Guide for Writing a Short Proposal

Environmental Systems Research Call 2020 "Urban Regions"

OCT 2019

Vienna Science and Technology Fund (WWTF)
Schlickgasse 3/12
1090 Vienna, Austria
T: +43 (0) 1 4023143-0

Elisabeth Nagl (elisabeth.nagl@wwtf.at)
Johanna Trupke (johanna.trupke@wwtf.at)

https://www.wwtf.at

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), "Information and Communication Technology" (*2008), "Cognitive Sciences" (*2011) and "Environmental Systems Research" (*2017). 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 process lies 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. Therefore models that enable a greater participation of Lower Austrian research institutions in WWTF calls were examined.

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 comparable 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 a nutshell, a JP differs from a standard WWTF project in the following points:

- The maximum funding volume is € 750,000 for a JP.
- The PI and Coordinator has to be affiliated to a university or non-university research institution in Vienna. Co-PIs can 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 joint projects 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 as 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](#)).

Important Issues

The **Call Fiche** including contact information of WWTF call manager(s) is available at http://www.wwtf.at. The formal criteria for a WWTF ESR20 project include a minimum funding volume of € 200,000 with an upper range of up to € 650,000 (€ 750,000 for a JP) and a planned duration of 2-4 years. In total, € 4.5 million are dedicated to this call.

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 with a Viennese affiliation and work place in case of funding. Project **partners** outside of Vienna may receive funding of up to 20% of the total funding applied for. Partners outside Vienna are optional; they are neither obligatory nor a formal criterion for acceptance.

For **universities**, WWTF projects are treated according to §27 of the 2002 University Act. Therefore, authorized signatures from the university / scientific institution acting as home institution are mandatory for submission. In case of funding, the home 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 in a WWTF-funded project should get 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. A maximum total employment is set to 100%. When planning the budget, please 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 in permanent employment
- *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)

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 small devices up to €1,500 each), **travelling costs** (incurred for attending project related scientific events and invitations), **publication costs** (including costs for patent filing and open access publication), **workshops / conferences** (costs incurred for own scientific events), and **other project related costs**. However, non-personnel costs must be balanced, as WWTF focuses on funding people, and should not exceed 25% of the funding volume applied for.

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 + indi-

rect costs. A separate project account / SAP number for bookkeeping is necessary for each project and the direct costs must be reported to WWTF. The overhead is paid as a flat rate with no conditions attached. Kindly comply with the overhead regulations of the involved institutions.

Ethical Aspects

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

- If 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 to WWTF (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 planned WWTF project, the PI has to include a statement (in the online submission system) confirming that the approval covers the planned research.

- Should it be impossible 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 text-box in the submission system and send the preliminary approval at the latest by the **15th of August 2020** to the call manager.

- 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 a 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 at www.wwtf.at.

Evaluation Process & Funding Criteria

In this call a **two-stage evaluation process** is used: in the first stage, a short proposal (character limits are defined in the online submission system) shall be submitted describing the key objectives and motivation for the proposed work. Second, 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 final closing date which is **the 23rd of January 2020 at 2pm**. Upon invitation, full proposals will have to be submitted by **the 20th of May 2020, 2pm**.

Evaluation procedure in detail:

1. Formal eligibility check by WWTF: the proposals will be screened for formal eligibility by the WWTF office based on the following criteria: Principal Investigator and Coordinator is affiliated to a Viennese research institution | duly submitted | funding range between € 200,000 and € 650,000 (€ 750,000 for a JP) | required signatures | all required parts filled out | length of the proposal not exceeded | not more than two key roles in different proposals. **Proposals that do not meet the key requirements outlined will not be sent for further evaluation to the core jury.** Applicants of proposals which are deemed ineligible will be informed shortly after the submission deadline.

2. Evaluation of the short proposals: If the proposal is formally accepted, it will be evaluated by a core team of the jury (core jury). Each proposal will be assessed independently by several jury members based on the following criteria:

Quality: The key selection criterion for this call is scientific quality, i.e., both the applicants and the submitted proposal must be scientifically outstanding.

Scope:
- Projects are required to address a clearly identified research question with long term relevance in the field of environmental systems research focused on urban regions.
- Projects should aim to significantly expand current views and knowledge of fundamental problems and challenges in this field. The research approach should have a systemic character in order to address questions that cannot be answered in a linear, uni-disciplinary manner.
- Key elements of this funding programme include the analysis of human/environment interactions and the interconnection between different research domains, to allow for holistic and multi-faceted approaches covering different environmental "-spheres" in urban areas.
- Projects teams should include researchers from complementary disciplines such as natural sciences, social sciences, humanities and engineering. Project ideas directed at governance measures are also included.
- Inclusion of predictive modelling approaches and the visualization thereof is strongly encouraged. Proposal designs should go far beyond monitoring.

Innovative character of a project is a major criterion in the assessment of the proposals.

Collaboration:

- To achieve the aims of the call, teams should include an appropriate mix of expertise, bringing together researchers from complementary scientific disciplines to foster interactive partnerships.
- Projects involving truly and progressive interdisciplinary collaborations will be given clear preference.

Potential of the applicants:

- Accomplishments and potential of the individual applicants to conduct the research according to their academic age.
- WWTF sets great value upon gender balanced teams. Young and/or female scientists are especially encouraged to apply as principal investigators.

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 www.wwtf.at.

Non-successful applicants will be informed promptly about rejections and will be provided with a short jury statement explaining the decision.

3. Evaluation of full proposals: If the short proposal fulfils the requirements, the applicants will be invited to submit a **full proposal** by **the 20th of May 2020, 2pm**. The full proposal must be consistent and in accordance with the successful short proposal, extending it by providing full details about the approach, the specific work plan, personnel, budget, etc. A guide for writing the full proposal will be provided in due time. The evaluation of full proposals is carried out through a combination of written international peer review and a panel of international experts that convene in Vienna. In the latter case, the core jury is extended by additional renowned scientists if necessary. At least **two jury members** are assigned to each proposal which at first undergoes **written peer review** by at least three international reviewers. Applicants will receive the anonymized full text reviews and a summary of the jury discussion after the formal funding decision.

4. Jury meeting in Vienna in autumn 2020: This is the most significant step in the assessment. There will be a comprehensive evaluation of all proposals on basis of written peer reviews and the jury's own expertise resulting in a recommendation "to be funded" or "not to be funded" for each proposal.

5. Formal funding decision (confirmation of jury recommendation) by WWTF Boards in autumn 2020.

W|W|T|F
VIENNA SCIENCE
AND TECHNOLOGY FUND

How to use WWTF's Online Submission System

1. Go to https://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 use your old 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); Please be aware that after submission no more changes are possible.
Note: The submission system closes at 2 pm 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, thus all proposals must be written in **English**. The length of the short proposal is determined by character counts and upload limitations in the online submission system (approximately 3-4 A4 pages). Please write precisely and to the point but include enough detail to allow an evaluation by international peers.

A short proposal to WWTF comprises of the following parts and has to be filled in the online forms:

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 as 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 home institutions, where each member intends to conduct the project and their respective **scientific expertise**.

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

W|W|T|F
VIENNA SCIENCE
AND TECHNOLOGY FUND

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 as Viennese institutions. In WWTF projects, Institutions based in Lower Austria are considered as "Other".

Please note that important communication from WWTF will be sent by mail to the address inserted in this section. The Core Team is composed of the Principal Investigator (PI) / Coordinator, and two Co-PIs and/or Core Team members. Altogether, no more than 3 team members may be listed in this section. The designated PI/Coordinator will be the sole responsible person towards WWTF. A researcher can appear in a key role (that is, as PI, Co-PI or Core Team Member) in **two proposals at most.**

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 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
- Funded projects: 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

This includes the *Title** of the project (max. 125 characters), ***Keywords**** and ***Disciplines*.*** Use precise and descriptive keywords, as these will be used to allocate the proposal to the most fitting reviewers/panel members. Furthermore, the **indicative project duration** (between 24 and 48 months) has to be stated. The **indicative budget** will be calculated below.

Note: All items marked with an asterisk (*) cannot be changed after the short proposal stage.

Project Summary/Abstract (max. 1500 characters)

This part must 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)

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? State background information and relevant previous research in the field.

Hypotheses and Objectives (max. 2000 characters)

What are the key hypotheses the research project? 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.

Novelty, relevance and fit to the Call (max. 1750 characters)

Which aspects of the proposed project are especially innovative and novel? Describe the scientific relevance of the proposed work for the Call theme "Environmental Systems Research: Urban Regions" (system perspective, focus on urban phenomena, societal relevance).

Methods and feasibility (max. 2000 characters)

Specify the methodology you intend to use to answer your research questions and to reach the objectives. Describe the basic working principles and concepts, and why the chosen approach/ specific mix of approaches is the most suitable to address the research question. How will the interdisciplinary collaboration be set up in terms of methods? Include a short assessment of the feasibility of the approach.

WWTF
VIENNA SCIENCE
AND TECHNOLOGY FUND

Role of team members, interdisciplinary collaborative aspects and gender balance (max. 1750 characters)

Each team member should describe his/her role in accomplishing the goal of the team as a whole. Which different disciplines are working together within your research project and which partnerships will result out of this 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.

Potential ethical aspects (max. 500 characters)

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.

Key references (max. 10 citations, max. 1250 characters)

Cite a maximum of 10 of the most relevant background literature for the proposal.

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. Do not submit the spreadsheet. Fill in the respective amount requested for personnel costs, non-personnel costs and overheads per partner institution (these will be listed automatically for each core team member and additional partner institutions) in the online table.

Please refer to the section "Important Issues" for details regarding which costs may be requested.

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 Joint Projects (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 have 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): WWTF provides substantial funding for scientific projects covering all project related direct costs plus a maximum of 20% over-

WW|T|F
VIENNA SCIENCE
AND TECHNOLOGY FUND

heads (i.e., "indirect costs"). Therefore, WWTF requires a brief explanation of your 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.

Schedule 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.

Affirmations and Authorization

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

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

In Case of Funding

The **Formal Funding Contract** will be between WWTF and the Home Institution of the Principal Investigator (for universities according to §27 of the University Law 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. During the project duration WWTF pays funding rates half a year in advance to the PI's Home Institution. The PI is then responsible for the distribution to the partner institutions (if applicable).

WWTF monitoring during the runtime of the 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. WWTF office also makes site-visits to learn about the project progress and working environment of the personnel employed. 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 online. WWTF may organize an **ex-post evaluation** by international peers ("Evaluation Day") for all projects funded within a specific call.