

### Funding Initiative

# Researching Research: Collaborative Research Projects

**Profile area:** Understanding Research

**Deadline:** probably in spring 2026

As part of the initiative "Researching Research", the Volkswagen Foundation offers funding for interdisciplinary, multi-methodological and internationally oriented research projects that bring together expertise from different disciplines and scientific communities in the area of research on research. Calls with changing topics are published for which applications can be submitted.



disciplines conducting research on research



research projects



researchers who have completed their doctorate and are currently employed at a German university or research institute; international co-applicants possible



up to 1 million Euro



up to 4 years



Additional funding available for science communication and/or for the preparation of research data for reuse (Open Science)

# 1 Objectives

By funding research on research, the Volkswagen Foundation aims to support the creation, reflection and strategic application of knowledge about the realm of science. With this it seeks to promote an open, inclusive, and diverse research culture and thus to generate positive effects on the future research system.

Therefore, the Volkswagen Foundation offers funding for interdisciplinary, multi-methodological and internationally oriented research projects that bring together expertise from different disciplines and scientific communities in the area of research on research. It supports not only the development of new knowledge but also reflection on the strategic application of the generated findings in the context of science and higher education policy. Calls with changing topics are published for which applications can be submitted. Each topic will address an issue that is relevant to the field of research on research and that can be approached from a variety of perspectives and directions.

The topic of the next call for proposals is expected to be published in autumn 2025.

## Current call: Political influences on epistemic practice

Research on research focuses - among other things - on the epistemic practices of scientists and the effects of specific working conditions on scientific knowledge production. However, the influence of political decision-making on research practice is not necessarily considered. At the same time, research and science policy seem to be well researched, whereas the effects and impact of political instruments on epistemic processes, i.e. their influence on the priorities and decisions of researchers in their everyday activities, are mostly not taken into account. The current call for proposals aims to interlink these two strands of research by supporting collaborative projects that aim to analyze the influence of political decisions on research practices and/or the repercussions of epistemic processes on political action. The question is how political premises and priorities at regional, national, supranational or international level affect, control or inhibit the practices of researchers, thereby influencing the (non-)existence of knowledge. And moreover, what mutual effects can be identified between political action and research practice.

Possible research areas or topics are, for example:

- Knowledge production between the political need or demand for specific knowledge and the idea of scientific autonomy and freedom.
- Interdependencies between science and politics due to the influence of policy frameworks and concepts on research practice.
- (Non-)acceptance of scientific insights or certain forms of knowledge by political actors, e.g. in the context of international negotiations.
- Impact of politically motivated support, withdrawal or (de)prioritisation of certain technologies on the processes of knowledge generation.

- Civil versus military research and the (re)nationalisation of science.

The aim of the call is to support collaborative projects that combine different methodological approaches and different disciplinary perspectives in order to generate new knowledge on the interlinkages between knowledge production and science policy frameworks. Current dynamics and debates as well as historical developments in different (trans)national contexts can be analysed. In the longer term, the findings should also support relevant stakeholders in their effort to improve research culture and to create global knowledge spaces.

## 2 Scope of Funding

The program is open to all scholars and scientists who work on questions or topics related to research on research. It thus explicitly addresses researchers outside of Science Studies in a narrow sense, as long as they are engaging with the structure and functioning of scientific research from the perspective of their respective field. Whatever the background of the researcher, it is required for the proposed research topic to take up current debates, developments and challenges in the field “research on research” and to consider the existing literature also beyond the German context.

Funding will be provided for collaborative projects that involve researchers from disciplines or fields related to research on research. Research questions must be relevant to the specific topic of the call and engage a variety of perspectives, different research methods must be applied or existing methodological approaches combined in a new way. Applications should clearly demonstrate in what way the chosen theoretical and methodological approach as well as the research question(s) are original and innovative. The Foundation expressly welcomes internationally oriented projects involving international cooperation partners or an international project advisory board. Depending on the project requirements, representatives of relevant stakeholders such as libraries, publishers, information infrastructures, professional societies or funding organizations can also be included as project partners.

In each round, four to five collaborative projects will receive funding for a period of four years and with a maximum funding volume of 1 million euros. There is a high degree of flexibility with regard to the composition of the project team and the requested funding volume. Both small and large project teams are equally eligible for funding. A higher funding volume seems appropriate primarily for data-intensive projects or in cases when multiple international project partners are involved and it must be justified accordingly. An essential requirement for all research groups who receive funding is to organize a conference in the final year of the project. The aim of the conference should be to reflect on the generated findings and the ways they could be put to use by relevant players in the research system.

Each applicant may only submit one proposal for a collaborative project in each round. If an application for a collaborative project is rejected, the persons involved may reapply in future calls for proposals. In this case, however, a new research question and a new project constellation are required.

This is not an open-topic program to fund collaborative research projects; applications without reference to the topic of the call for proposals and to science studies or research on research cannot be considered.

### **Overheads**

State and state recognized universities and universities for applied sciences can apply for 10 % overheads, foreign scientific institutions are also eligible. For more information on overheads, see "Information on lump sum for overheads", which is provided in our [download-section](#).

### **Open Science**

The Foundation is committed to Open Science ([Open Science Policy](#)). It is therefore expected that project results will be published open access and that data collected will be made available for scientific use via recognized repositories (see [NFDIs](#), [re3data](#), and [RIsources](#)). If data collection is intended, the essential information is to be presented in a data management plan ([basic data management plan](#) of the foundation or a more detailed data management plan of the respective discipline). In case no data is generated in the project, this needs to be explicitly stated in the application.

Note: For the later preparation of the project's research data, in the case of a grant, the offer '[Data Reuse - Additional funding for the preparation of research data](#)' is available.

### **Science communication**

In order to communicate research findings to the wider public and non-academic target groups – and in turn constructively incorporate their questions, concerns, and ideas – project teams which successfully received funding in this call can apply for '[Additional Funding for Science Communication](#)'.

### **General Information**

The Foundation cannot be held responsible for any obligations entered into prior to the receipt of grant approval.

Applications that have been or are intended to be submitted in this or a similar form to another funding organization will not be processed by the Foundation. Applications that do not meet the formal requirements will not be submitted for review. The Foundation can only award funds to scientific institutions.

### 3 Application and Selection Procedure

The program addresses researchers of all career stages from postdoc onwards. The lead applicant must work at a university or research institution in Germany and be substantially involved in the project, both in terms of content and with regard to the share of the funding he/she receives. He/she is responsible for all communication and reporting to the Foundation. The involvement of researchers at universities abroad as co-applicants is greatly appreciated, in case of funding their share of the funding will be granted to the institution of the lead applicant and transferred internationally. It is important, however, that all project partners contribute on equal terms, irrespective also of their career status. A project team usually consists of two to three partners; research projects of individual scholars are not eligible for funding.

#### 3.1 Time schedule

Applications can only be submitted by the relevant deadline. The deadline as well as the topic of each call are published on the website. Applicants will be notified about the decision approximately ten months after the deadline; if funded, projects should start within six months after notification of the decision.

#### 3.2 Procedure

Following a formal review of the application requirements by the Foundation's staff, applications are forwarded to an international and interdisciplinary panel of experts. Each application is pre-assessed by two members of the review panel, followed by a panel meeting where applications are discussed comparatively, and funding recommendations are made. There is no presentation of the project teams to the evaluation committee. The final funding decision is made by the Board of Trustees of the Volkswagen Foundation.

The following criteria will be considered in the review process:

- Significance and relevance of the research question(s) for the topic of the call.
- Connection to current debates and the state of research in "research on research".
- Innovativeness of the project and novelty of the research approach.
- Soundness of project design and level of scientific quality of the project.
- Original and coherent combination of different methodological approaches and disciplinary perspectives.
- Scientific qualification of the participants in the context of the topic.
- Appropriate composition of the project team with a view to career stages, research fields and international orientation.

## 4 Application Checklist

Applications must be submitted via the electronic application system of the Volkswagen Foundation. Please name one person per participating institution as applicant in the application system; if relevant, additional project partner can be listed in the template for the proposal. The main applicant must be employed at a university or scientific institution in Germany.

### 4.1 Electronic Application – Instructions

Please read the information about the electronic application system on the website of the Volkswagen Foundation prior to submitting your application. Information can be found in the document “[Electronic Application System – Instructions and Tips](#)”. It is important that applicants register all involved parties early on in the process. Without a user profile it is not possible to invite co-applicants or to submit an application.

If you have technical questions about using the electronic application system, please contact [support@volkswagenstiftung.de](mailto:support@volkswagenstiftung.de).

### 4.2 Application documents

Applications must be submitted in English. The following files (.pdf) are required:

- Proposal and further explanations, max. 10 pages incl. bibliographic references, Arial 10. Please use the template provided for download.
- CVs of the applicants, please use the template provided for download. In case of multiple applicants, please merge all CVs into a single file.
- Information on the proposed budget and respective explanations must be provided within the electronic application system. Please enter a separate budget plan for each applicant.
- Personnel concept, please use the template provided for download.
- If applicable, data management plan.

#### 4.2.1 Proposal

Please use the [Template Proposal](#).

#### 4.2.2 Curriculum Vitae of every applicant

Please submit your scientific career in tabular-narrative form. Please use the [Template CV](#).

### 4.2.3 Budget Plan

Funds may be requested to cover the following types of expenses:

- Personnel funds (postdocs, doctoral students, teaching substitutes for professorships for max. 2 semesters, graduate or undergraduate research assistants, technical staff).
- Non-personnel funds (research stays at other institutions in Germany and abroad, visiting scholars, funds for data collection and analysis, field research or archival research, funds for data backup and management, workshops, travel and conference funds, science communication, publication costs, consumables and services, etc.).

In the event that libraries, publishers, information infrastructures, professional societies or funding organizations are involved as project partners, a small amount of funding for travel expenses and/or work contracts for these partners may be included in the budget of the lead applicant.

Successful applications will receive additional funds for the planning and implementation of the mandatory conference, which should be held in the final year of the funding period.

### 4.2.4 Personnel concept

The Volkswagen Foundation aims to promote good working conditions in academia. Please submit a personnel concept using the template [Further Information on the Application](#) and upload the completed template to the Volkswagen Foundation's application portal in the category "Other enclosures". Information on the personnel concept as well as on funding for personnel in general can be found [here](#).

### 4.2.5 4.2.5 Data management plan

If data collection is intended, the essential information is to be presented in a data management plan ([basic data management plan](#) of the foundation or a more detailed data management plan of the respective discipline).

### 4.2.6 Further application documents

Applicants who do not have an affiliation with a university or scientific institution at the time of application should supplement the application with an official statement from the host professorship or department/institute. The statement must indicate the willingness to enter into an employment relationship with the applicant for the corresponding funding period and to administer the funds in the event of a successful application.

## 5 Contact

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## 6 More Information

- [Website "Researching Research: Collaborative Research Projects"](#)
- [Template Proposal \(Download\)](#)
- [Template CV \(Download\)](#)
- [Template Further Information on the Application \(Download\)](#)
- [Template Basic Data Management Plan \(Download\)](#)
- [Application System](#)
- [Electronic application made easy - instructions and tips](#)
- [FAQs for applicants](#)
- [Recommendations for sustainable traveling](#)
- [Download-section](#)