

RTI DISSERTATIONS 2023

CALL DOCUMENT

DATE: 06.II.2023

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.	THEMATIC ORIENTATION.....	4
2.	GOALS.....	4
3.	PROCEDURE.....	4
4.	REQUIREMENTS.....	5
5.	FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK.....	7
6.	CRITERIA FOR THE EVALUATION.....	7
7.	OBLIGATIONS OF THE APPLICANT ORGANISATION(S).....	8
8.	TERMINATION AND RECOVERY OF FUNDING.....	9
9.	DATA PROTECTION.....	9
10.	LEGAL BASIS.....	9

INTRODUCTION

The funding of the employment of PhD candidates at colleges, universities and non-university research institutions located in Lower Austria aims to strengthen the next generation of scientists in Lower Austria.

The targeted promotion and financial security of young scientists are important prerequisites for ensuring the scientific qualification and innovative strength of the state. Qualified young scientists contribute significantly to the fact that science and research institutions can act dynamically and gain research strength and visibility. The promotion of PhD candidates therefore increases the appeal of the location in national and international competition.

The Gesellschaft für Forschungsförderung NÖ (GFF NÖ) supports dissertation projects in non-profit Lower Austrian research and educational institutions by financing the employment of highly qualified PhD candidates in the field of basic and translational research.

Applications can be submitted from 06.11.2023 to 29.03.2024, 12 noon in the GFF NÖ submission system at <https://calls.einreichsystem.at>.

I. THEMATIC ORIENTATION

Submission is possible for dissertation projects with reference to all fields of action of the RTI Strategy Lower Austria 2027:

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

2. GOALS

The promotion of the employment of PhD candidates should contribute to the following goals:

- i. Strengthening of young scientists in Lower Austria
- ii. Strengthening of colleges, universities and non-university research institutions in Lower Austria
- iii. Increasing the appeal and visibility of the location

3. PROCEDURE

i. Submission

RTI calls are time-limited thematic calls for proposals within which applications can be submitted. The application language is English; this applies to all parts of the application.¹ Proposals can be submitted through the GFF submission system: <https://calls.einreichsystem.at>.

ii. Ex-ante evaluation

- *Evaluation procedure and project selection*

All applications submitted on time will first be checked by the GFF to ensure that they meet the formal criteria.

The GFF puts together a jury of independent external experts (see “Assessment Guidelines”). At least one expert report is prepared for each project application based on the defined assessment criteria (see point 6). In a final jury meeting, a funding recommendation is drawn up based on the expert reports.

¹ The application language “English” ensures the possibility of peer review by international scientific experts. A German-language application can only be submitted in exceptional cases and only for linguistic or literary studies, provided that mainly German texts are being processed. Before submitting a proposal in German, it is essential to consult with the funding agency and to submit a scientific abstract of the project including a scientific justification. This forms the basis for the decision by the funding agency.

- *Decision on funding*

The Supervisory Board of GFF NÖ decides on the funding.

- *Grant agreement*

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

iii. Funding period

- *Project start*

The funding of the employment relationship can start at the earliest on 01.04.2024 (retroactive funding) and at the latest six months after signing the funding contract. In justified exceptional cases, this deadline can be extended after consultation with the GFF and by submitting a written (informal) application.

- *Reporting*

The annual reports (each as of 31.12.) are prepared and submitted by the funding recipients in the submission system of the GFF NÖ.

- *Funding rates*

Funding instalments are paid annually in advance. 10% of the funding instalments are withheld until after the final report has been examined.

- *Conclusion*

The funding is formally concluded after the lead partners have submitted the final report to the GFF through the submission system and after the GFF has approved the report and disbursed any remaining funding by the GFF.

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. Eligible institutions

- **Lead partner** can be universities (incl. universities for applied sciences) and non-university research institutions² with a location in Lower Austria.
- The application must be submitted together with the dissertation candidate.

² Non-university research institutions are - regardless of their legal form or method of financing - institutions whose main task is to conduct independent research. If such an institution also carries out economic activities, separate accounting (for financing, costs and revenues) is required.

ii. Non-eligible institutions

- Organisations with a majority ownership by the federal state of Lower Austria (>50%) (with the exception of hospitals active in research or university clinics)
- Commercial enterprises³

iii. PhD candidate

- The formal **supervision** of the dissertation project can be agreed on with any university or research institution with the right to award PhDs. This does not have to be the institution submitting the application.
- The earliest **date** for starting with the PhD Thesis is **01.01.2024**.
- A **proof of an academic degree** entitling the holder for a doctorate or PhD study at a university or research or educational institution with the right to award doctorates has to be submitted.⁴
- **The admission of the dissertation topic** at a university with the right to award doctorates has to be submitted (subsequent submission is possible after consultation with the funding agency).
- There is **no age limit**.

iv. Equality

Equal opportunities is a prerequisite for a positive assessment of the application. The application must describe what measures have been taken or are planned by the participating institutions to ensure equal opportunities in their organization

v. Other requirements

- A fully completed and signed project application is a basic requirement for a positive funding decision.
- The dissertation project has to be thematically assigned to at least one field of action of the RTI Strategy Lower Austria 2027.⁵
- The doctoral candidate must be employed for the entire duration of the grant at an eligible institution located in Lower Austria.
- Stays / internships abroad are possible within the framework of the funding, provided that they are of comprehensible benefit to the dissertation.
- Employment within the scope of the grant must be for at least 30 hours for the dissertation project described in the application and for activities that are demonstrably directly related to it.

Failure to meet one or more of the requirements may result in disqualification of the application even before the expert review.

³ For the purposes of this tender, companies are commercial or professional economic entities that carry out a long-term, independent, organized economic activity aimed at producing or providing services and making a profit.

⁴ Confirmation of a PhD program that enables to start a PhD studies without a master's/diploma is permissible after consultation with the funding agency.

⁵ Health and nutrition; environment, climate and resources; digitalization, smart production and materials; society and culture.

5. FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK

i. Type and amount of funding

The funding is a grant. GFF NÖ funds 50% of the personnel costs (incl. employer's share) for the 30 hours per week employment of the PhD candidate named in the proposal. The funding is capped at the current annual FWF rates.⁶

ii. Cooperation

A cooperative application by two independent eligible institutions is possible. In this case, a total of 100% of the personnel costs (incl. employer's share) can be funded (50% of the funding per institution). The employment takes place with at least 15 hours at each of the two participating institutions, either with a separate employment contract or an employment at the first institution and a corresponding transfer contract to the second institution.

iii. Duration

Funding is awarded for the minimum duration of [PhD-programmes](#) in Austria (usually [36 months](#))⁷, but no longer than the completion of the PhD programme. The completion of the dissertation takes place with the reception of the degree certificate.

A cost-neutral extension of the funding is possible in justified exceptional cases of up to one year and in the case of parental leave / maternity leave in accordance with the applicable legal provisions.

iv. Personal contribution

The minimum contribution of own funds is 50% of the personnel costs of the PhD candidate. The financing of the own contribution through other third-party funds from private and / or public sources is possible, if they do not conflict with other funding conditions (EU, federal, state, etc.). In the case of simultaneous employment at two eligible and independent institutions (see 5.ii.), no own funds required.

v. Cost accounting

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

6. CRITERIA FOR THE EVALUATION

i. Formal assessment

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

⁶ <https://www.fwf.ac.at/de/forschungsfoerderung/personalkostensaetze/>

⁷ <https://www.bmbwf.gv.at/Themen/HS-Uni/Studium.html>

ii. **Expert evaluation**

The assessment is carried out using a points system by external, independent experts. The assessment is based on two main criteria (K1 and K2), each of which is divided into several subordinate sub-criteria.

The maximum number of points for an assessment is 10 points. The actual score is made up of the points awarded for each of the two main criteria. The maximum number of points per main criterion is 5 points (2 * max. 5 points = max. 10 points). The actual number of points per main criterion is determined from the points of the corresponding sub-criteria, for 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 the assessment:

- **Excellence [K1]**
 - Originality and innovation
 - Objectives and consistency
 - Quality and efficiency of the method(s)
 - Relevance and internationality

- **Implementation [K2]**
 - Quality and efficiency of the concept
 - Feasibility of the project
 - Institutional framework
 - Qualification

7. OBLIGATIONS OF THE APPLICANT ORGANISATION(S)

The applicant organisation is required to comply with the following points:

- i. Efficient, economical, appropriate and transparent use of funds.
- ii. Keeping separate and comprehensive records to demonstrate the implementation of the funded project. Securing storage of records and supporting documents during and for at least seven years after the end of the project, unless there are legal requirements to the contrary.
- iii. Use of an adequate accounting system.
- iv. Writing and submitting appropriate interim and final reports to the funding agency, according to the reporting structure provided by the agency.
- v. Allowing audits and evaluations by the funding agency and third parties commissioned by it and obligation to provide the relevant 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 a funding provider on websites, publications and events in connection with the funded activity (the use of logos and funding information is regulated in the funding agreement).
- ix. Compliance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) of the United Nations (UNO) and the further strategic embedding of the RTI Strategy Lower Austria 2021 – 2027.

8. TERMINATION AND RECOVERY OF FUNDING

With regard to the reduction, evaluation and reclaiming of funding, the provisions of Section 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 reclaim and discontinuation of the promised funding:

- i. The composition of the project consortium was changed without the express approval of the funding agency and key partners are no longer part of the consortium.

9. DATA PROTECTION

Your personal data will be processed as necessary 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 reviewers, jurors and examiners), as well as 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).

10. LEGAL BASIS

- [NÖ Kulturförderungsgesetz 1996](#)
- [Richtlinien für die Förderung nach dem NÖ Kulturförderungsgesetz 1996 Bereich Wissenschaft, Forschung und tertiäre Bildung](#)

These guidelines and the call document do not constitute a legal entitlement to the granting of funding, either in terms of the reason for the subsidy or the amount of the subsidy. The place of jurisdiction for all disputes arising from the granting of a fund is the Regional Court of St. Pölten.

This call document comes into force on **06.11.2023** and applies to funding applications in the call "**RTI Dissertations 2023**". Amendments will be published online (calls.einreichsystem.at).