

Change! Fellowships Brief Info

Deadline April 16, 2026, 2pm

1 General Information

What is funded: Personalities from the world of science who research and initiate transformation processes together with non-scientific partners

Target group: Postdocs (2-15 years after their doctorate), junior professors and professors up to 3 years after taking up their first tenured professorship

Max. grant: 1,5 to 1,8 million EUR

Funding period: 4 - 5 years

Deadline: 16 April 2026

Requirements: Involvement of 1 to 3 partners from outside of academia in the research process

We plan to have the next call in 2027.

Rejected projects cannot be submitted another time

2 Attention: New in 2026

- Eligibility of professors up to 3 years after taking up their first tenured professorship.
- Between 1 and 3 partners from outside of academia obligatory.
- 100% positions of PhDs and postdocs involved in the project.
- Lottery element as part of the selection process.
- Previous experience with partners from outside of academia or existing experience with transdisciplinary projects obligatory.
- Scientific Advisory Board.

3 Scientific Advisory Board

- Providing additional (interdisciplinary) expertise for the project, strengthening the scientific impact.
- Usually between 3 and 5 persons.
- Mix of national and international scientists.
- Travel costs for the board can be included in the budget of the main applicant.

4 Eligible Projects

- High scientific quality of research design, theory and method
- Transdisciplinary research
 - Research jointly with partners outside of academia on equal footing
- Research on transformation processes
 - Develop knowledge, methods, and scenarios to design such processes
 - Gain knowledge on factors that support or suppress such processes
- Problem focused on mustn't have solely technological solution. If technology is being developed it must be to support the process of change and it has to be analysed how it influences change
- Challenge focused on must be scalable or transferable

5 Project Funding

- Staff
 - own position (if necessary), 2-3 scientific staff positions (PhD or Post-Doc level, 100%)
 - Assistant positions
- Travel expenses
- Other research funds
- Publication costs (open access)

6 Partner Funding

- Partners outside of academia can apply for:
 - Staff costs
 - Travel expenses

- Other research costs
- Additionally up to 10 % (max. 12,000 €) of the costs above as lump sum administration costs for increased administration expenses due to the project
- **Separate expenditure plan for each partner outside of academia**

Partners can be abroad

- If research is on challenge abroad locals should be included into research
- Transferability and connection to other societies should be discussed

7 Review Criteria

- Originality and very strong scientific quality
- Potential for generating new knowledge on societal transformation processes and how to shape them as well as for developing recommendations for action as concrete as possible for project-specific target groups
- Coherence of project design, theoretical approach and methodology, openness of the approach
- Outstanding qualifications and scientific independence of the applicants
- Fitting transdisciplinary research design
- Relevant expertise and targeted composition of the partners outside of academia
- Career prospects within and outside of academia for all team members through their work on the project
- Proven engagement of the applicant in project-relevant networks outside of academia or existing experience in transdisciplinary research (see CV-template)
- Convincing reflection, integration and learning process in the project'

8 Review Process

1. Internal review by Volkswagen Foundation
2. June/July: evaluation of the proposal by external scientific committee
3. September: selection workshop (scientific excellence and individual competence; leadership and communication skills, conflict management)
4. Early 2027, the latest: notification on the decision

The Foundation reserves the right to apply a lottery element to identify applications from the mid field for steps of the process in case of high proposal numbers.

9 Enclosures

- Application template (on our website)
- CV of the main applicant template (on our website)
- Affiliation and CV of partner from outside of academia template (on our website)
- Statement of Declaration from university or research institute template (on our website)
- Letter of Intent by the Co-PI/partner from outside of academia template (on our website)
- Data management plan (on our website)
- Expenditure plan of the main applicant and separate expenditure plan for each Co-PI/partner from outside of academia (in the application portal)

Please do not provide additional documents.

10 Application Portal

- <https://portal.volkswagenstiftung.de>
- **The funding platform will be unavailable due to necessary system updates on 10 April between 1.30 p.m. and 5.00 p.m.**

11 Contact Persons

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