

CALL

PIONEER PROJECTS – IMPETUS FOR THE GERMAN RESEARCH SYSTEM

Deadlines: for preproposals twice p.a., 31 March and 31 October, respectively



All disciplines



Innovative pioneer projects for the (German) research system



Max. 500.000 EUR



Max. 3 years



PhDs, professors and academic administrators at German universities and research institutes



1 OBJECTIVES

The Volkswagen Foundation wants to offer experimental spaces for fundamental innovations and significant improvements in all areas of the (German) research system. To this end, the Foundation will fund promising ideas for pioneer projects from the academic community.

With this funding offer, the Foundation pursues the goal of inducing structural changes of the German research system to such an extent that

- the system becomes more innovative;
- competition and cooperation are balanced in the system;
- the system becomes more resilient and adaptable to current developments.

This funding offer addresses researchers and academic administrators who share this goal 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 who, in addition to their research activities, would like to explore a project idea for the further development (of a specific area) of the German research system, as well as academic administrators at universities and research institutions in Germany. Projects can relate to any aspect of the research system, such as the organisation of research, teaching, transfer, governance and administration. The envisaged project should pursue practical improvements; pure 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 desideratum or problem** in the (German) research landscape;
2. the project gives **impetus** and **shapes** structures, if necessary also across borders;
3. the idea is **novel** and **innovative**;
4. the project can be **continued without long-term support** from the Foundation and, ideally, be scaled up. The actors 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 can submit structured preproposals at any time (see “Application and Timeline” below).

The budget should be in the range of 50,000 to 500,000 EUR and appropriate to the proposed project. Apart from that, the chances of funding depend on the relevance and originality 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 the main applicants’ own position and 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

The funding offer is deliberately designed to be open and flexible - whether a project fits the funding objectives in principle will be assessed using a structured two-step selection process. Please use the two **templates** that we provide for this purpose:

- [Template for preproposals](#)
- [List of guiding questions](#)

The documents must be completed in English or German and may be submitted at any time by e-mail to the following address:

Pioniervorhaben_Wissen@volkswagenstiftung.de

If necessary, you may clarify questions about your project in a preliminary phone conversation. After the deadlines for the preproposals, the Foundation decides which applicants to invite for submitting a full proposal. A jury of experts will discuss the full proposals at selection meetings twice a year.

5 CHECKLIST AND GENERAL CONDITIONS

If invited, please submit the full proposal via the Foundation's application portal by the respective deadline. Full proposals must be in English and must follow the following structure:

- Summary in German (max. 1,200 characters)
- Summary in English (max. 1,200 characters)
- Main text of the proposal in English (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, if applicable,
- Budget (as a table)
- Budget explanation
- Self-set goals including success criteria in a separate document

Contact

Dr. Selahattin Danisman

Phone: +49 (0)511 8381 256

danisman@volkswagenstiftung.de

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". Please also read the responses to the "Frequently Asked Questions" thoroughly as they are part of the call.