

**Information for  
Applicants 114**

## **Artificial Intelligence and the Society of the Future**

**Next Deadline: [see website](#)**

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**The time schedule given in IV. applies to the first deadline (5 July 2018). The Information for Applicants valid for the 2<sup>nd</sup> deadline in 2019 will be available by February 2019.**

## I. Objectives

Current developments in the research field of “Artificial Intelligence” have the potential to fundamentally transform society and bring about far-reaching changes on social, political and economic levels. In contrast to major technological upheavals in the past, the changes are distinctive in particular due to their impact on almost all areas of society and social classes, as well as their extremely high and fast accelerating dynamics of change. Against this backdrop, the Volkswagen Foundation’s funding initiative focuses on joint, integrative research approaches in the social and engineering sciences which deal in a new way with questions in the area of “Artificial Intelligence and the Society of the Future”. Somewhat surprisingly for a thematic field of such scientific and social relevance, up to now, only few research cooperations and project constellations have been established to prompt researchers in the field to arrive at new perspectives and fresh solutions. The initiative therefore aims to provide incentives to develop a broader approach to fundamental issues and to allow participating researchers the freedom of scope for explorative research projects that broaden the range of methods and approaches of their respective disciplines. On the basis of a sound analysis, the projects funded should enable new insights into how the future of society and technology can be shaped.

A major challenge and at the same time a special opportunity for the participating disciplines lies in the joint exploration of a specific topic and the associated research issues which through a long-term cooperation will lead to a constructive exchange of knowledge and competence between the different disciplines “at eye level” and the development of accordingly extended competencies and innovative solutions.

## II. Funding Opportunities

The funding initiative addresses postdoctoral researchers and professors of all career levels in the social and engineering sciences prepared to devote themselves to interdisciplinary, integrative research networks and, by way of an innovative approach, to the challenges arising from the impact of artificial intelligence on society. The integration of different disciplines of the humanities is possible. In addition to substantial, longer-term project funding, it is also possible to fund upfront an optional one-year planning grant.

### 1. Planning Grant

In view of the required “new quality” of the interdisciplinary cooperation and the associated challenges for the project partners involved, the Foundation offers the option to apply for a planning grant with a term of **nine to twelve months** and a maximum funding amount of **EUR 150,000** in advance of a full application. The financial support for this “orientation phase” is intended, among other things, to enable the composition of a suitable project team, the identification of a connecting topic, and the preparation as well as formulation of a full proposal.

### 2. Funding of the Full Proposal (Full Grant)

For longer-term work on a research topic developed by the consortium, applicants may apply for a total funding amount of **maximum EUR 1.5 million** for a term of **up to four years** for cooperation projects involving **up to five working groups**. In addition to cooperative projects, the foundation is open to project proposals from the field of “Artificial Intelligence and Society” which can not be assigned to the two abovementioned offers (e.g. measures of science communication, symposia, public debates, or publications). An application in this case, however, is only possible following prior consultation with the Foundation and at its request.

### **III. General Conditions**

This call targets postdoctoral researchers and professors at all career levels who are employed by a university or research institute. The application consortium must have expertise in engineering, social sciences and / or humanities. The full proposal must be submitted by an institution in Germany, the participation of researchers from abroad is welcome. The Foundation covers all project-related costs; however, general overheads cannot be granted. The Foundation can only grant funding to academic institutions.

The Foundation does not process applications that have already been submitted in the same or a similar form to other funding organizations.

### **IV. Application and Selection Procedure**

The applications for both funding lines, "Planning Grant" and "Full Grant", are to be submitted by the respective deadline in electronic form via the Foundation's Application Portal together with the documents listed in Section V (Application Checklist). Applications are to be made jointly by the responsible researchers respectively. Following an internal assessment by the Foundation, an international and interdisciplinary expert panel reviews the quality, potential and originality of the projects and the integrative research approach as well as the qualification of the participating researchers.

There is a one-stage selection procedure for a planning grant which takes place on a written basis of the respective application. For a "full grant" a two-stage selection procedure is envisaged. Here, the application must be accompanied by a maximum five-page synopsis of the project on the basis of which the most promising projects are selected in an initial selection round. The project consortia of these projects are expected to be invited by the Foundation to present their projects in mid-October 2018 (2nd stage of the selection procedure). The final decisions on applications are expected to be communicated in early December 2018.

Please note that due to high numbers of applications, the Foundation cannot provide feedback on pre-proposals that were not successful.

Assessment is based on the following points:

- Relevance of the topic, innovative content, quality, and originality
- Need and added value of interdisciplinary cooperation
- Potential for new methodological approaches
- Expected advancement of the existing knowledge base
- Composition of the application team.

## V. Application Checklist

Applications must be submitted using the Volkswagen Foundation's [electronic application system](#).  
The following documents need to be provided as "enclosures" (pdf-files):

### 1. Planning Grant

- Signature Sheet from the application portal (with signature of the main applicant)
- Summary in German and English (max 1 page)
- Description of proposed project (up to three pages, without bibliography and CVs)
  - Subject and design of the "orientation phase"
  - Consortium, involved persons / institutions
- Short CVs of all PI's (maximum 3 pages per person)
- Budget plan.

### 2. Full Grant

- Signature Sheet from the Application Portal with signature of all applicants
- Summary of the project in German and English (max 1 page)
- Synopsis for 1st stage of the selection process (max 5 pages plus bibliography), taking into account the assessment criteria listed under IV
- Separate description of proposed research project which deepens the synopsis (maximum 10 pages plus bibliography for the second stage of the selection procedure)
- Short CVs of all PI's (maximum 3 pages per person including details of relevant publications)
- Time and work plan
- Budget justification
  - structured according to working groups
  - structured according to personnel, current and non-recurring costs including a justification for the individual items.

**Please inform yourself about the electronic application system of the Volkswagen Foundation prior to submitting your application. Information can be found in the document "Electronic Application System – Instructions and Tips".**

## **Information**

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## **Further Informationen**

[Applications FAQ's](#)

[Information for Applicants from Abroad](#)

[Electronic Application Made Easy – Instructions and Tips](#)

[Personnel Rates for Academic Staff](#) (in Germany)

[Link to the website "Artificial Intelligence and the Society of the Future"](#)