

RTI-PARTNERSHIPS 2025

DATE: 15.10.2025
CALL DOCUMENT

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I. INTRODUCTION

The funding of R&I partnerships aims to strengthen scientific research in the fields of action of the Lower Austria R&I Strategy 2027 in the medium and long term. In particular, a contribution should be made to the following strategic objectives:

- Initiating new research impulses and establishing new research priorities in Lower Austria,
- Promoting knowledge and technology transfer between research and industry,
- Strengthening the participation of Lower Austrian institutions in relevant funding programs,
- Stimulating innovations and enhancing Lower Austria as a research and business location.

KEY POINTS:

RTI-Field of action	Open for all fields of action
Funding volume	€ 900.000,--
Max. funding per project	€ 180.000,--
Funding ratio	Max. 90% of the eligible costs
Duration	2 years
Submission period	15.10.2025 – 20.2.2026 (12 Uhr)
Submission portal	https://calls.einreichsystem.at/
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2. THEMATIC FOCUS

RTI-Partnership proposals can be submitted with reference to all fields of action of the RTI Strategy Lower Austria 2027:

- i. Health and nutrition
- ii. Environment, climate and resources
- iii. Digitalization, smart production and materials
- iv. Society and culture

3. OBJECTIVES

Within the framework of this call, the sustainable development and expansion of the RTI-Partnerships is supported. These partnerships, acting as consortia, jointly work on a practice-relevant topic in an inter- or transdisciplinary manner.

The **objectives** of the R&I partnership focus on:

- Establishing new R&D networks among different stakeholder groups in Lower Austria (research institutions, companies, educational institutions, public administration, interest groups, etc.),
- Successfully acquiring third-party funding, particularly in the area of knowledge and technology transfer.

In terms of **content**, the RTI-Partnership should:

- Work on a new, forward-looking research topic that has development potential and relevance for the Lower Austria region,
- Develop and/or apply new scientific approaches or methods (e.g., through collaboration between different scientific disciplines),
- Promote knowledge and technology transfer between research and industry in Lower Austria,
- Lead to new product, process, and/or service innovations in the medium- and long-term, thereby contributing to value creation in Lower Austria,
- Involve as many key stakeholders and end-users relevant to the topic in Lower Austria as possible, while stakeholders from outside Lower Austria can also be included,
- Aim for sustainability beyond the end of the funding period.

4. PROCEDURE

4.1. SUBMISSION

RTI calls are time-limited thematic calls for proposals within which applications can be submitted. The application language is English; this applies to all parts of the application.¹

¹ The application language “English” ensures the possibility of peer review by international scientific experts. A German-language application can only be submitted in exceptional cases and only for linguistic or literary studies, provided that mainly German texts are being processed. Before submitting a proposal in German, it is essential to consult with the funding agency

Proposals can be submitted from **15.10.2025** to **20.02.2026 (12:00 noon)** through the GFF submission system: <https://calls.einreichsystem.at>.

4.2. EX-ANTE EVALUATION

EVALUATION PROCEDURE AND PROJECT SELECTION

All applications submitted on time will first be checked by the GFF to ensure that they meet the formal criteria. The GFF puts together a jury of at least three independent external experts (see “Assessment Guidelines”). For each project proposal, at least two expert reviews are prepared, as well as an assessment of the regional relevance based on the defined evaluation criteria (see Section 7.2). In a final jury meeting, a funding recommendation is made on the basis of the expert reviews and the assessments of the jury members.

DECISION ON FUNDING

The GFF supervisory board decides on the funding based on the jury’s recommendation.

4.3. FUNDING PERIOD

FUNDING AGREEMENT

The funding agreement is concluded between GFF and the funding recipient based on the legal basis applicable to this call (see point 11).

PROJECT START

The project has to start the latest 12 months after signing the funding contract. In justified cases, this deadline can be extended after submitting a written (informal) justification to the funding agency.

REPORTING

The annual reports are prepared and submitted by the funding recipients in the submission system of the GFF.

FUNDING RATES

Funding rates are paid annually in advance. 10% of each funding rate is withheld until after the final report has been examined.

COMPLETION

The funding is formally concluded after the lead partners have submitted the final report to the GFF through the submission system and after the GFF has approved the report and disbursed any remaining funding by the GFF.

4.4. INTERIM- AND EX-POST-EVALUATION

Within the framework of announced interim and / or ex-post evaluations, the funding agency or a third party commissioned by it may carry out an examination of the use of the funds in accordance with their intended purpose.

and to submit a scientific abstract of the project including a scientific justification. This forms the basis for the decision by the funding agency.

5. REQUIREMENTS

5.1. ANTRAGSBERECHTIGUNG

- **Eligible institutions (Lead partner):**
 - Universities (incl. universities for applied sciences) and non-university research institutions² with a location in Lower Austria
- **No-eligible institutions:**
 - Organisations with a majority ownership by the federal state of Lower Austria (>50%) (with the exception of hospitals active in research or university clinics)
 - Commercial enterprises³

5.2. COOPERATIONS

The lead partner is the eligible institution submitting the application for the RTI-Partnership. In addition, the key stakeholders in this thematic field must be involved in the partnership. Their integration into the partnership must be plausibly presented in the application.

Structurally, an RTI-Partnership consists of **one lead partner** and **at least five other independent institutions**. To confirm their participation in the project, each of these additional institutions must provide a **Letter of Intent (LOI)**, which must be submitted by the lead partner together with the application.

Of the total of at least five LOIs, the following requirements apply:

- **At least 50%** must come from institutions based in **Lower Austria**, and
- **At least two LOIs** must come from companies, with **at least one LOI** from a company located in Lower Austria.
- The **remaining** minimum of three **LOIs** may come from universities, higher education institutions, or non-university research institutions, as well as from companies or other relevant stakeholders or end-users.

5.3. OUTPUTS

An RTI-Partnership involves various activities to intensify networking and, if applicable, to expand the network through additional stakeholders. The networking activities (e.g., workshops, specialist events with relevant stakeholders, etc.), their objectives, and the corresponding target groups must be presented in the application and will be evaluated for plausibility during the review process.

An RTI-Partnership coordinates with stakeholders and end-users who are relevant to the RTI-topic being addressed. The planned activities, their objectives, and the corresponding target groups must be presented in the application and will be evaluated for plausibility during the review process.

² Non-university research institutions are - regardless of their legal form or method of financing - institutions whose main task is to conduct independent research. If such an institution also carries out economic activities, separate accounting (for financing, costs and revenues) is required.

³ For the purposes of this tender, companies are commercial or professional economic entities that carry out a long-term, independent, organized economic activity aimed at producing or providing services and making a profit.

An RTI-Partnership must submit **at least three RTI-project proposals** at the national and/or European level. The following conditions apply:

- The **lead partner** of the RTI-Partnership must submit as the lead partner of the proposals.
- Of these at least three proposals, **at least one project proposal** must be submitted in cooperation with one or more companies. This proposal must have a significant **structural component** and, therefore, a correspondingly high **funding volume**, so that the potential for the long-term sustainability of the R&I partnership can be plausibly demonstrated.
- The remaining at least two proposals must be submitted to **national** (e.g., FFG, FWF) and/or **European** (e.g., HORIZON, ERASMUS+, INTERREG) funding programs.
- The RTI-Partnership **proposal** must indicate which funding programs will be targeted during project implementation. This will be evaluated for plausibility during the review process.
- Proposals to funding agencies of the State of **Lower Austria cannot be considered**.

5.4. COORDINATION TEAM

The RTI-Partnership is led by **one scientific head** who is employed at the lead partner. In addition, **up to three project staff members** can be allocated at the lead partner for the operational implementation and coordination of the R&I partnership

5.5. EQUALITY

Equal opportunities is a prerequisite for a positive assessment of the application. The application must describe what measures have been taken or are planned by the participating institutions to ensure equal opportunities in their organization.

5.6. OTHER ISSUES

A fully completed and signed project application is a basic requirement for a positive funding decision.

If a positive ethics approval is required for the project, this must be indicated accordingly in the application. In the case of funding, the ethics approval must be submitted by the start of the project. In justified exceptional cases, a later submission is possible

Failure to meet one or more of the requirements may result in disqualification of the application even before the expert evaluation.

6. FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK

6.1. TYPE OF FUNDING

The funding is a grant. The funding intensity is **up to 90% of the eligible costs**.⁴

⁴ The funding rate can also be lower, depending on the amount of costs applied for.

6.2. DURATION

The duration of the funded projects is limited to 2 years. Cost-neutral project extensions are possible. An extension of the project duration must be requested informally by e-mail and approved by the funding agency (GFF).

6.3. FUNDING AMOUNT

The maximum funding per project is up to € 180.000,-

6.4. ELIGIBLE COSTS

In accordance with the principles of economy, efficiency and effectiveness, expenses are only eligible for funding to the extent that they are necessary and reasonable in terms of their type and amount to achieve the purpose of the funding. Inappropriate calculations may be a reason for rejection despite the excellence of the content of the funding application. The following costs are **eligible** if they are relevant to the project:

COSTS FOR SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL STAFF:⁵

- The calculation of eligible personnel costs is based on the planned or actual gross personnel costs plus a lump sum for ancillary wage costs (AWC) of 30%.
- The maximum eligible personnel costs per person are capped at the maximum contribution base set annually by the responsible federal ministry. *Example: maximum contribution base 2025 = € € 6.450,- / month; max. eligible personnel costs per person = € 6.450 x 14 = € 90.300,- (excl. AWC)*

MATERIAL COSTS AND OTHER COSTS

- Test and consumable material
- Acquisition costs up to the limit of low-value assets⁶
- Costs for publications in connection with the project
- Event costs and participation fees
- Travel expenses
- Internal service billing⁷

THIRD-PARTY SERVICES

Third-party services in compliance with the arm's length principle:

- Max. 25% of the total eligible costs
- Third-party service providers can provide definable and predetermined services; however, they cannot assume any central activities in the project (such as leading a work package or similar).
- Third-party service providers cannot assert any exploitation rights (IPR) on the project result.
- Lead partners, project partners and their affiliated institutions cannot provide third-party services in the project.

⁵ Only people who actually contribute quantifiable work and for whom personnel costs are applied for can be integrated into the project as project partners and employees.

⁶ 2024: max. 1.000 Euro per Acquisition; except for basic equipment

⁷ Can be billed as costs per unit ("unit costs"). The respective "unit costs" must be based on calculation models that are consistent, plausible, and verifiable by third parties. Only direct and indirect costs that can actually and additionally be allocated to the project, either directly or via cost units, can be included in the "unit costs."

OVERHEAD COSTS

Overheads are eligible only as a flat rate of 25% on the eligible personnel costs, material costs and other direct costs (but not third-party services). Thus, for example, the following types of costs are covered as a lump sum:

- Rent and operating costs
- Office supplies
- Administrative staff costs

6.5. NON-ELIGIBLE COSTS

- Costs outside the project period
- Invoices that are not in the name of the recipients
- Payments not made by grantees
- Discounts and rebates
- Value-added tax, provided that the applicants are entitled to deduct input tax.
- (Partial) amounts from payments for which credit notes were subsequently granted or charged back
- Costs for the acquisition of land
- Financing costs
- Cash payments over € 5.000,00
- Depreciation for wear and tear
- Machine hours and costs for plant usage
- Investments and acquisition costs (above the threshold of low-value assets)

6.6. COST ACCOUNTING

Evidence of the proper use of the funding must be provided as part of the reporting system and, if necessary, during financial audits (financial controls). In the reporting system, this evidence is provided in the form of structured cost center statements or lists of documents. In the financial audit, these cost center statements or lists of documents are used as the basis for the audit.

7. REVIEW CRITERIA

7.1. FORMAL REVIEW

- Completeness of the application
- Fulfillment of the requirements under point 5
- Fulfillment of the financial framework under point 6

7.2. EXPERT REVIEW

The evaluation is carried out on the basis of a point system by external independent experts (see 3.ii). The evaluation is carried out on the basis of three main criteria (K1-3), each of which is subdivided into several subordinate sub-criteria.

The maximum number of points for an assessment is 15 points. The actual number of points is made up of the points awarded for each of the three main criteria. The maximum number of points per main criterion is 5 points (3 * max. 5 points = max. 15 points). The actual number of points per main criterion

is in turn determined from the points of the corresponding sub-criteria, for which a maximum of 5 points can also be awarded in each case. The points for the main criteria are calculated from the arithmetic mean of the sub-criteria, which in turn results in the maximum number of points.

The following main and sub-criteria are used for assessment:

- **Excellence [K1]**
 - Originality and innovation
 - Relevance and international connectivity
 - Feasibility of the objectives
- **Implementation [K2]**
 - Quality of the cooperation
 - Feasibility of the third-party funding acquisition
 - Institutional and financial framework
- **Regional relevance [K3]**
 - Strengthening regional innovation and technology fields
 - Impulses and potential for innovations and technologies at the location
 - Potential for the long-term continuation of the partnership at the location

8. PFLICHTEN DER FÖRDERNEHMER*INNEN

Grantees are required to comply with the following:

- Economic, economical, appropriate and transparent use of funds.
- Maintaining separate and comprehensive records to demonstrate the implementation of the funded project and retaining the records and supporting documentation during and for at least an additional ten years after the end of the project, unless there are legal requirements beyond that.
- Maintenance of an adequate accounting system.
- Submission of appropriate interim and final reports to the funding agency, in accordance with the schedule and reporting structure provided by the funding agency.
- Enabling of audits and evaluations on the part of the funding agency and third parties commissioned by it, as well as the obligation to provide corresponding information.
- Timely notification of all significant events relevant to the implementation of the funded project.
- Provide public relations information to the funding agency.
- Establishing the visibility of the funding agency and the province of Lower Austria as the funding agency in web presences, publications and events related to the funded activity (the use of the logos and funding information is regulated in the project contract).
- Observance of the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#), the [United Nations \(UN\) Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#) and the further strategic embedding of the [RTI Strategy Lower Austria 2021 - 2027](#).

9. DISCONTINUATION AND RECOVERY OF FUNDING

With regard to reduction, evaluation and recovery of funding, the provisions according to §13 of the Guidelines for Funding under the Lower Austrian Cultural Promotion Act 1996 in the Area of Science, Research and Tertiary Education apply.

The following point can also lead to a complete recovery and discontinuation of the funding: The composition of the project consortium has been changed without the explicit approval of the funding agency or essential partners are no longer part of the consortium.

10. DATA PROTECTION

1.1. RESPONSIBLE PERSON ACCORDING TO THE GDPR

Gesellschaft fuer Forschungsfoerderung NOE mbH, A-3100 St. Pölten, Hypogasse 1, 1st floor, T: +43 2742 27570-0, E: office@gff-noe.at (GFF) is responsible for processing your personal data Responsible person in connection with your funding application in accordance with Art. 7 Z7 GDPR.

1.2. PURPOSE AND LEGAL BASIS OF DATA PROCESSING

In order to process and fulfill the funding application, the GFF processes the following personal data from you: Names and professional contact details of the contact person at the funding applicants' institutions; Names, professional contact details and CVs of the scientific management and the project partners; Names and contact details of other scientific or technical staff.

The legal basis for this data processing is the fulfillment of the contract in accordance with Article 6 Paragraph 1 Letter b of the GDPR, so that the GFF can process and fulfill your funding application.

1.3. STORAGE PERIOD

The GFF stores your personal data until your funding application has been fully processed (from submission to termination of the funding contract, including any necessary data transfer to the state of Lower Austria, external experts and examiners, insofar as this is necessary to fulfill the funding application).

In addition, GFF only stores your personal data to the extent necessary to fulfill legal retention obligations or to pursue or defend against legal claims.

1.4. DATA RECIPIENT

We will transmit your personal data to the following third parties if this is necessary to fulfill your funding application:

- State of Lower Austria
- External experts
- External examiners

In addition, GFF uses contract processors who process the data on their behalf. The processors may only process the data provided to them in accordance with our instructions and to carry out services for us. The GFF contractually obliges these processors to ensure the confidentiality and security of the personal data processed as part of the order.

I.5. YOUR RIGHTS UNDER THE GDPR

As the person responsible under the GDPR, you have the following rights towards GFF: (i) information (Art. 15 GDPR); (ii) correction (Article 16 GDPR); (iii) deletion (Article 17 GDPR); (iv) Restriction of processing (Article 18 GDPR); (v) objection (Art. 21 GDPR); (vi) data portability (Article 20 GDPR); (vii) Complaint to the responsible supervisory authority (Art. 77 GDPR), whereby in Austria the data protection authority (www.dsb.gv.at) is responsible.

Your personal data will be processed for the duration of the entire business relationship (from the submission to the termination of a grant agreement, including any necessary data transfer to the Province of Lower Austria as the grantor, external expert reviewers, and auditors) and beyond in accordance with the statutory storage and documentation obligations under the currently applicable [Austrian Data Protection Act](#) (DSG) and the [European General Data Protection Regulation](#) (DSGVO).

II. LEGAL BASIS

- [Lower Austrian Cultural Promotion Act 1996](#)
- [Guidelines for Funding under the Lower Austrian Cultural Promotion Act 1996 in the Field of Science, Research and Tertiary Education](#)

No legal claim to the granting of a funding arises from the legal bases and the call document. The place of jurisdiction for all disputes arising from the granting of a funding is the Regional Court of St. Pölten.

This call document comes into force on **15.10.2025** and applies to funding applications in the call "**RTI-Partnerships 2025**". Amendments and the current version will be published on the GFF website (<https://calls.einreichsystem.at/>).