

# RTI PROJECTS 2023: APPLIED RESEARCH

## CALL DOCUMENT

**DATE: 18.12.2023 (20.03.2024)**

### TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.	THEMATIC ORIENTATION.....	3
2.	OBJECTIVES.....	3
3.	PROCEDURES.....	3
4.	REQUIREMENTS.....	5
5.	FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK.....	6
6.	EVALUATION CRITERIA.....	8
7.	OBLIGATIONS OF THE BENEFICIARIES.....	9
8.	DISCONTINUATION AND RECOVERY OF FUNDING.....	10
9.	DATA PROTECTION.....	10
10.	LEGAL BASIS.....	11

# INTRODUCTION

This call supports industrial research projects.<sup>1</sup> Basic research projects, experimental development projects and feasibility studies will not be funded. Only cooperation (effective collaboration)<sup>2</sup> between at least one research and knowledge dissemination organisation (universities, colleges and non-university research organisations) and at least one industrial company will be supported. These collaborations will favour a dynamic development of the research institutions and the companies involved and support the development of expertise at the location.

This call document is based on the funding programme "RTI Projects: Applied Research" and contains details on thematic focus, objectives, procedures, prerequisites, financial framework conditions, review criteria, obligations of the applicant, discontinuation and recovery of funding, data protection and legal basis.

**Submission of project proposals is open from 18.12.2023 to 22.03.2024, 12 noon.**

---

<sup>1</sup> 'industrial research' means the planned research or critical investigation aimed at the acquisition of new knowledge and skills for developing new products, processes or services or for bringing about a significant improvement in existing products, processes or services. It comprises the creation of components parts of complex systems, and may include the construction of prototypes in a laboratory environment or in an environment with simulated interfaces to existing systems as well as of pilot lines, when necessary for the industrial research and notably for generic technology validation. (COMMISSION REGULATION (EU) No 651/2014, Article 2, Paragraph 85)

<sup>2</sup> ,effective collaboration': collaboration between at least two independent partners with the aim to exchanging knowledge or technology or towards a common goal, whereby the partners jointly define the subject of the collaborative project, contribute to its implementation and share its risks and results. The total costs of the project can be borne by one or more partners, so that other partners are exempt from the financial risks of the project. Contract research and the provision of research services are not considered forms of collaboration. (see COMMISSION REGULATION (EU) No 651/2014, Article 2, Paragraph 90)

## I. THEMATIC ORIENTATION

Proposals for funding of **industrial research** projects can be submitted for the fields of action defined in 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

Proposals for funding of basic research projects<sup>3</sup>, experimental development projects<sup>4</sup> and feasibility studies<sup>5</sup> will not be considered.

## 2. OBJECTIVES

Within the framework of this funding, industrial research projects are supported. In addition to strengthening the research institutions (expanding research competence, increasing visibility and expanding cooperation), the focus is therefore explicitly on practice-relevant (economic, ecological, technological and/or social) topics.

## 3. PROCEDURES

### 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 ([calls.einreichsystem.at](https://calls.einreichsystem.at)). The application language is English, and this applies to all parts of the application.<sup>6</sup> Submission is possible from **18.12.2023 to 22.03.2024, 12.00 noon**.

### ii. Ex-ante evaluation

- *Evaluation procedure and project selection*
  - All proposals submitted by the deadline will first be reviewed by the GFF to ensure that they meet the formal criteria.

---

<sup>3</sup> 'fundamental research' means experimental or theoretical work undertaken primarily to acquire new knowledge of the underlying foundations of phenomena and observable facts, without any direct commercial application or use in view (COMMISSION REGULATION (EU) No 651/2014, Chapter, 1, Article 2, Paragraph 84)

<sup>4</sup> 'experimental development' means acquiring, combining, shaping and using existing scientific, technological, business and other relevant knowledge and skills with the aim of developing new or improved products, processes or services. This may also include, for example, activities aiming at the conceptual definition, planning and documentation of new products, processes or services (COMMISSION REGULATION (EU) No 651/2014, Chapter, 1, Article 2, Paragraph 86)

<sup>5</sup> 'feasibility study' means the evaluation and analysis of the potential of a project, which aims at supporting the process of decision-making by objectively and rationally uncovering its strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats, as well as identifying the resources required to carry it through and ultimately its prospects for success (COMMISSION REGULATION (EU) No 651/2014, Chapter, 1, Article 2, Paragraph 87)

<sup>6</sup> The application language English ensures the possibility of peer review by international scientific experts. A German-language application can only be approved in exceptional cases and only for linguistic or literary studies applications, provided that predominantly German-language texts are being processed. Before submitting the application, 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.

- The GFF will assemble a jury of at least three independent external experts (see " Review Guidelines").
- The expert evaluation is carried out by the jury members and by independent external experts selected by the GFF. The evaluation will be based on the defined assessment criteria (provided in point 6).
- At least two expert reports are prepared for each project application, which results in a ranking of the applications based on the points awarded.
- In a final jury meeting, the final selection of the funded proposals is made on the basis of the expert opinions.

- *Funding decision*

The supervisory board of GFF confirms the selection of the funded proposals and decides on the funding.

- *Grant agreement*

The grant agreement is signed 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 within 6 months of 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 funding recipients in the GFF submission system (calls.einreichsystem.at).

- *Funding rates*

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

- *Closure*

Closing the project 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 (audits), the funding agency or a commissioned third party will assess whether the funds have been used for the intended purpose.

## 4. REQUIREMENTS

### i. Eligibility

- **Eligible for funding** are cooperations between at least one **institution for research and knowledge-dissemination**<sup>7</sup> (universities, colleges and non-university research institutions<sup>8</sup>) and at least one **company**, each with a location in Lower Austria.
- The **lead partner** is the institution for research and knowledge-dissemination.
- Institutions from outside of Lower Austria are not eligible for funding and cannot be part of the project consortium.
- **Third-party services** (see 5.v) can be used to obtain services required for the project; they can be acquired from institutions outside Lower Austria.
- **Ineligible institutions and companies**
  - Credit institutions
  - Insurance companies
  - Entities in which the Federal Government or the Province of Lower Austria (with the exception of clinics in the research sector) holds at least 50 % of the share capital or equity capital
  - Entities in difficulty pursuant to the COMMISSION REGULATION (EU) No 651/2014, Article 1, Paragraph 4c in conjunction with Article 2, Paragraph 18
  - Entities in the fields of fisheries and aquaculture, primary production of agricultural products and processing and marketing of agricultural products in accordance with the COMMISSION REGULATION (EU) No 651/2014, , Article 1, Paragraph 3 a to c
  - A funding application is not permitted if a cooperation partner is not eligible for funding within the meaning of the point.

### ii. Cooperation

- A cooperation is the effective collaboration of at least two mutually independent institutions (for definition see 4.i).
- The cooperation partners are implementing the project at the Lower Austria site.
- Each organization involved in the project must contribute at least 10% of the eligible costs.

---

<sup>7</sup> Institution for research and knowledge dissemination are institutions such as universities or research institutes, technology transfer institutions, innovation intermediaries, research-oriented physical or virtual cooperation institutions, regardless of their legal form (public or private law) or financing method, whose main task is to carry out independent basic research, industrial research or to engage in experimental development or to disseminate the results of such activities through teaching, publication or knowledge transfer. If such an institution also carries out economic activities, it must keep separate records of its financing, costs and revenue. Companies that, for example, as shareholders or members, can exercise decisive influence on such an institution may not be granted preferential access to the research results it produces.

<sup>8</sup> 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.

- The participating institutions must have the right to publish their own research results.
- iii. **Use of funds in Lower Austria**
- Since this is funding from the state of Lower Austria, funding can only be obtained and used for locations in Lower Austria (excluding third-party service providers, see 5.iv).
- iv. **Composition of the project team**
- Equality of opportunity between scientists in their participation in research projects is an essential prerequisite for a positive review of the proposal. If possible, this equality of opportunity should be reflected in a balanced gender distribution within the project teams. The project proposal must also describe the measures that have been taken or are planned by the participating institutions to ensure equal opportunities within their organisation.
- v. **Other**
- A fully completed project proposal, signed by the applicants, is a prerequisite to be considered in the evaluation procedure.
  - If a positive ethical vote is required for the project, this must be presented accordingly in the application. In the case of funding, the ethics vote must be submitted by the start of the project. In justified exceptional cases, a later submission is possible.
  - Letters of intent (LOIs) can be submitted as part of the project application.

**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 expert evaluation.**

## 5. FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK

### i. Funding

The funding is a grant. It is required to conduct a project, where the funded part can be fully allocated to industrial research. The funding rate depends (according to the definition of the European Commission) on the number of employees and the annual turnover and/or the annual balance sheet<sup>9</sup> of the cooperation partners and amounts to:

- up to **80%** of the eligible costs if **small companies** participate. A small company (SE) is defined as a company that employs fewer than 50 people and whose annual turnover or annual balance sheet does not exceed EUR 10 million.

- up to **75%** of the eligible costs when **medium-sized companies** participate. A medium-sized enterprise (ME) is defined as a company that employs between 50 and 249 people and either has an annual turnover of a maximum of EUR 50 million or an annual balance sheet total of a maximum of EUR 43 million.

- up to **65%** of the eligible costs if **large companies** participate. A large company (LE) is defined as a company that employs 250 people or more and whose annual turnover is more than EUR 50 million or whose annual balance sheet total is more than EUR 43 million.

---

<sup>9</sup> See [Attachment I of the COMMISSION REGULATION \(EU\) No 651/2014](#)

### ii. Duration

The project duration is a minimum of two years and a maximum of three years. Cost-neutral project extensions are possible in justified exceptional cases. An extension of the project duration must be agreed with GFF and subsequently applied for in writing.

### iii. Funding amount

The maximum funding amount is up to € 360.000 depending on the project duration:

- with 3 years: up to € 360.000
- with 2.5 years: up to € 300,000
- with 2 years: up to € 240,000

### 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 funding purpose. Inappropriate calculations may be a reason for rejection despite the excellence of the content of the project proposal.

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

- Project-relevant direct **personnel costs** for researchers, technicians and other personnel, insofar as they work for the project:
  - The application is based on the planned gross personnel costs including non-wage labour costs.
  - The maximum eligible personnel costs (including non-wage labour costs) per person are limited to the maximum contribution basis (plus 30%) set annually by the competent Federal Ministry.<sup>10</sup>
- Costs for **R&D-specific instruments and equipment** that have to be purchased to implement the project are eligible for funding on a pro rata basis according to their use in the project via **depreciation for wear and tear (Abschreibung für Abnutzung, Afa)**.
- **Third-party services** in compliance with the Arm's-length Principle
  - max. 25% of the total eligible costs
  - Third-party service providers can provide definable and predetermined services; However, they cannot take on any central activities in the project (such as managing a work package or similar).
  - Third-party service providers cannot assert any exploitation rights (IPR) on the project results.
  - Lead partners, cooperation partners and their affiliated institutions cannot provide third-party services in the project.

---

<sup>10</sup> Example: Maximum contribution basis 2022 = € 5,670 / month Max. eligible personnel costs (incl. non-wage labour costs) per person (€ 5,670 x 14 x 1.3): € 103,194.



- Direct **material costs** relevant to the project:
  - Test material and consumables
  - Costs for publications related to the project
  - Event costs and participation fees
  - Travel expenses
  - Fees for study participants
  - Other direct costs
  
- Overhead **costs** are eligible only as a flat rate of 20% on eligible direct and project-related personnel costs, costs for R&D-specific instruments and equipment and third-party services. 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 recipients
- Payments not made by beneficiaries
- 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
- Services provided by affiliated institutions

v. **Cost accounting**

The proper use of the funding must be demonstrated in the reporting system and in financial audits (financial controls). Within the framework of reporting, this evidence 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. 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 5

ii. **Preliminary review**

Fulfillment of the requirement “Industrial Research

### iii. Expert evaluation

The evaluation is carried out by external independent experts on the basis of a point system and along three main criteria (K1-3), each of which is subdivided into several sub-criteria.

The maximum number of points for a proposal 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 of the project
  - Objective and stringency of the project
  - Quality and effectiveness of the method
  - Relevance and internationality
- **Implementation [K2]**
  - Quality and efficiency of the work programme
  - Feasibility of the project
  - Financial and resource planning
  - Institutional framework and strategic embedding
  - Staff composition and qualification
- **Impact [K3]**
  - Impact on science
  - Impact on the research location
  - Economic impact
  - Social / environmental / technological impact

In a closing jury meeting, the final selection of the requested participants is made based on the expert reports and the opinions of the jury members.

## 7. OBLIGATIONS OF THE BENEFICIARIES

Beneficiaries are obliged to comply with 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. The beneficiaries undertake to provide (i) the funding agency, (ii) the Court of Audit of the Federal Province of Lower Austria, (iii) the Court of Audit of the Republic of Austria, (iv) the European Court of Auditors, (v) other control bodies

of the Federal Province of Lower Austria, (vi) the Republic of Austria and (vii) the bodies of the EU or EU funds (viii) cooperation partners - or the respective bodies and agents of the aforementioned - with information (including complete evidence) regarding the funded project at any time for evaluation and control purposes as well as for statistical analyses and to provide such bodies and agents with information at any time for evaluation and control purposes as well as for statistical analyses.

- 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 province of Lower Austria as the funding body in web presences, publications and events in connection with the funded activity (for the use of the logos and standardised funding information: see 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 the discontinuation and recovery of the funding, the provisions of paragraph 70 et seq. of Part B of the [General Guidelines for Lower Austrian Subsidies in the Field of Business, Tourism and Technology](#) apply.

## 9. DATA PROTECTION

- i. Responsible person according to the GDPR

The Gesellschaft für Forschungsförderung Niederösterreich m.b.H., A-3100 St. Pölten, Hypogasse 1, 1st floor, T: +43 2742 27570-0, E: [office@gff-noe.at](mailto:office@gff-noe.at) (GFF) is responsible for processing your personal data Responsible person in connection with your funding application in accordance with Art. 7 Z7 GDPR.

- ii. Purpose and legal basis of data processing

In order to process and fulfill the funding application, the GFF processes the following personal data from you:

- Names and professional contact details of the contact person at the funding applicants' institutions; Names, professional contact details and CVs of the scientific management and the project partners; Names and contact details of other scientific or technical staff.

The legal basis for this data processing is the fulfillment of the contract in accordance with Article 6 Paragraph 1 Letter b GDPR, so that the GFF can process and fulfill your funding application.

- iii. Storage period

The GFF stores your personal data until your funding application has been fully processed (from submission to termination of the funding contract, including any necessary data transfer to the state of Lower Austria, external experts, and examiners, insofar as this is necessary to fulfill the funding application) .

In addition, GFF only stores your personal data to the extent necessary to fulfill legal retention obligations or to pursue or defend against legal claims.

#### iv. Data recipient

We will transmit your personal data to the following third parties if this is necessary to fulfill your funding application:

- State of Lower Austria
- External experts
- External examiners

In addition, we use contract processors who process data on our behalf. The processors may only process the data provided to them in accordance with our instructions and to carry out services for us. We contractually oblige these processors to ensure the confidentiality and security of the personal data processed as part of the order.

#### v. Your rights under the GDPR

As the person responsible under the GDPR, you have the following rights towards GFF: (i) information (Art. 15 GDPR); (ii) correction (Article 16 GDPR); (iii) deletion (Article 17 GDPR); (iv) Restriction of processing (Article 18 GDPR); (v) objection (Art. 21 GDPR); (vi) data portability (Article 20 GDPR); (vii) Complaint to the responsible supervisory authority (Art. 77 GDPR), whereby in Austria the data protection authority ([www.dsb.gv.at](http://www.dsb.gv.at)) is responsible.

## 10. LEGAL BASIS

- [General guideline for Lower Austrian subsidies in the field of economy, tourism and technology](#)
- [Funding program for RTI Projects: Applied Research](#)
- [Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union \(2012/C 326/01\)](#)
- General Block Exemption Regulation (GBER) of the European Commission: COMMISSION REGULATION (EU) No 651/2014 of 17 June 2014 declaring certain categories of aid compatible with the internal market in application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, as amended, Art. 25(2). lit a/b/c/d ([summary](#)), recently adapted through the COMMISSION REGULATION (EU) 2023/1315 from 23.06.2023.
- Funding agreement between the State of Lower Austria and GFF dated 22.12.2020 regarding funding in the area of the RTI strategy of the state (calls)

The legal bases and the tender 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 a subsidy is the Regional Court of St. Pölten.

This call document comes into force on 18.12.2023 and applies to funding applications in the call "RTI Projects 2023: Applied Research." Amendments and any updated versions will be published in the GFF submission system ([calls.einreichsystem.at](http://calls.einreichsystem.at)).