

**Information for
Applicants 100**

**Experiment!
In search of bold research ideas**

Next Deadline: [see website](#)

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I. Objectives

Daring research projects which drop out of regular funding schemes due to their early stage or unorthodoxy shall receive a proving opportunity in 'Experiment!'. At the focal point are ideas for experiments and theory in science, engineering, behavioral and life sciences. Preferential support is given to approaches which

- are radically new and aim beyond continuous improvement,
- challenge and transform common wisdom,
- strive to establish counterintuitive hypotheses, unconventional methodologies or technologies, or
- stimulate entirely new research directions.

The ambitious aim is an exploration of fundamentally new research topics disregarding a high project risk and the vagueness of a successful outcome. The funding is meant for an exploratory phase, which is limited with respect to duration and finance, in order to demonstrate preliminary evidence for the concept's potential. In case of disappointment the scientific explanation of obstacles is a desired result.

II. Funding Opportunities

The exploratory phase funded has a duration of 1 ½ years. The total grant is limited to EUR 120,000. Overhead costs will not be considered. The funds may be flexibly utilized for all personnel and non-personnel costs incurred. This includes for instance:

- the involvement of cooperation partners from the scientific community in Germany or abroad,
- research stays at other institutes, invitation of visiting scientists,
- workshops and other meetings as well as
- a substitute for a sabbatical or a leave of absence from clinical duties.

Approximately 30-40 exploratory projects p. a. will get support depending on the quality of the submitted proposals – doubling the number of grants compared to the years 2013 to 2016. The exact number of projects funded depends on the outcome of the review process. In previous years, more than 500 applications were submitted on an average for each deadline.

III. General Conditions

The choice of topics is free within the addressed scientific fields. However, additional support for existing or expired excellence clusters, collaborative research centers, priority programs etc. is excluded. Rejected ideas from previous rounds will not be reconsidered, neither in a modified form. Projects funded so far can be found on our website (Grants awarded: Project-Persons-Search).

Applicants who conform to the following conditions are eligible:

- Completed doctorate or superior academic qualification;
- Employment by a university or an extra-mural research institution in Germany, at the latest starting with the project;

- Participation in one application per deadline; further each research unit (independent group, chair or similar) can submit one application only.
- If returning from abroad, relocating to a new institution, or applying for one's own position: Written confirmation by the institute regarding the feasibility, the grant administration and, if applicable, the employability (own position).

A cooperative application is possible, if desired. The applicant institute is responsible for the administration of the grant total. Co-applicants also must hold a doctorate degree, a habilitation or a professorship appointment. They have to be affiliated with a scientific institution in Germany or abroad. The restriction of participation in one application per deadline applies to co-applicants, too.

A timely project start is assumed. Two years upon receipt of the grant the Foundation will organize the 'Forum Experiment!' at the conference center Herrenhausen Palace in Hanover, Germany. Each project is invited to present results of the exploratory phase, independent of emerging progress or disappointment. The date of the forum will be announced in due time.

IV. Application and Selection Procedure

The application requires a 3-page project outline of the research idea and a 1-page self-assessment to align with the objectives of the funding initiative. A uniform structure of the short proposal and self-assessment is mandatory. Only applications in English will be accepted. Since 2013 there has been an annual 'Experiment!' call. The current deadline (until 11:59 pm in Germany) is announced on the website.

There are three actors involved in the partially randomized, anonymised selection: Foundation staff, an external scientific jury and – in a trial phase from 2017 to 2020 – the lot. The whole process is designed without any peer review reports in writing. First, all proposals will be checked and shortlisted by the funding division according to the program criteria, the self-assessment and their conclusiveness. The resulting shortlist (approx. 120-140 applications) is rated by an international and interdisciplinary jury in a double-blind way, i. e. with anonymized documents. Thus, only the bold, potential breakthrough idea counts and not the reputation of the person behind it. The jury rejects applications with inadequate quality and selects the most convincing ideas (approx. 15-20 grants). Each jury member has exactly one 'funding joker' to optionally propose a project that does not reach consensus. During the test phase an equal number of grants (15-20) is drawn in a lottery from the same pool of applications, which meet the program requirements and the quality criteria, under the supervision of the Foundation's legal officer. In this way bias is omitted and ideas that otherwise would be easily overlooked are given a chance.

The lottery as a new selection element as well as the entire review process will be evaluated. The grantees will not know whether their idea was received enthusiastically by the scientific jury or whether they were lucky. All projects are treated equally.

The following selection criteria apply:

- The scientific originality, vision, and unorthodoxy of the research idea,
- the anticipated impact if successful,
- the potential learning effect in case of a failure,
- the project venture and

- the appropriateness of a limited exploratory phase to advance the idea.

A decision is planned for roughly four months after the application deadline. In consideration of the partially randomized process and the high numbers of applications it is not possible to give details on individual decisions or to communicate comments made by the jury.

V. Application Checklist

Applications can be submitted in English via the Foundation's electronic application system. The templates for structuring your application can be found on the 'Experiment!' website. In the application system, forms providing details on the applicant, the recipient of grant (institution), project title, duration, rough budget breakdown, and a legally binding declaration have to be completed online. The following three attachments (pdf) need to be uploaded and, if applicable, an additional letter:

- Anonymized proposal (template 'Short proposal') restricted to 1000 +/- 100 words, including optional references, but not counting template subtitles and figure captions. Please strictly omit in the text and in figures any names of applicants, project partners, participating institutes and self-citations as references.

Your proposal in a nutshell: key question, key result, key impact (three concise sentences).

1. Research idea and context (i.e. starting point, open question, relevance, perspectives), preferably without references.
2. Proposed solution or concept (i.e. unique approach, postulated hypothesis, non-standard methodology, if applicable).
3. Objective of the exploratory phase (i.e. major gains expected, obstacles faced, potential bottlenecks).

Optional: Two figures maximum, preferably on the last page, figure caption restricted to two lines each.

- Anonymized self-assessment (template 'Self assessment') restricted to 300 +/- 50 words without counting template subtitles, also omitting author names, affiliations etc. and structured as follows:
 1. In comparison with your other projects: Why is this research idea particularly fitting to 'Experiment!'?
 2. Why should the jury / the Foundation definitely consider your research idea?
 3. Which objection(s) do you expect? How would you argue against it?
- Short CV including the current position at the institute and a publication list (≤ 10 published articles) on two pages each per applicant for the internal verification by the Foundation.

Only if applicable: If you are currently not employed by the recipient institution please provide a signed letter by the respective chair or group leader stating the feasibility, the grant administration and the employability (the latter only in case of applying for your own position) under:

- Institutional Declarations

Attachments not listed above and application supplements which have not been requested remain unconsidered for the selection process.

Please inform yourself about the electronic application system of the Volkswagen Foundation prior to submitting your application. Information can be found in the document 'Electronic Application System – Instructions and Tips'.

VI. Information

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Additional Information

General links:

[Applications FAQs](#)

[FAQs for Applicants from Abroad](#)

[Electronic Application System - Instructions](#)

[Electronic Application System](#)

[Salaries for Academic Staff](#)

About 'Experiment!':

[Website funding initiative 'Experiment!'](#)

[Experiment! – FAQs](#)

[Template Short Proposal \(Download\)](#)

[Template Self Assessment \(Download\)](#)

Module: Science Communication and Knowledge Transfer

The Volkswagen Foundations offers funding for science communication and knowledge transfer both as an additional part of new proposals and for projects that currently receive funding from the Foundation. This measure aims to support communication formats between academics and non-academics (citizens, journalists, professional communicators etc.). Applicants should always contact the program director in charge before submitting their proposal. For further information about all funding opportunities within the context of science communication, see

www.volkswagenstiftung.de/en/sciencecommunication.