

In accordance with its Funding Guidelines (as amended), the FWF has issued the following Application Guidelines for

Top Citizen Science

Vienna, February 25, 2025

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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 aim of the Top Citizen Science program (hereinafter also referred to as TCS) is to promote citizen participation in research projects. Citizens should have the opportunity to contribute their skills, expertise, and curiosity, without impacting the high quality of the research work. Involving citizen scientists has the potential to generate new research questions, open up new approaches to the field, expand researchers' range of skills, and accelerate innovation processes. Opening up the research to involve citizens does not have to generate added value in all of the categories listed as examples, but each project must be expected to generate substantial additional findings. The program is also intended to help bring research processes and researchers' work closer to the general public and break down existing barriers between science and society.

Projects are headed by an individual researcher (hereinafter referred to as the applicant or principal investigator).

1.2 What types of projects can be funded?

Funding is available for the expansion of existing FWF-funded basis projects through the addition of citizen science components; basis projects must be suitable in content and methodology. TCS projects have a maximum duration of two years.

Citizen science¹ encompasses all activities of individuals who contribute to the generation of scientific knowledge in a non-professional capacity; it is understood here as the active involvement of citizens and their skills, expertise, commitment, and resources in scientific research and the acquisition of scientific knowledge. The objective is to address citizens of different ages, genders, and social backgrounds as well as people with highly specialized knowledge and expertise, so-called knowledge communities; young target groups are expressly included.

Citizens can be involved in the following categories, depending on the extent of their expertise and/or their commitment and/or the resources they contribute:

- Crowdsourcing: Involvement of citizens in data collection and/or processing
- Distributed intelligence: Involving citizens in data analysis and interpretation

¹ See also: [White Paper - Citizen Science Strategy 2030 for Germany](#).

- Participatory science: Involving citizens in the further development of methods, tools, and/or products
- Collaborative science: Involvement of citizens in problem definitions, development of research questions, and/or quality criteria

Citizens can be involved in various phases of the planning and implementation of a research project. Involvement does not have to be realized in all of phases throughout the course of a project as listed below, and the type of involvement can also change throughout the course of the project.

- *Agenda* (topic definition/finding)
- Data creation (data generation/collection)
- Investigation (research work)
- Dissemination (science communication)

Please note: Involving citizens without tapping their expertise, i.e. solely as research subjects or data sources (e.g. as test subjects, survey participants, etc.), is not a component of citizen science in this sense and not eligible for funding under the provisions of this program.

1.3 Submission

The deadline for submission (i.e. approval of the application for submission by the research institution) is **April 8, 2025 (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).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 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** at which FWF projects are already being funded are eligible to apply,³ because an approved FWF project⁴ is required to serve as a basis project for a TCS extension project. The TCS extension 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.

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

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

⁴ Projects funded under the programs Clusters of Excellence, Erwin Schrödinger, Book Publications, Digital Publications, Academic Journals, Top Citizen Science, or Science Communication are not eligible as basis projects.

The research institution appoints a principal investigator (PI) to carry out the project. This person must either be leading or have led an FWF-funded project or have an FWF-funded position as a project staff member in the existing basis project. The principal investigator must also have the appropriate qualifications and sufficient time resources to carry out the proposed research. The research institution must provide the necessary infrastructure.

If the applicant is a staff member of the existing basis project, a declaration of support from the principal investigator of the basis project must be provided. This declaration should state that the application is the only TCS application for the FWF basis project.

If the TCS extension project is based on international research projects that are being or have been carried out in different countries (e.g. projects within the framework of a D-A-CH agreement), only the principal investigator in Austria is eligible to apply.

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.

Only one TCS extension project may be applied for per existing FWF basis project. Likewise, only one TCS application may be submitted per person. In the case of collaborative programs, either the coordinator or another consortium member may apply. In Special Research Areas, all consortium members can submit a proposal for a TCS extension project. This means that if the basis project is part of a Special Research Area, there can be more than one TCS extension project.

TCS extension projects do not count towards the number of possible applications or projects that a principal investigator can lead pursuant to the [Application and project number limit](#).

1.4 What are the requirements for applicants?

The prerequisite is an existing, approved FWF project (basis project) that has not yet been completed at the time a decision is made on the extension project being applied for (project ending date on or after January 31, 2026).

This existing FWF basis project ensures the scientific quality of the research on which the proposed project is based. Quality assessment of the submitted TCS extension projects with regard to the expected additional scientific gain and other effects such as social impacts, etc. is carried out as part of a review process conducted by the FWF.

1.5 What types of funding can be requested?

The maximum amount of funding that can be requested is €100,000 per application (including the 5% general project costs).

Project-specific costs 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 lead 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).⁵ Associated research institutions report directly to the FWF to account for funds used at their institution.

The financing of non-cash and cash prizes is generally permissible if it is deemed necessary for the Citizen Science activities or the project itself. It is up to the reviewers to assess whether or not this is necessary (see [section 3](#)). In the event of approval, the FWF advises applicants to seek external legal advice on the organization of the competition (in particular with regard to tax treatment). The principal investigator must include documentation of the specific use of the prizes (names of the prize winners and description of prizes) with the statement of costs.

For information on applying for personnel costs for the principal investigator'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 is used to inform potential

⁵ 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.

reviewers about the project. The abstract must use the English headings provided below and be entered into the online form provided for this purpose.

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

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

2.1.2 Brief information on the existing FWF basis project (max. 2 pages)

Page 1: Weblink to the existing FWF basis project, project ID number, project content, objectives, duration, collaboration partners, and funding amount

Page 2: Status quo of the research work

2.1.3 Project description

Project descriptions are limited to 10 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 1–3 and if applicable 4 on additional pages:

- Annex 1: List of literature cited in the application (*References*) max. 5 pages
- Annex 2: Information on the lead research institution and any associated research institutions and a plausible justification of the funding requested
- Annex 3: CVs and descriptions of previous research achievements
- Annex 4 (optional): Collaboration letters from national and international cooperation partners (max. 1 page per letter)

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

2.1.4 Additional documents

- Required:
 - Publication lists for internal FWF to check for conflicts of interest with potential reviewers (see [section 2.2.4](#))
- Where applicable:
 - If the applicant is a staff member of the existing basis project, a declaration of support from the principal investigator of the basis project
 - Results or final project report: If the project submitted is the continuation of an FWF-funded TCS extension 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 in the language of the application (max. 6 pages).
 - Additional documents 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 (*Overview_revision*) must be uploaded.
 - Cover letter accompanying the application (optional)
 - List of max. 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.

2.1.5 Forms to be completed

- Required: *Research institution assignment* form, *Contact* form, *Application* 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 format

2.2.1 Language of application

To allow applications to be reviewed by international experts, applications must be submitted in English. If desired, a version in German or another specialist language may be added as a supplement. Submission solely in German or another specialist language other than English

is only permitted in exceptional cases. Such exceptions apply exclusively to applications from the fields of linguistic and literary studies involving only texts in German or languages other than English. In all such cases, it is absolutely necessary to consult the project officers in the respective FWF [specialist department](#) prior to application. An academic abstract for the project as well as a brief yet convincing statement explaining why submission in a language other than English is justified for substantive academic reasons will be required. The final decision shall be made by the relevant decision-making bodies of the FWF.

2.2.2 Project description: Scope and formatting requirements

The project description may not exceed 10 pages. It must contain a table of contents with page numbers. Optional components such as a list of abbreviations or figures, captions, tables, footnotes, etc. are to be included in the 10-page limit.

The continuous text in the project description, Annexes 1–3, the publication lists, and the additional documents specified in [section 2.1.4](#) 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 files, 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](#) (DOI = Digital Object Identifier) or another [persistent identifier](#) should be used for the literature cited.

2.2.3 Project description and annexes

The project description may not exceed 10 pages and must include a table of contents as well as the following sections, each designated by headings:

- 1) Table of contents
- 2) Citizen science aspects
- 3) Interactions with citizens, planned handling of data
- 4) Research team and cooperations⁶
- 5) Expected far-reaching effects
- 6) Additional aspects:

⁶ Please specify the intended cooperation partners and the subject of the intended cooperation(s) or the planned contribution to the project. All national and/or international cooperation arrangements named in the project description must be listed on the Other cooperation form (one form must be completed for each cooperation partner). Cooperation partners named in the project description and who contribute significantly to the research project may be confirmed by a collaboration letter.

- a) Ethical, safety-related, or regulatory aspects⁷: All potential ethical, safety-related, or regulatory aspects of the proposal and how applicants plan to deal with them must be described in this section. These questions should be addressed briefly in the text even if the applicant believes the project does not raise any such issues.
- b) Sex-specific and gender-related aspects⁸: Any potential sex-specific and gender-related aspects 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.

Specific questions relating to points 2) to 5) apply; these should be addressed in the project description. These questions for reviewers are listed in [Appendix B](#).

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
 - Existing project participants (not financed by FWF project funds) (usually the principal investigator and academic project staff at the research institutions)
 - 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 2.3.2](#)).

⁷ For instance, the European Commission's [Ethics for Researchers](#) or [The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity](#) can serve as a guide here.

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](#)).

Annex 3: CVs and description of previous research achievements

The academic CVs and research achievements (for the principal investigator as well as a maximum of 3 other key project participants) should be described on no more than three pages per person. Please note that according to the [Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment](#), metrics such as journal impact factors, Article Influence Scores, h-index and the like may not be listed on academic CVs.

Academic CVs must be structured as follows:

- *Personal details:* Personal details (name, researcher unique identifier(s) such as ORCID, research ID, etc., no photos), address of research institution, and relevant websites. In addition, a publicly accessible link to the list of all published publications is required.
- *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): Indication of interruptions or delays in academic career
- *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.
- *Additional research achievements:* List of no more than ten of the most important research achievements apart from academic publications. Please note that research achievements should be presented individually (e.g., one project = one research achievement, two projects = two separate research achievements, etc.). Examples of such research achievements include 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 each research achievement must be provided.

Annex 4 (optional): Collaboration letters

Collaboration letters (each no more than 1 page) from national and international collaboration 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 file is required:

- *Publications_lists.pdf*: A list of all research publications over the last five years⁹ (categorized into “quality-assured publications” and “other publications”) of all participants for whom a CV has been submitted, as well as for all project staff members for whom personnel costs are requested, in *one* PDF file; 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 What project-specific costs can be funded?

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

If the 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, where applicable, to associated research institutions.

VAT is an eligible expense only if the funding recipient is not entitled to deduct it and it is demonstrably and finally borne by the funding recipient. 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 personnel who are 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. When calculating personnel costs, applicants must include a

⁹ Publication lists must include: all authors, complete titles of the publication, 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.

fixed percentual increase determined by the FWF to compensate for wage raises in subsequent years.

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 principal investigators

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 permanent or long-term employment at the time of application. Principal investigators can apply for a senior postdoc salary rate¹⁰ to fund their own position (pro-rated accordingly in the case of partial funding).

Female principal investigators 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 their career development. Coaching is understood to mean individual 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, e.g., 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 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.) is considered part of the standard infrastructure and no funding will be approved for these items.

Equipment eligible for funding includes:

¹⁰ 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.

- 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 completing the online 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 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.

If a specific piece of equipment required for the proposed project is already available at the research institution but is in need of repair, funding for repairs can be requested instead of purchasing costs. Again, the equipment must not be part of the research institution's infrastructure and may not be otherwise in general use at the research institution.

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. 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.

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 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.

2.3.6 Other funding available

- 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](#)

The procurement guidelines of the research institution and the provisions of the [Federal Procurement Act 2018](#) (Bundesvergabegesetz) 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 (see [section 3.3](#)). 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 the proposed research can be found on the FWF website under the [Communication portfolio](#).

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 reason 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 (*Overview_revision*) made in the resubmitted application must be submitted to the FWF. 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 2](#), 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 Required components of an application

a) Files:

- *Proposal.pdf* (project description incl. Annexes 1–3 and where applicable 4, with PDF bookmarks, at least for the major sections)
- *Summary_main.pdf*
- *Publications_lists.pdf* (publication list of all the key project participants for the last five years, categorized into “quality assured publications” and “other publications”)

b) Forms:

- *Research institution*
- *Contact form*
- *Application form*
- *Cost breakdown*
- *Academic abstract* in English
- *Co-authors*
- *Associated research partners* (if applicable)
- *Other collaboration* (if applicable; for national and international collaboration partners)

2.5.2 File uploads, if applicable

- *Cover_letter.pdf* (= accompanying letter; optional)
- *Letter_of_support.pdf* (= PI's declaration of support; 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-making

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 principal investigator can make no further changes to the application themselves. All applications are checked for completeness and any formal errors by the FWF Office. The FWF's decision-making bodies reserve the right to return applications without review if they do not meet the FWF's formal requirements. The most common reason why applications are returned without review is a lack of or insufficiently integrated citizen science approach (see [section 2.2.3](#)) and that resubmissions have not been sufficiently revised (see [section 2.4](#)).

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 working days). The requested changes are to be submitted to [elane](#) as a supplementary application and approved for submission by the lead research institution if necessary. If the **requested changes** are not submitted before the deadline, the decision-making bodies at the FWF will return the application without review.

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 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 applicant must briefly explain why these reviewers should be excluded. If the reasons for exclusion are professionally and academically sound, the FWF will generally fulfil such requests and will exclude these 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

The number of reviews required for funding approval does not depend on the amount of funding requested. Up to the maximum application amount of €100,000, 2 reviews are required.

3.4 Decision-making process

For detailed information on the decision-making process, the criteria for selecting international reviewers, detailed rules concerning conflicts of interest, and the composition of juries and review panels, please see the [General Principles of the Decision-Making Procedure](#).

The **review process** generally takes about 6 months. More detailed information is available online on the [FWF Dashboard](#).

The review process is completed, the FWF Board considers the reviews and decides whether the proposal should be funded. The lead research institute and the principal investigator are informed in writing of the FWF's decision.

3.5 Reasons 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](#).

3.6 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 second review. However, please note that generally all resubmissions are 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 of the official notification of the decision) and cannot be resubmitted during that period.

Applications that have been submitted to the same funding program three times and rejected for reasons C3 or C4 (i.e. the original application and corresponding resubmissions) are also blocked for 12 months (from the date of the official notification of the decision); rejections for reasons C1 or C2 are not included in this total. In principle, only topics are blocked and not applicants or research institutions.

4 Compliance with legal requirements and standards of research integrity

4.1 Legal regulations

Please note that the research institution(s) and all individuals involved in the project are obligated to comply with all legal requirements, safety provisions, and any embargo regulations and sanctions (e.g., Federal Disability Equality Act, Federal Equal Treatment Act, Dual-Use Regulation [EU] 2021/821) that apply for the Principal Investigator Project and 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, 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

Please note that if a grant is awarded, a PR summary in German and English will be published on the FWF website, as well as the grant amount and later, PR summaries of the project's findings in German and English. Summaries must be submitted to the FWF when the grant agreement is returned. 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. Information on writing PR texts 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 contributions, 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** using the following structure 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.

(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 Top Citizen Science projects¹¹

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 proposal¹² based on the following six assessment criteria: 1) Citizen science aspects, 2) interactions with citizens and handling of data, 3) researchers' qualifications, 4) expected wider impacts, 5) ethical and gender-related aspects, and 6) final assessment. 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.

¹¹ Further information is available on our website: [FWF's mission statement and values](#) and the [Application Guidelines](#) for a TCS expansion project

¹² The project proposal must meet the FWF's formal requirements. Please bear these in mind when writing your review. (Key formal requirements: 10 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 details, please see the [Application Guidelines](#) for Top Citizen Science)

Section 1:

- 1) Quality aspects - Top Citizen Science project
 - a) How would you assess the proposal's relevance in relation to the current international state of research and to citizen science activities?
 - b) Are the objectives of the TCS extension project and the rationale for choosing the citizen science approach clearly presented?
 - c) To what extent does the proposal represent a meaningful extension/addition to the existing basis project?
 - d) What additional substantial research findings that would not be possible without citizen participation will be generated by the extension project?
 - e) Are the methods, work plans, and schedules clearly defined and appropriate?
- 2) Quality aspects - interactions with citizens and handling of data
 - a) Is the target group and the size of the target group clearly defined and sufficient?
 - b) How do you rate the communication concept for the planned target group and the planned methods of involvement?
 - c) How do you rate the added value and personal benefits that citizens can derive from this project?
 - d) Is the quality of the data adequately ensured?
 - e) How would you rate the applicant's planned handling of data protection aspects?
- 3) Quality aspects - Research team
 - a) How do you assess the composition and qualifications of the research team, particularly with regard to experience and plans in connection with Citizen Science?
 - b) How would you rate the quality of existing and planned cooperations?
- 4) Expected far-reaching effects
 - a) How do you rate the dissemination strategies described?
 - b) What potential effects could the planned TCS expansion project have on other research fields and/or social areas (social impact, positive effects on the public perception of science, etc.)?
- 5) Additional aspects:
 - a) Ethical, safety-related, or regulatory aspects: Have these considerations been addressed satisfactorily?
 - b) *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 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

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