

## RTI-DISSERTATIONS 2024

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**CALL DOCUMENT**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	EINLEITUNG .....	2
2.	THEMATIC ORIENTATION.....	3
3.	GOALS.....	3
4.	PROCEDURE.....	3
5.	REQUIREMENTS .....	4
6.	FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK .....	6
7.	THE EVALUATION.....	7
8.	OBLIGATIONS OF THE APPLICANT ORGANISATION(S) .....	7
9.	TERMINATION AND RECOVERY OF FUNDING .....	8
10.	DATA PROTECTION.....	8
II.	LEGAL BASIS.....	9

## I. EINLEITUNG

The funding of the employment of PhD candidates at colleges, universities and non-university research institutions located in Lower Austria aims to strengthen the next generation of scientists in Lower Austria.

The targeted promotion and financial security of young scientists are important prerequisites for ensuring the scientific qualification and innovative strength of the state. Qualified young scientists contribute significantly to the fact that science and research institutions can act dynamically and gain research strength and visibility. The promotion of PhD candidates therefore increases the appeal of the location in national and international competition.

The Gesellschaft für Forschungsförderung NÖ (GFF NÖ) supports dissertation projects in non-profit Lower Austrian research and educational institutions by financing the employment of highly qualified PhD candidates in the field of basic and translational research.

### KEY POINTS :

<b>RTI-Field of Action</b>	open
<b>Funding volume</b>	€ 1.500.000,--
<b>Max. funding per project</b>	Staff costs (capped at the current annual FWF rate for PhD students)
<b>Funding rate</b>	cooperative 100% non-cooperative 50%
<b>Duration</b>	36 months / max. until completion of the PhD studies
<b>Submission period</b>	28.10.2024 to 14.02.2025 (12:00 a.m.)
<b>Submission platform</b>	<a href="https://calls.einreichsystem.at/">https://calls.einreichsystem.at/</a>
<b>Contact</b>	Dr. Florian Huber Call- & Program-Management T: +43 2742 275 70-11 M: +43 664 911 53 69 E: f.huber@gff-noe.at

## 2. THEMATIC ORIENTATION

Submission is possible for dissertation projects 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. GOALS

The funding of the employment of PhD candidates should contribute to the following goals:

- i. Strengthening of young scientists in Lower Austria
- ii. Strengthening of colleges, universities and non-university research institutions in Lower Austria
- iii. Increasing the appeal and visibility of the location

## 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.<sup>1</sup> Proposals can be submitted through the GFF submission system: <https://calls.einreichsystem.at>.

### 4.2. EX-ANTE EVALUIERUNG

#### 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”).

The evaluation is carried out by the jury members and by independent external experts additionally selected by the GFF on the basis of the defined assessment criteria (see point 7).

At least two expert reviews are prepared for each project application, which results in a ranking of the applications based on the points awarded (see point 7)..

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<sup>1</sup> 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 and to submit a scientific abstract of the project including a scientific justification. This forms the basis for the decision by the funding agency.

### DECISION ON FUNDING

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

## 4.3. FÖRDERZEITRAUM

### 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 funding of the employment relationship can start at the earliest on 01.04.2025 (retroactive funding) and at the latest six months after signing the funding contract. In justified exceptional cases, this deadline can be extended after consultation with the GFF and by submitting a written (informal) application.

### REPORTING

The annual reports (each as of 31.12.) are prepared and submitted by the funding recipients in the submission system of the GFF NÖ.

### 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.

# 5. REQUIREMENTS

## 5.1. ELIGIBLE INSTITUTIONS

- **Lead partner** can be universities (incl. universities for applied sciences) and non-university research institutions<sup>2</sup> with a location in Lower Austria.
- The application must be submitted together with the dissertation candidate.
- **Non-eligible institutions:**

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<sup>2</sup> 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.

- 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 enterprises<sup>3</sup>

### 5.2. PHD CANDIDATE

- A **proof of an academic degree** entitling the holder for a doctorate or PhD study at a university or research or educational institution with the right to award doctorates has to be submitted.<sup>4</sup>
- The formal **supervision** of the dissertation project can be agreed on with any university or research institution with the right to award PhDs. This does not have to be the institution submitting the application.
- **The admission of the dissertation topic** at a university with the right to award doctorates has to be submitted (subsequent submission is possible after consultation with the funding agency).
- The earliest **date** for starting with the PhD Thesis is **01.01.2025**.
- There is **no age limit**.

### 5.3. 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

### 5.4. OTHER ISSUES

- A fully completed and signed project application is a basic requirement for a positive funding decision.
- The dissertation project has to be thematically assigned to at least one field of action of the RTI Strategy Lower Austria 2027.<sup>5</sup>
- The doctoral candidate must be employed for the entire duration of the grant at an eligible institution located in Lower Austria.
- Stays / internships abroad are possible within the framework of the funding, provided that they are of comprehensible benefit to the dissertation.

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

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<sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup> Confirmation of a PhD program that enables to start a PhD studies without a master's/diploma is permissible after consultation with the funding agency.

<sup>5</sup> Health and nutrition; environment, climate and resources; digitalization, smart production and materials; society and culture.

## 6. FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK

### 6.1. TYPE OF FUNDING

The funding is a grant. The subject of funding is the employment relationship of the doctoral candidate named in the application for 30 hours per week. The doctoral candidate must be employed at an eligible institution located in Lower Austria for the entire duration of the funding. Within the scope of this level of employment, the doctoral candidates must devote themselves exclusively to the dissertation and other projects and activities that can be clearly assigned to it.

50% of the actual personnel costs incurred are funded (including the employer's share). However, the maximum billable personnel costs are capped at the current annual FWF rate.<sup>6</sup> The difference to the actual costs can be made through other third-party funds from private and/or public sources, provided they do not contradict other funding conditions (EU, federal, state, etc.).

### 6.2. COOPERATION

A cooperative application by two independent eligible institutions is possible. In this case, a total of 100% of the personnel costs (incl. employer's share) can be funded (50% of the funding per institution).

The employment takes place with at least 15 hours at each of the two participating institutions, either with a separate employment contract or an employment at the first institution and a corresponding transfer contract to the second institution.

### 6.3. DURATION

The funding is awarded for the minimum duration of a PhD degree in Austria (6 semesters or 36 months)<sup>7</sup>, but a maximum until the completion of the PhD degree. The dissertation is completed with the issuance of the completion certificate.

A cost-neutral extension of the funding is possible in justified exceptional cases of up to one year and in the case of parental leave/maternity protection in accordance with the applicable legal provisions. If the project duration is interrupted in the event of parental leave, it is possible to return to work for less than 30 hours per week upon request.

Each extension of the project duration must be applied for separately and approved by the funding agency (GFF).

### 6.4. FINANCIAL REPORTING

The intended use of the funding must be proven within the scope of reporting (see GFF cost guidelines) and during financial audits (financial controls) using cost center extracts or receipt lists.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.fwf.ac.at/de/forschungsfoerderung/personalkostensaetze/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.bmbwf.gv.at/Themen/HS-Uni/Studium.html>

## 7. THE EVALUATION

### 7.1. FORMAL ASSESSMENT

- Completeness of the application
- Fulfilment of the conditions under point 5
- Fulfilment of the financial conditions under point 6

### 7.2. EXPERT EVALUATION

The assessment is carried out using a points system by external, independent experts. The assessment is based on two main criteria (K1 and K2), each of which is divided into several subordinate sub-criteria.

The maximum number of points for an assessment is 10 points. The actual score is made up of the points awarded for each of the two main criteria. The maximum number of points per main criterion is 5 points (2 \* max. 5 points = max. 10 points). The actual number of points per main criterion is determined from the points of the corresponding sub-criteria, for which a maximum of 5 points can also be awarded. 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 the assessment:

- **Excellence [K1]**
  - Originality and innovation
  - Objectives and consistency
  - Quality and efficiency of the method(s)
  - Relevance and internationality
- **Implementation [K2]**
  - Quality and efficiency of the concept
  - Feasibility of the project
  - Institutional framework
  - Qualification

## 8. OBLIGATIONS OF THE APPLICANT ORGANISATION(S)

The applicant organisation must comply with the following:

- Efficient, economical, appropriate and transparent use of funds.
- Keeping separate and comprehensive records to demonstrate the implementation of the funded project. Securing storage of records and supporting documents during and for at least seven years after the end of the project, unless there are legal requirements to the contrary.
- Use of an adequate accounting system.
- Writing and submitting appropriate interim and final reports to the funding agency, according to the reporting structure provided by the agency.
- Allowing audits and evaluations by the funding agency and third parties commissioned by it and obligation to provide the relevant information.
- Timely notification of all significant events relevant to the implementation of the funded project.
- Provision of information for the public relations work of the funding agency.

- Establishing the visibility of the funding agency and the state of Lower Austria as a funding provider on websites, publications and events in connection with the funded activity (the use of logos and funding information is regulated in the funding agreement).
- Compliance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) of the United Nations (UNO) and the further strategic embedding of the RTI Strategy Lower Austria 2021 – 2027.

## 9. TERMINATION AND RECOVERY OF FUNDING

With regard to the reduction, evaluation and reclaiming of funding, the provisions of Section 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 reclaim and discontinuation of the promised funding:

- The composition of the project consortium was changed without the approval of the funding agency and key partners are no longer part of the consortium.

## 10. DATA PROTECTION

### 10.1. 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.

### 10.2. 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.

### 10.3. 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.

### 10.4. 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.

### 10.5. 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](http://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

- [NÖ Kulturförderungsgesetz 1996](#)
- [Richtlinien für die Förderung nach dem NÖ Kulturförderungsgesetz 1996 Bereich Wissenschaft, Forschung und tertiäre Bildung](#)

These guidelines and the call document do not constitute a legal entitlement to the granting of funding, either in terms of the reason for the subsidy or the amount of the subsidy. The place of jurisdiction for all disputes arising from the granting of a fund is the Regional Court of St. Pölten.

This call document comes into force on **28.10.2024** and applies to funding applications in the call "**RTI Dissertations 2024**". Amendments will be published online ([calls.einreichsystem.at](http://calls.einreichsystem.at)).