

RTI-CITIZEN-SCIENCE 2025

FIELD OF ACTION: SOCIETY AND CULTURE

DATE: 01.04.2025
CALL DOCUMENT

TABLE OF CONTENT

I.	INTRODUCTION	2
2.	THEMATIC FOCUS	4
3.	OBJECTIVES	4
4.	PROCEDURES	4
5.	REQUIREMENTS	6
6.	FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK	7
7.	REVIEW CRITERIA	9
8.	OBLIGATIONS	10
10.	DATA PROTECTION	11
II.	LEGAL BASIS	11

I. INTRODUCTION

Current studies on attitudes towards science in Austria show that around 30% of those questioned have little trust in science.¹ According to these studies, one reason for this widespread **scientific skepticism** might be that there is little direct contact between researchers and the general public.

The call RTI-Citizen-Science 2024 builds on this problem by focusing on the comprehensive **participation of citizen scientists** in research projects and thus on the in-depth **exchange** between science and the general public.

The **citizen science approach**² aims to actively involve citizen scientists in the scientific activities in the course of which new knowledge is generated.³ However, according to the **European Citizen Science Association (ECSA)**, citizen science is understood as a flexible concept that can be adapted to different circumstances and disciplines.

Since a uniform definition of citizen science does not appear to be very effective due to the various inter- and transdisciplinary approaches and methodological variations, the ECSA has agreed on **10 basic principles of citizen science** in order to characterize this approach and make it usable for research practice.⁴

On the basis of the basic principles, the "**Österreich forscht**" network also developed a set of twenty **quality criteria** for citizen science projects.⁵ These criteria represent both a substantial basis for the conception of citizen science projects and a basis for the classification and evaluation of citizen science projects.

As part of several EU projects, the online platform **EU-Citizen.Science** was also developed by ECSA together with other partner organizations, where knowledge, tools, training and other resources for the planning and implementation of citizen science projects are available.⁶

In order to stimulate participatory research methods and projects, the call **RTI-Citizen-Science 2025** will be published on the basis of these concepts and principles and against the background of the **RTI Strategy of Lower Austria 2027**. The funding instrument is intended to enable a dialogue between science and society as well as a transfer of knowledge in both directions in the sense of the paradigm of open science (open science).

In addition to the impulses for science through cooperative research and the generation of new findings, science also benefits from direct discussion and thus from feedback on the practical relevance of their work. Conversely, citizen science projects are intended to encourage curiosity and interest in science and research among the population, which in turn can cushion widespread skepticism about science.

¹ Eurobarometer (2021): <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2237>; OEAW (2022): [Wissenschaftsbarometer Österreich 2022](#)

² Citizen Scientists might be people of different age (including children and young people), gender and social background as well as people with specialized knowledge or expertise (knowledge communities).

³ Katrin Vohland, Anne Land-Zandstra, Luigi Ceccaroni, Rob Lemmens, Josep Perelló, Marisa Ponti, Roeland Samson, Katherin Wagenknecht (2021): The Science of Citizen Science. Springer: <https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007/978-3-030-58278-4.pdf>

⁴ ECSA (2015): Ten Principles of Citizen Science. Berlin. <https://zenodo.org/record/5127534#.Y8IDxD3MKUI>

⁵ <https://zenodo.org/record/3648636#.ZFtdS3ZByUk>

⁶ See also „**Top Citizen Science**“ (FWF) or „**Sparkling Science**“ (OeaD)

KEY POINTS:

Field of action	Society and Culture
Total funding	€ 1.080.000,--
Maximum funding per project	€ 360.000,--
Funding rate	Up to 90% of the eligible costs
Duration	Min. 2 / max. 3 years
Submission	01.04.2025 to 25.06.2025 (12:00)
Submission platform	https://calls.einreichsystem.at/
Contact	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 FOCUS

Funding applications for citizen science projects can be submitted in 2025 for the field of action "**Society and Culture**", which is defined as one of the four fields of action in the Lower Austria 2027 RTI Strategy. In an increasingly complex society, engagement with society and culture can provide essential orientation knowledge and make a decisive contribution to reflecting on and understanding social, political, economic, and cultural developments.

The call is aimed at projects in which citizen scientists **actively** work as researchers together with Lower Austrian scientific institutions on questions in the **humanities, social sciences, and cultural studies**. The scientific necessity for the comprehensive participation of citizen scientists must be clearly presented in the application. **Citizen scientists** are therefore expected to **participate in all project phases** (see in particular the criteria for the preliminary review in section 7.2).

The **relevance of the citizen science approach** for the project depends on whether the research question could be answered without the participation of citizen scientists and on the explanation of what scientific insights can be gained through the participation of citizen scientists.

The consistent participation and justification of the relevance of citizen scientists are therefore essential for the **evaluation of the applications**.

3. OBJECTIVES

Projects should make contributions to the following objectives:

- Mutual knowledge transfer between science and population
- Sustainable implementation of citizen science in society and science as well as contribution to innovations and solution of social challenges
- Expansion of research competencies in Lower Austria in the addressed topic and increasing the visibility and profile of the location
- Expansion of cooperation between the participating institutions

4. PROCEDURES

4.1. SUBMISSION

RTI calls are time-limited calls in which funding applications can be submitted. Submissions are made via the GFF submission system (calls.einreichsystem.at). The application language (of all parts of the proposal) is English.⁷ Submission is possible from **01.04.2025 to 25.06.2025, 12.00 (noon)**.

⁷ The application language (English) ensures the option of having expert reviews by international scientific experts. A German-language application can only be approved in exceptional cases and exclusively for proposals from linguistics or literature research, provided that predominantly German texts are being processed. In case it is intended to submit a proposal in German, the funding agency has to be consulted and a scientific abstract of the project including a (scientific) justification for the need to use German as the main language has to be submitted. The final decision is up to the funding agency.

4.2. EX-ANTE EVALUATION

EVALUATION PROCEDURE AND PROJECT SELECTION

All applications submitted by the deadline will first be reviewed by GFF to ensure that they meet the formal criteria.

After the formal review, the proposals are reviewed by an independent external citizen science expert as part of a preliminary assessment to determine whether the intended projects meet the criteria for citizen science projects.

The GFF assembles a jury of independent external experts (see "Application Guide"). For each project application, at least two expert reviews are prepared on the basis of the defined evaluation criteria. In a final jury meeting, a proposal for funding is prepared on the basis of the expert reviews.

FUNDING DECISION

The supervisory board of GFF decides on the funding.

4.3. FUNDING PERIOD

FUNDING AGREEMENT

The grant agreement is concluded between GFF and the recipient on the basis of the legal basis applicable to this call.

PROJECT START

The project has to start no later than six months after signing the grant agreement. In justified exceptional cases, this deadline may be extended after consultation with GFF.

REPORTING

The annual reports are prepared and submitted by the grantees in the GFF submission system (calls.einreichsystem.at).

FUNDING RATES

Funding installments are paid annually in advance, with 10% of the total funding amount paid after review of the final report.

PROJECT COMPLETION

The formal conclusion of the funding includes the submission of the final report by the project consortium (calls.einreichsystem.at), the evaluation of the report and the transfer of the final payment.

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 conduct an audit to determine whether the funding is being used for its intended purpose.

5. REQUIREMENTS

5.1. ELIGIBILITY

- **Eligible institutions**
 - **The lead partner** can only be a *university, university for applied sciences or non-university research institution* located in *Lower Austria*.
 - **Project partners** can be *university for applied sciences, universities and non-university research institutions* as well as non-profit organizations, schools, educational institutions and municipalities located *in or outside Lower Austria*
- **Non-eligible institutions**
 - Facilities directly majority-owned (>50%) by the State of Lower Austria (except for clinics in the research sector, schools and care institutions);
 - Companies in the commercial sector.⁸

5.2. COOPERATIONS

- At least two institutions have to be involved in the project.
- Max. 80% of the grant funds may be used at one institution.
- In the case of funding, it is recommended by the GFF to set up a consortium agreement between the project partners before the start of the project for defining the rules of the cooperation.
- Collaborations with non-funded institutions are possible by means of a Letter of Intent (LOI).

5.3. USE OF FUNDING IN LOWER AUSTRIA

Since the subsidies are provided by the province of Lower Austria, a predominant use of the subsidies in Lower Austria ($\geq 75\%$) is a basic prerequisite for a subsidy.

5.4. PROJECT TEAM

INTEGRATION OF CITIZEN SCIENTISTS

The proposal has to present the comprehensive scientific integration of the citizen scientists into the project as this is essential for the evaluation.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Equal opportunity is a prerequisite for a positive review of the application. This equal opportunity can be reflected, for example, in the diversity of the project team. The project application must also describe which measures have been taken or are planned by the participating institutions to ensure this equal opportunity in their organization.

⁸ For the purposes of this call, companies are defined as commercial or freelance economic units that carry out a production or provision of services as well as a long-term, independent, organized, profit-oriented economic activity.

5.5. OPEN SCIENCE

The GFF's **Open Science Policy**⁹, in effect since the beginning of 2025, follows the fundamental principles of Open Science and aims to ensure the free accessibility, usability, and further processing of scientific knowledge and research data. It builds on the two most important Open Science approaches: **Open Research Data** and **Open Access Publications** (OA).

Costs for Open Science activities can therefore be budgeted and justified in the project **proposal**. In addition, reporting on compliance with the GFF Open Science Policy is required in the **interim** and **final reports** of the project. This also includes a **data management plan** that defines and describes the relevant datasets that will be generated and/or analyzed, as well as the corresponding protocols.

5.6. OTHER

A fully completed project proposal signed by the applicant consortium is a prerequisite for consideration in the evaluation process.

If the project requires a positive ethics approval, this must be clearly stated in the application. In the event of funding, the ethics approval must be submitted by the start of the project. In justified exceptional cases, it may be submitted later.

Failure to meet one or more of these requirements may result in a disqualification of the proposal as a result of the formal review.

6. FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK

6.1. TYPE OF FUNDING

The funding is a grant. The funding intensity is up to **90% of the eligible costs**.¹⁰

6.2. DURATION

The duration of the funded projects is a **minimum of two and a maximum of three years**. Cost-neutral **project extensions** are possible in justified exceptional cases. An extension of the project duration must be applied for separately and approved by the funding agency (GFF).

6.3. AMOUNT OF FUNDING

The maximum funding amount is up to € 360.000, depending on the duration:

- 2 years project duration: up to € 240.000
- 2.5 years project duration: up to € 300.000
- 3 years project duration: up to € 360.000

⁹ <https://calls.einreichsystem.at/upload/20240726-gff-open-science-policy-en-1.00.pdf>

¹⁰ The funding rate is dynamic and actually depends on the calculated costs of the project (example: calculated costs of the project = € 500.000; max. funding = € 360.000; funding rate = 72%).

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.

Costs in the following categories are **eligible if** they are relevant to the project:

PERSONNEL COSTS FOR SCIENTIFIC / TECHNICAL STAFF¹¹:

- The calculation of eligible personnel costs is based on the planned or actual gross personnel costs plus a lump sum of 30% for ancillary wage costs (AWC).
- 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 2024 = € 6.450 / month; max. eligible personnel costs per person = € 6.450 x 14 = € 90.300,- (excl. ACW)*

MATERIAL COSTS AND OTHER COSTS

- Test and consumable material
- Acquisitions up to the limit of low-value assets
- Costs for publications in connection with the project
- Event costs and participation fees
- Travel expenses
- Fees for study participants
- Allowances for citizens
- Licence costs
- Internal services billing¹²

THIRD-PARTY SERVICES

In compliance with the arm's length principle:

- Max. 10% of the total eligible costs
- Project sponsors, cooperation partners and their affiliated institutions cannot provide third-party services in the project.
- Third-party service providers can provide definable and predetermined services; however, they cannot assume any central activities in the project (such as managing a work package or similar).
- Third-party service providers cannot assert any exploitation rights (IPR) on the project result.

OVERHEAD COSTS

Eligible only as a flat rate of 25% on 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

¹¹ Only people who actually contribute quantifiable work and for whom personnel costs are applied for can be created as project partners and employees.

¹² 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."

- 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
- Costs for machine use

6.6. FINANCIAL REPORTING

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 4
- Fulfillment of the financial framework under point 5

7.2. PRE-REVIEW

Citizen scientists are expected to participate **in all project phases**:

- Initial phase: Involving the citizen scientists in one or more participatory workshops or meetings (e.g.: to integrate non-academic knowledge or the expertise of the citizen scientists into the project; to coordinate the research approaches, assumptions and/or hypotheses; for the operationalization or specification of methods, concepts, and/or instruments, etc.),
- Implementation phase: Involvement of citizen scientists in data collection, processing, analysis and/or interpretation,
- Final phase: involvement of the citizen scientists in the dissemination of the project results and/or communication about the project.

The involvement of Citizen Scientists solely as a “research object” or as a “data source” (e.g. only as test persons or as participants in surveys etc.) therefore does not correspond to the orientation and objectives of this call. Corresponding applications will therefore not be funded in this call.

7.3. 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
 - Objective and stringency
 - Quality and effectiveness of the method
 - International relevance
- **Implementation [K2]**
 - Quality and efficiency of the work program
 - Feasibility of the project
 - Financial and resource planning
 - Institutional framework and strategic embedding
 - Personnel composition and qualification
- **Impact [K3]**
 - Impact on science
 - Impact on the research location
 - Social / economic / ecological / technological impact
 - Two-way knowledge transfer between society and science

8. OBLIGATIONS

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. SUSPENSION AND RECLAIM 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. .

Furthermore, a change in the composition of the project consortium without the explicit approval of the funding agency or if essential partners are no longer part of the consortium can also lead to a complete recovery and discontinuation of the funding.

10. DATA PROTECTION

10.1. CONTROLLER UNDER THE GDPR

The Gesellschaft für Forschungsförderung Niederösterreich M.B.H., A-3100 St. Pölten, Hypogasse 1, 1st floor, T: +43 2742 27570-0, E: office@gff-noe.at (GFF) is responsible for the processing of your personal data in connection with your funding application in accordance with Article 7 (7) GDPR.

10.2. PURPOSE AND LEGAL BASIS OF DATA PROCESSING

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

The legal basis for this data processing is the performance of the contract in accordance with Art. 6 (1) (b) GDPR so that GFF can process and fulfill your funding application.

10.3. STORAGE PERIOD

GFF will store your personal data until your funding application has been fully processed (from submission to termination of the funding agreement, including any necessary data transfer to the Province of Lower Austria, external experts and examiners, insofar as this is necessary to fulfil the funding application).

In addition, GFF will only store your personal data to the extent necessary to comply with statutory retention obligations or to pursue or defend against legal claims.

10.4. DATA RECIPIENTS

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

- Province of Lower Austria
- External reviewers
- External examiners

In addition, GFF uses 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 perform services for us. GFF contractually obliges these processors to ensure the confidentiality and security of the personal data processed in the context of the order.

10.5. YOUR RIGHTS UNDER THE GDPR

You have the following rights vis-à-vis GFF as a controller under the GDPR: (i) information (Art. 15 GDPR); (ii) rectification (Art. 16 GDPR); (iii) erasure (Art. 17 GDPR); (iv) restriction of processing (Art. 18 GDPR); (v) objection (Art. 21 GDPR); (vi) data portability (Art. 20 GDPR); (vii) Complaint to the competent supervisory authority (Art. 77 GDPR), whereby in Austria the data protection authority (www.dsb.gv.at) is competent.

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 **01.04.2025** and applies to funding applications in the call "**RTI-Citizen-Science 2025**" Amendments and the current version will be published on the GFF website (www.gff-noe.at).