

RTI PARTNERSHIPS 2021

CALL DOCUMENT

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INTRODUCTION

The RTI Strategy 2027 of the State of Lower Austria defines the RTI partnerships as a funding instrument for the establishment of networks and thematic groups that are to advance research and innovation on issues and challenges within the RTI fields of action.

Within the framework of the RTI partnership, institutions from different scientific disciplines are to network with non-scientific institutions (i.e. interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary). The combination of scientific and practical knowledge should contribute to the solution of societal challenges.

An RTI partnership is formed around a specific topic and brings in a wide range of competencies to enable new perspectives and open discourse. The RTI partnership should continue to develop and grow. This is the only way to ensure sustainability and needs orientation.

A total of **€ 1,680,000** is available as funding volume for this call.

This call document contains details on thematic orientation, objectives, procedure, prerequisites, financial framework conditions, review criteria, obligations of the applicant, discontinuation and recovery of funding, data protection and legal basis.

Supplementary information on the application process can be found in the "Application Guide".

Submission of project proposals is open from 29.11.2021 to 04.03.2022, 12 noon.

I THEMATIC ORIENTATION

Funding applications for an RTI partnership can be submitted for the four fields of action of the RTI Strategy of Lower Austria 2027:

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

2 OBJECTIVES

Within the framework of this funding, the sustainable establishment and expansion of RTI partnerships is promoted, which work together as consortia on a practice-relevant topic in an interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary manner.

By linking research and practice, scientifically, economically, socially, ecologically and technologically relevant problems are to be addressed and solutions for social challenges are to be (further) developed.

An RTI partnership is formed around a concrete topic based on the four fields of action of the RTI Strategy of Lower Austria 2027 and contributes different competences to achieve the following **objectives**:

- Sustainable development and expansion of the RTI partnership
- Initiation of coordinated networking activities and events¹
- Elaboration of thematic development strategies and concepts for the RTI location Lower Austria
- Promotion of knowledge transfer and dialogue between research and practice
- Preparation and conception of innovative research and development projects that contribute to solving current and future social, economic, ecological and technological challenges.

3 CONTROL AND OUTPUTS

In order to steer, support and regularly coordinate the planning and implementation of the project, the RTI partnership manager employed by the lead partner of the RTI partnership shall set up a **Steering Board** and organise the (physical or virtual) meetings at least **every six months**.

The Steering Board shall include at least the following persons:

- One representative of the lead partner
- One representative per cooperation partner
- Representative of the funding agency

Depending on the orientation and focus of the RTI partnership, the Steering Board can be expanded to include other central actors.

¹ Network meetings, focus groups, workshops, planning meetings, etc.

The **Steering Board** consults on the basis of a review by the RTI partnership manager on the current status and future planning steps and thus ensures that the RTI partnership achieves the intended goals and delivers the expected results. In addition, the Steering Board contributes to the solution of any problems and the extension of the partnership, coordinates the extension of the partnership as well as the thematic focus and creates possible synergies with other research projects. The RTI partnership manager documents the board's inputs and any recommendations and action points, and subsequently makes them (including the review) available to the cooperation partners and the steering board (these regular steering board reports are part of the expected outputs).

In order to verify the achievement of objectives, the following **outputs** are generally expected from each RTI partnership:

- By month 6: Establishment of the Steering Board and structure of the partnership
- Semi-annual reports of the Steering Board meetings (*6 reports in total for a project duration of 3 years*)
- By month 24: Planning the sustainability of the RTI partnership
- By month 30: Thematic development strategy and concept for the RTI location Lower Austria
- By month 36: At least 1 proposal submitted at European level (e.g. HORIZON EUROPE, INTEREG, ERASMUS+ etc.) and at least 1 proposal submitted at national level (e.g. FFG, FWF etc.). *Alternatively, a second application may be submitted at European level.*

4 PROCEDURE

i. Submission

RTI calls are calls with a limited time frame in which funding applications can be submitted. Applications are submitted via the GFF submission system (calls.einreichsystem.at). Applications must be submitted in English (or, in exceptional cases, in German). Submission is possible from **29.11.2021 until 04.03.2022, 12 noon**.

ii. 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. The GFF assembles a jury of at least five independent external experts (see "Guidelines for Review"). The expert review is carried out by the jury members and/or (if necessary) by additional independent external experts selected by GFF on the basis of the defined review criteria (see point 6).
 - A total of two to three expert reports are prepared for each project application. In a final jury meeting, the final selection of the funded applications is made on the basis of the expert opinions.

- *Funding decision*

The Supervisory Board of GFF confirms the selection of the funded applications and decides on the funding.

- *Grant agreement*

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

iii. Funding period

- *Project start*

The project must start no later than six months after the funding contract has been signed. In justified exceptional cases, this deadline may be extended after consultation with GFF and by submitting a written (informal) application.

- *Reporting*

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

- *Funding rates*

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

- *Closure*

The formal conclusion of the funding takes place through the submission of the final report by the funding recipients in the GFF submission system (calls.einreichsystem.at).

iv. 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

i. Eligibility

- The **lead partner of the RTI partnership** can only be a *university, college or non-university research institution* with a location in *Lower Austria*.
- **The following are not eligible as lead partners:**
 - Institutions in direct majority ownership (> 50%) of the State of Lower Austria (with the exception of clinics in the research sector). Companies in the commercial sector² (for the purposes of this call, companies are defined as commercial or freelance economic units that carry out an economic activity aimed at the production or provision of services as well as a long-term, independent, organised and profit-oriented economic activity).

² However, companies from the commercial sector can participate as cooperation partners (see 4.ii).

ii. Cooperations

An RTI partnership consists of **three or more** independent institutions (cooperation partners) from one of the following **groups**³:

1. Actors in research and science⁴
2. Actors of the economy
3. Actors in education
4. Actors of the administration⁵
5. Actors of the society⁶

The **confirmation of the participation of the cooperation partners** in the RTI partnership takes place within the framework of the submission of the funding application, where they are entered in the submission system as "other participating institution." They also sign a *letter of interest* (LOI), which is also uploaded to the system.

The sole **formal applicant** is the **lead partner** of the RTI partnership.

In the case of funding, however, a **cooperation agreement** must be drawn up between all the institutions described in the funding application *before the start of the funding period*, which regulates the internal and external relationship of the RTI partnership.

Extensions of the RTI partnership by additional cooperation partners are **possible** after **consultation with the funding agency** and are explicitly **desired**. Joining an RTI partnership is done by extending and signing the cooperation agreement, which is sent to all cooperation partners and the funding agency.

The **withdrawal** of participating institutions from an RTI partnership after the start of the project is only possible in justified exceptional cases and only permissible with the approval of the funding agency (GFF).

iii. Equal opportunities

Equal opportunities are a prerequisite for a positive review of the application. These equal opportunities should, as far as possible, be reflected in a balanced gender distribution. The project application must also describe which measures have been taken or are planned by the participating institutions to ensure equal opportunities in their organisation ([Gender Equality Plan](#)).

iv. Other

A fully completed and signed funding application is a prerequisite for the application to be considered in the evaluation procedure.

Failure to meet one or more of these requirements may lead to the exclusion of the project application in the course of the formal review and thus even before the peer review.

³ Examples: An RTI partnership consisting of a university (lead partner), two companies and an NGO (cooperation partners) meets the requirements because three groups are represented. An RTI partnership consisting of one university (lead partner) and two associations (cooperation partners) does not meet the requirements because only two groups are represented.

⁴ Examples: Colleges, universities, non-university research institutions, etc.

⁵ Examples: Office of the Lower Austrian State Government, municipalities, cities, etc.

⁶ Examples: Citizens' initiatives, other forms of structured involvement of society.

6 FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK

i. Form of funding

The funding is a grant. The maximum permissible funding intensity is **90% of the eligible costs** (see 5.v).

ii. Runtime

The term of the funded RTI partnerships is 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).

iii. Funding amount

The maximum amount of funding per RTI partnership is € 420,000.

iv. Use of funds in Lower Austria

As this is a subsidy from the State of Lower Austria, subsidies can only be obtained and used for locations in Lower Austria (with the exception of third-party service providers, see 5.v).

v. 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 funding purpose. Inappropriate calculations can be a reason for rejection despite the excellence of the content of the funding application.

Costs in the following categories are **eligible**:

- Project-relevant **personnel costs** of the RTI partnership manager employed by the lead partner of the RTI partnership.
- Other scientific or technical staff employed by the lead partner of the RTI partnership (excl. administrative staff)
 - Applications and accounting are based on the planned or actual gross personnel costs plus a lump sum for ancillary wage costs in the amount of 30%. The maximum eligible personnel costs per person are capped at the maximum contribution base set annually by the competent federal ministry.
Example: Maximum contribution basis 2021 = € 5,550 / month
Maximum eligible personnel costs per person = € 5,550 x 14 x 1.3 = € 101,010
 - The sum of the funded personnel costs of the additional scientific and technical staff employed by the lead partner of the RTI partnership may not exceed 20% of the total funding amount.
- Project-relevant **material costs and other costs** incurred by the lead partner of the RTI partnership (up to the limit of low-value assets).
 - Test material and consumables
 - Costs for publications related to the project
 - Event costs and participation fees

- Travel expenses
- Fees for study participants
- Expense allowances for citizens
- Other direct costs
- **Third-party services** in compliance with the arm's-length principle (Fremdvergleichsgrundsatz).
 - a total of up to 20% of the total funding amount for third-party services provided by institutions participating in the RTI partnership
 - a total of up to 10% of the total funding amount for third-party services from institutions **not** involved in the RTI partnership
- **Overhead costs** are eligible only as a flat rate of 25% on eligible personnel costs. These are, for example:
 - Rental and operating costs
 - Office supplies
 - Administrative staff costs

Costs in the following categories are **not eligible**:

- Costs outside the project period
- Invoices that are not made out to the funding recipients
- Payments not made by the funding recipients
- 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
- Depreciation for wear and tear (AfA)

vi. **Cost accounting**

The proper use of the funding must be demonstrated in the reporting system and, if necessary, in financial audits (financial controls). Within the framework of reporting, this evidence is provided in the form of structured cost centre statements or lists of documents. The financial audit is based on these cost center statements or lists of documents.

7 ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

i. **Formal review**

- i. Completeness of the application
- ii. Fulfilment of the conditions under point 4
- iii. Fulfilment of the financial conditions under point 5

ii. **Expert opinion**

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 each of 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 evaluation:

- **Excellence [K1]**
 - Originality and innovation
 - Relevance and international connectivity
 - Appropriateness of the objective
- **Implementation [K2]**
 - Quality and efficiency of the work programme
 - Composition and organisation of the partnership
 - Institutional and financial framework
- **Impact [K3]**
 - Impact on science and the research location
 - Social / economic / ecological / technological impact

8 OBLIGATIONS OF THE APPLICANT

The main applicants and partners involved are obliged to observe the following points:

- i. Economic, economical, appropriate and transparent use of funds.
- ii. Keep separate and comprehensive records to demonstrate the implementation of the funded project and retain the records and supporting documents during and for at least 10 years after the end of the project, unless there is a legal requirement to do otherwise.
- iii. Maintenance of an adequate accounting system.
- iv. Submission of appropriate interim and final reports to the funding agency, in accordance with the timetable and reporting structure provided by the agency.
- v. Enabling of audits and evaluations by the funding agency and third parties commissioned by it and obligation to provide corresponding information.
- vi. Timely notification of all significant events relevant to the implementation of the funded project.
- vii. Provision of information for the public relations work of the funding agency.
- viii. Establishing the visibility of the funding agency and the State of Lower Austria as the funding body in web presences, publications and events in connection with the funded activity (the use of the logos and funding information is regulated in the project contract).
- ix. 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 FUNDING RECOVERY

Decisions on discontinuation and funding recovery are made by the funding agency within the framework of the conditions set out in the respective funding agreement and in this document in the form of a written request to the lead partner. The provisions regarding reduction, evaluation and recovery pursuant to §6 of the Guidelines for Funding under the Lower Austrian Cultural Promotion Act 1996 for the field of science, research, tertiary education and science dissemination apply.

In addition, the following points can lead to a complete recovery and discontinuation of the promised funding:

- i. Before the start of the funding period, no cooperation agreement regulating the internal and external relationship of the RTI partnership has been concluded between the cooperation partners (including the lead partner).
- ii. The composition of the RTI partnership was changed without the explicit approval of the funding agency, or key partners are no longer part of the RTI partnership.

10 DATA PROTECTION

Your personal data will be processed for the duration of the entire business relationship (from the submission to the termination of a funding contract, including any necessary data transfer to the State of Lower Austria as the funding provider, external experts and auditors) and beyond in accordance with the statutory storage and documentation obligations within the framework of the currently applicable [Austrian Data Protection Act](#) (DSG) and the [European General Data Protection Regulation](#) (DSGVO).

11 LEGAL BASIS

- [Lower Austrian Cultural Promotion Act 1996](#)
- [Guidelines for funding under the Lower Austrian Cultural Promotion Act 1996 for the fields of science, research, tertiary education and science dissemination](#)

The legal basis and the call document do not give rise to any legal claim to the granting of funding. The place of jurisdiction for all disputes arising from the granting of funding is the regional court of St. Pölten.

This call document comes into force on **29.11.2021** and applies to funding applications in the call "RTI Partnerships 2021." Amendments and any updated versions will be published in the GFF submission system (calls.einreichsystem.at).