

CALL

MOMENTUM – FUNDING FOR RECENTLY TENURED PROFESSORS

Deadline: 28 April 2025

-  area of research: all disciplines
-  type of funding: concepts for strategic development of the professorship
-  up to 850,000 Euro (1st phase); up to 200,000 Euro (2nd phase)
-  4 years (1st phase); 2 years (2nd phase)
-  university professors from 3 to 5 years after taking up their first tenured professorship
-  Pure research projects are not eligible for funding; 2-step application procedure



1 OBJECTIVE

"Momentum" stands for the impulse that comes at *the appropriate point in time* which keeps something moving or developing dynamically after it has started. In this sense, this call addresses researchers three to five years after they have taken up their first tenured professorship, i.e. at a stage in their career when they are firmly established in the German academic system. The aim is to open up opportunities to further develop the content and strategy of their professorship during this career phase. These researchers are given the opportunity to "rethink" their own professorship, and their research is to gain "Momentum".

In an ever more breathless research environment, this funding offer creates breathing space for new thinking in research and research-based teaching beyond the routine of university life. Willingness to innovate and take risks, coupled with the courage to explore uncharted territory, are the most important prerequisites for achieving scientific breakthroughs. The focus of "Momentum" therefore – in contrast to increasingly widespread specialization – is to strengthen the diversity of research and the creativity of research personalities at universities.

2 FUNDING OFFER

This funding opportunity is open to all disciplines equally and addresses the humanities, cultural studies and social sciences as well as the natural sciences, life sciences and engineering. The program is also open to professors of all nationalities. The prerequisite is that they hold a tenured professorship at a university in Germany. Funding will be granted for strategic concepts aimed at further developing the content of a professorship. It is explicitly not required that the applicant has done any previous work in the new field. Individual research projects will not be funded.

Successful Momentum concepts will be funded in two phases: After a first (implementation) phase of four years, the concepts are evaluated and, if successful, established at the respective institution (faculty/university) in a second (consolidation) phase of two years. A maximum of 850,000 EUR (1st phase) and 200,000 EUR (2nd phase) (plus 10 % overhead costs in each phase) can be requested. The funds are awarded exclusively in addition to the core budget provided by the university. They may not be used to cover gaps in the core budget.

The activities for the implementation of the strategic and content-related development of a professorship depend on the respective discipline and on the organizational environment or location. This funding offer is designed to be flexible. Funding can be provided for e.g.

- equipment and non-personnel costs other than those covered by the core financing,
- personnel costs (other than PhD students),
- stays abroad,
- funds for testing and establishing new research-based teaching formats,
- funds for science communication measures (up to 10.000 EUR).

Other measures, especially a combination of different measures, are also conceivable. In all cases, the application must clearly address and justify which specific measures are required for the planned further development of the professorship in research and, if applicable, in research-based teaching.

Equal Opportunity Funds

The Foundation supports equal opportunities and diversity in the academic system and therefore enables the application of so-called equal opportunities funds as part of the regular application process. Equal opportunity funds are funds for measures that serve to compensate for disadvantages at an individual level and/or aim to strengthen diversity in the academic system in general. Detailed information on the possible use of the funds and how to apply for them can be found on the Foundation's homepage under [Equal Opportunity Funds](#) (in German). You can only apply for these funds as part of the full application.

Sustainability Funds

The Volkswagen Foundation is committed to sustainability, and in particular resource-efficient research processes. It therefore provides funds to certify research laboratories involved in the research project via providers such as LEAF or mygreenlab as sustainable. These funds – granted in addition to the maximum funding sum – amount to a lump sum of up to 3,000 EUR per laboratory. Laboratories are eligible if at least one of the PI/co-PIs conduct the respective research there. To apply, please indicate the correct lump sum in the expenditure plan at the corresponding position. You can only apply for these funds as part of the full application.

3 FUNDING FRAMEWORK

This program is aimed at outstanding professors who have been appointed to their first tenured professorship three to five years ago. For the upcoming deadline of April 28, 2025, this usually means that the first tenured professorship was taken up between April 1, 2020 and April 30, 2022.

Personnel funds can be applied for postdoctoral researchers, technical staff and research assistants. Funding is not available for PhD students. Equipment will be funded up to an acquisition value of 200,000 Euro. In exceptional cases, more expensive equipment (> 200.000 Euro) can be applied for, but the foundation will contribute only 50% of the costs.

A complete exemption of the applicant from teaching is not possible. A partial substitute can be granted for up to two years. In the event of longer stays abroad of up to two semesters, a full teaching substitute may be granted to serve for this period. This substitute should be recruited from among junior faculty who do not already have a permanent position. The substitute in question may not be from the applicant's close institutional or personal environment and, if possible, the last qualification stage should not have occurred more than two to three years ago.

Not eligible for funding are:

- professors at non-university institutions and therefore also professors with a double affiliation,
- professors at universities of applied sciences,

- tenure-track professors,
- research projects,
- PhD positions.

4 APPLICATION AND SELECTION PROCESS

At this stage applications for the 1st funding phase of Momentum funding will be accepted. Therefore, the maximum funding available in this phase is 850,000 EUR. Applications for the 2nd funding phase can only be submitted towards the end of the 1st funding phase of an ongoing Momentum project. Eligible applicants will be informed of the applicable framework conditions.

The application and review process for Momentum is a multi-stage process:

Stage 1: For the first stage you have to submit the following documents via the application portal of the Volkswagen Foundation by the first deadline:

- a CV according to the template,
- a 90 seconds video proposal describing your Momentum idea,
- German and English abstracts (directly into the funding portal).

A mandatory CV template is provided on the call website. In the short video, the applicants will personally explain in the form of a video pitch why and how they want to strategically develop their professorship, what the innovative content of their concept is and what significance the suggested steps have for their own professorship and the respective research discipline. We would like to point out that the quality of the video production and the submitted videos are **not criteria** for the review of the concepts. The videos must not exceed 90 seconds in length. Please use one of the following video formats: avi, mp4, mov, wmv, flv, mpg, mpeg (bitrate: audio = 192, video = 2,500; container format with variable codex). Video files sizes may not exceed 30 MB.

The application documents will be comparatively evaluated by an interdisciplinary and international jury panel. Applicants will be notified whether they can hand in a full proposal or whether their concept has been rejected by

August the latest. No feedback on the reasons for rejection can be given to rejected applicants after this first review stage.

Stage 2: Applicants who are invited to submit a detailed concept in the second stage are asked to complete the template "Hauptantrag Momentum" ("Full Proposal Momentum") provided on the call website and upload it through the Volkswagen Foundation's application portal by the second deadline in November 2025. At the same time as the invitation to submit an application, the applicants will receive an invitation to present and discuss their proposals with an interdisciplinary peer review panel in December 2025.

In the pre-structured template, essential questions about the concept have to be answered, such as what the planned strategic development of the professorship entails, the motivation behind it, which specific steps will be taken, and what a possible success of the strategic development could look like.

Please enter the proposed budget and budget justification directly into the application portal.

In addition to the completed template, the following additional documents must be uploaded via the Volkswagen Foundation's application portal at this stage:

- Budget (template is available in the funding portal),
- Personnel concept,
- Institutional statement(s).

It is mandatory to include a binding institutional statement with the full proposal. This statement must describe the institutional framework and how the concept fits into the overall strategy for research and/or teaching of the respective organizational unit. It must also describe the provision of the necessary basic equipment and, depending on the content of the concept, own contributions of appropriate size are expected. If you applied for teaching substitution, the university must guarantee in its statement that you will be temporarily exempted from your duties for the time that was applied for. Any necessary construction measures are to be guaranteed by the university. In order to ensure the sustainability of the proposed measures, a commitment must be made to cover the costs that will arise on a permanent basis. Depending on the scale of the project as well as the amount of own contributions to be made, the institutional

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statement must be signed by the dean's office and/or the university management.

If the applicant has changed the institution within the eligibility period but before the application was submitted, the requested funds must be related to the appointment funds and their additionality must be explained separately. In these cases, an additional institutional statement from the university administration should be provided.

Further optional documents may be added to the proposal, e.g

- Bibliography,
- Data management plan, if applicable,
- Quotations for equipment (>10,000 EUR).

The evaluation of the submitted proposals will be based amongst others on the following **criteria**:

- academic excellence of the applicant,
- creative potential of the applicant,
- motivation of the applicant for the strategic development of the professorship,
- innovativeness of the concept, also with regard to the previous research focus,
- viability of the concept,
- significance of the concept for the respective field of research,
- potential integration of the concept into the strategy of the university or organizational unit.

In the event of a rejection in one of the two stages, it is not possible to resubmit a revised version of the concept. If an applicant is still eligible to apply for the next round of "Momentum", a new concept in terms of content can only be submitted after prior consultation with the Foundation.

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NOTES ON APPLICATION/APPLICATION STRUCTURE

All application documents must be submitted in English via the Foundation's funding platform (<https://portal.volkswagenstiftung.de>) with the exception of the German summary and the personnel concept. Instructions for doing so can be found online.

In the first stage of the selection process, applicants are only required to submit the CV and the short video proposal. Abstracts in German and English must be entered directly in the funding portal. If invited to the second stage, only the respective required documents need to be submitted. Templates for the CV and the full proposal are available on the call website and must be submitted fully completed.

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