

Supplementary Application Guidelines for the Subject-Specific
Funding Program

Alternative Methods to Animal Testing

Vienna, January 1, 2025

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what
matters.

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1 What types of projects can be funded?

Funding is available for projects that are clearly defined with specific limits in terms of duration and budget that focus on the research and development of methods to avoid animal testing. The application guidelines for the [Principle Investigator Projects](#) program apply.

The focus of this subject-specific funding program is basic research in line with the 3R principle (**replace reduce, refine**) described by Russel and Burch in 1959. Funding is available for research proposals whose results contribute to replacing animal testing (**replacement**) or, if this is not possible, to reducing the number of animals used (**reduction**), or to minimizing animals' pain and distress (**refinement**).

2 Applying for funding

Applications for this call for proposals must be submitted following the guidelines and using the forms of the Principle Investigator Projects program by **May 12, 2025 (2:00 pm CET)**. Applications may only be submitted online using the FWF's electronic application portal [elane](#). The application must be approved for submission in elane by your research institution; the application will not be accepted until this approval has been granted.

When applying, please first select the "Principal Investigator Project (PAT)" program category and then select the "3R - Alternative Methods to Animal Testing" call from the **drop-down menu**. In addition, a program-specific form must be filled out in elane. On the basis of this program-specific form, the FWF will decide whether the submitted proposal actually meets the thematic requirements of the current call. If this is not the case, the applicant agrees that the application shall be processed and decided upon as a Principal Investigator Project according to the standard procedure.

Once the application has been received, applicants may only make changes or provide supplementary information if requested to do so by the FWF; any such changes or supplementary information must be submitted within 10 days of receiving notification from the FWF (online only, as an additional application).

Applications which are received after the deadline will be handled according to the usual procedures of the Principal Investigator Projects program.

3 Eligible costs

Depending upon the project, funding can be requested for project-specific costs (personnel and non-personnel costs). Please note that the number of reviews required depends on the amount of funding requested.

4 Decision-making process

The FWF Scientific Board makes all final decisions on the awarding of grants, based on the results of an international peer review process. The Board meeting is expected to take place in December 2025.

The BMBWF will provide €600,000 in research funding as part of this call. Where the resources required for an eligible project exceed the funding amount provided by the BMBWF, the FWF will fund the difference from its own budget.

5 Specific information on the call

Applications submitted under this call in the Principal Investigator Projects program are not subject to the [limit on the number of ongoing projects](#).

Appendix: Notes and questions for reviewers for the subject-specific funding program Alternative Methods to Animal Testing¹

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 taking into consideration 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 applicant's ten most important academic publications and the 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 proposal² based on the following six assessment criteria:

1) innovation and originality, 2) quality of the proposed research, 3) approach and feasibility, 4) researchers' qualifications, 5) ethical, sex-specific, and gender-related aspects, and 6) 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.

¹ For more information please visit our website: [FWF's Corporate Policy](#) or [Application Guidelines for Principle Investigator Projects](#).

² The project proposal must meet the FWF's formal requirements and we ask you to 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 max. 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 information see the [Application Guidelines for Principal investigator Projects](#))

Section 1: Your review

Declaration (mandatory):

☐ I hereby confirm that I have read and understood the FWF terms of confidentiality, data protection, and conflicts of interest, and agree to comply with these terms.

1) Innovation and originality with regard to 3R research:

How relevant is this project to 3R research? Is the proposed research innovative? Does it make an original contribution to its field?

2) Quality of the proposed research:

Are the research questions formulated clearly? Are they timely, challenging, and likely to lead to relevant insights?

3) Approach and feasibility:

Is the 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?

- How would you assess the plausibility of the proposed research?
- How likely is it that other laboratories and research institutions around the world can use the alternatives developed as part of this research?
- Do you expect that the use of the alternatives developed here will create an added value compared to the approaches currently in use in this field? Please give reasons.

4) Qualifications of the researchers involved

How well are the researchers qualified to carry out the proposed research? How would you assess the academic qualifications of the applicant, their team, and collaboration partners? In evaluating their qualifications, please consider their career stage, taking into account unorthodox career paths and circumstances that may have slowed down their progress (e.g., parental leave, long-term or chronic illness, disability, caregiving responsibilities).

5) Ethical, sex-specific, and gender-related aspects:

- a) Ethics: Have ethical considerations been addressed satisfactorily?

- b) Applicants are required to address any relevant sex-specific and/or gender-related elements inherent in their research questions and/or research design. Please assess whether their treatment of these components is adequate.

6) 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(s)

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 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 wish to be conveyed to the applicant(s). Feel free to also give us feedback about the evaluation process and your interactions with us.