

## RTI PROJECTS 2023: BASIC RESEARCH

### *FIELD OF ACTION: DIGITALIZATION, INTELLIGENT PRODUCTION AND MATERIALS*

### CALL DOCUMENT

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# INTRODUCTION

The funding of basic research projects is intended to strengthen scientific research in the fields of action of the Lower Austria RTI Strategy 2027. The research should contribute to solving societal challenges in the medium and long term and have societal benefits.

The fields of action of the RTI Strategy Lower Austria 2027 include:

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

The targeted development of research competencies in Lower Austria contributes to raising the profile of Lower Austria as a research location and promotes excellent and internationally visible research. Lower Austrian colleges, universities and non-university research institutions are supported in their efforts to participate successfully in calls for proposals for existing national and international research funding programs and to enter into increased cooperation with international partners.

The call "RTI Projects 2023: Basic Research" is targeting the field of action "**Digitalization, intelligent Production and Materials**" of the RTI Strategy Lower Austria 2027.

A total of **€ 2.160.000,-** is available as funding volume for this call.

In this call document you will find details on the thematic focus, objectives, procedure, framework conditions, budget, review criteria, conditions of funding, data protection and legal basis.

**Submission of basic research projects is open from 27.03.2023 to 30.06.2023, 12 noon.**

## I. THEMATIC ORIENTATION

Funding applications for basic research projects can be submitted in the "**Digitalization, intelligent Production and Materials**" field of action of the RTI Strategy Lower Austria 2027.

Within the framework of this field of action, basic (application-oriented) research<sup>1</sup> should focus on **new technologies**.

The challenges in this field of action include: Surface technology, tribology, 3D printing, additive manufacturing, robotics, aerospace, big data, data security (cybersecurity), virtual and augmented reality as well as the Internet of Things, machine learning, artificial intelligence and cognitive products, blockchain and distributed ledger technology, cryptography, advanced materials, new sensors and sensor systems.

## 2. OBJECTIVES

Projects should make contributions to the following objectives:

- Expansion of research competencies in Lower Austria in the addressed topic
- Increasing the visibility and profile of the location
- Expansion of cooperations between the participating institutions; cooperations and consortia in the projects should go beyond third-party services; the goal is the joint scientific processing of a problem by the project partners
- Contribution to innovations and solution of technological, economic, societal, and ecological challenges; including access to scientific knowledge and information (Open Access)

## 3. PROCEDURES

### i. 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](https://calls.einreichsystem.at)).

The application language is English. The submission is open from **27.03.2023 to 30.06.2023, 12 noon**.

### ii. Ex-ante evaluation

- *Evaluation procedure and project selection*

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

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 (see point 6). In a final jury meeting, a recommendation for funding is prepared on the basis of the expert reviews.

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<sup>1</sup> This is research that is associated with gaining scientific knowledge and can (but does not necessarily have to) be related to practice.

- *Funding decision*

The supervisory board of the GFF decides on 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

- *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 and by submitting a written (informal) application.

- *Reporting*

The annual reports are prepared and submitted by the grantees in the GFF submission system ([calls.einreichsystem.at](https://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.

- *Conclusion*

The formal conclusion of the funding takes place through the submission of the final report by the grantees in the GFF submission system ([calls.einreichsystem.at](https://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 conduct an audit to determine whether the funding is being used for its intended purpose.

## 4. REQUIREMENTS

### i. Eligibility

#### - Eligible institutions

- **The lead partner** can only be a *university, college or non-university research institution* located in *Lower Austria*.
- **Project partners** can be colleges, universities, non-university research institutions and non-profit organizations 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);
- Companies in the commercial sector.

### ii. **Cooperations**

- At least two independent entities 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 to set up a consortium agreement. This contract regulates the internal relationship of the cooperation.
- Collaborations with non-funded institutions are possible by submitting of a Letter of Intent (LOI).

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

Since the funding is provided by the province of Lower Austria, a predominant use in Lower Austria ( $\geq 75\%$ ) is required.

### iv. **Composition of the project team**

- *Career development of young scientists*

The project is intended to offer scientists (especially young researchers) the opportunity to develop and advance their scientific careers.

- *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.

### v. **Other**

A fully completed and signed grant application is a basic requirement for the application to be considered in the evaluation process.

**Failure to meet one or more of these requirements may result in disqualification of the project application during the formal review and thus even before the technical review.**

## 5. FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK

### i. **Type of funding**

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

### ii. 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).

### iii. Funding amount

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

#### *Gradation*

- 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,-

### iv. 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:

- **Costs for scientific and technical staff:**<sup>2</sup>
  - o The calculation of eligible personnel costs is based on the planned or actual gross personnel costs plus a lump sum for ancillary wage costs (AWC) of 30%. 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 2023 = € 5.850,- / month; max. eligible personnel costs per person = € 5.850 x 14 = € 81.900,- (excl. AWC)*
- **Material costs and other costs** (up to the limit of low-value assets):
  - o Test and consumable material
  - o Costs for publications in connection with the project
  - o Event costs and participation fees
  - o Travel expenses
  - o Fees for study participants
  - o Allowances for citizens
  - o Other direct costs
- **Third-party services** in compliance with the arm's length principle:
  - o Max. 10% of the total eligible costs
  - o Third-party service providers can provide definable and predetermined services; however, they cannot assume any central activities in the project (such as leading a work package or similar).
  - o Third-party service providers cannot assert any exploitation rights (IPR) on the project result.

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<sup>2</sup> Only people who actually contribute quantifiable work and for whom personnel costs are applied for can be integrated into the project as project partners and employees.

- Lead partners, project partners and their affiliated institutions cannot provide third-party services in the project.
- **Overhead costs** are eligible only as a flat rate of 25% on the 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
  - Office supplies
  - Administrative staff costs

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

- 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
- Machine hours and costs for plant usage

**v. Cost accounting**

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.

## 6. REVIEW CRITERIA

**i. Formal review**

- Completeness of the application
- Fulfillment of the requirements under point 5
- Fulfillment of the financial framework under point 6

**ii. 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:

- i. Excellence [K1]**
  - Originality and innovation
  - Objective and stringency
  - Quality and effectiveness of the method
  - Relevance and international connectivity
- ii. 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
- iii. Impact [K3]**
  - Impact on science
  - Impact on the research and education location
  - Career development (especially of young scientists)
  - Social / economic / ecological / technological impact

## 7. OBLIGATIONS OF THE RECIPIENTS

Grantees are required to comply with the following:

- i. Economic, economical, appropriate and transparent use of funds.
- ii. 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.
- iii. Maintenance of an adequate accounting system.
- iv. Submission of appropriate interim and final reports to the funding agency, in accordance with the schedule and reporting structure provided by the funding agency.
- v. 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.
- vi. Timely notification of all significant events relevant to the implementation of the funded project.
- vii. Provide public relations information to the funding agency.
- viii. 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).
- 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](#).

## 8. DISCONTINUATION AND RECOVERY 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.

The following point can also lead to a complete recovery and discontinuation of the funding:

- i. The composition of the project consortium has been changed without the explicit approval of the funding agency or essential partners are no longer part of the consortium.

## 9. DATA PROTECTION

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).

## 10. 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 **27.03.2023** and applies to funding applications in the call "**RTI Projects 2023: Basic Research.**" Amendments and the current version will be published on the GFF website (<https://calls.einreichsystem.at/>).