

RTI INFRASTRUCTURE 2023: HEALTH AND NUTRITION

CALL DOCUMENT

DATE: 03.07.2023

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	THEMATIC ORIENTATION.....	3
2.	OBJECTIVES.....	3
3.	PROCEDURE.....	3
4.	REQUIREMENTS.....	5
5.	USAGE CONCEPT.....	6
6.	FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK.....	7
7.	EVALUATION CRITERIA.....	8
8.	OBLIGATIONS OF THE APPLICANT ORGANIZATIONS.....	9
9.	DISCONTINUATION AND FUNDING RECOVERY.....	9
10.	DATA PROTECTION.....	10
II.	LEGAL BASIS.....	10

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 2023" is published in the field of action "**Health and nutrition**" 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 03.07.2023 until 29.09.2023, 12 noon.

I. THEMATIC ORIENTATION

Proposals for research infrastructure funding can be submitted within the field of action "**Health and nutrition**" of the RTI Strategy for Lower Austria 2027.¹ It is required that the infrastructure is almost exclusively used for **non-economic purposes** (research).

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, where proposals for funding can be submitted via the GFF submission system. Proposals (all parts) have to be submitted in English.² The submission system is open from **03.07.2023** to **29.09.2023, 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 three independent external experts.
 - The evaluation is carried out by the jury members and / or additional independent external experts selected by the GFF. A minimum of two reviews are prepared for each proposal.
 - In the final meeting, the funding recommendation is prepared by the jury based on the reviews.

- *Funding decision*

The Supervisory Board of the GFF confirms the selection of funded projects by the jury.

¹ https://www.noe.gv.at/noe/Wissenschaft-Forschung/FTI27_web.pdf

² The proposal language (English) allows for reviews by international experts.

- *Grant agreement*

The grant agreement is signed by the GFF and the project partners on the legal basis applicable to this call.

iii. Funding period

- *Acquisition*

The research infrastructure may only be purchased after the grant agreement comes into force. Any prior costs are not eligible for funding.

- *Operation*

The research infrastructure has to be put into operation 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 starts when the research infrastructure is put into operation and lasts until the end of its service life (see point 4.vi).

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

After the first three years, the GFF might request reports on a random basis in order to verify that the facility is being used in accordance with its intended purpose (until the end of its service life; max. 10 years after it has been put into operation).

- *Disbursement of the grant*

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 transferred after submitting the invoice(s) and confirming that the infrastructure has been successfully put into operation.

iv. Interim and ex-post evaluation

Within the framework of announced interim and/or ex-post evaluations, the funding agency or a commissioned third party 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 are **eligible to apply** with their location in Lower Austria.
- Companies in the commercial sector³ 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. **Subject matter of the funding**

Funding is provided for the acquisition (construction and expansion) of research infrastructure (equipment / instruments / software for research purposes; with the exception of basic equipment or replacement investments) in the area of almost exclusively non-commercial use.

iii. **Use of funds in Lower Austria**

The research infrastructure must be purchased for a research location in Lower Austria, where it has to be put into operation. Any change of location is not permitted without the approval of the funding agency and may lead to funding recovery (see point 9).

iv. **Cooperation**

Cooperative use of the research infrastructure by other institutions (within or outside Lower Austria or Austria; incl. institutions not eligible to apply) is possible and welcomed. The planned cooperative use might be expressed in the proposal by a letter of interest (LOIs), where also the conditions for cooperative use have to be described.

v. **Type of use**

The research infrastructure has to be used almost exclusively 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:

- the economic activity is directly related and necessary to the operation of the research facility or research infrastructure, or

³ For the purposes of this call, companies are deemed to be 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.

- it is inextricably linked to the main non-economic activity and in both cases
- the scope of economic use is limited. This is the case when the same inputs (e.g.: material, equipment, personnel and fixed capital) are used for the economic activities as for the main non-economic activity and when the capacity allocated to the economic activity does not exceed 20% of the total annual capacity of the concerned infrastructure is.

Economic activities in the above sense are, for example, the rental of equipment and laboratories to companies, the provision of services for companies or contract research.

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

vi. **Service life**

The service life (= amortization 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 commissioning⁴).

vii. **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.

⁴ For example: Commissioning occurs in July 2023; reporting requirement extends from July 2023 to December 2033, unless the operational life is shorter.

6. FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK

i. **Type 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.ii).

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.

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. conn. fees, public charges, power purchase rights)
- Contract preparation costs (lawyer, notary)
- Financing costs
- External services of affiliated companies or partner companies
- Cash payments > 5.000 Euro

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]**
 - Originality and innovation
 - Need and domain of application
 - Relevance and internationality

- **Implementation [K2]**
 - Quality and efficiency of the concept
 - Financial and resource planning
 - Institutional framework and strategic embedding
 - Staff composition and qualification

- **Impact [K3]**

- Impact on science
- Impact on the research location
- Development of cooperations
- 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 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 after the grant agreement comes into force (except when approved by the funding agency).
- iii. The research infrastructure was sold and/or the location was changed. 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

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).

11. 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 **03.07.2023** and applies to funding proposals in the "RTI Infrastructure 2023" call. Amendments and the current version will be published in the GFF submission system (calls.einreichsystem.at).

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