

FWF proposal submission workshop

12.09.24

- Always call or email if questions
- Will send out email

## FWF Basics

- FWF is basic research, FFG is applied research
- 2023: 624/2373 applications accepted
- Many different funding areas
- Areas:
  - 1) Natural Sciences + Engineering
  - 2) Biology + Medicine
  - 3) Humanities + Social Sciences
- Funding ~ 350 million € per year
- Board meetings 5 times a year for decisions

## FWF Principal Investigator Projects

- Funding: aimed at basic / application-oriented basic research (not aimed at commercial exploitation)
- No preference for disciplines
- Eligibility: academic qualification (publications) / 2 peer-reviewed in last 5 years - 1 can be in press
- All reviewers are international (can't have worked in Austria in the past 5 years) / should be main author in life sciences / I should be first author / I should be last author
- Can't be collaborator in past 5 years
- Don't have to be a citizen or living in Austria /
- Processing time: usually over 6 months / double-blind peer review / majority in English
- 2 reviews minimum → more if asking for more money /
- chances of getting funded higher with 2 reviewers
- Contact FWF first to see if you meet eligibility requirements

## Submission Process

### 1.) Before submission

- Personal eligibility requirements / simple certification check
- Need to apply through an Austrian research institution, no personal applications
  - Contact them and see if they are willing to host you
- The research institution is the applicant, but you are the PI
- You can change the host institution after approval / submission - contact FWF in advance before board decision  
3 months in advance

You can apply to multiple funding sources at the same time but you must declare that you do this in your FWF application

- You can't get funding from both sources though

## Submission

### • Academic Abstract:

- English, 3000 characters
- Sent in email to reviewers, so make sure it's good!  
so that they agree to review
- Title will be title of email!

Headings: → you need to structure this way → Follow template in Guidelines

- Wider research context
- Hypotheses/research question/objectives
- Approach/methods
- Level of originality/innovation
- Primary researchers involved
- Kind of like mini-proposal as opposed to academic abstract

### • Project Description: The proposed research

- In Careers division (ESPRIT), they are more strict about following format from Guidelines
- Don't start with too basic facts - reviewers are experts
- Show you know about research landscape, state-of-the-art, and where you fit in
- Set realistic goals
- Don't propose too many ideas in one proposal — they must be independent though
  - can split them up into Part I, Part II

- Formulate your project as a question, not with an answer or with a method
- For collaboration partners, name only real ones, don't just name drop
  - Intensity Level of Contacts defined online
  - ↳ add a letter of intent from collaboration partners
- Salary can only come from one project
  - If there is another, you will have to hire a senior postdoc to lead it
- FWF doesn't care about dissemination (publications) in the proposal, only about the research
  - But you can add a strategy for the reviewers

Associated Research Partner (in Austria) → Gets funding

Nat./Internat. Coop. Partner → Don't get funding

- Work plan + timeline
- Qualifications - convince that you are best for the job
- Why your research institution is the right place = expertise in colleagues infrastructure

Budget:

- Funding: concise justifications for personnel
- concise justifications for non-personnel costs
  - estimate costs for conferences and travel/hotel

- For external research steps, can't be away from your research institution for > 3 months (otherwise needs board approval)
- Don't overestimate/underestimate costs
- Not permitted to fund basic infrastructure (computers)
  - must already be well-equipped at research institution
- FWF automatically adds 5% to total costs — conference fees must come from here
- Cost breakdown in online form must match what's in the proposal
- Budget is awarded as a global budget then you can allocate as you choose

### CVs Annex:

- Professional Academic CV, no fluff
- Address of research institution & website
- Research interests: abstract or list of keywords
- Link to ORCID
- 10<sup>max</sup> most important publications
- 10<sup>max</sup> additional research achievements (e.g. conference)

## Application Check

- Return w/o review  $\begin{cases} \text{qualifications} \\ \text{is it basic research?} \end{cases}$
- Rectifiable issues
- Major, unrectifiable issues

Make Proposals Concise - people prefer  
to read something shorter



## Peer Review

- 2 Scientific Board members assigned from relevant field
- Board members nominate reviewers
  - application-specific
  - none from Austria
  - max 2 reviews per year, 90% first-time reviewers
  - active experts
  - more experience than applicant
- Can upload list of 3 reviewers to exclude
  - give a reason why ←
- Can also exclude past reviewers if you were rejected before
- Revising is always a full submission
  - list of changes
  - response letter to all reviewers
  - Don't have to follow all reviewers' suggestions in revision
  - Don't be adversarial in revision letter
  - If you do a good revision taking most feedback from reviewers, they are usually happy to accept
    - Revisions are more likely to be accepted
- Most likely scenario is getting rejected at first and then approved rather than approved first time
- Reviewers will not see each others' reviews but the response letter is to all reviewers.

- You can put colored text to mark changes in the revision, <sup>(not necessary)</sup> but note what the colored text means in the revision letter and make sure it's still readable

### Questions for Reviewers:

- 1) Innovation + Novelty
- 2) Quality of Planned Research
- 3) Approach/Methodology + Feasibility
- 4) Scientific Qualifications of the researchers
- 5) Ethics, sex, gender
- 6) Final assessment



Use headings from the Guidelines so that it's easy for them to assess these

- They assign a rating number but the FWF only looks at the written statement to make decisions — score is just to give a general sense
- FWF never makes its own judgments
  - In other countries there is usually a scientific board that can overrule a review → This is not the case with FWF

- FWF doesn't do tiebreaker reviews
  - If one bad review it generally is rejected
- Reviewers usually have 6-8 weeks to give a review

## Reviewer Comment Exercise

- Make sure you don't overstate novelty or neglect to cite relevant work in the field
- Make sure hypothesis is clear, answerable, and not previously known
- Need to comment on male/female ratio in gender section
- FWF funds research projects, not PhD projects
  - FWF is not focused on teaching, training, PhD students
  - the project can include a PhD project but it doesn't have to
  - Project should not be focused only to fund students
    - It should be about the research!
  - Austrian gov't doesn't do a good job providing scholarship/funding for PhDs

## Decision

- Need at least 2 reviews (can reject w/ 1 review occasionally)
- Text reviews are most important (ratings are more indicators)

### Reasons for rejection:

- C1 - C5
  - Rejection C5 → 12 months ban
  - C3/C4 three times → 12 months ban
- } Bans only apply to application/proposal, not researcher or institution
- C1/C2 → <sup>recommended but</sup> rejected for cost or another was better

## Resubmission

- Only 1 reviewer will be the same as original submission
- Will not send it back to very negative reviewer
- Usually about 6 pages resubmission/response document
  - Respect the reviewers' time

## Overall

- Around 26% of PI proposals are accepted first time
- Can revise and resubmit except C5 rejection
- Always can call or email FWF
- Takes 1 week from board meeting for decision posted
  - will get an email/online portal (Elane)
- Project starts within 6 months,
  - 6-12 months w/ justification
  - approval from board for >12 months
- Have a lot of freedom within project
  - Control of global budget
  - Project details can change
- Contract issues are handled through your institution

## Tips

- Key aspects:
- Focus on problems/questions precisely
  - Realistic objectives
  - Define hypothesis clearly
  - Define state of research
  - Methods + work plan: describe briefly + clearly
  - List previous academic work most relevant to the proposed project
  - Use easy-to-understand English
  - Justify costs plausibly
  - Complete/meaningful explanations

Most often cause for rejection

- Don'ts:
- Review of existing methods combined together
    - ↳ this is engineering, not science
    - not innovative
  - Under research questions
  - Obvious proposal
  - No clear focus
  - Present hypothesis too deep in manuscript
  - No clear explanation of choice of method



- methods just used because of prior experience
- Just using method (code) since you have it → should have problem first and then choose the correct method
- Work plan: no risk assessment
- Qualifications: many other groups are tackling this topic and proposal researcher will not be competitive

- Do's:
- Project perfectly fits author's skills
  - Minimize risk
  - Intriguing problem
  - Clearly outlined steps to success
  - Career development: uses the applicant's skills but does not just reuse them
    - room for growth

## FWF Website

- FWF Research Radar : can find approved projects
- Program Portfolio
- Application documents
- SciLog magazine
- Calendar / Newsletter



Workshop for ESPRIT