

**Information for
Applicants 102**

**"Original – isn't it?"
New Options for the Humanities and Cultural Studies**

Next Deadline: [see website](#)

- I. Objectives**
- II. Funding Opportunities**
- III. General Conditions**
- IV. Application and Selection Procedure**
- V. Application Checklist**

I. Objectives

The funding initiative “Original – isn't it?” aims at the **scientific exploration of original ideas in the humanities and cultural studies**. However, the specific nature of the themes belonging to the humanities and cultural studies, makes it difficult to say precisely what constitutes “original”, “new”, or “innovative”. It may encompass anything that contradicts established knowledge or generally accepted intuitions; or just as well the development of a new approach to research, a new hypothesis, a new theory, observation of a new phenomenon, and the discovery of knowledge gaps.

With this funding initiative the Foundation wishes to encourage scholars in the humanities and cultural studies to embark on projects of groundbreaking originality. The Foundation does not specify what form this originality should take. It is up to the applicants to put forward the arguments that determine what is “new” in their proposed projects.

II. Funding Opportunities

Funding Line 1 “Komm! ins Offene...”

This funding line takes its title from a Hölderlin poem. It addresses the individual researcher, offering them a possibility to develop a new idea, a new hypothesis or a new topic in the form of an essay or treatise (80-120 pages): In other words, in a genre that reveals the author's intellectual exploratory thrust and demonstrates the particular suitability of the topic for explorative investigation and new approaches. This initiative does explicitly not aim at comprehensive books. It's rather all about unusual, intelligent and comprehensible, clearly formulated insights designed to rivet the attention of the readers – be they experts, members of academia, or of the general public. Projects can be funded with up to **100,000 euros** over a funding period of up to **1 year**.

Funding Line 2 “Constellations”

The title of this funding line is inspired by Walter Benjamin who used the term in various contexts. It addresses researchers who wish to join in small **teams of up to four partners** to follow up on new research ideas and put their feasibility to the test in an exploratory phase. Here, too, the main criterion is the potential for groundbreaking originality. The project results are to be gathered in a co-authored publication (article, essay, book) under formulation of a common agenda, including the development of coherent terminologies or (sets of) methods. Teams comprising partners drawn from the social sciences, life sciences, natural sciences, or engineering are particularly welcome, although – depending on the respective agenda – this is not in any way a requirement. The maximum funding period is **1.5 years**. Projects with **up to three project partners** can be funded with up to **150,000 euros**. Projects with **four project partners** can be funded with up to **200,000 euros**.

A total of approximately 20 projects will be funded per call. If you are interested in projects that have been granted before within this initiative, please see our website under “Project-Persons-Search”.

III. General Conditions

The funding initiative is open to scientists at all career levels after the PhD working in the humanities or cultural studies. Scientists working in theoretical social sciences are also eligible to apply. The main applicant has to be employed at a scientific institution in Germany. Researchers from foreign institutions are welcome to apply as co-applicants in funding line 2.

Funding can be allocated in a flexible manner to cover the costs of resources and staffing. This could include costs arising from the integration of project partners within Germany and abroad, research

stays at outside institutions, workshops or the costs of employing a deputy during an additional sabbatical. Translation costs may also be applied for. In funding line 1 there is no provision for staffing with post-docs other than for the applicants themselves. Funding will be allocated on a lump-sum basis, i.e. there is no need for the individual applicant to adhere to a firm budget plan. This is to enable a flexible reallocation of funds in accordance with the course of the project.

The following **costs cannot be considered**:

- Overheads
- Financing of doctoral studies
- Child care

It is a condition that **projects should commence in a timely manner**, normally in the semester after the award of the grant. However, it is also possible to start the project earlier. The grantees of both funding lines are to present their project results at a forum to be held in Herrenhausen Palace. Every project is invited to present their preliminary findings in the form of a talk and/or poster presentation.

IV. Application and Selection Procedure

Applications must include a 3-page project description and a 1-page self-assessment (see item 5: Application Checklist).

Depending on the working language of the discipline, applications should be written in English or German.

The selection procedure is designed as a two-stage process. First all the submitted short proposals will be reviewed internally by the Foundation in order to arrive at a comprehensive shortlist. The final selection will be carried out by a jury comprising international researchers drawn from different disciplines. The members of the jury will receive the application documents in anonymized form.

Following criteria are important for the **selection procedure**:

- Potential for groundbreaking originality: What is the aspect of surprise? What is the aspect that rivets the eye?
- Relevance of the topic for science, the general public and society as a whole
- How the project fits in with the funding format
- Appeal of the expected results for the respective target groups
- Lack of funds at applicants' own institutions or possibilities of funding from other sources.

In view of the short processing time (5 to 6 months) and the large number of applications it is, unfortunately, not possible to give reasons for the rejection of proposals or to obtain feedback from the jury.

V. Application Checklist

Please submit a short proposal online via the Volkswagen Foundation's electronic application system, where you can upload the following information as attachments (pdf files):

- Short proposal (max. 1,200 words in all, approx. 3 pages, see 'Short Proposal sheet')
 - clear and focused research questions, e.g. illustrated with an example
 - current state of research with up to 20 bibliographical references that are not included in the word count
- Summaries of the project in German and in English (max. 200 words each)

The proposal itself should be anonymous and omit the applicant's name, their institute's name, and any references by the applicant's group.

- Self-assessment answering the following questions (max. 300 words, approx. 1 page, see 'Self-assessment sheet'):
 - Where do you perceive "the originality" and "the new" in your proposed project?
 - Why are you applying within the context of this funding initiative and not at your university or another funding organization?
 - Are there any difficulties or counter arguments you would like to address at the outset?
 - Where do you intend to publish your essay/treatise (funding line 1)? Where do you intend to publish your article/book (funding line 2)?

Your self-assessment should also take into account the anonymity of the evaluation process.

- Short CVs of all applicants (max. 2 pages per applicant), including the position you hold at your institution, and a list of five selected publications (in funding line 2, please submit all CVs in one file).

The CV will only be used for the internal pre-selection process and will NOT be made accessible to members of the jury.

- Cover sheet downloaded from the application system
 - in funding line 1: Signed by the applicant.
 - in funding line 2: Signed by all applicants. In the event of applications from different institutions or locations, it is possible to use more than one cover sheet. All the cover sheets must be uploaded, duly signed.
- Miscellaneous (optional)

Any other documents that may be submitted will NOT be made accessible to members of the jury.

Please enter an **approximate budget plan** in the application system. In case you apply for personnel costs, please specify if the costs are for your own position, a substitute or other personnel costs. In funding line 2 please enter the budget plans for each applicant separately.

Please obtain information 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".

Information

Dr. Sebastian Schneider
Phone: +49 (0)511 8381-373
Fax: +49 (0)511 8381-4373
E-Mail: s.schneider@volkswagenstiftung.de

VolkswagenStiftung
Kastanienallee 35
30519 HANNOVER
GERMANY
www.volkswagenstiftung.de

Additional information

- ["Original – isn't it?" – FAQs](#)
- [Self-assessment sheet \(Download\)](#)
- [Short Proposal sheet \(Download\)](#)
- [Application FAQs](#)
- [Information for Applicants from Abroad](#)
- [Electronic Application System – Instructions and Tips](#)
- [Link to Webpage "Original – isn't it?"](#)