cited.

2.2.3 Project description and annexes

The project description may not exceed 20 pages and must include a table of contents as well as the following sections, each designated by headings:

1) Table of contents

2) State of the art of relevant international research (including own preliminary work, if applicable) and relation of the project to this context

3) Clearly defined aims and hypotheses or (arts-based) research question(s) of the project

4) Description of the project's anticipated level of originality or (arts-based) scientific innovation

5) Methods

6) Work plan and timeline

7) Associated research partners (if applicable): Description of the contributions of the associated research partners (see section 1.5) to the proposed research; associated research partners must be named in the ***Associated research partner* form**.

8) National and/or international cooperation partners (if applicable): Please specify the intended collaboration partners and the subject of the intended collaboration(s) or the planned contribution to the project. In addition to legal regulations, FWF's regulations on international collaborations also apply (see the FWF website for more information). All national and/or international cooperation arrangements that were stated to be essential in the project description must be listed on the *Other cooperation* form (one form must be completed for each cooperation partner) and may be confirmed by a collaboration letter.

9) Project-relevant (arts-based) research qualifications of the researchers involved

10) All potential ethical, safety-related, or regulatory aspects[5] of the proposal and how applicants plan to deal with them must be described in this section. These questions need to be addressed briefly in the text even if the applicant believes the project does not raise any such issues.

11) Any potential sex-specific and gender-related aspects[6] 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 applicant does not feel that the project involves any such aspects.

If the content of the submitted ASTRA project overlaps with an already approved/ongoing FWF-funded project (see section 1.3.2), the project description must also clearly state where the two projects overlap and which parts are new to the ASTRA project.

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 and the research institutions of associated research partners where applicable

    - Existing project participants (not financed by FWF project funds – usually the principal investigator and academic project staff at the research institutions)

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

[6]   Positioning and thoughts on the research approaches in the project in terms of sex-specific and gender-related aspects, i.e., is the research approach likely to result in any 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.)

- Available infrastructure

- Information on the funding requested

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

  - 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 section 3.3.2).

Annex 3: CV and description of previous research achievements

The academic CV and descriptions of previous research achievements of the applicant must be described on no more than 3 pages according to the guidelines provided below.

Guidelines for (arts-based) 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 relevant (arts-based) research positions (incl. the extent of employment in the case of part-time employment)

- *Career breaks* (if any): List of breaks or delays in the applicant's (arts-based) research career (see also section 1.4.3)

- *Net research experience:* The length of time (in years and months) that has actually been used in net total for (arts-based) 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:* A presentation of the main research areas and the most important (arts-based) research findings to date

- *Academic publications (and/or arts-based works):* List of no more than 10 of the most important published or accepted (arts-based) research publications and/or works (journal articles, monographs, edited volumes, contributions to edited volumes, proceedings, concerts, exhibitions, installations, performances, artworks, 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 (arts-based) research achievements:* List of no more than ten of the most important (arts-based) research achievements apart from 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: Career plan with letter of support from the research institution

The authors (the applicant and a supporting person, e.g. institute or group head at the research institution where the project is to be carried out) must be named at the beginning of the document, which must not exceed three pages. Using the English terms given here, the following points must be addressed.

- *Qualification/expertise:* Skills and knowledge of the principal investigator, as needed to successfully carry out the proposed project and achieve the program goal

- *Career goals:* Longer and medium-term research and career goals of the principal investigator, contribution of the proposed project to the achievement of these goals

- *Research profile:* Description of the principal investigator's academic and (arts-based) research profile and of how the planned research will contribute to consolidating this profile and help the principal investigator qualify for an academic leadership position

- *Institutional support:* Description of the lead research institution's contribution to the principal investigator's integration, of medium- and/or long-term career prospects, and of support provided by the lead research institution for the implementation of the project that goes beyond the project funds (e.g. infrastructure opportunities, support staff, opportunities for teaching and supervising students).

Annex 5 (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

2.2.4   Publication output

The following two separate uploads are required:

- *PI-publication.pdf:* Two publications written by the applicant must be named, documenting that the applicant fulfills the general requirements to apply (see template *PI-publication*). The FWF will determine the applicant's eligibility to apply based on these publications.

- *Publication_lists.pdf:* A list of all research publications over the last five years (categorized as "quality-assured publications" and "other publications") of the applicant; 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.

2.2.5   Alternative project plan

In the event that the proposal is not selected for an FWF ASTRA Award but is eligible for a Merit Award corresponding to a three-year Principal Investigator Project with a maximum of €450,000 in funding (see also section 3.4 and 3.5), an alternative project plan (*alternative_project_plan.pdf*) must also be submitted together with the ASTRA proposal. This document must state which parts of the ASTRA project would be conducted if a Merit Award is granted (on no more than 2 pages, including a cost breakdown). If the applicant is not interested in a Merit Award, this document should state only that no Merit Award will be claimed.

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 a research institution 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, if applicable, to any associated research institutions.

VAT is an eligible expense only if a research institution is 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.

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 principal investigator'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 principal investigator, regardless of whether they are in fixed-term or long-term employment at the time of application. The senior postdoc salary rate[7] applies for the principal investigator's own position (pro-rated accordingly in the case of partial funding).

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 institution(s). "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

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

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 principal investigator 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 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 in making the calculations.

2.3.4   Travel costs

Funding may be requested for project-specific travel and accommodation, field work, expeditions, etc., as well as for the presentation of project results at conferences. 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,[8] which can also be requested as part of the travel expenses or funded through the budget for general project costs. A CO_2 offset contribution can be requested for up to 15% of the ticket price.

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

Travel expenses for researchers from Austrian and international research institutions other than the lead research institution or associated 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 associated 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

Unlike when cooperating with associated research partners (see section 1.5), costs arising in the context of a research collaboration with an external research institution are to be borne by that research institution. This does not apply to cooperation arrangements with researchers 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.

2.3.6   Other eligible costs

- Costs for personal coaching and/or personnel development measures for the principal investigator in the amount of up to €10,000 per year, which directly contribute to the principal investigator'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).

- 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 or arts-based 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

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

2.3.7   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.

2.3.8   Tenure package

In the interest of the advancement of women, after approval, female principal investigators can apply for additional project funding of €200,000 within the first three years of the project's term in the following cases:

- They have been granted a position with a permanent employment commitment upon fulfillment of a qualification agreement (e. g. tenure-track position) or already hold such a position at the time of application

- They have been granted or assumed a permanent academic leadership position (professorship or equivalent position) after applying for funding

2.3.9   Child allowance

Women principal investigators who are employed full-time after the birth of a child are entitled to a child allowance of €9,600 per child per year (= gross amount including all employer and employee contributions; paid in 12 monthly installments) up to the child's third birthday, paid out as additional funding after approval.

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 has been 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:

- 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 3.2). 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 no deadlines for the resubmission of a rejected application apply, the respective application requirements do need to be complied with. Resubmissions must be submitted as described in section 3.1, 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

The following sections provide an overview of all files and forms to be submitted.

2.5.1 All applications must include the following parts:

a) Files:
- *Proposal.pdf* (project description incl. Annexes 1–4 and where applicable 5, with PDF bookmarks, at least for the major sections)
- *PI-publication.pdf* (two publications written by the applicant must be named, documenting that the applicant fulfills the general requirements to apply)
- *Publication_lists.pdf* (list of the applicant's publications over the last five years, categorized into "quality assured publications" and "other publications")
- *Alternative_project_plan.pdf* (description, including a cost breakdown, of which parts of the ASTRA project will be conducted in the event of receipt of Merit Award funding)

b) Forms:
- *Research institution assignment*
- *Contact*
- *Application*

- *Program-specific data*
- *Cost breakdown*
- *Academic abstract* (in English)
- *Co-authors*
- *Associated research partners* (if applicable)
- *Other cooperation* (if applicable; for national and international collaboration partners)

2.5.2   File uploads, if applicable

- *Cover_letter.pdf* (= accompanying letter; optional)
- *Negative_list.pdf* (= reviewers who should be excluded; optional)
- *Follow.pdf* (= result report or final project report of the previous project for follow-up applications; will be forwarded to the reviewers)
- *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)

3   Processing and Decision on the Application

3.1   Submission and requests for changes

All of the files and forms specified above must be uploaded in full to elane. Once an application has been officially submitted, the research institution and the applicant can make no further changes to the application themselves.

The applicant must finish preparing the application in time to allow the respective lead research institution sufficient time to approve the application for submission by October 3, 2024 (2:00 pm local time, Vienna/Austria). All applications approved and submitted by the research institutions by this deadline will be subjected to a formal check by the FWF Office.

If the FWF Office identifies issues with the application that it considers to be rectifiable, it will notify the research institution and the applicant, giving them the opportunity to correct the problems within a reasonable period of time (generally 10 workdays after notification of the issues). The requested changes are to be submitted to elane as a supplementary application and approved for submission by the lead research institution if applicable. If the **requested changes** are not submitted before the 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 3.4).

The most common reasons why applications are returned without review by the FWF's decision-making bodies are (a) that the applicant's publication record does not meet the requirements (see section 1.4.1) and (b) that the application does not address specific hypotheses or research questions (see section 2.2.3).

Once the review process has begun, no more changes can be made to the application.

3.2   Excluding reviewers

A list of a maximum of three 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 applicant must briefly explain why these reviewers should be excluded. If the reasons for exclusion are professionally and academically sound, the FWF will generally fulfill the applicant'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 applicants.

3.3   Number of reviews required

At least three reviews are required for approval. In exceptional cases, a rejection is permitted on the basis of fewer than three reviews if any further reviews would not be able to balance out the reviewers' overall negative assessment.

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.

Once a year, based on these written reviews, the decision-making bodies of the FWF draw up a shortlist of applicants to be invited to a mandatory hearing with an international, multidisciplinary jury. Applicants whose project proposals are not included on the shortlist will be notified of the decision at this time. The FWF Scientific Board will then decide on the award-winning proposals, based on the jury's recommendations made after considering the results of the hearings. The decision will be communicated in writing to the lead research institution and the applicant.

At least half of the FWF ASTRA Awards are granted to women. If the jury does not recommend a sufficient number of eligible women researchers, the FWF will award a correspondingly smaller number of FWF ASTRA Awards to ensure the minimum 50% share of women.

3.5 Merit Awards

Projects presented at the hearing that do not receive an FWF ASTRA Award will – if the alternative project plan is deemed plausible by the FWF's decision-making bodies – be funded by the FWF as three-year Principal Investigator Projects with a maximum of €450,000 each (Merit Awards). It is possible to resubmit a rejected ASTRA project after receiving a Merit Award, but a Merit Award can only be awarded once per researcher.

3.6 Grounds for rejection

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

3.7 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.

3.8 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. In general, only topics are banned, not applicants or applying research institutions.

4 Compliance with Legal Requirements and Standards of Research Integrity

4.1 Legal regulations

Please note that research institution(s) 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. The research institution must report any cases of suspected serious deviations to the ÖAWI. 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 (*Forschungsorganisations-gesetz*, 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 principal investigator 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 and description of financial aspects

Information on the lead research institution and any associated research institutions and the description of project finances must be presented **in English** 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 applicant's research institution and - if applicable - of associated research partners:

- Existing personnel (not financed by the FWF, usually the principal investigator 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 also 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 of ASTRA Awards proposals[9]

The FWF actively supports equal opportunities and equal treatment in all of its programs. The review of an application must not put applicants at a disadvantage for non-research related reasons such as age, gender, etc. For example, instead of considering the applicant's actual age, the review process should focus on how the length of the individual's research career corresponds to their research achievements to date.

Our commitment to equal opportunities also means considering breaks or delays in applicants' research careers (e.g., due to parental leave; long-term or chronic illness; disability; caring responsibilities; etc.), which may have led to publication gaps, atypical career paths, or limited international research experience. Please also see our information for reviewers on unconscious bias in the decision-making process.

Only the ten most important academic publications and the ten most important additional research achievements of the applicant 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[10] based on the following seven assessment criteria: 1) principal investigator's qualifications, 2) innovation and novelty, 3) quality of the proposed research, 4) approach and feasibility, 5) ethical, sex-specific, and gender-related aspects, 6) institutional support and career development, and 7) overall evaluation. For each of these criteria except 5) 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 applicant in full and in anonymous form. If the proposal is approved, the research institution may have access to the anonymized reviews submitted to the applicant.

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[9] Further information can be found on our website: FWF's mission statement and values and the Application Guidelines for ASTRA projects.

[10] The project proposal must meet the FWF's formal requirements. Please bear these in mind when writing your review. (Key formal requirements: 20 pages max. for the project description including figures and tables; 5 pages maax. for the list of references; 3 pages max. for each academic CV, including a description of previous research achievements and the ten most important publications. For further details, please see the Application Guidelines for ASTRA Projects.)

Section 1:

1. Principal investigator's qualifications

How well is the principal investigator qualified to carry out the proposed (arts-based) research? How would you assess their (arts-based) research qualifications? In evaluating the principal investigator's qualifications, please consider their career stage, taking into account any unusual career paths and circumstances that may have slowed down their progress (e. g., parental leave, long-term or chronic illness, disability, caring responsibilities).

2. Innovation and novelty

Is the proposed research innovative? Does it make an original contribution to its field?

3. Quality of the proposed research

Are the (arts-based) research questions formulated clearly? Are they timely, challenging, and likely to lead to relevant insights?

4. Approach and feasibility

Is the (arts-based) research design well-conceived, clearly formulated, and suitable for answering the research question(s)? Is there a well-organized work plan? Have the methods been chosen well and does the proposal describe them in sufficient detail?

5. Ethical, sex-specific, and gender-related aspects

Ethics: Have ethical considerations been addressed satisfactorily?

Sex-specific and gender-related aspects: Applicants 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 aspects is adequate.

6. Institutional support and career development

Will the research project be integrated into the activities of the research institution? Is there suitable institutional support for the principal investigator to allow them to become established as an independent, internationally visible researcher and to advance their academic career in the long-run? Upon completion of the project, will the applicant have reached the level of qualification required for a professorship or an equivalent leading research position?

7. Overall evaluation

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 recommendations for the applicant

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 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 submitted to the applicant. Feel free to also give us feedback about the evaluation process and your interactions with us.