

## Validation projects

Call for validation projects as part of the  
“Transfer Campaign”

Call for proposals for funding from the Impulse and Networking Fund

Helmholtz Association | 07.06.2022

## Call for validation projects as part of the "Transfer Campaign"

The mission of the Helmholtz Association is interdisciplinary and long-term cutting-edge research in fields of high strategic relevance. Our mission is to contribute solutions to major societal challenges - also in the sense of transferring our research results. Together with our partners from science and industry, we develop holistic and systemic solutions from the fundamentals to application, and thus play a key role in shaping Germany as a country of innovation.

### 1. Objective of the transfer campaign

The funding concept for the Impulse and Networking Fund (IVF), which was approved by the members, the Helmholtz Senate and the funding bodies in 2020, targets mainly 'pathfinder projects', also known as campaigns. Specific funding opportunities for transfer activities within the framework of the campaigns have been defined. These are now implemented as part of the third thematic campaign, the so-called transfer campaign. The different focal points are addressed via three calls for proposals:

- Validation projects (call for proposals: 07.06.2022)
- Transfer Academies (call for proposals: 01.06.2022)
- Project complement to the innovation platforms (call for proposals planned for 2023)

#### Projekte fördern I

Validierungs-/ Proof of concept-Projekte  
Volumen: ca. 10 Mio. Euro (2023/24)  
Projekte für 2 Jahre  
Ausschreibung: QII / 2022  
Zweistufiges Verfahren  
Förderung ab Winter 2022/23

#### Projekte fördern II

Komplement zu den Innovationsplattformen  
analog „Helmholtz Innovation Labs“  
Volumen: ca. 9 Mio. Euro (2024/25)  
Pro Jahr 1,5 Mio. Euro für Projekte für jede  
der 3 Plattformen  
Zentren-offene Ausschreibung: 2023

#### Helmholtz Transfer Academies

Unterstützung für Gründer:innen und Entrepreneurship Education  
dezentral (z.B. Konsortien oder Forschungsbereiche)  
Volumen: 3 Mio. Euro (2023-25)  
Förderung von 3 Konzepten mit je ca. 330 T Euro/a für 3 Jahre  
Ausschreibung: in QII / 2022

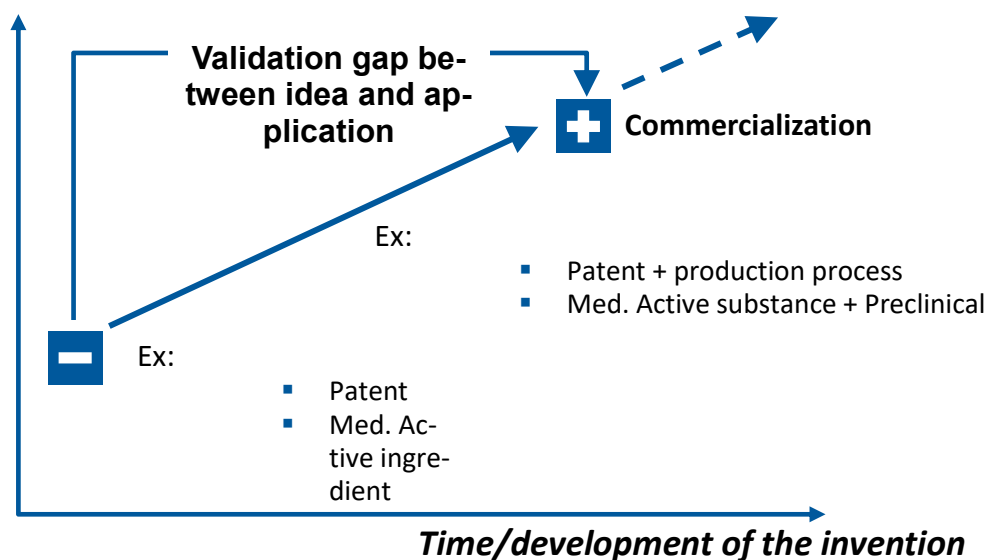
This tripartite funding opportunity for transfer activities in the fields of technology transfer and knowledge transfer stems from the process of the Helmholtz Association's transfer strategy.

## 2. Grant purpose

Objective of the call for proposals in the area of validation projects

The central objective of the validation projects in the transfer campaign is to close the gap between idea and application. The financial support shall enable scientists from Helmholtz centers to validate research results to the extent that an increase in value and commercialization is achieved. Validation can take the form, for example, of proof of technical applicability, a production process or preclinical testing (proof-of-concept projects), thereby increasing the value of the invention and the commercialization prospects of the product or service.

### *Value of the invention / commercialization opportunity*



The validation projects as part of the transfer campaign take the approach of promoting entrepreneurial thinking and action and support a cultural change within the Helmholtz Association towards a stronger market orientation of research.

Other goals of the validation grant are:

- Increasing the visibility of the Helmholtz Association in industry and society,
- Formation of a network with partners from the business community,
- Value creation within the Helmholtz Association as a result of the commercialization of the validated product or service.

### Target group

The call is aimed at scientists employed at Helmholtz centers who would like to validate market-relevant results or methods from their research with the aim of commercialization. However, an application cannot be submitted by spin-offs or cooperation partners. The grant is awarded via the relevant Helmholtz center.

### 3. Eligibility requirements

#### Subject of the promotion

Eligible projects are those that aim to develop research results and methods into commercializable products or service offerings. These projects must be designed to add significant value by increasing the applicability of the underlying technology or addressing market needs. A validation project is successfully completed when the product or service offering, including a marketing synopsis and current exploitation strategy, has been created and thus commercialization is possible. Any exploitation efforts that go beyond this are also eligible for funding.

With the application, it must be documented that the validation project applied for is not funded in whole or in part by other funding sources. In the case of an ongoing application process with other funding sources, this must be reported to the contact person at the office for validation projects in the transfer campaign via the following e-mail address [kampagne@helmholtz.de](mailto:kampagne@helmholtz.de).

#### Eligibility Requirements

The following requirements must be met to be eligible for a grant:

- The project is applied for by a scientist from a Helmholtz center.
- The project is planned to run for up to two years.
- The requested grant from the IVF funds of the transfer campaign for the validation project should not exceed the amount of 1,000,000 euros and should usually be above 400,000 euros.
- The application forms are completed and signed with a legally binding (digital) signature.
- The applications are available in electronic form
- The project and the commercialization of the planned product or service offering are clearly described.
- The pre-application (see point 4) contains a confirmation/signature of the technology transfer office of the research center about the support of the validation project.
- The main application (see point 5) contains a confirmation/signature of the technology transfer office of the research center about the support of the validation project.
- The main application (see point 4) is accompanied by a written confirmation from the responsible board of the Helmholtz Center that the application is supported and that the 25% counterpart funding to the requested funding from the IVF (100%) is guaranteed.

### 4. Type, scope and amount of the grant

Grants are awarded as fixed-amount funding. Grants are paid to the corresponding Helmholtz center in milestone-dependent tranches. The centers grant 25 percent additional funding on

the grant from the transfer campaign<sup>1</sup> in the form of own contributions to the validation project. The Helmholtz Center's own share can be substituted in whole or in part by payment obligations of a business partner.

Validation projects can receive a grant for a period of up to two years. At the end of the funding period, commercialization must be demonstrated (see point 5.). If market changes or commercialization options require additional work, it may be decided that the funding amount is increased by up to 10% of the total grant. Only in justified exceptional cases, the decision board of the Initiative and Networking Fund (see point 4.) can grant a grant exceeding this amount or an extension for a maximum of one year. The amount of the grant in the transfer campaign is between 400,000 and 1,000,000 euros. Only in justified exceptional cases the minimum amount can be lower.

In addition to direct project-related personnel and material costs, costs for contracts with third parties, such as contract research organizations (CROs), marketing service providers, manufacturers of prototypes, etc., are eligible for funding. Thus, for example, costs for consumables, for consulting services with regard to production, quality management or the performance of studies are also eligible for funding.

## 5. Procedure

### Application procedure

The application process has two steps:

1. Step: Preliminary application and a corresponding short video.
2. Step: Main application.

In the pre-application, using the application form, the project must be described on five pages, including time schedule and financial planning. In addition to the pre-application, the members of the applying group create a short video of their validation project in the form of a presentation. These short videos will be made available to the members of the selection panel in addition to the pre-applications, so that they can view the presentations as short videos and achieve an ideal understanding of the validation project outlined in writing through this contextualization.

Furthermore, in addition to the personal details of the applicant, the underlying technology and the commercialization of the planned product or service offering must be presented in the pre-application. In addition, the signature of a representative of the Helmholtz Center's Technology Transfer Office is required in the pre-application. A selection committee will evaluate the pre-application and the short video.

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<sup>1</sup> Example of calculation: 1,000,000 Euro grant from the transfer campaign, 25 % own contribution from the center or business partner, results in a total project volume of 1,250,000 Euro [1,000,000 + 250,000 = 1,250,000].

If the pre-application process is completed with a positive vote by the selection panel, the applicant will be invited to submit the main application. A selection panel will evaluate the main application. A signature from the Center's Technology Transfer Office must be submitted with the main application. A signature of the Center's Board of Directors must be submitted with the submission of the main proposal. The board's signature confirms support for the proposal and that the 25 percent matching funds are provided. Should the co-financing of the center be substituted by payment obligations of an economic partner, a corresponding proof with a legally binding signature of the cooperation partner must be submitted for this purpose.

In the main application, further aspects are to be described in addition to the above-mentioned evidence and in addition to the information provided in the preliminary application in order to enable an evaluation based on the defined criteria (see selection and approval procedure). Furthermore, suitable internal and external sponsors of the project (see point 5.5 of the application form) should be proposed in the main application.

In general, the application forms "Pre-application for validation project in the 2022 transfer campaign" and "Main application for validation project in the 2022 transfer campaign" must be used, fully completed and confirmed with a legally binding signature. The application forms are available for download at [www.helmholtz.de/ausreibungen](http://www.helmholtz.de/ausreibungen). Applications are submitted electronically via the IVF project management platform ProMeta. An account can be created at [ivf.helmholtz.de](http://ivf.helmholtz.de) by self-registration in order to submit the application forms. After logging in with the user name assigned by the platform and the password you have created, you will be taken to the overview page with the currently running calls for proposals and can enter the master data and upload the documents via the button "Submit application". Self-registration is already possible; the input masks for the preliminary applications and the video will be activated at the beginning of July.

The ProMeta platform should also be used to upload the short videos for the pre-proposals. For information on video creation, please refer to the attachment "Notes Submission Videos".

If you have any questions about the transfer campaign, please contact the responsible team members from the Helmholtz office at the e-mail address [kampagne@helmholtz.de](mailto:kampagne@helmholtz.de). Pre-applications may be submitted until **Aug. 22, 2022**.

## Selection and approval procedure

The preliminary application will be checked with regard to formal funding requirements and plausibility. The plausibility check is carried out by the selection committee based on the following criteria categories:

- Commercialization potential,
- Added value through validation,
- Implementability.

Applicants will receive an e-mail invitation to submit the main application or a rejection within approx. 6 weeks after the upload of the preliminary applications. The main applications should

be submitted four weeks after the invitation.

If necessary, the applicants can ask for a feedback meeting.

In the main application, the project planning must be detailed; furthermore, a concretization of the milestone and financial planning must take place.

The submitted main applications will first be reviewed to determine whether the formal eligibility requirements continue to be met. Subsequently, the main applications are assessed based on defined criteria within four differently weighted categories:

1. Commercialization potential
  - Product / service including unique selling proposition
  - Added value for target customers
  - Relationship between market size and investment volume required for commercialization
  - Feasibility in a competitive context
  - Concept for protection and execution of the idea (information regarding planned / existing property rights, invention disclosure, patent application, freedom to operate, etc.)
  - Assurance of ownership by Helmholtz
2. Added value through validation
  - Existing validation gap up to the point of commercialization.
  - Value enhancement through validation
  - Increasing the visibility of the Helmholtz Association through the project
3. Feasibility
  - Project content and planning (goals, resource requirements, schedule, milestones)
  - Suitability of milestones as criteria for early termination
  - Utilization strategy after validation support
  - Milestone-based financial planning
4. Project Management
  - Assessment of the project manager on the basis of written proof of project management competence
  - Assessment of the suitability of the project manager on the basis of written evidence
  - Assessment of competencies in the project team based on the written evidence.
  - Answering queries about the main application, if applicable.

After the review, a decision on the main applications and a funding commitment is made in a meeting of the decision board (members of the selection committee).

## 6. Finance and project management

### Grant agreement

If the main application is approved, a grant agreement will be concluded between the Helmholtz Association and the respective Helmholtz Center of the applicant. By submitting the main application, the center agrees to bear the 25 percent own contribution and to pass on the entire funding to the applicant. If the Helmholtz Centre's co-financing is substituted by payment obli-

gations of a business partner, this must be regulated in a separate contract between the Helmholtz Centre and the cooperation partner. The financial participation by a cooperation partner from industry does not automatically result in an exclusive right of exploitation, but a right of first negotiation or a most-favored-nation clause.

In addition to the application, the NKBF 2017<sup>2</sup> will be an integral part of the grant notification.

## Call for funds and milestone achievement

The funds are called in tranches, which are usually paid out at intervals of 3 to 6 months. A prerequisite for the call for funds is the fulfillment of milestones on the part of the validation project. The definition of the milestones is submitted and checked by the applicant with the main application. In general, when a milestone is reached, coordination with the selected external project sponsor (see below) and the internal sponsor from the respective center on further milestone planning must be brought about and communicated to the Initiative and Networking Fund Management. This coordinated milestone planning is a prerequisite for the disbursement of the next tranche.

Compliance with the milestones must be demonstrated in each case simultaneously with the call for funds by the project management in a one- to two-page project status report countersigned by a center executive. Likewise, the external project sponsor must provide a brief assessment. If a milestone is not met in the view of these stakeholders or in the view of the Impulse and Networking Fund management, immediate termination of the grant under the "kill early" principle may result. As this may cause problems in the drafting of employment contracts, pragmatic solutions are sought for the project management units.

## Success control and project completion

A performance review is planned in addition to the continuous milestone review through the project status reports, on the one hand in the form of an interim evaluation after half of the funding period and on the other hand at the end of the project. For the interim evaluation, in addition to the submission of the milestone reports, a presentation of progress by the project management is expected. The presentation of this progress report for the interim evaluation will take place during a status seminar, which will be held at the Helmholtz Center or at the Helmholtz office. By arrangement, the presentation can also take place online.

The successful completion of a validation project in the transfer campaign must be demonstrated by a final report countersigned by a center executive. This must clearly state that the product/service offering has been completed and is ready for commercialization. The status of commercialization must be substantiated by a qualified exploitation strategy. Furthermore, an exposé on the product/service offering suitable for exploitation activities must be available at the end of the project.

## Project management, monitoring and management support

As a rule, the applicant should be in charge of the validation project in the transfer campaign.

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<sup>2</sup> NKBF 2017 [https://www.bmbf.de/bmbf/shareddocs/bekanntmachungen/de/2017/10/1429\\_bekanntmachung.html](https://www.bmbf.de/bmbf/shareddocs/bekanntmachungen/de/2017/10/1429_bekanntmachung.html)



If the applicant hires another person for the project management, this must be made clear in the application. In justified exceptional cases, the decision board may also recommend that the project management may be filled by another person and that the applicant accompanies the project as a scientific advisor. If such a recommendation is not followed by the applicant, funding may be denied.

The project management is supported by an internal and external mentor. The internal mentor should be an employee of the technology transfer unit. The external mentor, in turn, should be a competent project manager with industry experience. The external mentor's tasks include advising on business development, initiating contacts with interested parties and exploitation partners, and confirming milestone achievement as well as giving a statement at the status seminar (detailed requirements profile will be provided if needed). The external mentor should dedicate at least one to two working days per month to the validation project. Remuneration of the external sponsor should not exceed 15,000 € p.a. and is paid out of the grant to the validation project (as assignments to third parties). The costs of this mandatory sponsor model are thus to be considered in the financial planning in the main application.

## Commercialization phase

After completion of the validation project, immediate commercialization should be sought. Ideally, the exploitation options have already been explored in the final phase of the project, so that commercialization can be realized via a cooperation agreement or a licensing agreement with a business partner or a spin-off following the funding. The commercialization has to be accompanied by the technology transfer office of the relevant Helmholtz center. If this is desired by all parties, commercialization can be carried out via the sponsors of the projects or other third parties, such as patent exploitation agencies.