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SPIN-OFF FELLOWSHIPS
GUIDELINES FOR THE SECOND CALL FOR
SPIN-OFF FELLOWSHIPS – 2ND APPLICATION ROUND

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1 PREFACE

The FFG is your partner for research and development. These Guidelines are designed to support you in submitting a funding application under the Spin-off Fellowships programme. They explain:

- how to obtain funding,
- what conditions must be met, and
- how the application process works.

The Spin-off Fellowships programme is an initiative of the Federal Ministry for Education, Science and Research (BMBWF).

A Spin-off Fellowship provides a framework for researchers to develop intellectual property (IP) of universities or research institutions with the aim of commercially exploiting the IP via a future downstream company start-up. The programme supports researchers (Fellows) who would like to use their research idea to establish a business, and who have decided to leave their career in science to follow another challenging professional path as entrepreneurs. The research and development activities at the university or research institution must be undertaken by the Fellows.

2 KEY POINTS AT A GLANCE

Table 1: Key points of the Call

Key points	Information
Short description	The Call is directed at those organisations listed in 4.2. Applications for a Spin-off Fellowship are submitted to the FFG by the respective university or research institute. The Fellow is responsible for the project management. The Fellow(s) will address technologies or research results owned by an eligible organisation. They develop these technologies or results so that they meet user needs to the extent that, once the Fellowship ends, it is possible to establish a company. Throughout the term of the Fellowship the Fellow(s) are employed at the university or research institution. They must be 100% focused on this task and not assigned to any teaching or other research activities.
Online	https://www.ffg.at/spin-off-fellowships-programm
Funding rate	max. 100 %
Amount of funding / eligible total costs	min. € 100,000 and max. € 500,000
Project start and duration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Earliest project start: 01/01/2024 ✓ Latest project start: 01/04/2024 ✓ Duration: min. 12 months, max. 18 months
Type of application	Single application
Funding provider	Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (BMBWF)
Total budget	A total of € 13.5 million in funding is available for the second call.
Eligible costs	<p>The following costs are eligible for funding under the Spin-off Fellowships programme:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Personnel costs – Costs of materials – Costs of infrastructure use – Third-party costs – Travel costs <p><u>NOTE:</u> Overhead costs are <u>not</u> eligible for funding!</p>

Key points	Information
Application deadlines	Application deadlines for the 2nd Call: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 1st application round: 20/05 – 14/09/2022 – 11 approved projects – 2nd application round: 10/05 – 19/09/2023, 12:00 (CEST) – 3rd application round: scheduled for Sept. 2024 – 4th application round: scheduled for Sept. 2025
Jury meeting and hearing	Save the date for the hearings: Scheduled for CW 48/2023
Language	German or English
Submission	The project application including cost planning is submitted online via eCall. The following annexes must be uploaded together with the funding application: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Declaration of support from the university or research institution – Letter of motivation and recommendation from the host – Individual IP exploitation agreement based on the spin-off strategy of the university or research institution – Presentation of the planned business model in the form of a 1-page Lean Canvas or Business Model Canvas – CV of the Fellow(s)
Contact persons	Programme Management: Barbara Lohwasser, barbara.lohwasser@ffg.at , 05 7755 2201 Markus Pröll-Schobel, markus.proell-schobel@ffg.at , 05 7755 2407 Astrid Stakne, astrid.stakne@ffg.at , 05 7755 2406 Information on costs and financing: Katharina Eder, katharina.eder@ffg.at , 05 7755 6087 Martina Petracs, martina.petracs@ffg.at , 05 7755 6081
Submission portal	https://ecall.ffg.at

3 OBJECTIVES OF THE CALL

The objective of the Spin-off Fellowship programme is

- 1 to enhance the potential for commercial exploitation of
 - a) early-stage technologies or
 - b) developments in the arts, the advancement and appreciation of the arts/artistic research (AAA) as well as the humanities, social sciences, and cultural sciences (HSC)

at qualified Austrian universities and research institutions,

- 2 to exploit this potential for commercialisation, primarily through start-ups,
- 3 to help the projects and researchers (Fellows) selected for funding to prepare for commercial exploitation to the extent that this can begin immediately after the project ends,
- 4 to increase the chance that the outcome of this funding will result in the establishment of an RTI-focused company in Austria.

Win-win situation

The Spin-off Fellowships programme effectively creates a win-win situation for both the researchers and their universities and research institutions.

Researchers are offered the opportunity to transform an idea into a marketable product or service in a relatively short period of time. Targeted training measures are designed to prepare Fellows to establish a company start-up.

The **programme promotes knowledge transfer** at the intersection between science and industry. In many cases, universities and research institutions do not exploit their know-how, and patents often merely incur costs. The programme is intended to expand options for commercialising intellectual property and increasing the chances of business success. Successful commercial exploitation will generate returns for the universities or research institutions over the medium to long term.

4 THE BASIS FOR FUNDING

4.1 What is a Spin-off Fellowship?

The aim of a funded Spin-off Fellowship is to develop the intellectual property held by a university or research institution so that, after completion of the Spin-off Fellowship, it can be commercially exploited in the form of a start-up. The intellectual property is developed by the Fellow(s) with the support of their host organisation. The following aspects are key:

- During the maximum project duration of 18 months, the Fellows must be employees of an eligible organisation and work exclusively on the project.
- The **project activity** carried out as part of the Fellowship focuses on applied **research and development**. This involves taking into account both strategic market considerations as well as the needs of future user groups.
- The project must be **supported by a host**. A host is a supervisor (e.g., Head of an Institute or Department) who holds a higher position in the organisation's hierarchy than the Fellow.
- The host must provide a complete workplace and standard laboratory and/or workshop facilities. These are classified as a contribution in kind by the university or research institute and cannot be charged to the project.
- In addition to the host, it is recommended that a **business mentor** is also provided to support the project implementation. Normally, the mentor will be someone from the host organisation's network or operating environment who provides their expertise **free of charge**, particularly during the project period.
- A **specific IP commercialisation agreement** based on the university or research institution's spin-off strategy must be signed prior to submission of the application. This is to ensure that the potential subject matter of the agreement and associated basic legal commercialisation and remuneration aspects have been clarified prior to the start of the project. In drawing up the agreement, care must be taken to ensure that state aid requirements are considered, that the agreement does not preclude subsequent financing/participation by a fund or other investors, or that, as a result of provisions being insufficiently clear, the key aspects of the agreement cannot be determined. The following are examples of **problematic agreements**:
 - No time limit for revenue sharing
 - Revenue sharing at levels higher than standard for the industry
 - Poorly defined change of control rules
 - Poorly defined milestone payments
 - Poorly defined stakeholding for the applicant organisation (considering blocking minorities and SME status)
- During the Fellowship, the Fellows should acquire or deepen a **(basic) knowledge of topics relevant to the market and start-ups**.

- Furthermore, the FFG organises regular **online talks by experts** on issues relevant for start-ups, as well as the chance to participate in person in **networking events**.

Anyone deciding to apply for a Fellowship is choosing to leave their scientific career at a university or research institution and to set out on a new professional career path.

4.2 Who is eligible for funding?

The following organisations are eligible to apply for a Spin-off Fellowship:

- Austrian universities (acc. to Universities Act 2002 (UG), Federal Law Gazette (BGBl.) I No. 120/2002)¹
- Austrian private universities (acc. to Private Higher Education Act (PrivHG))²
- Austrian universities of applied sciences (acc. to University of Applied Sciences Act (FHG))³
- Austrian Academy of Sciences (FN 71839x)
- Ludwig Boltzmann Gesellschaft GmbH (FN 261775p)
- Institute of Science and Technology Austria (IST Austria)
- COMET Centres as part of their non-economic activities in the non-K area
- Silicon Austria Labs GmbH (FN 459345h)
- Joanneum Research Forschungsgesellschaft mbH (FN 48282d)
- Austrian Institute of Technology GmbH – AIT (FN 115980i)
- Federal museums acc. to the Federal Museums Act 2002, Federal Law Gazette (BGBl.) I No. 14/2002 and other museums (acc. to the Guidelines for the Austrian Museum Quality Seal, unless the funding provider is a federal, regional or local authority).

Fellows – the target group of the programme – are persons with an affinity for research and entrepreneurship who hold a minimum of a Bachelor's degree. At the start of the project, the Fellow(s) must be employed at the university or research institution.

Applications are made by the eligible organisation; organisations may make multiple applications. The Fellow takes the project lead and acts as the contact person for the FFG. Where one project involves several Fellows, the team must nominate one person as Project Leader.

¹ The smallest organisational unit that can participate on behalf of a university is the university institute or a comparable organisational unit pursuant to the University Organisation Act (UOG 2002/§ 20). The participating organisational unit (institute or comparable unit) must be duly authorised according to UOG 2002/§ 27. Subordinate organisational units (e.g. working groups) are not eligible to act as a project partner.

² see also <https://www.bmbwf.gv.at/Themen/HS-Uni/Hochschulsystem/Privatuniversitaeten.html>

³ see also <https://www.bmbwf.gv.at/Themen/HS-Uni/Hochschulsystem/Fachhochschulen.html>

The relevant technologies or research findings are the property of the eligible organisation.

4.3 How much funding is granted?

The funding per Spin-off Fellowship is

- at least €100,000 and
- a maximum of €500,000

A Spin-off Fellowship has a minimum duration of 12 months. The maximum duration is limited to 18 months. If a start-up is established prior to the end of the project, then the Fellowship is terminated prematurely.

The funding rate is 100% as the funded measure is a non-economic activity (see [Framework for State aid for research and development and innovation \(2022/C 414/01\)](#)).

4.4 Which costs are eligible/ineligible for funding?

Eligible costs must be allocable directly to the project. This means that:

- they are incurred additionally to the normal operating costs during the funding period;
- they are in accordance with the funding contract;
- they can be evidenced by receipts.

Details on cost recognition can be found in the [Cost Guidelines 2.1](#).

Further useful information can be found in the [FAQs about the Spin-off Fellowship programme](#).

The Cost Guidelines apply to the Spin-off Fellowship programme with the following restriction:

Overhead costs are not eligible for funding!

4.4.1 Eligible costs

The following costs are eligible for funding:

- Personnel costs
- Costs of materials
- Costs of infrastructure use
- Third-party costs
- Travel costs

Personnel costs:

- The Fellows must be employees of the applicant organisation. The Fellows must work exclusively on the project and may not teach or publish or undertake any other research activities during the project duration. The Fellowship is not a grant for completing a Master or PhD thesis.
- The costs for collaborating staff can be included where requested and justified.
- The host acts as the scientific mentor and supports the project. However, this input is classified as a contribution in kind by the university or research institute and cannot be charged to the project.

Costs of materials:

This cost category includes project-related consumables, low-value assets, inventory withdrawals, and pro rata licence fees.

Costs of infrastructure use:

You can include the pro rata depreciation of R&D-relevant equipment, a machine hour rate, or the leasing rate.

The workplace and standard laboratory and/or workshop facilities used by the Fellow must be provided by the host free of charge.

Third-party costs:

All purchased services as well as fees, especially for training measures and external coaching, must be listed as third-party costs. **Training** courses may cover areas such as innovation management, user-oriented approaches to market analysis, business model development, certification, or preparing business and financial plans. The individually organised training activities are intended to help the Fellow gain the skills they need. The guideline is around 80 hours per Fellow.

The research and development work must be conducted by the Fellows as a matter of principle. **Costs for the purchase of R&D services** which cannot be carried out by the Fellow or the host organisation must be explained in detail and justified in the application. Applicants are advised to additionally upload an **offer or detailed specifications** when entering the costs in the eCall system.

Travel costs:

Travel costs must be clearly relevant to the project. Only the travel costs of project staff can be charged. This includes, for example, travel expenses to FFG networking events, trainings or for the purpose of obtaining user feedback.

4.4.2 Non-eligible costs

The following cost types are ineligible for funding under a Fellowship:

- Administrative costs of the host organisation
- All costs and expenses for host and mentor
- Costs of representation
- Costs of hospitality
- Costs for preparing business plan and financial plan
- Costs associated with marketing and customer acquisition
- Costs for distribution and patent maintenance

Imputed costs cannot be charged. The final amount of the eligible total project costs and funding will only be determined after completion of the project in the course of the audit.

4.5 Is research integrity ensured?

Funding may only be granted to applicants who demonstrate scientific integrity during both the application phase and project execution.

The FFG is a member of the [Austrian Agency for Research Integrity \(OeAWI\)](#) and is thus committed to safeguarding good scientific practice.

If a lack of scientific integrity or misconduct is suspected in the course of the evaluation process or project reviews, the relevant documents may be forwarded to the OeAWI Commission for Research Integrity, which will then decide whether to initiate an independent investigation procedure and, if necessary, will carry out any necessary investigations.

If the investigation reveals a lack of scientific integrity or misconduct (e.g. plagiarism), the application must be rejected for formal reasons. If funding has already been granted, the funding must be reduced, retained or reclaimed.

5 SUBMISSION PROCEDURE

5.1 What is the procedure for submission?

Applications must be submitted electronically via **eCall** before the deadline:
<https://ecall.ffg.at>.

How does it work?

- Enter the project description consisting of content description, work plan, and cost and financing online via eCall.
- The system will verify the cost calculation by checking whether the details provided for the project meet the funding conditions (e.g. funding amount, maximum project size, duration)
- Upload the required documents (mandatory Annexes)
- Finalise the application in eCall and click "Submit application"
- Upon successful submission, an acknowledgement will be sent automatically by email.

Not necessary:

- Additional postal submission of a duly executed copy

Not possible:

- Uploading or amending application documents after submission
- Revising the online application after submission

The eCall Tutorial is available at: <https://ecall.ffg.at/tutorial>.

5.2 What details and documents are required for submission

Projects may only be submitted electronically **via eCall**. The application consists of the following online elements, which must be entered in eCall under the following menu items:

- **Content description** presents the content of the project.
- **Work plan** includes the work packages and elements of project management, such as time management plan (GANTT diagram), tasks, milestones, results.
- **Description of organisation** includes the expertise of the individual project participants, a description of results from other projects and project-relevant infrastructure.
- **Costs and funding** describes all cost categories. The totals for each work package will be automatically displayed in the online work plan.

In addition to the online elements, the following mandatory Annexes must be uploaded and submitted together with the funding application:

- Declaration of support from the university or research institution (see template provided in the Download Center of the current call)
- Letter of motivation and recommendation from the host (see template provided in the Download Center)
- Individual IP commercialisation agreement, based on the spin-off strategy of the relevant university or research institution
- Presentation of the planned business model in the form of a Lean Canvas or Business Model Canvas (1 page)
- CVs of the Fellows (together with the personnel costs in eCall)

The funding application must be submitted in German or English.

5.3 Is it necessary to mention other projects?

Applicants are required to list additional projects related to the proposed project in order to facilitate the evaluation. The results and expertise obtained from these projects must be presented. Relevant projects include:

- previous projects whose results provide the basis for the proposed project,
- ongoing or completed projects (of the previous 3 years) that are thematically related to the proposed project,
- project applications that are thematically related to the call,
- project applications that are related to the submitted project.

Multiple funding of costs that have already been funded is not permitted. The proposed project must therefore be clearly differentiated from thematically related projects that have already received funding. The complete presentation of previous funding granted or requested does not reduce the chance of receiving funding under this call, but rather demonstrates the expertise of the funding applicant.

5.4 How will confidential project data be used?

The FFG processes the personal data of funding applicants and funding recipients provided by the data subjects as part of the application for funding, data collected by the FFG for the purpose of concluding the funding contract, and data generated by searches in the transparency portal according to Sec. 32 (5) of the Transparency Database Act (TDBG 2012) for the following purposes:

- Processing of the funding application and assessment of whether the general and specific funding requirements have been met;
- Conclusion of the funding contract and (if a funding contract has been concluded) compliance with the relevant contractual obligations, including but not limited to administration of the funding payments and monitoring of compliance with funding requirements;

- Compliance with statutory obligations, including but not limited to reporting obligations and control purposes in order to avoid double funding (i.e. Sec. 38 in conjunction with 18, 27, 28 ARR, as well as Sec. 12 FTFG and Sec. 9 FFG-G).

The legal basis of processing is therefore Art. 6 (1) (b) GDPR, i.e. performance of a contract, and Art. 6 (1) (c) GDPR, i.e. compliance with legal obligations.

The personal data will be disclosed to the following institutions in compliance with legal obligations:

- The federal ministries as FFG owners (Ministry for Climate Action, Environment, Energy, Mobility, Innovation and Technology (BMK) and Ministry for Digital and Economic Affairs (BMDW)), other contracting authorities for the management of funding measures (e.g. other federal ministries)
- Third parties, which may include the Court of Audit, EU bodies, and other federal or regional funding agencies.

National and international experts are given access to the submitted documents as part of project evaluation – see section 6.2. Such experts act as processors in the name and on behalf of the FFG and are required to take technical and organisational measures to ensure data security and data confidentiality.

Project content and results may only be published (e.g. on the website or in social media forums) with the consent of the funding recipient (Art. 6 (1) (a) GDPR) unless the FFG has a legal obligation to do so.

The FFG must also obtain the consent of the data subject for any other data use exceeding these provisions.

The FFG is under a legal obligation to maintain secrecy about all company and project information pursuant to Sec. 9 (4) of the Austrian Research Promotion Agency Act (FFG-G, Federal Law Gazette BGBl. I No. 73/2004).

The FFG will ensure a level of protection appropriate to the risk in terms of confidentiality, integrity, availability and resilience of the systems by implementing technical and organisational measures within the meaning of Art. 32 GDPR that are sufficient and appropriate for protecting the data against accidental or unlawful destruction, loss and unauthorised access.

Further information about ensuring the confidentiality and security of personal data during the course of the project is available in the [eCall Tutorial](#).

6 EVALUATION AND DECISION

6.1 What is the formal check?

The formal check serves to examine the funding application for formal correctness and completeness.

We will communicate the result of the formal check within two weeks via eCall:

- If the formal criteria are not met and the deficiencies cannot be corrected, the application for funding will not enter the subsequent steps of the procedure.
- If the deficiencies can be corrected, you may rectify these problems within a reasonable period of time.

Should it transpire after the formal check that incorrect information has been given, the funding application may also be removed from consideration at a subsequent point in the procedure.

Eligibility for participation

Table 2: Checklist for formal check – Eligibility for participation

Criterion	Items checked	Can deficiency be corrected?	Consequence
The funding applicants are entitled to submit an application.	Eligible funding applicants include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Austrian universities – Austrian private universities – Austrian universities of applied sciences – Austrian Academy of Sciences – Ludwig Boltzmann Gesellschaft GmbH – Institute of Science and Technology Austria (IST Austria) – COMET Centres as part of their non-economic activities in the non-K area – Silicon Austria Labs GmbH – Joanneum Research Forschungsgesellschaft mbH – Austrian Institute of Technology GmbH – AIT – Federal museums acc. to the Federal Museums Act 2002, BGBl. I No. 14/2002, other museums (acc. to the Guidelines) 	no	Rejection for formal reasons

Criterion	Items checked	Can deficiency be corrected?	Consequence
	for the Austrian Museum Quality Seal), unless the funding provider is a federal, regional or local authority.		

Completeness of project description in eCall

Table 3: Checklist for formal check – Completeness of project description

Criterion	Items checked	Can deficiency be corrected?	Consequence
The project description in eCall has been completed in full and in the correct language.	The project description in eCall must be completed in full. Language: German or English	no	Rejection for formal reasons

Annexes

Table 4: Checklist for formal check – annexes

Criterion	Items checked	Can deficiency be corrected?	Consequence
The mandatory annexes have been submitted.	The following annexes must be uploaded together with the funding application: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Declaration of support from the university or research institution (see template) – Letter of motivation and recommendation from the host (see template) – Individual IP exploitation agreement based on the spin-off strategy of the university or research institution – Presentation of the planned business model in the form of a 1-page Lean Canvas or Business Model Canvas – CV of the Fellow(s) (together with personnel costs in eCall) 	yes	Rectification via eCall after submission

6.2 What is the evaluation process?

National and international experts will review the submitted documents in accordance with the criteria mentioned in section 6.2.2.

It is possible to exclude reviewers (individuals or staff of particular organisations) stating the reasons (menu item "Project Data").

Recommendations and/or requirements can be defined as part of the evaluation process. Recommendations are non-binding remarks and opinions designed to support the applicant in implementing the project. Requirements are binding – see section 7.2.

6.2.1 Peer reviews

The FFG Programme Management initially obtains two peer reviews for each application from experts not working in Austria to assess their scientific quality. These reviews are made available to the members of the evaluation committee together with the funding application.

6.2.2 What criteria are used to evaluate applications for funding?

Applications for funding are evaluated according to the following 4 criteria:

- 1 Quality of the project
- 2 Suitability of funding applicants/project participants
- 3 Potential/Benefit and exploitation
- 4 Relevance of the project to the Call

The projects are evaluated by awarding points in each criterion. In addition, there is a threshold value for each criterion. The threshold value for the main criteria is 60%. Projects which do not reach the specified threshold value for one of the main criteria will be rejected. If the application scores zero points in a sub-criterion of the 4th main criterion "Relevance of the project to the call", the application will also be rejected. An application can score a maximum of 100 points. Projects must reach a total threshold value of 75 points to be eligible for funding. The following tables show the evaluation criteria, including the relevant sub-criteria.

Evaluation criteria

Table 5: Evaluation criterion "Quality of the project"

1. Quality of the project	Max. points 30 (threshold 18)
1.1.State of the art – How well did the applicant present the state of the art and current state of knowledge, as well as the products and services available in the market?	6
1.2.Innovative content – How innovative is the project in terms of the presented state of the art and current state of knowledge and/or available products and services? – Is the content sufficiently innovative to offer potential to create a start-up?	6
1.3.Quality of planning What is the quality of the planning, assessed according to the following criteria? – Is the schedule and work plan well structured and reasonable? – Are the planned costs reasonable and adequate? – Is the planning realistic in terms of its implementation?	6
1.4.Consideration of user-specific issues – To what extent were user-specific requirements considered in the planning process? – Does the methodology allow the early integration of user feedback? If the project relates to people: ⁴ – What is the quality of the analysis and consideration of <u>gender-specific topics</u> in the planning process?	6
1.5.Consideration of sustainability goals – To what extent does the project consider sustainability goals (ecological, social, economic), especially with respect to climate neutrality? – What account is taken of sustainability, in particular climate neutrality, in the planning and implementation of the project, and is the chosen methodology adequate? (Further information is available here.)	6

⁴If (groups of) persons are the subject of the project or if people will be affected by the research results, this must be reflected in the research design..

Table 6: Evaluation criterion "Suitability of funding applicants"

2. Suitability of funding applicants	Max. points 20 (threshold 12)
<p>2.1. Expertise of the Fellow(s)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Do they have the required scientific and technological expertise, and will this expertise be integrated? – Is the Fellow or team believed capable of setting up a company? – Do they have the necessary subject-specific expertise, management skills and qualifications, including those needed to achieve the sustainability goals? 	10
<p>2.2. Institutional requirements of the host organisation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – To what extent do the institutional framework conditions/requirements of the host organisation (e.g., range of services, project-relevant infrastructure, support from host, spin-off strategy and IP commercialisation agreement) help to prepare or realise a downstream company start-up? 	10

Table 7: Evaluation criterion "Benefit and exploitation"

3. Benefit and exploitation	Max. points 30 (threshold 18)
<p>3.1. Target groups, market potential and competitive environment</p> <p>How greatly will the project outcome benefit users, and what is the potential for commercial exploitation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Are the benefits, advantages and USP stated in qualitative and quantitative terms, and are these plausible? – Have the target groups, markets and market segments been sufficiently specified, and supported with realistic figures? – What are the impacts and effects (both positive and negative) of the project with respect to sustainability (social, ecological, economic), especially in terms of climate neutrality? 	15
<p>3.2. Exploitation concept relating to start-up formation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Is the future IP strategy appropriate for establishing a start-up? – Are the perceived opportunities for commercial exploitation realistic? 	15

Table 8: Evaluation criterion "Relevance of the project to the Call"

4. Relevance of the project to the Call	Max. points 20 (threshold 12)
4.1. Feasibility with respect to the programme objectives	
– Is the project reasonable and plausible in view of the objectives of the Call?	15
– How great is the potential for establishing a downstream start-up?	
4.2. Incentive effect of funding	
– How would you judge the incentive effect of funding? To what extent does the funding contribute to making the project feasible, or faster and/or more ambitious and/or of a greater scope?	5

6.2.3 Written preliminary evaluation, hearings and evaluation committee meeting

The **evaluation committee** comprises national and international experts. The members of the evaluation committee examine the submitted funding applications according to the criteria laid out in section 6.2.2.

Written preliminary evaluation:

The members of the evaluation committee provide a written preliminary evaluation conducted according to the evaluation criteria and considering the peer reviews, and award points which are used to produce an initial ranking of the applications. This may result in a shortlist for invitation to the hearings.

Hearings:

At the hearings, the Fellows give a short presentation followed by a question and answer session involving the members of the evaluation committee and the Fellows. The Fellows are given instructions for preparing their presentation for the hearing.

IMPORTANT: Save the date!

The hearings are planned for some time during CW 48 / 2023. We would ask you to keep this week free from other commitments. Fellows **must attend** the hearing.

Where Fellows do not attend, the FFG reserves the right to formally exclude the funding application from the next stage of the selection process. The precise date for the hearing will be provided via eCall as early as possible.

Meeting of the evaluation committee and funding recommendation:

The members of the evaluation committee evaluate and discuss the final evaluation based on the peer reviews, the written preliminary evaluations and the hearings. At the end of the meeting, the members of the evaluation committee will make a recommendation for funding or rejection of the project.

6.3 Who takes the funding decision?

The responsible Federal Minister will take the funding decision based on the funding recommendation provided by the evaluation committee.

7 THE FUNDING PROCEDURE

7.1 How is the funding contract concluded?

In the event of a positive funding decision, the FFG will send the funding applicants a view with the key parameters of the funding contract (e.g. amount of funding granted, amount of eligible costs, start and end date of the funding period, reporting obligations and binding requirements) via the eCall system.

If the view is accepted within the specified period, the FFG will prepare the funding contract and send it to the funding applicant. The funding applicant must return the duly signed funding contract to make it legally valid. There shall be no entitlement to funding until the signed contract has been returned.

7.2 How are requirements taken into account?

Requirements may be imposed in the course of the review. Two types of additional requirements are possible:

- Requirements that must be met prior to the conclusion of the funding contract.
- Requirements that must be met in the course of the project.

Requirements shall form an integral part of the contract.

7.3 What reports and accounts are required?

An interim report and interim accounts must be submitted via the eCall reporting function **within one month of the reporting deadlines specified in the funding contract.**

The FFG reserves the right to carry out on-site audits during the course of the project.

A final report and the final accounts must be submitted **within 3 months of the conclusion of the project**, via the eCall reporting function.

If the project is aborted during the project term, a final report and final accounts must be submitted. The FFG is entitled to reclaim money if the funding already paid exceeds the eligible costs.

The reports and accounts must meet the following requirements:

- They must include a description of the activities and costs incurred by the funding recipients in the reporting period.
- Reports must be prepared using the eCall templates.
- Before placing a contract for third-party or in-kind services, the funding recipient must obtain several offers for comparison, if the estimated contract value exceeds €20,000.

Support of public relations: The funding recipients undertake to work together with the FFG and the responsible ministries to support PR work, if required. This includes in particular the provision of non-confidential project information and images for electronic dissemination portals and other media purposes.

7.4 How are the funding instalments paid?

The first instalment will be paid once the requirements to be fulfilled prior to conclusion of the contract or payment of the start instalment have been met and the funding contract has been signed, however, not earlier than one week before the start of the funding period. Payments are made to the bank account of the organisation being funded.

Further instalments will be paid in accordance with project progress:

- after the interim report and interim accounts have been audited
- after the specified requirements have been met
- The amounts will be transferred in accordance with the instalment plan agreed in the funding contract:
 - 1st instalment (start instalment): 50 %
 - 2nd instalment (interim instalment): 40 %
 - 3rd instalment (final instalment): 10 %

Instalment amounts may be reduced if the interim reports indicate a delay in project progress or if the costs are below plan.

Payment of any funding during the course of the project does not imply recognition of costs.

7.5 How is the on-site audit carried out?

In addition to the reports, the FFG may carry out an on-site audit during or after the end of the project.

The original receipts and associated documentation of payments (e.g. account statement) must be made available for these on-site audits. The FFG's audits will be announced in good time.

7.6 How should changes be communicated?

Any changes to contractual points such as project content, costs, deadlines or funding period must be requested and substantiated:

- via eCall message,
- in the interim or final report.

Please upload the relevant documents as an attachment to the eCall message. Any modifications to the contract parameters require the approval of the FFG.

Immediate notification is required for:

- substantial changes to the project.

The following changes must be communicated in the **interim or final report**:

- cost reallocations between cost categories, e.g. costs of materials to personnel costs

7.7 Can the funding period be extended?

If the project goals have not yet been achieved and the approved level of costs has not been exceeded, the funding period may be extended for up to one year on a cost-neutral basis.

The following requirements must be met:

- The funding recipients are not responsible for the delay;
- The project is still eligible for funding;
- An application for extension has been submitted via eCall message within the approved funding period.

7.8 What happens after the conclusion of the project?

Following the conclusion of the project, the organisation being funded submits a final report and final accounts. The FFG Project Controlling & Audit Division will check whether the funding has been used appropriately. The audit will establish the final eligible costs.

You will receive the result of the audit via eCall message:

- In the event of a **positive** result, the appropriate use of the funding will be confirmed and the final instalment will be transferred.
- In the event of a **negative** result, procedures may be initiated to secure repayment of funding.

Funding details: The specified final instalment will be transferred once the originally planned costs have been reached. If the project is underspent the level of funding will be reduced accordingly. The funding amount may also be reduced for content-related, formal or legal reasons.

For more information about eligible costs, see the [Cost Guidelines 2.1.](#)

8 LEGAL BASIS

The Call is based on the Special Directive for the Spin-off Fellowships Programme of the Federal Ministry for Education, Science and Research dated 01/03/2022, GZ BMWFW-2022-0.158.666.

The measures funded under this programme constitute non-economic activities in accordance with state aid regulations. The Call shall be governed by the Framework for State aid for research and development and innovation (2022/C 414/01) of 28/10/2022 for specific parts of RTI funding, including for eligible costs or the distinction between economic and non-economic activities of research organisations.

The provisions of the Ordinance of the Federal Minister of Finance on General Framework Guidelines for the Granting of Funding from Federal Funds (ARR 2014), Federal Law Gazette BGBl. II No. 208/2014.

§§ 1-11 of the Federal Act of 1 July 1981 on research organisation in Austria and on amendments to the Research Organisation Act (FOG), Federal Law Gazette BGBl. No. 341/1981, as amended by BGBl. I No. 75/2020.

The Federal Equal Treatment Act (GLBG), Federal Law Gazette BGBl. I No. 66/2004.

The Equal Opportunities for People with Disabilities Act (BGStG), Federal Law Gazette BGBl. I No. 82/2005, and the prohibition of discrimination specified in § 7b of the Disabled Persons Employment Act (BEinstG.), Federal Law Gazette BGBl. No. 22/1970.

9 FURTHER INFORMATION

This section contains information about further funding options and services which you may find useful in connection with funding applications or funded projects.

9.1 FFG Project Database

The public access [FFG Project Database](#) provides the opportunity to publish brief information about funded projects and an overview of the funding recipients. This enables you to present your project to the interested public. The database can also be used to search for cooperation partners.

Once funding is granted, the applicants are informed via the [eCall](#) system that they can publish specific brief information about their project in the FFG Project Database. The information will only be published if active consent is given in the eCall system.

More information on the Project Database can be found on the [relevant page of the FFG website](#).

9.2 Open Access publications

Research results obtained with the aid of public funding are to be put to the best use to provide maximum benefit to science, business and society. The Open Access principle should therefore be followed where possible for peer-reviewed publications produced with the support of FFG funding. The principle is "as open as possible, as closed as necessary", which also applies in European funding schemes.

9.3 Handling of project data – data management plan

A data management plan (DMP) is a tool that supports the efficient and systematic management of all data generated throughout the duration of a project.

DMPs can be created, e.g., using the free tool [DMP Online](#). The [Guidelines on FAIR Data Management](#) of the European Commission also provide assistance in this respect.

A data management plan describes

- what data are collected, processed or generated within a project,
- how these data are handled in the project,
- what methods and standards are applied,
- how the data are stored and updated over the long term, and

- whether it is planned to make datasets available to third parties for reuse (i.e., open access to research data)

It is sensible to ensure public access to research data which provide the basis for peer-reviewed publications and whose publication is necessary to reproduce and verify the published results.

In the event of publication, the data should be "findable, accessible, interoperable and reusable".

9.4 Milestones of the call (up to first instalment)

Figure 1: Milestones of the call

