

Funding Guidelines

of the Austrian Science Fund (FWF)

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Discovering
what
matters.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the funding guidelines

As part of the tasks assigned to the Austrian Science Fund according to Article 2 para. 1 of the federal act on the funding of research and technology development (Research and Technology Funding Act—FTFG), the federal government's RTI Strategy 2030, and the RTI Pact governed by the research funding act, the Austrian Science Fund issues the following funding guidelines, which govern the content listed in Article 2b para. 2 FTFG, for the implementation of funding programs or measures in accordance with para. 1 sentence 1 and 5 FTFG, using funds resulting from a funding agreement according to Article 2a sentence 1 FTFG. These guidelines include, in particular, provisions

- on the procedure for defining funding programs (see [Section 2](#))
- on establishing the minimum contents of funding programs (see [Sections 3–6](#) and [Sections 8–13](#)),
- on measures to prevent multiple funding (see [Section 7](#)), and
- on the definition of objectives and indicators, and the carrying out of evaluations (see [Section 14](#)).

1.2 Scope of application

These funding guidelines are general guidelines that apply in principle to all of the FWF's funding programs.

Specific features of the individual funding programs are defined in the application guidelines of the respective programs. These include form requirements, required qualifications of the principal investigator, evaluation criteria and procedures, limits on the number of ongoing funded projects, cost categories and rules on the acquisition of equipment, reporting requirements, and exceptions to the ban on multiple funding / financing.

2 Procedure for the definition of funding programs

In accordance with the requirements of Article 5 para. 4 and para. 6 of the federal act on the funding of research, technology, and innovation (Research Funding Act—FoFinaG), the Austrian Science Fund (FWF) defines the funding programs in the form of a program portfolio consisting of three-year programs.

3 Purpose of the funding

The purpose of the funding is to fund research projects

- which aim to generate new scholarly insights or promote the advancement and appreciation of the arts at a high level,
- whose hypotheses and research questions as well as the methods necessary to pursue them are described in detail,
- which are limited in duration,
- which do not aim to make a profit,
- which conduct independent research in accordance with the Framework for State Aid for Research, Development, and Innovation (2014/C 198/01).

4 General funding requirements

4.1 Eligibility to apply (application requirements)

Depending on the funding program, natural persons or legal entities are eligible to apply.

The project must be headed by persons who are working at the time of implementation in scientific/scholarly research, art, or art-related research in Austria or under the auspices of an Austrian research institution, and who can demonstrate that they possess the necessary qualifications for the specific program. Exceptions to this general rule apply for programs in which the grant recipient is expected to complete a stay abroad. The application guidelines of specific programs may define additional requirements regarding a connection to Austria for researchers whose own salary is funded through project funds.

The research project must be able to demonstrate that it can be executed in accordance with the rules on state aid. The infrastructure necessary to carry out the research project must be available.

The application guidelines of specific programs may define appropriate qualification requirements based on the aims of the respective funding program.

4.2 Limit on the number of funded projects

As a rule, researchers may serve as the principal investigator in no more than three FWF-funded research projects at the same time. The application guidelines of specific programs

may define other limits in the case of research projects with different needs in terms of mentoring or workload, or as part of career advancement measures.

4.3 Language of application

The language of application is English. The application guidelines of specific programs may make exceptions for certain disciplines if the research project intends to only work with texts in German or another language other than English.

5 Grant type

Funding is provided in the form of non-repayable¹ grants.

6 Eligible costs

6.1 General information

Only project-specific costs may be requested, i.e., personnel and non-personnel costs that are essential to carry out the research project and that go beyond the resources made available from the research institution's infrastructure. The FWF does not generally finance the infrastructure or basic equipment of research institutions.

6.2 Level of funding

The level of funding is based on an appropriate project size to achieve the objectives of the respective funding program. The application guidelines of specific programs may set upper limits on the amount of funding that can be requested.

The project-specific costs should be calculated in a reasonable manner. Inadequate calculations of project costs may represent a reason for rejection, even if the application is considered excellent in terms of content.

¹ Reasons for the recovery of grant funds are specified in Section 12.

6.3 Personnel costs

6.3.1 Project members

The FWF's standard personnel costs and salaries should be used to calculate the personnel costs of project members.

6.3.2 Principal investigator

Under certain circumstances, the salary of the principal investigator can be financed with the funds of the project. The requirements that must be fulfilled to qualify for this option—which can be found in the application guidelines of the specific program—depend on the nature of the respective funding program and the length of time which the principal investigator requesting the salary has had their main place of residence in Austria or was / has been working as a researcher in Austria. In addition, these requirements also take the researcher's income (whether from employed or self-employed work) into consideration.

6.4 Project-specific equipment

Funding is available for the acquisition of equipment required specifically for the research project.

In this context, equipment refers to apparatus and instruments, system components, project-specific software, and other durable goods where the acquisition cost per item exceeds the amount of EUR 1,500.00 (incl. VAT, unless the research institution is entitled to deduct VAT) and where the said equipment is financed primarily (more than 50% of the total costs of the specific item) from FWF funds.

The equipment is to be ordered and paid for by the research institution upon the instruction of the principal investigator of the respective FWF project. Each piece of equipment is to be recorded in the inventory, and the acquisition costs are to be reimbursed in accordance with the relevant agreement between the research institution and the FWF.

Depending on the program, the FWF can exclude the funding of equipment if the respective program focuses on the promotion of young researchers or publications.

7 Measures to prevent multiple funding

An FWF grant may not be requested for costs that are already borne by other funding bodies. Applications that are essentially identical may not be submitted more than once, either in the same or a different FWF funding program. Depending on the program, the

respective application guidelines may make exceptions if this could advance the career of the applicants.

Applicants agree when submitting an application and during the implementation of a research project that they shall inform the FWF immediately if they request support for this project from other organizations, or if additional support is granted. The FWF shall check whether this constitutes multiple funding and decide on its further course of action. Depending on how much the projects overlap, the FWF may stop processing the funding application, reduce the amount granted, or request the refund of previously disbursed funds.

In addition, comparisons with other national funding organizations (e.g., ÖNB, WWTF) will be conducted on a regular basis to prevent multiple funding.

8 Form of application

As a rule, applications are to be submitted online according to the current application guidelines of the respective FWF program. The application guidelines of specific programs may make an exception if online submission is not possible due to a lack of technical means.

9 Assessment of research proposals

The assessment of research proposals is conducted exclusively using internationally recognized quality criteria based on the project's potential to generate new insights in the arts and sciences.

Any aspects of a research project that go beyond the realm of scholarly research (e.g., economic, social, or ecological) should be mentioned, but they will not play a part in the assessment of whether the project should be funded.

The application guidelines of specific programs may use additional criteria, especially if the specific focus of the program demands them.

10 Procedure for the awarding of funding

10.1 Formal check

The FWF Office undertakes a formal check of submitted applications. This check is usually conducted by academically qualified staff together with the support of the reporters of the FWF. Applications will not be sent out for review if they

- 1) are outside the FWF's scope of action and/or

- 2) are incomplete (e.g., missing or unclear hypotheses or research questions) and/or
- 3) do not meet the formal requirements of the FWF (e.g., exceed the scope of the application, do not comply with the formatting rules).

Applicants can generally rectify any errors or problems identified by the FWF within a reasonable period of time. Reasonable periods of time for the correction of errors within each program are defined in the application guidelines of the respective program. The possibility to rectify errors may not exist in programs with deadlines.

If the errors and problems are not rectified, the FWF will return the applications without review, i.e., they will not be processed further.

Applications that are rejected or returned without review cannot be resubmitted without revision. The appropriate extent of revision depends on the reasons for rejection or return without review.

10.2 Review process

Applications that meet the formal criteria will be sent for review to the reviewers suggested by the reporters of the FWF Board and confirmed by the decision-making bodies of the FWF. This is the beginning of the review process.

The selected reviewers are generally persons working outside Austria. The decision-making bodies of the FWF may make exceptions depending on the nature of the proposed project.

The minimum number of reviews required to reach a positive funding decision is determined by the decision-making bodies of the FWF and generally depends on the requested amount of funding. This number is defined in the application guidelines of the respective program.

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

The application guidelines of the specific programs may define additional or different steps in the review process or forms of review if they serve to ensure the quality of the FWF's funding decisions.

10.3 Funding decisions

Once the review process has been completed, the FWF Board decides whether to fund the projects on the basis of the reviews. Applicants are notified in writing of the FWF Board's decision. If the project has been approved for funding, a grant agreement will be concluded between the applicants and the FWF.

11 Monitoring and disbursement

The FWF generally reviews the use and accounting of grant funds once a year. A final report summarizing the research and a final statement of accounts must be presented on completion of the project.

Depending on the purpose of funding, the objectives of the program, and the grant amount, additional or appropriately adapted reviews may be required in the grant agreements.

Unused funds must be returned to the FWF.

If documents are not submitted for review, the FWF may, following a reminder with a reasonable deadline, stop all payments for the research project of the grant recipient and suspend the processing of any new research proposals to the FWF.

Depending on the funding program, grant funds are disbursed either in the form of contractually agreed regular instalments or on the basis of request by the grant recipient.

12 Suspension and recovery of grant funds

The grant recipient agrees to return any grant funds received and to pay interest in the amount of three percent above the base rate from the day of disbursement if

- 1) the FWF has been misled about any important circumstances or has not been informed completely, or
- 2) the research project has not been carried out or carried out in time due to the fault of the grant recipient, or
- 3) the grant money has been used improperly, or requirements or conditions necessary for the success of the project have not been met due to the fault of the grant recipient, or required reports have not been submitted, or proof has not been produced, or
- 4) there is a serious violation of the [Guidelines for Good Scientific Practice](#) of the Austrian Agency for Research Integrity ([ÖAWI](#)).

Funding shall be suspended if the conditions stated in the grant agreement cease to exist through no fault of the grant recipient.

13 General funding requirements

13.1 Publication of data

All project-specific data are processed by the FWF using information technology in conformity with the applicable data protection regulations and are in part published in the FWF's annual report; in addition, data are passed on in anonymous form for statistical analyses and for research policy purposes unless secrecy must be maintained for reasons of national defense or patent law, or publication is inappropriate in terms of protecting trade secrets. The English and German abstracts, the amount of funding approved, and subsequently the German and English abstracts of the final project report are published on the FWF's website.

In addition, all other data and studies of the FWF or studies commissioned by the FWF are published open access (see [Zenodo](#)), provided this is permitted by data protection laws.

13.2 Open Access Policy

As a signatory to the [Berlin Declaration on Open Access to Knowledge in the Sciences and Humanities](#), the FWF is committed to supporting and promoting sustained open access to scholarly publications and research data. To this end, the FWF requires all grant recipients and project members to make any publications which arise from FWF-funded projects freely available through open access media on the Internet and supports project members accordingly.

The FWF's [Open Access Policy](#) may define useful types of open access media based on the respective quality control procedure (peer review).

13.3 Research integrity

The [Guidelines for Good Scientific Practice](#) of the Austrian Agency for Research Integrity (ÖAWI) are to be observed.

Where a breach of these standards is suspected, the case will be investigated by either the FWF according to its [procedure](#) or by the ombudsperson of the responsible research institution. Depending on the circumstances, the FWF or the ombudsperson of the research institution may ask the ÖAWI to investigate the matter. The FWF reserves the right to suspend any procedures related to applications or ongoing projects, either partly or entirely, until such investigations have been concluded.

13.4 Research ethics

Applicants and grant recipients must comply with all legal requirements and safety provisions (e.g., the Federal Disabilities Act) that apply to their research project and obtain all the necessary permits (e.g., from the Ethics Commission, the Commission for Animal Experimentation, the Federal Monuments Authority Austria, or the relevant foreign authorities). These aspects are also part of the international peer review.

14 Objectives, indicators and program evaluations

14.1 Objectives of the funding programs

The FWF's programs aim to support research projects which are intended to generate new scholarly insights or promote the advancement and appreciation of the arts at a high level and are non-profit.

Grants on the basis of these guidelines are generally awarded under programs whose objectives are defined in the application guidelines of the respective program.

14.2 Indicators

Based on the respective objectives of the program, indicators are defined for each program that are used as the basis for the monitoring and evaluation of funding programs.

14.3 Program evaluation

Evaluations of funding programs are normally awarded to independent and well-known experts in the field by means of a transparent selection procedure and defined criteria. The [FWF Rules on Quality and Transparency of Evaluations, Studies and Research Policy-related Services](#) as well as the [Evaluation Standards in Research and Technology Policy of the Austrian Platform for Research and Technology Policy Evaluation \(fteval\)](#) must be observed. Evaluations are scheduled at appropriate intervals after the beginning and during the course of programs and are published open access.

Program evaluations are the primary impact assessments. In addition, overarching and extensive impact assessments are carried out by international institutions at appropriate intervals.

15 Effective date

Based on the resolution passed by the FWF Executive Board on 13 December 2021, these guidelines come into effect on 1 January 2022.