

# CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

issued October 1, 2021

HELMHOLTZ DOCTORAL PRIZE  
for mission-oriented research

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



## A. Aim of the funding

Doctoral candidates at Helmholtz contribute to solving major challenges facing our society through their scientific work. The Helmholtz Association aims to support talented young researchers at an early stage in focusing excellent research on application. To this end, Helmholtz awards a doctoral prize that honors academic achievements to that point and offers young researchers an incentive to apply the scientific insights and skills acquired during their doctorate.

In this context, mission-oriented (basic) research combines the search for new insights with potential applications. This may take different forms, with doctoral candidates pursuing research goals that simultaneously solve a practical problem by opening up an immediate, innovative potential application with their basic research, or by potential users becoming directly involved in developing questions and methods.

The Helmholtz Doctoral Prize aims to encourage doctoral candidates to pursue an academic career, thereby positioning themselves at the interface between research and application, developing and expanding their entrepreneurial skills, and helping shape the transfer from science to society early in their careers. Prizewinners thus also serve as role models for the doctoral students at Helmholtz.

Moreover, the President of the Helmholtz Association particularly welcomes and supports the nomination of outstanding female candidates for the award with the aim of enhancing the visibility of their achievements in scientific research.

## B. Target group

The funding instrument is aimed at young researchers who have completed their doctoral studies with outstanding results at a Helmholtz Center within the last 14 months. Candidates must have excelled scientifically during their doctoral studies and should demonstrate personal commitment with a career at the interface between research and application ahead of them.

The effective date for the 14-month period mentioned above is the date by which the application must be submitted to the Helmholtz head office (December 1, 2021). The determining factor is the date on which the applicant defended their thesis at the university. The defense must have already taken place when the application is submitted. The PhD certificate or an equivalent certification from the university is required for the prize to be awarded and must be submitted to the Helmholtz head office by April 1, 2022, at the latest.

## C. Funding scope, duration, and object

Helmholtz may award up to six prizes, ideally one prize in each of the association's six research fields: Energy; Earth and Environment; Health; Aeronautics, Space, and Transport; Matter; Information.

The prizewinners receive a one-time cash prize in the amount of €5,000, which they are free to use for a scientific endeavor of their choice.

In addition, the prizewinners will receive funding for a Helmholtz Field Study Fellowship of up to three months. The Field Study Fellowship is used to fund the market exploration phase in order to arrive at a better understanding of customers' needs and is supervised by a field study mentoring. The conditions are the same as those for the Helmholtz Free Field Fellowship in the context of the Helmholtz Enterprise program (see [here](#)). The utilization of the Helmholtz Field Study Fellowship must be officially notified to the Helmholtz Office no later than six months after the funding decision has been announced and must commence within 12 months after announcing the funding decision. Furthermore, those receiving funding must be employed at or associated with a Helmholtz Center.

The Helmholtz Doctoral Prize will be awarded in spring 2022. The exact date will be announced well in advance.

## D. Application process

The Centers nominate suitable candidates for the individual research fields and take responsibility for the process of pre-selecting the candidates. **Each Center may nominate a maximum of one candidate per research field.** Original application documents and electronic copies are to be submitted via the Centers' directors to the Helmholtz Association Bonn head office by **December 1, 2021**, at the latest. (Ms. Martina Carnott, Ahrstrasse 45, 53175 Bonn, [martina.carnott@helmholtz.de](mailto:martina.carnott@helmholtz.de)).

Postdocs may not submit their own applications.

### The nomination must include the following documents:

- Cover sheet with the following information:
  - Candidate's name and contact details (including an e-mail address and phone number)
  - Title of the candidate's doctoral thesis
  - Name of the Helmholtz Center, institute, and supervisor
  - Assignment to one of the six research fields
  - Helmholtz program for which the nomination is being made
  - Five or six keywords
- Copies of the candidate's doctoral certificate or equivalent university certification (submission deadline: April 1, 2022) including grades and, where relevant, other certificates (such as achievements at graduate and/or research schools)
- A detailed CV (including awards, scholarships, stays abroad, lectures/poster presentations at conferences, etc.)
- A publication list (publications that occurred during and after the candidate's doctoral studies)
- A letter of recommendation from the director of the nominating Helmholtz Center and/or direct supervisor, containing the following information:
  - The reasons why the candidate has been nominated (including the relevance of their research to the Helmholtz mission)
  - Evaluation of the candidate's dissertation and other academic achievements to date
  - Assessment of the candidate's potential in terms of their skills and personality
- Statement from the Centers transfer office regarding the application potential of the research results with respect to the following aspects (max. half page for each item):
  - Brief general assessment by the transfer office regarding the extent to which the research results can be applied in their present form.
  - What has been achieved so far in terms of a potential transfer between research and application (including, for example, involvement of non-scientific stakeholders or, if applicable, current technology readiness level (TRL))?
- Cover letter (max. three pages) written by the nominee indicating the potential their thesis offers in terms of application and demonstrating clear motivation to continue exploring potential applications as per point 2 of the FSF application ("essay"):
  - What can your research achieve?
  - Who is the target group of your research (in very specific terms, who might be the users or customers for the application of your findings)?
  - What do you think are the values-added of your research for business or society; i.e., what specific problems faced by potential users or customers could be solved with the results of your research?
  - What questions do you have regarding the transfer of results into application that you would like to answer during the Field Study Fellowship?
  - If you already have an idea for an application (product/service): Why is your idea a sound idea?

### E. Selection process

Prizewinners are selected on the basis of the assessment by the Helmholtz Association's management boards in consultation with the President of the Helmholtz Association. Candidates are not required to present themselves in person as part of the process.

### F. Dates and deadlines

- December 1, 2021 Deadline for Helmholtz Centers to submit their nominations to the Helmholtz Association's head office
- December 15, 2021 Applications that meet the award's formal requirements are forwarded to the Helmholtz Association management boards
- February 15, 2022 Submission of nominations by the management boards to the head office  
Thereafter: Decision by the President of the Helmholtz Association
- Spring 2022 Awarding of the Helmholtz Doctoral Prize by the President of the Helmholtz Association: The location and date of the presentation will be announced well in advance.