

RTI INFRASTRUCTURE 2021: ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE AND RESOURCES

CALL DOCUMENT

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INTRODUCTION

Within the framework of the RTI infrastructure call, funding is provided for the acquisition for the establishment and expansion of research infrastructure in the area of non-economic use.

The research infrastructure is intended to improve the technical equipment of the universities and non-university research institutions located in Lower Austria, to facilitate outstanding research and to contribute to the profile of the location. This increases the attractiveness and competitiveness of Lower Austria as a research location and strengthens its innovative power. The cooperative use of research infrastructures by several institutions further enhances this benefit.

The call "RTI Infrastructure 2021" is announced in the field of action "**Environment, Climate and Resources**" of the RTI Strategy of Lower Austria 2027.

In this call document, you will find details on thematic orientation, objectives, procedure, prerequisites, utilization concept, financial framework conditions, review criteria, obligations of the applicant, discontinuation and recovery of funding, data protection and legal basis.

Supplementary information can be found in the "Proposal Guide" as well as in the project description template.

The submission system of the GFF NÖ (calls.einreichsystem.at) is open from 06.12.2021 until 04.03.2022, 12 noon.

I. THEMATIC ORIENTATION

Proposals for research infrastructure funding can be submitted for the "**Environment, Climate and Resources**" field of action of the RTI Strategy for Lower Austria 2027. It is required that the infrastructure is mainly used for **non-economic purposes** (research).

The challenges in this domain include the bio-economy and the circular economy; sustainable energy systems and clean mobility; limiting the effects of climate change and adapting to climate change; reducing CO₂ emissions through decarbonization; saving resources and energy efficiency; promoting the use of renewable raw materials and bio-based materials, products and process technology; sustainable land use; protecting water bodies; preserving biodiversity; sustainable agriculture and smart farming.

2. OBJECTIVES

The funding of research infrastructures in the non-economic sector intends to contribute to the following objectives:

- i. Sustainable expansion of research competence
- ii. Increasing the visibility and profile of the location
- iii. Expansion of cooperation through joint use of research infrastructure

3. PROCEDURE

i. Submission

RTI calls are thematic calls for a limited period of time in which proposals for funding can be submitted via the GFF submission system. Proposals have to be submitted in English from **06.12.2021 to 04.03.2022, 12.00 noon**.

ii. Ex-ante evaluation

- *Evaluation procedure and selection*
 - All proposals submitted on time will first undergo an internal formal review by the GFF.
 - The GFF assembles a jury of at least five independent external experts.
 - The evaluation is carried out by the jury members and / or additional independent external experts selected by GFF. A total of 2-3 evaluation reports are prepared for each proposal.
 - In the final meeting, the proposals are selected by the jury based on the evaluation reports.

- *Funding decision*

The Supervisory Board of the GFF confirms the selection of the projects and the funding.

- *Grant agreement*

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

iii. Funding period

- *Acquisition*

The research infrastructure may only be purchased after funding has been approved. Any costs incurred prior to this are not eligible for funding.

- *Commissioning*

The research infrastructure must be commissioned no later than twelve months after signing the funding agreement. In exceptional cases, this deadline may be extended after consultation with GFF and by submitting a written (informal) justification.

- *Reporting*

The reporting obligation begins with the commissioning of the research infrastructure and extends until the end of its service life (see point 4.v).

The annual reports are prepared and submitted by the funding recipients through the GFF submission system for the first three years after commissioning.

It is also possible to request reports on a random basis in order to verify that the facility is being used in accordance with its intended purpose after the first three years until the end of its service life (max. 10 years after commissioning).

- *Funding rates*

The funding recipients can call up 50% of the total funding amount at the time of acquisition.

The second 50% of the total funding amount will be paid after submitting the invoice(s) and a confirmation of successful commissioning.

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.

4. REQUIREMENTS

i. Lead partner

- Universities, colleges and non-university research institutions located in Lower Austria are **eligible to apply**.
- Companies in the commercial sector and institutions in direct majority ownership (> 50%) of the province of Lower Austria (with the exception of clinics in the research sector) are **not eligible to apply**.

ii. Use of funds in Lower Austria

The research infrastructure must be purchased for a research location in Lower Austria and must also be commissioned and used there. A change of location is not permitted without the approval of the funding agency and may lead to the funding being recovered (see point 9).

iii. Cooperation

Cooperative use of the research infrastructure by other institutions is possible and welcomed. Evidence of the planned cooperative use is provided by expressions of interest (LOIs) from other institutions (within or outside Lower Austria or Austria; incl. institutions not eligible to apply) in the funding proposal. The framework conditions for cooperative use must be described in the proposal (see project description template).

iv. Funding objects / types of use

Funding is provided for the acquisition (construction and expansion) of research infrastructure (equipment / instruments / software for research purposes; excluding basic equipment or replacement investments) in the area of predominantly non-economic use.

The research infrastructure must be used predominantly for **non-economic activities** (at least 80% of the total annual capacity).

Non-economic activities include:

- Training of more or better qualified employees
- Independent research and development to increase knowledge and understanding
- Dissemination of research results and knowledge transfer

Economic use is only **possible** if it is a purely secondary activity, if the economic activity is directly connected with and necessary for the operation of the research institution, or if it is inseparably connected with the main non-economic activity.

Furthermore, the **scope of the economic use** must be limited. Using the same inputs, the allocated capacity of economic use must not exceed 20% of the total annual capacity of the research infrastructure.

In order to exclude direct or indirect aid, the economic use must be charged **at market prices** (full costs + profit margin).

v. **Service life**

The service life (= depreciation period) must be stated in the funding proposal and is decisive for the duration of the reporting obligation (max. 10 years after the year of commissioning¹).

vi. **Other**

A fully completed and signed project proposal is a prerequisite to be considered for evaluation.

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

5. USAGE CONCEPT

A usage concept for the entire planned service life (= depreciation period, but max. 10 years) must be drawn up for the research infrastructure. The first three years must be presented in detail.

The structure and the corresponding core aspects, which constitute an essential part of the evaluation, are provided in the project description template.

6. FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK

i. **Form of funding**

The funding is a grant. The directly attributable acquisition costs of the research infrastructure are eligible for funding at a rate of up to 90% and up to the maximum funding amount (see 6.iii).

ii. **Funding amount**

The funding amount for the research infrastructure is min. € 100,000 and max. € 250,000. The amount of the funding depends on the requested acquisition costs. The amount that is transferred depends on the actual acquisition costs and is limited to the maximum funding amount.

¹ For example: Commissioning occurs in July 2022; reporting requirement extends from July 2022 to December 2032, unless the operational life is shorter.

iii. **Eligible costs**

In accordance with the principles of 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 proposal.

Only costs for infrastructure acquisition that are directly attributable to the funded project, are capitalized and result in expenditure are eligible for funding. Apart from the acquisition costs for the research infrastructure, no other cost categories are eligible for funding in this call.

iv. **Exclusion of double funding**

Double funding of the acquisition costs as well as funding of the depreciation of the requested research infrastructure by additional third-party funds and subsidies must be excluded.

v. **Non-eligible costs**

- Invoices that are not addressed to the lead partner
- Payments not made by the lead partner, with the exception of payments made by financing banking institutions to obtain retention of title on behalf of the lead partner.
- Discounts and rebates
- Value added tax, provided that the lead partner is entitled to deduct input tax
- Open (unpaid) liability discounts
- (Partial) amounts from payments for which credit notes were subsequently granted or charged back
- Costs for the acquisition of land
- Fees and charges (e.g. connection fees, public charges, electricity purchase rights)
- Contract preparation costs (lawyer, notary)
- Financing costs
- External services of affiliated companies or partner companies

vi. **Own contribution**

The required own contribution is at least 10% of the direct acquisition costs of the research infrastructure.

The financing of own contributions through additional third-party funds and grants is permitted.

vii. **Cost accounting / reporting obligations**

The proper use of the funding must be demonstrated in the reporting system and, if necessary, in so-called financial audits.

7. EVALUATION CRITERIA

i. **Formal review**

- i. Completeness of the proposal
- ii. Fulfilment of the conditions under point 4
- iii. Fulfilment of the financial conditions under point 6

ii. **Evaluation**

The evaluation is carried out by external independent experts (see 3.ii). The evaluation is carried out along 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 calculated based on 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 calculated 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.

- **Excellence [K1]**
 - Research gap and domain of application
 - Innovation and objectives
 - Relevance of the expected results
- **Implementation [K2]**
 - Quality and appropriateness of the usage concept
 - Financial and resource planning
 - Institutional conditions and qualification
- **Impact [K3]**
 - Development of research competencies and institutional profile
 - Dissemination, communication and public relations
 - Cooperation
 - Societal / economic / ecological / technological impact

8. OBLIGATIONS OF THE APPLICANT ORGANIZATIONS

Applicant institutions are required to comply with the following:

- i. Economic, economical, appropriate and transparent use of funds
- ii. Keeping separate and comprehensive records to demonstrate the implementation of the funded project; keep the records and supporting

- documents for the duration of the project and for at least a further seven years after the end of the project, unless there is a legal requirement to do otherwise
- iii. Management of an adequate accounting system including separation accounting (economic / non-economic area).
 - iv. Compiling and submitting appropriate reports to the funding agency, in accordance with the reporting structure provided by the agency.
 - v. Enabling audits and evaluations by the funding agency and third parties commissioned by it, as well as the 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 activities of the funding agency.
 - viii. Mentioning of the funding agency and the Province of Lower Austria as the funding body in publications and events in connection with the funded activity.
 - ix. Compliance with the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#), the [United Nations \(UN\) Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#) and the further strategic embedding of the [RTI Strategy for Lower Austria 2021 - 2027](#)
 - x. Compliance with the Federal Procurement Act 2006, Federal Law Gazette 1 No. 17/2006, as amended, and its implementing provisions in the award of research infrastructure to be procured; proposal of the Lower Austrian Procurement Review Act LGBl. 7200-3 and its implementing provisions.
 - xi. Compliance with existing standards and imperatives in the areas of scientific integrity and scientific ethics.

9. DISCONTINUATION AND FUNDING RECOVERY

With regard to the reduction, evaluation and recovery of funding, the provisions of §13 of the [Guidelines for Funding under the Lower Austrian Cultural Promotion Act 1996 in the field of science, research and tertiary education](#) apply.

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

- i. The research infrastructure was acquired prior to the funding commitment.
- ii. The research infrastructure will not be put into operation within twelve months of the funding commitment (except when approved by the funding agency).
- iii. Any sale and/or change of location of the funded research infrastructure is forbidden. Any justified exceptions need to be assessed with the funding agency.
- iv. The share of economic use is more than 20% of the total annual capacity in one or more years.

Unless otherwise determined by the funding agency, repayments must be made at an interest rate of 2% above the applicable 12-month EURIBOR.²

² If the 12-month EURIBOR is negative, an interest rate of 2% p.a. applies.

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 Province 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).

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](#)

The legal basis and the call document do not give rise to any legal claim for the grant. 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 **06.12.2021** and applies to funding proposals in the "RTI Infrastructure 2021" call. Amendments and the current version will be published in the GFF submission system (calls.einreichsystem.at).