



Wiener Wissenschafts-, Forschungs- und Technologiefonds

Funding Guidelines

WWTF

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Preface

The Vienna Science and Technology Fund (Wiener Wissenschafts-, Forschungs- und Technologiefonds, WWTF) operates as a private not-for-profit institution dedicated to promoting research through funding, in accordance with its statutes and these Funding Guidelines, high-quality scientific projects within the sphere of interest of the State of Vienna. The Fund is generally open to all fields of science. Through defined thematic programmes it develops calls and comparable instruments for research organisations and researchers to invite them to submit applications for funding pursuant to the Guidelines set out below. These Guidelines are the binding framework of the WWTF and are designed to ensure visibility, traceability, quality and structure of the Fund's work. Applicants need to consider the "Guidelines for writing a proposal" which vary between thematic programmes and which are developed on the basis of these Guidelines.

Within the scope of options available to it, the WWTF operates as a fund to promote science, employing specific instruments for further effect. It views itself as a "niche operator" that strengthens and utilises the scientific potential in and for Vienna through selectively funding major projects. In choosing thematic programmes and in selecting specific project applications, consideration is given to the extent to which such projects help reinforce strengths of and/or significantly contribute to the sphere of interest of the State of Vienna and its regional environment.

The Fund has two key instruments: "major projects that offer the prospect of utilisation" and "endowed chairs". They are offered by way of thematic programmes. Furthermore, these Guidelines also provide for accepting applications for and funding, to a limited extent, smaller-scale projects which may or may not be covered by the thematic programmes. Through its focus with regard to content and instruments, key benchmarks of the Fund's activities are to be promoted: chief among them dimensionality, visibility, medium-term orientation and, foremost, strengthening the *fortes* of Vienna.

On the procedural side, the Fund has set up rules to govern applications and the decision-making process. They are developed to ensure that the Fund will keep up with the standards of comparable funding facilities in Austria and abroad and will make its decisions on the basis of transparent proceedings.

The Guidelines are broken down into two modules: The "general provisions" define the objectives, eligible applicants, prerequisites for funding, criteria for funding, cost accounting, type and amount of funding and, finally, the duties incumbent upon successful applicants. The "procedures" specify details of application, review, decision-making, contracting, payment, reporting and evaluation. A number of formal issues, such as rules governing the suspension and repayment, round off the Guidelines. The instruments as set out above may require different criteria, volumes and procedural principles. For completeness and assignability, these differences are listed for each section. For external relations, "Guidelines for writing a proposal" are specified for each instrument (including application forms) directed at the specific target group. Unless otherwise provided below, the WWTF office undertakes the responsibilities assigned to the funding agency within the scope of its competences.

These Guidelines were adopted by the WWTF Board of Directors on 6 December 2002, upon recommendation of the Advisory Board of 15 November 2002.

GENERAL PROVISIONS

1. Funding objectives

Overall objective

Strengthening existing research competence within the sphere of interest encompassed by the State of Vienna, by linking its focus on basic research with a medium-term application perspective.

Operative targets

1. Contributing to the creation and extension of critical dimensions in the research location Vienna.
2. Strengthening the networking of research facilities and groups in Vienna, especially within the frame of international partnerships.
3. Helping to realise medium-term potentials for utilisation and exploitation within the sphere of interest of the State of Vienna.
4. Enhancing the anchor function undertaken by the research institutions for research-intensive enterprises in location Vienna.

2. Applicants

Eligible applicants are research institutions and researchers. Where individuals are concerned, they need to have an institutional background suitable for the envisaged project dimensions as a prerequisite for funding.

Research institutions are university and non-university research facilities.

- Applicants from academia are governed by the relevant statutory or assigned competences¹.
- For these Guidelines, non-university research institutions are deemed to be other public or private facilities concentrating on the development of knowledge within the scope of a long-term, independent, organised and usually not-for-profit activity. This covers in particular facilities such as public institutions in the field of basic research and contract research institutions.
- As to **endowed chairs**, the same broad concept of applicants applies. However, if this involves the direct appointment of university professors, only a university domiciled in Vienna is eligible to submit applications.

Where the applicant and the resulting executory research facility is not domiciled in Vienna, reference to the “sphere of interest of the State of Vienna” needs to be supported by special pertinent arguments.

Syndicates and cooperative ventures are generally accepted as applicants; in such case, the application must be submitted by the institution or individual undertaking the main part of the working programme.

Enterprises are eligible to submit applications only when they are participants/co-financers of a syndicate of applicants lead-managed by a scientific main applicant. Enterprises within the

¹ Regarding the 1993 University Organisation Act (UOG), this means partial legal personality enjoyed by individual organisational levels. As of the validity of the 2002 University Act (UG), the competences listed become relevant; university members submitting an application are governed by Section 26 of the 2002 UG.

meaning of these Guidelines are commercial or professional units pursuing an economic activity aimed at producing goods or rendering services and designed to be permanent, independent, organised and profit-making.

3. Funding tools and requirements

3.1 General requirements: aims of funding

In its capacity as a funding agency, the WWTF perceives its primary responsibility in financing major visible projects in the field of basic research, albeit with a perspective of medium-term utilisation and exploitation. Applications and fundings typically involve projects set to run for several years. **Endowed chairs** are a tool to establish new groups of researchers in future-proof fields in Vienna. The financing tool covering **major projects that offer the prospect of utilisation** aims to strengthen and extend existing groups of researchers and support them in finding applications and opportunities for exploitation. Both tools are offered within the scope of thematic programmes. In a subsidiary capacity, funding may also be applied for by way of supplementary tools within and external to thematic programmes.

3.2 Endowed chairs

Endowed chairs are aimed to entice excellent researchers to Vienna. A key element in the scheme is that it is directed not just at recruiting and establishing individuals, but that these will be embedded in an excellent working environment and provided with a working group. Key factors of selection are the scientific excellence of both the individual to be chosen and the facility for which such individual will work (research group / research field). While the latter is always reviewed in advance by the WWTF, there are two options with regard to the selection of individuals:

- Where the endowed chair involves the position of head of a research group, then the WWTF will choose the individual through external experts. Applications for funding may be filed by all bodies eligible under Section 2 of the Guidelines.
- Where the endowment of a chair involves the direct appointment of a university professor, the WWTF identifies abstract criteria to be met by such individual. A university that has successfully competed for funds for such a position itself carries out the selection process in accordance with such criteria. Ambitious paths chosen for such an appointment are awarded a positive evaluation.

Especially in the latter case, the WWTF requests that the appointing facility develop a strategy and detailed job profile, as well as extend substantial own efforts and support to integrate the selected individual. In addition, incentives are to be created to allow individuals endowed with a chair to extend their resources beyond the initial provision for staff and funding, e.g. by obtaining project funding. Applicants furthermore need to identify in their application the terms under which the selected individual will be financed after termination of the funding period.

The WWTF may provide funds for a **period** extending from a minimum of two years to a maximum of five years, normally for four years. The WWTF essentially pays for the salary, other staff and material costs and part of the initial procurements, and it may also assist the selected individual in his/her personal integration by taking suitable action.

The activities linked to this tool should be performed within the category of basic research.

3.3 Major projects that offer the prospect of utilisation

Major projects that are likely to offer an opportunity for utilisation should offer existing groups of researchers an option to deepen and widen their work through a research project running

for several years. Typically, the work of several individuals is to be financed for a period of several years, with applications accepted from networks as well as individuals.

Funding by WWTF may be obtained for a **period** of at least two years to at most four years.

The utilisation opportunity as envisaged should be interpreted widely and understood with a view to the publication of research results. It may encompass the pursuit of medium- to long-term economic utilisation, or it may be understood as a contribution to a social benefit. Work within such a project remains focused on basic research, and both applicant and application are judged by their scientific excellence. In selecting, accompanying and ultimately evaluating the projects, special criteria and procedures are applied which identify the benefits and facilitate them by suitable accompanying measures. Possible users and partners for utilisation may be included in the scheme, e.g., in the form of accompanying groups or financing partnerships.

The activities linked to this tool should be performed within the category of basic research.

3.4 Supplementary tools

The WWTF may award additional tools of a minor scope within or external to its thematic programmes. Such tools serve to support the main responsibilities of the WWTF and to facilitate well-founded individual initiatives. This does not involve a second pillar of funding for research projects but comprises specifically the following activities:

- activities to strengthen the position of Vienna within the European Research Area;
- activities to support research facilities in Vienna in their strategic and organisational competence.

4. Funding criteria

For the WWTF, excellence is at the centre of its funding schemes, mirrored in the excellence and visibility of researchers and projects, the professionalism of applications, the prospect of future utilisation and exploitation, and in the organisation and management performance achieved by applicants.

All applications need to be measured by the WWTF's criteria, some of them formal, others of a qualitative-evaluating nature. Some of the criteria apply to all tools, others to endowed chairs only or to major projects offering the prospect of utilisation. The WWTF will provide detailed guidelines/application forms for each tender and each instrumentl.

4.1 Criteria to be met by all applications

- **Formal: "Application"** – submission of an application for funding in the form of a filled-in application form; naming the applicant and tool category as set forth in Section 3 above. If the submission is made within the scope of a call, observance of time limits and formal criteria.
- **Formal: "Resources"** – naming a project structure, including schedules for work, time, human resources (development), financing and costs. Documentation of own resources provided by the applicant and its partners. **Qualitative-evaluating** assessment of the suitability and reasonability of such plans and items.
- **Qualitative-evaluating: "Visibility"** – suitability of the project submitted for the development of visible dimensions and achievement of medium-term benefits and utilisation potentials within the sphere of interest of the State of Vienna.

4.2 Special criteria: endowed chairs

- **Formal: "Development plan"** – anchoring the chair in the development plan of the institution. Apart from an assessment whether the application meets formal criteria, a

qualitative evaluation is made of the strategy for research, teaching, grooming of junior scientists and the general development of the research field.

- **Formal: “Future funding”** – information by the applicant on sources and terms for future funding of the selected holder of the chair after the WWTF’s funding has ceased.
- **Qualitative-evaluating: “international recruiting”** – the potential candidate has at least worked abroad most of the past five years.
- **Qualitative-evaluating: “excellence”** – candidates should be shown to be scientifically excellent in the field, and younger top scientists should be preferred.
 - Where a chair is coupled with an appointment to a university professorship, these qualities must be reflected in the applicant’s job description. The WWTF gives a particularly positive rating to recruiting concepts that include active search elements.
 - In all other cases, the individual’s excellence is a central criterion for the WWTF’s assessment.
- **Qualitative-evaluating: “an accepting environment”** – excellence of the discipline and group accepting the individual at the applicant institution. In a wider sense also presence of a suitable scientific environment and potential users.

4.3 Special criteria: major projects that offer the prospect of utilisation

- **Qualitative-evaluating: “applicants’ excellence”** – applicants’ track record, quality of organisation and project management, collaborative relations and networks. The WWTF awards evaluative points to applicants showing the existence of strong research groups in the relevant field,
- **Qualitative-evaluating: “quality and innovativeness”** – research activities submitted for funding should meet the highest international quality standards in their field and be covered by the thematic programmes run by the WWTF. Positive points are awarded to collaborative projects when applicants can show clear role definitions of partners, unequivocal lead management and an obvious benefit for Vienna.
- **Qualitative-evaluating: “prospect of benefits and utilisation”** – the project aims to achieve medium-term economic and/or social benefits; incorporates adequate management, accompanying and transitional measures; includes a concept of strategies for publication, protection and possible exploitation.

5. Eligible costs

5.1 Fundable costs

The following expenditures may receive funding provided that they accrue within the scope of accepted projects and are reasonable for the project and scientific field:

- human resources costs for staff employed for the project;
- third-party costs, especially for external inputs, consulting, studies and software. In general it is expected that funds dedicated to human resources are spent mostly on the regular standard employment of staff rather than on other kinds of (quasi-)employment;
- devices and lab equipment, to the extent they are directly required for the project;
- cost of material, consumables and other operating expenses;
- cost of events, travel, invitations, as well as specific organisational work within the scope of more complex projects or project partnerships;

- overheads, such as the cost of administration, energy or rental, up to 15% of fundable costs. The (partial) waiver of such cost can be credited to the applicant as part of its own input;
- **endowed chairs:** pre-tax salary of the selected individual plus employer's contributions; an allowance for moving and settling the individual is possible.

More detailed cost regulations are set out in the application forms and reporting structure to be published.

5.2 Non-fundable costs

No funding is given for the following costs:

- costs not directly associated with the application, and costs accrued prior to submitting the application;
- costs for the acquisition of land and buildings;
- costs for construction investments and basic equipment.

6. Type and amount of funding

6.1 Type of funding

The WWTF awards grants within the scope of its funding activities.

6.2 Amount of funding

The WWTF is intent on granting funding for larger-dimensioned and therefore visible projects. In terms of maximum funding for the entire duration of the funded project of a minimum size this means:

- **Endowed chairs:** apart from exceptional cases, the funding should not be less than a minimum overall size (total fundable costs) of € 1 million.
- **Major projects that offer the prospect of utilisation:** the minimum project size (total fundable costs) is € 200,000.
- **Supplementary tools:** Maximum funding is € 50,000.

6.3 Cofinancing

All projects submitted to and funded by the WWTF must include a tangible financing component furnished by the applicant. This component may be in the form of payments in kind or monetary benefits.

Endowed chairs and **major projects that offer the prospect of utilisation** must have some input by the applicant. Depending on the thematic programme, this input is set at 10–20% of the overall fundable costs. Where parts of a project involve applied research, evidence must be furnished that beneficiaries or utilisation partners contribute an appropriate part of the financing.

Supplementary tools require an input by the applicant amounting to at least 35% of the overall fundable costs.

Financial contributions by third parties, private and/or public bodies may count towards the applicant's own input and are desirable provided they do not substantially affect the WWTF's funding conditions. In the case of **endowed chairs** in particular, third-party contributions must be examined for their additional utility, expenditure and conditions.

7. Applicant's obligations

The successful applicant undertakes to comply with the following duties:

- ensure efficient, economical and diligent administration of the funds with the prudence of a merchant of standing;
- keep separate and comprehensive records as evidence of carrying out the funded project; provide for safekeeping of records and vouchers for the duration of the project and for seven years after its termination;
- set up a separate account for the funded project;
- draft and submit interim and final reports to the WWTF in accordance with the reporting structure specified by the WWTF;
- allow the WWTF and third parties authorised by the WWTF to audit and evaluate the project and furnish them with all pertinent information;
- duly report all events of relevance for the performance of the funded project;
- provide information for the WWTF's PR activities;
- name the WWTF in scientific and other publications arising from the funded project.

More detailed provisions governing the successful applicants' obligations are specified by the WWTF in the application forms, the funding contract and the auditing structure to be published.

PROCEDURE

8. Submission and evaluation

8.1 *Submission for thematic programmes*

The WWTF identifies time-limited thematic programmes within the scope of which applications for funding (to be submitted as the relevant application form) are accepted in calls. Applications not covered by such thematic programmes will be accepted only in the form of **supplementary tools**.

Major projects that offer the prospect of utilisation are identified within the scope of calls. Thematic programmes may include one or more calls. Applicants are given sufficient time to prepare their applications.

Applications for **endowed chairs** are accepted in a similar procedure. Lead and preparation times will be at least six months after a call has been issued ("internal opinion-making", especially when an endowed chair is coupled with an appointment for a university professor), and other suitable and flexible procedures are used to account for the complexity of the preparatory process. The result of such procedure, however, is that applications will compete with each other.

The WWTF will facilitate the preparatory processes by suitable tools such as workshops for applicants.

When responding to calls, applicants need to consider that their application is submitted in a language that allows adequate international evaluation.

8.2 *Evaluation of applications*

Upon receipt of an application, the WWTF files it, confirms its receipt and carries out a formal check of its timeliness and completeness. The check is based on the criteria listed in Section

4 of the Guidelines. Among the **formal criteria**, the lack of substantial components of an application or serious deficiencies may cause an application to be rejected even before submission to an external evaluation. After passing this check, the application's compliance with formal criteria is additionally evaluated in terms of contents by external experts. An external assessment is then made along the **qualitative-evaluating criteria**, with the application submitted to an even more stringent evaluation in terms of content and balancing of criteria than is the case regarding formal criteria.

Procedure followed for major projects that offer the prospect of utilisation and for endowed chairs

Following their evaluation for formal criteria, applications received within the scope of a call need to go through the following procedure:

1. The WWTF's Advisory Board sets up from among its members a working group for the relevant thematic programme which is charged with checking the quality of applications received from a call. The working group is assisted in its task by the office, and it appoints one of its members as its spokesperson.
2. All applications received within the scope of a call for projects or a process to set up an endowed chair are handled together.
3. The working group receives the applications and appoints experts, drawing on the assistance of third parties if necessary for the expert selection procedure.
4. Eligible experts are scientists and specialists working abroad in the field covered by the relevant call. Experts check whether applications comply with the criteria, and they can be appointed to assess one or more applications. Fees will be paid only in exceptional cases. If they wish, experts remain anonymous and are known only to the working group. In their applications, applicants are entitled to explicitly exclude up to three individuals from serving as experts, although applicants do not know the planned composition of the expert panel.
5. Each application is evaluated in writing by at least two experts in line with the Guideline's criteria. If necessary, the written expert opinion may be supplemented by a visit with the applicant and other tools.
6. In the event that expert opinions should arrive at seriously inconsistent findings, additional experts may be appointed as set out above.
7. The expert opinions are interpreted and summarised by the working group and then discussed by the Advisory Board. The latter draws up a recommendation to the Board of Directors, designating applications as being "eligible for funding", "under consideration for funding" or "not of merit", together with reasons for the evaluation and, where applicable, stating reductions, stipulations and terms.

If so agreed by the Board of Directors and Advisory Board, the procedure may be adapted on a case-to-case basis to reflect a greater jury orientation, provided such procedure meets all the above quality assurance criteria.

Procedure for supplementary tools

Applications for supplementary tools are given a check for formal criteria by the office and are then, upon consultation with the chairperson of the Advisory Board, handed over to suitable third parties and/or Advisory Board members for a short written opinion. Based on this, the office submits a recommendation to the Board of Directors.

Joint provisions

The WWTF will endeavour to synchronise calls and the meetings of the Advisory Board and Board of Directors so that the procedure will be accelerated as much as possible.

The Board of Directors, Advisory Board and office of the WWTF will take all reasonable steps to avoid bias on the part of their members or experts.

All applications and expert opinions are treated confidentially.

The WWTF office assists the selection procedure by properly preparing the requisite information and communicating with experts.

Applicants are informed of the criteria, procedure and deadlines within the frame of calls.

8.3 Decision-making; contract

All applications not rejected on formal grounds are submitted to the Board of Directors together with a summary and recommendations. Decision-making is reserved to the Board of Directors. Based on the expert opinions and recommendations, it specifies stipulations and conditions as well as the maximum grant awarded. All applicants are furnished with a letter by the WWTF informing them of the decision and its chief grounds.

The office sends successful applicants a contract, based on the decision and sample contract of the WWTF. The contract becomes effective upon being signed by the WWTF and the applicant.

In the case of **major projects that offer the prospect of utilisation**, an award will be forfeited if a contract is not entered and operative project work not commenced within six months of approval. In the case of **endowed chairs**, this time limit is 18 months after approval. Applicants may once submit an application to have the time limit extended, which will be decided by the Board of Directors.

9. Management and quality control

9.1 Payment and accompanying project monitoring

Grants are paid across the entire period of the project, within the scope of the approved financial schedule and based on reports. Where major projects are involved, payments and reports are typically foreseen in semi-annual intervals. Grant instalments are usually paid in advance, reflecting project progress as audited by the WWTF. If budgeted costs are not fully spent, the grant will be reduced *pro rata*. The final instalment is subject to approval of the final report and an audit of the final accounts. Depending on the audit, paid grant instalments may have to be paid back. Any interest earnings received from the short-term investment of funds must be used for the funded project.

The requisite reporting is specified by the WWTF in its structural requirements. It serves to monitor project progress, to audit costs and to collect data for evaluation.

9.2 Evaluation of projects

In addition to the *ex ante* evaluation described in Section 8 above, the WWTF carries out a further evaluation after completion of the project. For large-scale projects, the WWTF may perform an interim evaluation as well.

10. Suspension and reclaim of grants

The WWTF decides on the suspension and reclaim of grants on the basis of the grant contract and the terms and conditions set out in these Guidelines, by way of a written claim to the recipient. Causes for suspending and reclaiming grants include, without limitations:

- The WWTF or a third party authorised by the WWTF has been incorrectly or incompletely informed of significant facts, or the recipient has failed to perform a reporting duty.

- In spite of being reminded in writing, the recipient has failed to furnish requested reports or documents or to supply requested information.
- The recipient has obstructed or prevented foreseen monitoring measures or has failed to comply with its record-keeping duties.
- The recipient has failed to comply with stipulations or conditions to secure the project's success or has used part or all of the grant funds contrary to their dedication.
- The recipient has failed to commence or complete the project in time or has failed to obtain the WWTF's consent to a delay.
- Bankruptcy proceedings are instituted against the recipient's assets, or institution of such proceedings is refused due to lack of assets, or the recipient's operation is permanently terminated, before completion of the funded project or within three years of its completion.

Unless otherwise provided by the WWTF, repayments shall be subject to an interest rate of 2% above the applicable 12 month EURIBOR. More detailed provisions are set forth in the grant contract.

11. Data secrecy

Recipients' data collected in connection with the process of obtaining and managing the grant may be used by the WWTF within the scope of the 2000 Data Protection Act, Federal Law Gazette no. 165/1999 (as amended), and passed on to third parties authorised as certified auditors to the extent necessary to comply with the WWTF's essential responsibilities regarding assessing, contracting, managing, controlling and evaluating applications for grants.

12. Concluding provisions

These Guidelines do not entitle applicants to any grants on the merits or in terms of amount.

Any disputes arising from or in connection with any grants shall be settled by the competent court in Vienna, Austria.

These Guidelines shall become effective on 1 January 2003 and shall be valid for an unlimited period.