

Communication Contest

Circularity in Daily Life

Profile area: Societal Transformations

Deadline: 15.05.2024

(Primary) raw materials are becoming increasingly scarce. Their extraction and processing place an excessive burden on the earth through greenhouse gas emissions, biodiversity loss and water consumption. A transformation towards a significantly reduced raw material footprint is the societal consensus. This is the goal of circularity. Recycled and biogenic materials, prolonged product lifespans, refurbishing and repurposing are key to this.

The transformation to a sustainable use of raw materials and products requires acceptance and the participation of society. To this end, the communication contest "Circularity in daily life" promotes innovative formats of science communication, participatory and dialogical pilot projects and extracurricular knowledge transfer.



Area of research: all disciplines



Type of funding: science communication



Target group: researchers at a university or extramural institute



up to 120,000 EUR, follow-up application possible (up to 60,000 EUR)



up to 1 year



in Germany; cooperation with stakeholders outside academia.

1 Objectives

Within the communication contest 'Circularity in Daily Life', the Volkswagen Foundation invites researchers to join with non-scientific stakeholders for designing and implementing science communication projects that make the resource transition tangible. The planned activities should aim to impart knowledge to laypeople and, ideally, arouse interest in future-relevant STEM¹ topics. One challenge is to transfer new circular approaches from a controlled laboratory environment to an everyday setting and prepare them for communication.

In terms of topics, the communication contest relates to sustainable raw material-product cycles in everyday life. Based on a specific example, the project can deal with usage cascades, zero-waste practices, retrofitting, upcycling, or unfamiliar secondary raw materials. Of particular importance is an original concept that arouses curiosity, inspires amazement, and encourages participation. Applicants are free to choose the practical implementation, such as exhibits, Fab-Lab or MakerSpace setups, serious games, participative or dialogical interaction formats. However, well-established formats like repair cafés, collection of old appliances for recycling, waste picking campaigns for a clean environment, and youth research competitions are excluded.

The Foundation attaches great importance to a well-thought-out communication concept that is based on the current state of research on circularity. Therefore, the science communication instrument should be fitting for the selected target group. Promising applications describe a clear communication objective, a defined target group, a recruitment concept, an implementation plan (including location and date, if applicable) and a performance evaluation. It is therefore also necessary to explain how exactly evidence of goal achievement will be recorded, including details on the information collected and indicators used.

Ideally, scientific and practical expertise on communication and didactics as well as on circularity and the sustainable use of resources are combined in the conception. Accordingly, the project team should be transdisciplinary and preferably also interdisciplinary (i.e., at least one member from academic research and one practitioner outside of academia). It is of advantage, if at least one team member has suitable networks and takes on a multiplier role to gain access to the target group and to disseminate a successful measure.

Note: This communication contest is aimed at sustainable use of raw materials and products by private end consumers. Circularity in a professional context, resource cycles in companies, and industrial symbioses are not addressed here. The field of action 'Circularity at universities' is also not addressed. Therefore, applications for curriculum development, student competitions or campus-related activities of green offices at universities cannot be considered. A thematic proximity to a funded cooperation project under 'Circularity with recycled and biogenic resources'² is possible, but not mandatory.

2 Scope of Funding

Target group-specific and innovative science communication and extracurricular education on resource-product cycles can get support. The funding relates to the conception, preparation, implementation, and evaluation of the activity. All funds must be administered by the applicant's

¹ Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics

² Researchers seeking funding for a scientific-technical project are referred to the separate call for proposals 'Cooperation projects: Circularity with recycled and biogenic resources'.

university or extramural research institute, including any costs incurred by the practitioner's organization. The following formal requirements apply:

2.1 Project design and eligibility

- Realization in Germany
- Firmly agreed cooperation with a practitioner outside of academia (such as company, freelancer, municipal facility, media, museum, sustainability initiative, science center, association, club)
- Expertise on science communication and circularity in the transdisciplinary project team
- Eligible to apply:
Professor, group leader or researcher with a doctorate at a scientific institution in Germany (i.e., university or recognized extramural research institute).

2.2 Budget and duration

- Amount of funding: up to 120,000 €
- Project duration: 1 year
- Eligible for funding are expenses for scientific staff and, if applicable, other staff at the university or extra-mural institute, travel expenses, recurring costs (like consumables, contracts, work contract, e.g. for a participating non-academic institutions or practitioner), equipment (like construction kit, measuring device).

The initial application may not exceed € 120,000, plus 10% overheads for universities. If a project is successful, a follow-up application for up to € 60,000 is possible. The purpose of follow-up funding is the further development and dissemination of best practice examples, for instance with tried and tested instructions, documentation material, or open access publications. If you are interested in a follow-up application, please get in touch with your contact at the Foundation in due course to clarify the application modalities. For a follow-up application, you should be able to submit a final report including the results of the performance evaluation as well as a new work plan and time schedule.

Overheads

State or state recognized universities and universities for applied sciences can apply for 10 % overheads. For more information on overheads, see "Information on lump sum for overheads", which is provided in our [download-section](#).

General Information

The Foundation cannot be held responsible for any obligations entered into prior to the receipt of grant approval.

Applications that have been or are intended to be submitted in this or a similar form to another funding organization will not be processed by the Foundation. Applications that do not meet the formal requirements will not be submitted for review. The Foundation can only award funds to scientific institutions.

3 Application and Selection Procedure

3.1 Time schedule



3.2 Procedure

Applications can be submitted in German or English. Processing takes about six months from the application deadline.

First, the Foundation will review all submitted applications regarding their suitability for the purpose of the call. All suitable applications are forwarded to an interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary jury for a comparative assessment and final selection. The funding decision is made by the Foundation based on the jury's recommendations.

Review Criteria:

- Quality and originality of the project
- Solid scientific basis of the chosen example for circularity
- Congruence of measure(s) and selected target group
- Relevance for the target group and potential for learning
- Coherence of the planned conception, implementation, and dissemination
- Plausibility of the evaluation and impact criteria
- Outstanding qualification of the applicant(s), purposeful composition of the project team and a well-designed integration of practitioner's expertise.

4 Application Checklist

4.1 Electronic Application – Instructions

Please read the information about the electronic application system on the website of the Volkswagen Foundation prior to submitting your application. Information can be found in the document "[Electronic Application System – Instructions and Tips](#)". It is important that applicants register all involved parties early on in the process. Without a user profile it is not possible to invite co-applicants or to submit an application.

If you have technical questions about using the electronic application system, please contact support@volkswagenstiftung.de.

4.2 Application documents

4.2.1 Proposal according to the template file

Please use the template provided on the website for your application or use the structure provided there. The length of the application is limited to 7 pages. Information is required on the project title, communication objective, concept, implementation, evaluation, and the design of the cooperation.

4.2.2 Budget Plan with Justification

Please enter the budget directly in the application portal. The expenses are subdivided into scientific personnel, further personnel, travel costs, other recurring costs, non-recurring equipment costs, publication costs and, if applicable, lump sum for overheads. Please indicate contracts for work and services and other cost items that are intended for the practitioner's organization. All cost items must be justified with respect to the project-needs; keywords in the budget form are sufficient for this purpose.

Due to the short project duration, the communication contest is not suitable for funding doctoral positions. If a practitioner returns to a university or extramural institute for the project, a leave of absence from the current position and the modalities of temporary employment must be clarified in advance with the respective administration (pay scale classification, conditions for journalist in residence, artist in residence etc.).

4.2.3 Curriculum Vitae of every applicant

A CV template is available on the website for applicants from academic institutions. Practitioners outside of academia must be listed with name and organization. Use of the CV template is optional for them. Alternatively, they are welcome to submit an informal brief description of their organization with an informal CV listing their professional stations and relevant expertise for the project (max. 2 pages).

5 Contact

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6 More Information

- [Website VolkswagenStiftung](#)
- [FAQs for applicants](#)
- [Application System](#)
- [Electronic application made easy - instructions and tips](#)
- [Useful Information and downloads](#)
- [Recommendations for sustainable traveling](#)
- [Influence of generative models of text and image creation in research and in the funding activities of the Volkswagen Foundation](#)
- [Open Science Policy](#)
- [Transdisciplinarity \(in German\)](#)
- [Funding Diversity](#)