

CALL

PIONEER PROJECTS – IMPETUS FOR THE GERMAN RESEARCH SYSTEM



All disciplines



Innovative pioneer projects for the (German) research system



Max. 500.000 EUR



Max. 3 years

PhD holders, professors and academic administrators at German universities
and research institutes

1 OBJECTIVES

The Volkswagen Foundation aims to contribute to relevant, concrete and practical improvements of the German research system by offering financial scope for fundamental innovations in governance, administration, research, teaching, or transfer. To this end promising ideas for prototypes shall be seized for funding from the scientific community.

With this funding offer, the foundation pursues the goal of influencing structures of the German research system to such an extent that

- the system becomes **more adaptable** to current events or can even **initiate new developments**;
- resources are used **more efficiently**;
- science and administration **work trustfully hand in hand** in order to design the future of the system together.

Thus, this funding offer addresses researchers and academic administrators who share these goals and who want to provide **new impetus** and **shape structures** with a **focused pioneer project** in a specific area of the German research system.

2 FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

The funding offer addresses active researchers as well as academic administrators at research institutions in Germany, who would like to explore a project idea for the further development (of a specific area) of the German research system. A project can relate to any aspect of the research system, such as governance, administration, research, teaching or transfer. The funding should help to create a space for experimentation in order to try out new concepts without the pressure of being successful at all costs. **The project should pursue practical improvements; research projects are not eligible**

for funding. The Foundation expects the knowledge gained during the projects to be shared with interested stakeholders.

In addition to the **qualification** of the applicants for the implementation of the project as well as the **feasibility** of the project planning (including time and cost planning), the following **criteria** are important for the review of the proposals:

1. The project addresses an existing **problem** in the (German) research landscape;
2. The project provides an **impetus** towards change and new structures are created;
3. The project is **decisively novel**, not simply the next incremental improvement;
4. The project can **continue without long-term support** from the Foundation and, ideally, be **scaled up** if successful. The stakeholders directly relevant for upscaling should therefore be involved from the onset of the project.

3 WHAT WE OFFER

Researchers with a PhD, professors and academic administrators at research institutes and universities in Germany are eligible for funding.

The **budget** should be in the range of 50,000 to 500,000 EUR and appropriate to the proposed project. Universities as well as universities for applied sciences may apply for an additional 10% of overhead costs. The chances of funding depend on the content of a project, not on its cost or size. The budget can include any type of staff positions, with the **exception** of personnel funds for

- a) the main applicants' own position and
- b) PhD positions,

both of which cannot be applied for.

There are no other restrictions to the cost plan, as it is determined by the requirements of the project in question. The **duration of the project** also depends on the specific requirements - as a rule, the Foundation assumes that pioneer projects require a duration of between one and three years.

Both academic and non-academic **cooperation partners** may be involved in a project. However, a proposal must always have one main applicant who acts as coordinator and main contact for the Foundation.

4 APPLICATION AND TIMELINE

Projects are recommended for funding after a two-stage selection process:

At a first stage a project outline can be submitted. This project outline is used to come to an understanding whether this project matches the goals of the funding program. In order to guarantee a simple, complete and transparent communication, applicants are asked to fill in a pre-structured form, which can be downloaded from the website. The project outline consists of

- a) a brief description of the addressed problem and the suggested solution,
- b) a strategy for the continuation and scaling after the funding has ended,
- c) a list of the main cooperation partners (if applicable),
- d) a budget outline.

(for details: Project Outline Template for download on the website)

The first stage is not a peer review. The Foundations office assesses the submitted project outlines comparatively with focus on the main idea.

The idea of the project is assessed according to the following aspects:

- Match with the goals of the funding program,
- Well thought through strategy to solve the addressed problem,
- An adequate and realistic goal for a pioneer project.

The foundation chooses those projects, which appear to be the most interesting and promising relative to the goals of this program, for an invitation to submit a full-scale application.

At a second stage, a jury of experts reviews the full proposals. The relevant criteria for this review are

- The quality of the project and the strategy to solve the addressed problem,
- The degree of novelty of the project,
- The qualification of the applicant(s) for this specific project,
- The adequacy of a private foundation as funder for this project and the lack of other funding sources,
- An adequate strategy for the communication of project results,
- Ideas and strategies for the continuation and scaling of the project in case of success,
- The adequacy of the requested budget.

The Board of Trustees of the Volkswagen Foundation decides on the funding based on the experts' recommendations.

Please note that the Volkswagen Foundation accepts and reviews projects ideas only once. Modified or revised versions of the same previously rejected project will not be accepted.

5 CHECKLIST AND GENERAL CONDITIONS

Please submit all documents via the Foundation's application portal by the respective deadline.

The **project outline** (first stage): please use the template available on the Volkswagen Foundation website. This is the only document that has to be submitted at the first stage of the assessment process. The project outline can be written in English or German.

If you are invited to submit a **full proposal**, please submit the following documents by the deadline communicated in the invitation:

- Summary in German (max. 1 page)
- Summary in English (max. 1 page)

- Main text of the proposal in English or German (max. 10 pages)
 - including impact strategy and strategy for continuation
 - Statement on why the project is not eligible for funding from other sources
- CV and list of publications of main applicant and further project members, if applicable
- Budget (as a table)
 - Total sum max. 500,000 Euro (overheads not included)
 - Universities and universities of applied sciences may apply for an additional 10% overheads
- Budget explanation
- Self-set goals including success criteria in a separate document (max. 2 pages)

Please be aware that

- a) every application can only have one main applicant for administrative reasons. Additional persons can be co-applicants.
- b) besides the requirements listed above there are no further formal demands. The foundation tries to give room for the optimal presentation of each individual project and thus restricts the formal requirements to the bare necessities.

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Please get informed 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". Please read

the responses to the “Frequently Asked Questions” thoroughly, as they are part of the call.