

## Funding offer

# Equal opportunity funds

To support equal opportunities and diversity in the research system, the Volkswagen Foundation offers the possibility to apply for so-called 'Equal opportunity funds' within the regular application process in its initiatives. These funds support measures that serve to compensate for disadvantages at an individual level and/or aim to strengthen diversity in the education and research system in general.



Applications have to be a part of regular applications for funding (Please note: this funding offer does not apply to calls in the profile area zukunft.niedersachsen)



Measures to compensate for individual disadvantages and to strengthen diversity in the research system



Up to 1% of the total grant (in addition to the max. funding amount)



The funds are restricted to the stated purpose and cannot be reallocated

## 1 Objective

In its position paper on [Funding Diversity](#), the Foundation explicitly formulates its commitment to diversity in a holistic understanding. Based on the German General Equal Treatment Act, it defines seven diversity dimensions that should be given specific consideration in funding activities in order to address and compensate for structural inequalities. The dimensions encompass

- Gender
- Sexual identity,
- Disability,
- Age,
- Ethnic origin,
- Religion or world view,
- Social background (non-academic family background, financial or economic situation, status as migrant or as a direct descendant of immigrants, as well as status as refugee or asylum seeker)

In order to compensate for inequalities resulting from these diversity dimensions and to promote diversity in the research system in general, the Volkswagen Foundation has launched an additional support programme called 'Equal opportunity funds'.

## 2 Scope of funding

Equal opportunity funds support measures implemented over the duration of a research project that are aimed either

- at equalising structural inequalities in the sense of compensating for individual disadvantages, or
- promoting diversity in the research system in general.

Equal opportunity funds can be applied for as a lump sum when submitting regular applications for project funding. The lump sum can then be used flexibly and according to all project members' needs over the course of the project. Possible measures depend on the needs of the project and range from childcare and technical aids for physical disabilities to the development of mentoring programmes. Equal Opportunity Funds can be applied for up to 1% of the total application amount (excluding overheads) and they are granted in addition to the maximum funding sum.

**Please note:** Information on whether equal opportunities funds can be applied for in a call for proposals can be found in the information sheet for the respective initiative on its homepage. Equal opportunity funds cannot currently be applied for in calls for proposals in the [zukunft.niedersachsen](#) profile area. It is also not possible to apply for equal opportunities funding in calls for workshops or other events. Instead, funds for childcare can be applied for directly in such calls (see respective guidelines).

## 1 Application and selection procedure

Equal opportunity funds are applied for as part of a **regular application**; subsequent applications are not possible. The lump sum is listed in the item 'Equal opportunities funds': no detailed breakdown of the costs or information on specific measures is required at the time of application. However, the [Equal opportunity funds template \(DOCX\)](#) must be completed for the application (one template for the whole project).

The funding decision will be based on the following **criteria**:

- Clear reference to the Volkswagen Foundation's understanding of diversity
- Realistic potential contribution to the objectives of Equal opportunity funds (individual compensation for disadvantages or strengthening diversity in the research system)
- Clearly structured and meaningful application: The Foundation expects that the applicants are not writing generic diversity statements but are explaining their understanding of diversity in and for the specific project.

As this is additional funding, the application for Equal opportunity funds has *no* influence on the actual review process and the funding decision on the underlying application. The application

for Equal opportunity funds is only reviewed if the main application has been approved for funding.

### 3 Utilisation of approved Equal opportunity funds

Equal opportunity funds are initially blocked in the event of approval. In order to get them released and use them during the project phase, please approach your contact person at the Foundation with an informal written request (e.g. by e-mail) detailing the intended measures and the approximate costs.

**Please note:** 1. To avoid small-scale administrative work, the release of funds is not possible for less than EUR 500. Please pool several measures. 2. Equal opportunity funds cannot be re-allocated.

The **criteria** applied when deciding on the release of Equal opportunity funds are as follows:

- **Relevance:** The planned measure relates to at least one of the seven diversity dimensions defined by the Volkswagen Foundation and corresponds to the objectives intended with the Equal opportunity funds (see Section 2).
- **Plausibility:** The planned measure makes a plausible contribution to equal opportunity, either on an individual or a structural level.
- **Additionality and needs-orientation:** The measure(s) go(es) beyond the usual and expected activities within the framework of a funded project and explicitly benefit disadvantaged groups of people.
- **Examples of concrete measures** include, but are not limited to
  - Funds for childcare or accompanying persons for conference trips
  - Childcare or care for dependent relatives
  - Parental leave or nursing care
  - Technical and personal support in cases of physical limitations
  - Utilisation of coaching or mentoring offers
  - Development of career-promoting networks (also: development of mentoring programmes)
  - Awareness-raising workshops for the staff of a funded research project
  - Language courses and further training programmes

Additional measures can also be applied for depending on the needs of the project team.

**Please note:** Projects with several Co-Pis can use the funds separately or pool them – for example to set up a mentoring programme or conduct a cost-intensive workshop – provided that the respective institutions agree and take on the necessary administrative work.

The use of Equal opportunity funds must be proven to the Foundation. This proof must be provided in the same way and at the same time as for all other approved funding. Spending of Equal opportunity funds must also be detailed in the statement of account. Receipts must be kept available for possible inspection.

## 4 Contact

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## 5 Further information

- [Website Volkswagen Foundation](#)
- [Equal opportunity funds website](#)
- Download: [Template Equal opportunity funds \(DOCX\)](#)