

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

dated December 17, 2021

Recruitment Processes That are
Sensitive to Diversity

funded from the Initiative and Networking Fund of the President of the
Helmholtz Association



A. Initial situation

In its Joint Initiative for Research and Innovation, Helmholtz has set itself the goal of attracting and retaining the “best minds” – regardless of their various life situations, biographies, previous experiences, identities, and beliefs. Moreover, Helmholtz acknowledges that the pressing challenges of our time can only be addressed if different perspectives and skills work in tandem in the context of research and innovation. Diversity is the key to excellence.

Diversity promotes excellence in three ways:

1. Excellent research results:

Outstanding research requires different perspectives that are mutually enriching. Competition and critical discourse to identify the best ideas give rise to findings and progress. At the same time, diverse working contexts provide fertile ground for new and relevant research topics, such as the field of gender medicine (see also gendered innovations) and AI research that is sensitive to diversity (see also algorithmic bias).

2. Excellent organization:

Helmholtz and its Centers must position themselves as attractive employers if we are to attract and retain the “best minds.” One aspect of this is promoting a culture of appreciation for diversity across every area of the organization. In addition, HR processes must be set up in a way that ensures candidates and employees receive the best possible support in every phase of the employee life cycle (recruitment, onboarding, employee development, and offboarding).

3. Excellence in the scientific landscape:

Helmholtz is a key player that shapes the scientific landscape in Germany and Europe as well as at the international level. As such, it leads the way by driving the topics of diversity, equality, and inclusion with a commitment to excellence and resolutely fighting discrimination and inequality in its sphere of influence. By taking this stance, it also fulfills its stated mission of making a constructive contribution toward addressing urgent challenges and debates in society.

Recognizing these factors, Helmholtz developed and adopted a Diversity and Inclusion Guideline in 2020 that defines strategic goals for the Association as a whole. These goals include creating a shared understanding of diversity and inclusion, diversity compliance as a minimum requirement in accordance with Germany’s General Equal Treatment Act (Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsgesetz, AGG), and establishing a joint process focused on developing a more diverse culture and organization. This call for applications contributes to the latter. A second round of calls for applications designed to make a similar impact is planned for 2022.

B. Objectives of the funding

The funding initiative aims to support the Centers in establishing and evolving personnel processes that are sensitive to diversity in the recruitment phase (all activities starting with HR marketing, to recruiting, through to concluding a contract). In doing so, recruitment is to be closely interlinked with talent management activities that are already well-established at the Centers. The focus is explained by the leverage effect that recruitment has, given that various target groups' access to the organization is determined here.¹

The funding initiative will be successful if effective processes and structures have been created at the Centers in order to better use personnel potential that has previously only used to a limited extent and it is possible to measure this improvement (quantitative success criteria). The funding initiative can also be considered a success if the players and stakeholders at the Centers see an improvement in personnel processes that are sensitive to diversity (qualitative success criteria).

C. Type and scope of the funding

Projects from the area of diversity-sensitive recruitment are eligible for funding. An analysis of the status quo of diversity measures in general and already established personnel processes that are sensitive to diversity in particular serves as the basis. From this, the Centers are to develop a strategy concept and determine (sets of) measures for piloting that contribute to the recruitment of one or more defined target groups² taking the topics of diversity and inclusion into special consideration.

Potential measures from the area of (external) HR marketing include, among others:

- Employer branding campaigns with a focus on diversity (which can link into the "Helmholtz" umbrella brand).
- Event series and networking formats for and with the defined target group
- Invitation, exchange, and attendance formats
- Auditing and certification of the Center's personnel processes
- Career events and fairs

¹ A further beneficial aspect is embedding the planned activities at the Centers in a broad portfolio of measures to implement the Helmholtz D&I Guideline, which also addresses the other phases of the employee life cycle (onboarding, development, and offboarding) and an inclusive organizational culture. However, these measures are not eligible for funding in the context of the call for applications.

² The target groups can include various professional groups and career stages. The funding is not limited to the scientific area.

- UX optimization of the career site with respect to accessibility as well as content and imagery that are sensitive to diversity
- University marketing

Potential measures from the area of recruiting include, among others:

- Calls for applications that embrace diversity and positioning in the corresponding online communities (e.g. via social media advertising)
- Recruiting and appointment processes that embrace diversity
- Unconscious bias training for selection committees and managers
- Network recruiting and suggestion systems (e.g. researchers from the target group recruit researchers)
- Strategic talent scouting and active sourcing

The Centers also have the option of pooling measures – where this is possible and expedient – across Centers, e.g. in line with the research fields. Topic-specific events and formats (e.g., hackathons, barcamps) offer particularly good potential. These can also tap into the content of the Helmholtz 200 Challenges. A further potential measure for recruitment that embraces diversity would be setting up a cross-Center talent pool for a specific research topic or in a research field.

The measures mentioned as examples can be combined, adapted, or supplemented with additional measures from the area of HR marketing and recruiting – depending on the strategic objective and target group(s).

Expenditures for the following or comparable items are eligible for funding:

- Personnel costs for additional personnel in diversity management, change management, or project coordination
- Professional consulting fees (e.g. process monitoring, strategy development, digital HR marketing and recruiting, an advertising agency, UX design)
- Additional resources for training measures (e.g. unconscious bias training)
- Material resources for organizing events
- Material resources for PR and communication measures
- Material resources for purchasing supporting tools/software solutions (e.g. for anonymizing applications, candidate journey software)
- Travel and accommodation expenses (e.g. for visiting international partner institutions)

D. Funding process

Over the course of the two rounds of calls for applications, annual funding in the amount of 100,000 euros (to be matched by the Centers in an equivalent amount at a minimum) is to be provided from the Initiative and Networking Fund to a total of 12 projects for a period of four years.

The four-year project term is divided into two funding phases that are linked by a mid-term evaluation coordinated by head office:

1. **Concept development and piloting (2022–2024):** The first two years of the funding term can initially be used to flesh out and consolidate the concept outlined in the application. This is to be followed by piloting of the (sets of) measures offering the greatest potential to address the strategic goals and target groups. The first phase of funding concludes with an evaluation of the success of the pilot, which is incorporated into the mid-term evaluation.
2. **Mid-term evaluation (2024):** An evaluation report provides the basis for presenting the project progress, the success of the pilot, project governance, and the involvement of the stakeholders in detail and assessing their success. The report also sets out conceptual adjustments for the second phase of funding and potential ways of consolidating the measures.
3. **Expanded implementation and consolidation (2024–2026):** The second phase of funding takes up adjustments and recommendations from the mid-term evaluation in order to roll out the piloted measures on a broader basis or to use further suitable measures to enhance recruitment that is sensitive to diversity. This phase concludes with a detailed final report.

The projects implemented at the Centers are accompanied by event, networking, and communication offers coordinated by the Helmholtz head office. A fundamental aspect of the funding initiative is a structure that fosters a shared learning process across the various Centers. The projects are therefore required to make active contributions and to be prepared to share experiences at the Association level. The long-term goal is to consolidate a community of practice for the topics of diversity and inclusion in recruitment extending throughout Helmholtz and beyond.

E. Application and selection process

The applicants are the Centers. The application is to be submitted by June 1, 2022, by the management of the Centers and comprises the following components:

1. **Cover letter from the management of the Center**
2. **Project application (total of max. 20 pages, see Attachment 1)**
3. **Financing plan (see Attachment 2; please insert this in the project application in the appropriate place)**

Further documentation (e.g. existing diversity concepts, strategy papers, or similar) can be included with the application as attachments. Applications are to be submitted using the new project management software that has recently been established. We will provide information on the submission methods in good time.

After verifying that applications are complete and correct, the applicants will be invited to present their project to a panel of DEI experts headed by the President, Prof. Dr. Otmar Wiestler, on June 24, 2022. This is to be followed by the funding decision, with recommendations for implementation provided where necessary.

The following criteria for selection will be applied:

- Quality of the analysis of the status quo based on existing data: Precise description of current structures, measures, and processes as well as personnel potential that has yet to be utilized
- Conceptual and strategic fit: Conclusive definition and design of strategic goals, target groups, and (sets of) measures based on the analysis
- Feasibility of the concept: Schedule and work plan with clearly measurable milestones
- Conclusive presentation showing stakeholder involvement: Description of the involvement of target group players and stakeholders at the Center and beyond
- Suitable project governance: Involvement of the relevant stakeholders and decision-makers at the Center (at a minimum: HR department, equal opportunities officer, director, business development where applicable, diversity officer, representative of employees with disabilities, etc., depending on the focal point of the project) and project routines
- Transparent financing plan
- Coherent description of how the project is expected to continue after the funding period

F. Dates and deadlines

6/1/2022: Deadline for Centers to submit their completed applications to the Helmholtz Association's head office

6/24/2022: Selection meeting in Berlin (or as a video meeting depending on the current situation with the coronavirus pandemic) headed by the President including personal presentation of the applications

Six months after funding approval at the latest: Project starts at the Center

G. Contact and advice

The contact for the call for applications at Helmholtz head office is Mona Florian, Talent Management Officer, Email: mona.florian@helmholtz.de

Online information sessions and brief workshops (via WebEx) are planned for the applicants and also provide the starting point for the shared learning process:

The first information session will be held on **January 12, 2022, from 10 am–11 am**. Register by email to mona.florian@helmholtz.de. You will be provided with the login details after registering.

Additional short online workshops on the topics of diversity analysis and strategic planning of measures for diversity and inclusion will be held in February and March. If interested, please contact mona.florian@helmholtz.de by email. We will then create a mailing list and provide you with information on the dates and login data in good time.

Attachments

Attachment 1: Application template

Attachment 2: Financing plan

Please insert the financing plan in the application template and submit it together with the cover letter as a PDF file via our project management software.