WWTF

WIENER WISSENSCHAFTS-,
FORSCHUNGS- UND TECHNOLOGIEFONDS

Guide for Writing a Short Proposal

Life Sciences Call 2020

JANUARY 2020

About WWTF

The Vienna Science and Technology Fund (WWTF) is the only larger Austrian private non-profit organization established to promote science and research. WWTF started its funding activities in 2003. According to its statutes, WWTF aims to fund excellent scientific research(ers) following the highest international standards in order to promote Vienna as a city of science and research.

WWTF provides substantial funding for larger multi-annual research projects at home institutions located in Vienna ("Project Funding"), as well as striving to attract excellent researchers from abroad to Vienna ("Vienna Research Groups for Young Investigators"). WWTF runs calls resulting in a strong competition for funding.

Currently, WWTF runs the following thematic programmes: "Life Sciences" (*2003), "Mathematics *and* ..." (*2004), "Information and Communication Technology" (*2008), "Cognitive Sciences" (*2011), and "Environmental Systems Research" (*2016). The financial resources of WWTF originate from the "*Privatstiftung zur Verwaltung von Anteilsrechten*" and from the City of Vienna.

While the thematic funding programmes are established in close coordination with Viennese RTD policy and initiatives, the review and selection processes lie strictly in the hands of international scientists not employed in Austria. For each call, an appropriate international expert jury is formed. Additionally, for each application entering the full proposal stage a number of written peer reviews are obtained.

Supporting excellent science in Vienna and Lower Austria

Vienna as an innovation area does not end at the city limits, and a "Vienna Innovation Area" is important and useful in our efforts to be one of the most important European research and innovation centers. This includes the networking of research communities. WWTF has well developed tools for competitive research funding in Vienna. There is a strong desire from researchers in Vienna and Lower Austria for stronger cooperation. A new agreement enables this cooperation between research institutions in Vienna and Lower Austria in the WWTF competitions. It is a valuable gain for all involved parties.

In a framework initially limited to three years, the Province of Lower Austria dedicates a maximum total of € 3 million in fiduciary support to WWTF, i.e. up to € 1 million per year. This is also the maximum amount of project funding that can go to Lower Austrian project partners as part of cooperation projects per year.

Both sides can decide whether or not the opportunity for these cooperation projects should exist for a specific call. After three years, the continuation and its design will be decided.

Specifics of Joint Projects (JP)

WWTF now also accepts joint projects between Viennese and Lower Austrian universities and research institutions in its regular project calls. The aim is to receive applications in which the partners cooperate on equal terms.

The incentive for cooperation projects is a slightly higher total maximum funding amount which consortia applying for a Joint Project can request (+ € 100.000 compared to the regular maximum funding amount).

The Vienna share (at least 51% of the project sum) is paid by WWTF from its own resources, while the Lower Austrian share (49% maximum) is financed from the Province of Lower Austria.

In summary, a JP differs from a standard WWTF project in the following points:

- The maximum funding volume for a JP is € 100.000 more than the funding volume of a regular WWTF project.
- The PI and Coordinator has to be affiliated to a university or non-university research institution in Vienna. At least one Co-PI has to be affiliated to research institutions in Lower Austria.
- The budget allocated to partners in Vienna has to be at least 51% of the total budget; the share of budget going to partners in Lower Austria has to be higher than 20% and can be 49% at most (cooperations with partners in Lower Austria up to 20% are not considered JPs but can be submitted as regular WWTF projects). Partners outside Vienna or Lower Austria are optional and may request up to 20% of the total budget.
- Regional branches of Viennese Institutions (e.g. BOKU, VetMed, AIT) located in Lower Austria are considered Viennese partners.

The Lower Austrian project partner has to comply with the Lower Austrian Culture Promotion Act 1996 and the directives issued on the basis thereof (Richtlinien für Förderung nach dem NÖ Kulturförderungsgesetz 1996).

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Important Issues

The **Call Fiche** including contact information of the WWTF call managers is available at wwtf.at.

The **Principal Investigator and Coordinator (PI)** of a WWTF project must have a Viennese home institution to which the project is affiliated to. This includes researchers moving to Vienna who will have a Viennese affiliation and workplace in case of funding. Project **partners** outside of Vienna may receive up to 20% of the total funding applied for. Partners outside Vienna are optional.

For **universities**, WWTF projects are treated according to §27 of the Universities Act 2002. Therefore, authorizing signatures from the university / scientific institution acting as hosting institution are required for the submission. In case of funding, the host institution will be the formal contract partner for WWTF with the PI taking full scientific and financial responsibility.

WWTF funding may be used for all project-related costs; however, the main focus should be on funding scientific personnel. Everybody employed through a WWTF-funded project should receive a fair contract with at least a *minimum wage* according to the "Kollektivvertrag" (collective agreement) of the Austrian Universities or – for staff employed at non-university institutions – according to the standards of the Austrian Science Fund (FWF, available online). The maximum employment is set to 100%. When planning the budget, use full-time equivalent (FTE) salaries and be aware that the PhD salary listed by FWF is for a 75% position.

Personnel costs cannot be claimed for permanent senior staff that is fully financed by the institution. Exceptions are made for institutions whose basic institutional block funding is less than 40% of the overall budget of the organisation. In these cases, permanently employed senior staff may claim up to 20% of their annual salary from WWTF.

The personnel categories are:

- *Senior Personnel:* highly qualified scientists, usually already permanently employed
- *Post Doc:* or equivalent qualification, including Senior Postdocs
- *PhD Student:* or equivalent qualification
- *Diploma Student:* Bachelor or Master students
- *Office/Technician:* office staff or technical staff (proportional funding only)

The funding by WWTF under this scheme is not intended to cover investment in general infrastructure, however *pro rata* depreciation rates for the project duration are fundable for **equipment** necessary for the project. WWTF funding also covers **materials,** consumables and software (as well as small devices up to 1,500 € each), **travelling costs** (incurred for attending project related scientific events and meetings), **publication costs** (including costs for patent filing and open access publication), **workshops/ conferences** and **other project related costs**. However, non-personnel costs must be balanced, as WWTF focuses on funding people, and should not exceed the limit stated on the call fiche for non-personnel costs.

WWTF pays a **maximum of 20% overhead**. Overhead ("indirect costs") is calculated as 20% of the direct costs of the project. The total funding volume is calculated as direct + indirect

costs. Applicants are required to comply with the overhead regulations of the involved institutions.

Compliance with the rules for good scientific practice including the appreciation of ethical aspects in research is mandatory even at the proposal stage.

- If the approval from the ethics committee/institutional review board is required for the planned project this has to be clearly stated at the short proposal stage and the approval ("Votum") **has to be submitted online with the full proposal (PDF upload).**
- The approval by the ethics committee has to be specific for the planned WWTF project; therefore, the title of the project should be the same as on the approval (minor deviations are possible). If the title of the approved research differs significantly from the proposed project, the PI has to include a statement (in the online submission system) confirming that the approval covers the planned research.
- Should it not be possible to have a final approval before the full proposal deadline due to reasons which are beyond the control of the applicant, such as constraints imposed by the local ethics committee, the applicant must explain the reasons in the provided textbox in the submission system and send the preliminary approval the call manager at the latest two months after the full proposal deadline.
- If the main applicant for the ethical approval is not the PI or co-PI/Core-Team Member of the WWTF proposal, a clear statement has to be included in the online proposal whereby the PI or co-PI/Core-Team Member confirms that he/she is authorized to conduct the planned research within this ethical approval.
- If the planned research is covered by an existing approval, the applicants have to submit the extension of the approval ("Verlängerung der Gültigkeit des Votums"). The above also applies for extensions.

Non-compliance will result in the rejection of the proposal on formal grounds and will therefore not be further processed or sent for evaluation.

Please also consider WWTF's open access policy available online.

Evaluation Process & Funding Criteria

Project calls follow a **two-stage evaluation process**: in the first stage, a short proposal is submitted describing the key objectives and motivation for the proposed work. In the second stage, the applicants of successful short proposals are invited to submit a full proposal. Short proposals may be submitted at any time from the opening of the call until the deadline.

Evaluation procedure in detail:

1. **Formal eligibility check by WWTF:**

The proposals will be screened for formal eligibility by the WWTF office to check if the following criteria are met:

a. Eligibility: the PI must be affiliated to a Viennese university or non-university research institution; the research institutions of the applicants must be eligible for this type of funding. For JPs, at least one co-PI must be affiliated to a Lower Austrian university or non-university research institution.
b. Applicants may not be in a key role (that is, as PI, Co-PI/Core Team Member) in more than two proposals.
c. Duly submitted via the online submission system.
d. Budget: requested funding within the defined range, limits per cost category and region not exceeded.
e. All parts of the proposal completed, including the required uploads.
f. All required signatures (and stamps) uploaded.

Proposals that do not meet the key formal requirements will not be sent for further evaluation to the core team of the jury (core jury). Applicants of proposals which are deemed ineligible will be informed shortly after the submission deadline.

2. **Evaluation of short proposals:**

If the proposal is not rejected for formal reasons it will be evaluated by the core jury. Each proposal will be assessed independently by several jury members based on the following criteria:

a. **Quality:** scientific originality and excellence of the proposed research project.
b. **Scope:** is the project within the scope of the call as described on the call fiche?
c. **Innovative character:** which aspects of the proposed project are especially innovative?
d. **(Economic/societal) Relevance**: what are the prospective benefits and when are they expected?
e. **Potential of the applicants:** accomplishments and potential of the applicants to conduct the research. Young and/or female scientists are especially encouraged to apply and to act as Principal Investigators.
f. **Collaborative and interdisciplinary aspects:** teams should include an appropriate mix of expertise, bringing together researchers from complementary scientific disciplines.

g. **Consideration of gender aspects:** The relevance of potential sex-specific and gender-related aspects of the proposed projects should be considered and explained within the different sections of the short proposal. Please also refer to the document "*Including sex and gender considerations in WWTF proposals and research teams*" available online.

After an independent evaluation of the proposals, the panel will meet in Vienna to discuss the submitted short proposals. After the meeting, all applicants will be promptly informed about the decision. Non-successful applicants will be provided with a <u>short</u> jury statement explaining the decision by mail. In some cases, the panel also gives feedback to the successful applicants for the full proposal.

3. Evaluation of full proposals:

If the short proposal is successful, the applicants will be invited to submit a **full proposal**. The objectives described in the full proposal must be consistent and in accordance with the short proposal, extending it by providing details about the approach, the specific work plan etc. A guide for writing the full proposal will be provided in due time. The full proposals will be evaluated by international peer reviewers (written assessment) and a panel of international experts that convenes in Vienna. In the latter case, the core jury is extended by additional scientists if needed. At least **two jury members** are assigned to each proposal which at first undergoes **written peer review** by at least three international reviewers. Applicants that have submitted a full proposal will receive anonymized full text reviews and a summary of the jury discussion after the formal funding decision by mail.

Jury meeting in Vienna after the review process: This is the most significant step in the assessment. There will be a comprehensive evaluation of all proposals on the basis of the written peer reviews and the jury's own expertise, resulting in a recommendation "to be funded" or "not to be funded" for each proposal.

4. Formal funding decision

Formal confirmation of the jury recommendation by the WWTF Board of Directors. Applicants will be promptly informed about the decision.

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In Case of Funding

The **Formal Funding Contract** will be between WWTF and the institution of the PI (for universities according to §27 of the University Act 2002), the PI has full scientific and financial responsibility. Projects may start immediately but should **not start later than 6 months** after the formal funding decision has been made. Throughout the project duration WWTF transfers the funding instalments annually in advance to the PI's Home Institution. The PI is responsible to distribute the allocated funds to the partners and partner institutions (if applicable).

WWTF monitoring throughout the duration of projects includes annual online reports delivered by the PI to WWTF with an overview on the scientific results achieved, personnel employment and funding spent as well as project outputs. During the course of the project, WWTF visits the PI and team to learn about the project progress and working environment of the personnel employed through WWTF funding. WWTF offers the possibility to adapt the work plan according to project needs. After the project has ended a comprehensive final report must be submitted. WWTF may organize an **ex-post evaluation** by international peers ("Evaluation Day") for all projects funded within a specific call.

How to use WWTF's Online Submission System

All WWTF proposals have to be submitted electronically via our submission system.

1. Go to funding.wwtf.at
2. **Register** with your e-mail address and name: the password will be sent to you by e-mail. If you had registered in a previous call, you can re-use your login credentials.
3. **Log in**, choose the call, and create a new proposal.
4. **Short proposal**: fill in requested information in *online forms* and *upload requested files* (in PDF format). You can save the current status of your proposal at any time, access the system multiple times, and edit the content.
5. *Submit proposal*: the submit button becomes active only after all requested information has been filled in and uploaded (signalled by a green check mark next to the chapter title). Be aware that after the submission no more changes are possible.

Note: The submission system closes at 2 pm (Vienna local time) on the day of the deadline. The short proposal has a size limit of maximum 5 MB. No diagrams or pictures are allowed in this stage, with exception of the Gantt chart.

Required Structure of a WWTF Short Proposal

Applications to WWTF undergo an assessment by international scientists, therefore all proposals must be written in **English**. The length of the short proposal is determined by character and upload limits in the online submission system (about 5-6 A4 pages). Please write precisely and to the point but with sufficient details to allow an evaluation by international peers.

The short proposal comprises of the following parts, which have to be completed in the online form:

Type of Project

Is this a joint project with substantial funding going to partners in lower Austria?

Please see the [specifications of a joint project](#) on page 3 of this guide.

Please note that regional branches of Viennese Institutions (e.g. BOKU, VetMed, AIT) located in Lower Austria are considered Viennese partners.

Is this a Joint Project with substantial funding going to partners in Lower Austria? *
- ⦿ Yes (Joint Project)
- ○ No (WWTF Project)

Principal Investigators and Core Team Members:

Name and **full contact information** of the core team, including the host institutions, where each member intends to conduct the project. Please note that important communication from WWTF will be sent by mail to the PI's address inserted in this section.

For each of the three institutions added, the region of the institution has to be selected.

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For JPs there are three options:

Region *	○ Vienna ○ Lower Austria ○ Other

Note: Branches of Viennese institutions in Lower Austria (such as BOKU Tulln or AIT Tulln) count as Viennese institutions.

For regular WWTF projects there are two options:

Region *	○ Vienna ○ Other

Note: Branches of Viennese institutions in Lower Austria (such as BOKU Tulln or AIT Tulln) are considered Viennese institutions. In WWTF projects, for institutions based in Lower Austria select "Other".

The "Core Team" is composed of the Principal Investigator and Coordinator (PI), and up to two co-PIs/Core Team Members. Altogether, no more than three team members may be listed in this section. The designated PI will be the sole responsible person towards WWTF. For each core team member, the following details should be filled in (mandatory fields are marked with an asterisk): highest academic degree (drop-down), type of employment at the time of submission (drop-down), year of birth, date of doctorate (if applicable), ORCID (or equivalent researcher ID), the institutes/research group's website, and if available, the personal scientific website. Finally, a brief description of the team member's scientific expertise.

Biographical Sketch (2 pages, PDF upload, mandatory use of the provided CV template)

Curriculum Vitae (1 page):

- Personal information
- Higher education, including obtained degrees and dates when these were received
- Appointments/positions: a list, in reverse chronological order, of all the individual's academic/ professional appointments or other work experience
- Fellowships and awards
- Selected memberships
- Selected third party funding: a list of selected funded projects incl. project duration, funding source, granted amount of money and the role in each project
- A list of the most relevant collaborations. Indicate the names and nature of the cooperation
- Other relevant activities/ experience: a list highlighting the broader impact of the professional and scholarly activities which focus on the generation, integration, and transfer of knowledge
- If applicable, a list of career breaks

List of Publications (1 page):

A summary of the publication record.

A list of up to ten selected peer-reviewed publications published. Mark publications most relevant to the proposed research with an asterisk.

Partner Institutions

In case your proposal includes more than three collaborating institutions, there is the option to add two more Partner Institutions (up to 5 institutions in total) in order to allow for a comprehensive planning of costs (below). Additional team members affiliated to these institutions can be added in the full proposal phase.

Basic Information:

It includes the **Title*** of the project, **Keywords*** and **Disciplines*.** Furthermore, the **indicative project duration** (between 2 and 4 years) has to be stated. The **indicative budget** will be calculated below.

*Note: Items marked with an asterisk cannot be changed after the short proposal stage

Project Summary/Abstract (max. 1500 characters, including spaces)

This part should provide a complete project summary. Clearly state the research question and the aims of the team as a whole. Describe the most innovative aspects of your proposal and the fit to the scope of the call.

Short Proposal:

Introduction, Background, and State of the Art (max. 2500 characters, including spaces)

What is the topic of the research project? What is the state of the art of the proposed research? What are the research questions and the scientific challenges the project wants to address?

Objectives and Hypotheses (max. 2000 characters, including spaces)

What is/are the goal(s) the project wants to achieve? Provide an outline of the scientific approach that will be used to reach your objectives. The objectives should be achievable within the duration of your project. State preliminary data and any relevant research experience.

Expected Results, Novelty, and Relevance (max. 2000 characters, including spaces)

Which results are expected? Which aspects of the proposed project are especially innovative? Describe the scientific relevance of the proposed work and the timeliness of the research project.

Methods and Feasibility (max. 2000 characters, including spaces)

Specify the methodology you intend to use in order to answer your research question(s) and to reach the objective(s). Describe the basic working principles and concepts, and why the chosen approach/ specific mix of approaches is the most suitable for the addressed research question. Include a short assessment on the feasibility of the approach.

Role of Team Members, Interdisciplinary Collaborative Aspects (max. 1500 characters, including spaces)

Each team member should describe his/her role in accomplishing the goal of the team as a whole. Which different disciplines are represented in the project and which partnerships across

research groups and institutions will result from the project? Which collaborative elements are essential for the project to succeed; what makes the team more powerful than the sum of the individual contributions? A team member's contribution should be integrated into the overall plan and should not appear merely as a resource.

Key References (max. 10 citations, max. 1250 characters, including spaces)

Cite a maximum of 10 of the most relevant background literature for the proposal. There is no required citation format, nevertheless publications should be cited in a way that allows the reader to easily retrieve the key information.

Time Plan and Project Overview (1 page Gantt chart, PDF upload)

Upload a Gantt chart to give an overview of the milestones to be achieved during the project period. Specify the time periods and the respective PIs responsible for each milestone.

Potential Ethical Aspects (max. 750 characters, including spaces)

If required, information should be given with respect to the ethical approval. Is an ethical approval available covering the prospective use of data and the planned analysis? If not, state whether an additional approval is required. See above for details.

Budget

A table with a brief budget listing the main cost categories (personnel, non-personnel, and overhead costs) has to be filled in. A cost planning tool (spreadsheet) can be downloaded from the submission system and should be used to calculate personnel, non-personnel and overhead costs. Please refer to the section "Important Issues" for details regarding which costs may be requested. Do not submit the spreadsheet. Fill in the amounts requested for personnel costs, non-personnel costs and overheads for each partner institution (these will be listed automatically for each core team member and additional partner institutions) in the online table.

Budget per Region

Based on the information given in the table "Budget", the share of budget allocated to the regions "Vienna" and "Other" will be shown for WWTF projects and to the regions "Vienna", "Lower Austria" and "Other" for JPs.

For JPs, the budget allocated to the region "Vienna" has to be at least 51%. The share of budget allocated to the region "Lower Austria" can vary between 21% and 49%. Up to 20% can be allocated to any partner located in other regions ("Other").

For WWTF projects, at least 80% of the requested funding has to be allocated to the region "Vienna". Up to 20% can be allocated to any partner (including partners in Lower Austria).

The submission system will alert you if the inserted amounts exceed the permitted funding distribution between regions.

Explanation of Cost Planning (max. 750 characters, including spaces): WWTF provides substantial funding for scientific projects covering all project related direct costs plus a maximum of 20% overheads (i.e., "indirect costs"). Therefore, WWTF requires a brief explanation of your

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cost planning at the short proposal stage. This should include explanations for the major expenditures planned within the project. A more comprehensive explanation of costs has to be submitted together with a detailed project budget in the full proposal. In the case of an invitation to submit a full proposal, there should not be any significant changes in the requested budget in comparison to the short proposal. Exceptions are permitted but require an explanation.

Affirmations and Authorization

Affirmations are the signatures of the core project team members. Additionally, WWTF requires collecting the signatures of the authorized person(s) of all participating institutions to which the persons signing the "Authorization" are affiliated to in case of funding.

Multiple copies may be used for signing. **Please upload one PDF containing all the required signatures.**

Hard-copies of the proposal or the signatures are not required.