

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

as of July 14, 2020

for up to 3 Joint Research Projects

“The Coronavirus Pandemic: Insight, Coping,
and Prevention”

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

Great social challenges pose a multitude of scientific questions. The Coronavirus pandemic has confronted our society with major challenges and questions that go far beyond the healthcare sector and will not be solved in the short term. The Helmholtz Association, with its engagement in diverse research fields, is called upon to develop new synergetic approaches for understanding, coping with, and preventing pandemics and their numerous implications, which will make our society less vulnerable in the event of similar episodes in the future. The experience of the Coronavirus pandemic should also be used to gain insights from this exceptional situation that could help to optimize responses in the affected areas.

In order to address this complex topic area, the Helmholtz Association aims to fund up to three research consortia from the Initiative and Networking Fund as part of a pilot project for campaign-like pioneering projects. *The call for applications is subject to the underlying funding concept for the Initiative and Networking Fund being approved by the Board of Trustees in late summer 2020.*¹

A. Topic range of the pilot project

Under the umbrella of the pioneering project on the Coronavirus pandemic, up to **3 joint research projects** are to be set up to research questions concerning

- the pandemic itself,
- the effects of the pandemic and related measures on other areas,
- pandemic-independent questions, whose key drivers only became apparent through this episode.

Consortia from all areas of the Association are to develop joint projects across Center and research field boundaries, in which the sub-projects are closely related to each other in terms of content. The consortia can also involve partner institutions.

The joint projects should apply a **matrix of baselines and underlying research topics** as a basic concept and thematic framework.

The **baselines**, which represent the first dimension of the matrix, describe the categories the projects should address:

- **Insight**
Which lessons can be learned from the pandemic or the episode and which pandemic-independent insights only became possible through the situation or measures?
- **Coping**
How can aspects of the pandemic or the attendant circumstances be coped with? Which coping strategies for other areas have resulted from the insights gained?
- **Prevention and Optimization**
How can we contribute to preventing similar situations in the future or improving systems and areas about which we now have gained new insights and knowledge?

These baselines are to be served by selected **research topics** of the Association, which constitute the second dimension of the matrix:

- Virological, immunological, and other biomedical parameters of the Coronavirus pandemic as well as research on the origin and spreading of the virus

¹ Information about the decision can be found on the website https://www.helmholtz.de/aktuell/aktuelle_ausschreibungen/ and in the Slack channel described on page 12.

- Warning and forecasting systems
- Critical infrastructures, supply chains, supply and power systems
- Transformation research and societal aspects
- Using the “real-world experiment” of this particular situation for other research questions (e.g. power systems, mobility, climate, digital transformation)

Large-scale, joint, and coordinated projects should address the research questions in accordance with the campaign concept. To this end, the joint projects have to meet the following criteria:

- They should fulfill all three baselines of the matrix’s first dimension as far as possible and interpret these baselines using the guiding principle of “From insight to coping and prevention”.
- They should form a genuine synergetic research consortium so that the individual parts make valuable contributions to the overall research question.
- They have to address at least one of the research topics mentioned.

B. Recipient, type and scope of the funding

The Initiative and Networking Fund provides funds for the joint projects to the following extent. The following applies for each of the up to three joint projects:

- Maximum funding of up to €6 million
- Funding term of 3 to 5 years

Helmholtz Centers and German universities are eligible for funding. The participating Helmholtz Centers and, if applicable, other partners involved are expected to provide co-financing, the total of which over the entire term should at least correspond to the amount of funding provided by the Initiative and Networking Fund. The draft proposal must specify the co-financing as allocated to sub-projects and the respective term years. The full proposal must also specify the co-financing partner and provide a breakdown of what is to be covered by the co-financing.

Project funding is provided as fixed-amount financing. Personnel costs (expenditures), material costs (expenditures), and investments according to the NKBF 2017 (for the funded Helmholtz Centers) and the ANBestP (for partners external to the Helmholtz Association) are eligible for funding. Once the full proposal has been submitted, an application to begin preliminary measures can be submitted, so that activities can be acknowledged as eligible for funding from this point on if approved with respect to matching funds for the project.

C. Conceptual requirements for the joint projects

The joint projects should meet the following conceptual requirements:

- They should be designed across Centers and research areas.
- They should take transfer aspects at all project stages into consideration by involving relevant societal or economic stakeholders in the development of possible questions and in the further development of the research project. During consortium development, a funding sum of at least €300,000 per year plus matching funds must be used for transfer purposes. This can be achieved using the relevant profile elements (see p. 5f, below) or suitable alternative measures.
- They should present a concept for how the young investigators involved in the project will be funded. This applies irrespective of whether the “Young Talent Promotion” profile element is selected.

- They should be implemented in the spirit of Open Science. Open Science means open access to research results (Open Access according to the Helmholtz Association's policies), research data (Open Data), and access to research software wherever possible and appropriate. Further advice, if needed, is provided by the Helmholtz Open Science Office (os.helmholtz.de). Open Science can also be addressed by conducting individual sub-projects using appropriate Citizen Science methodology.

D. Structure of the joint projects

The joint projects should be structured as follows:

- Division into **sub-projects** that may vary in size
- Integration of the sub-projects into a **backbone project** that will manage the consortium, support joint initiatives, manage overarching offers for the junior investigators in the consortium if applicable, and, if thematically appropriate, coordinate the required involvement of social and economic stakeholders. The latter may also be undertaken by a specific sub-project, if the relationship and contact to respective stakeholder groups is closer from the outset.
- At least two of the sub-projects are to be drafted as **profile elements**. The following types of profile elements are possible:
 - Application-oriented research and transfer: Transfer Tandem Groups and/or funding program for transfer projects
 - Young talent promotion: Helmholtz Research School and/or Helmholtz Young Investigator Groups
 - National/international networking: Synergy Groups and/or Helmholtz International Research School
 - Explorative research: competition for ideas

For these profile elements, a separate budget with funding of at least €300,000 per annum plus matching in the same amount will be set aside within the context of the total funding amount. The "Explorative research" profile element is an exception: No matching is required here and the total amount of the minimum own contributions is reduced accordingly.

E. Drafting of the consortium's profile elements

The profile elements apply funding formats and standards from previous funding concepts of the Initiative and Networking Fund and place them under the thematic umbrella of the pioneering project and the consortium in which they are embedded. When the full proposals are being evaluated, the profile elements will be assessed separately and measured against the respective outlined criteria.

1. Application-oriented research and transfer

The current pandemic is an example of a global challenge that should not only be researched out of curiosity but must also be tackled using concrete approaches. To this end, the innovation process should be thought of in reverse, starting from the aspect of application: Beginning with social problems associated with Coronavirus pandemic or future epidemics/pandemics, the research process should be tailored to the development of effective solutions. This understanding of innovation incorporates knowledge and technology transfer and presupposes the involvement of users and stakeholders at an early stage in order to frame issues and questions and test approaches together.

The aim of this profile-building element is to make the research results of the consortium available to target groups in economics, politics, and civil society. This can be achieved through instruments of

knowledge and/or technology transfer. When drafting this profile-building element, we advise interested applicants to consult relevant stakeholders and target groups outside the scientific community at an early stage in order to convincingly present the application perspective. Furthermore, we explicitly encourage applicants to consult and involve relevant contact persons at the Centers (e.g. technology transfer offices).

Two instruments are available for drafting the profile element:

Transfer Tandem Groups (funding: min. 2x €150,000 per annum plus matching in the same amount)

- Tandems are formed by two research groups, so that a translational perspective results, e.g. by combining basic and application-oriented research or two complementary aspects of application, both of which are relevant to solving the underlying problem.
- The funding sum is €150,000 per annum and group, i. e. a tandem consisting of two groups located at two Helmholtz Centers or one Helmholtz Center and a university will receive two times € 150,000 per annum. Matching funds in the same amount are required. A collaboration between a Helmholtz research group and an external partner (e. g. another non-academic institution, a company, foundation, public authority, or NGO) is also possible. These external partners must contribute their own budget.

Assessment criteria:

- The economical and/or societal questions for which solutions are to be developed can be clearly identified.
- Both groups demonstrate complementary expertise or methods to work on the questions. Both groups have excellent references in these areas.
- The working program can make relevant contributions to the overall question within the limited term of the groups.
- A detailed concept had been prepared for close cooperation suited to the object of research.

Internal consortium support funds for transfer projects (funding: at least €300,000 per annum, matching in the same amount)

Transfer from research to application is usually an iterative process through constant feedback from the users (co-creation). It is therefore all the more important that financing options are permanently available for approaches with sufficient potential. This is the purpose of the consortium's internal funding program, which can support the following transfer options in science and technology:

- Preparing spin-off projects or measures to support start-ups (profit & non-profit)
- Support for technical validation projects and the development of prototypes to test a transfer project under real conditions
- Support to develop partnerships with companies or other users outside academia (profit & non-profit)
- Experimental spaces, in which research and application are merged and developed further (profit & non-profit)
- Explorative studies to test user needs (3-6 months, profit & non-profit)
- Developing consulting services, simulation tools, or databases for users outside academia (profit & non-profit)
- Entrepreneurship training for young investigators

The transfer funds can be used to cover direct and indirect personnel and material costs and costs for third-party orders. It is requested that, when developing their concepts for the draft proposal, applicants consider which of the transfer options listed above are to be financed using the funds provided. If the consortium receives a request to submit a full proposal, the transfer funds should be supported by informative indicators that can be used to measure activity progress and implementation. In the assessment of goal achievement, actual and target values for these performance indicators (current values for 20xx and target values for 20xx) will be used in conjunction with qualitative indicators. Transfer options can be adjusted during the consortium term, but must be explained in the course of reporting.

Assessment criteria:

- Representation of the transfer fund funding objectives (with respect to the selected transfer options, for instance)
- Expected transfer fund effectiveness and funded measure sustainability (with respect to solving the problem addressed, the consortium's goal, or similar criteria)
- Structures with respect to sovereignty over and procedures for decision-making regarding the use of funding
- Strategy to raise awareness of the fund within the consortium and achieve clarity regarding modes of funding
- Representation of the administrative structure for such a fund (with respect to management and documentation of funding use, for instance)

Note on marketing, communication, or outreach activities:

The activities that can be funded as stated above represent only a small part of the broad range of measures that research institutions can use to interact with society. The proposing centers are therefore explicitly encouraged to plan supporting science communication and societal outreach projects as part of the consortium research. These measures must be funded from basic financing but can be included in co-financing.

2. Young talent promotion

Helmholtz Research School (funding: at least €300,000 per annum, matching in the same amount)

Helmholtz Research Schools are to be conceived of as joint facilities by the Centers involved in the consortium and at least one partner university. They can be implemented on site or as virtual Research Schools. They must run for at least four years in order to ensure that a doctoral candidate cohort can complete their theses.

The funds from the Initiative and Networking Fund primarily serve to finance the additional cost of the Research School's organizational structure and the special technical and additional qualifications offered. Some of the funds can also be used to finance doctoral positions.

Doctoral students are the focus of the Research School. The dissertation topics are to be based on the consortium's central research questions and must also provide a suitable foundation for building a scientific or non-scientific career. Multi-disciplinary topics are also welcome in line with the orientation of the research consortium.

- The Research School essentially consists of a curriculum of events and educational opportunities that incorporate multi-disciplinary perspectives on the research subject and take the transfer of results to business and society into consideration from an early stage. Cooperation with the Helmholtz Information and Data Science Academy (HIDA) is to be described for elements in the area of Information and Data Science.

- A fully-formulated, uniform recruiting concept adapted to the goals of internationality and diversity as specified in the Helmholtz Association guidelines on diversity and inclusivity is also expected.
- The doctoral students are to be supervised according to the quality standards laid out in the Helmholtz doctoral guidelines. What is decisive here is the development of a work and qualification plan for doctoral students, the establishment of a doctoral committee for optimal supervision, and innovative further career development opportunities. The Centers are to ensure that the doctoral students are familiar with the essential support offered (technology transfer offices, ombudspersons in the event of conflict) within a structured orientation process.

Assessment criteria:

Scientific orientation

- Excellence, innovative potential, relevance, and sustainability of the specific scientific program. Interdisciplinary approaches are welcome.
- Scientific expertise of all scientists involved in the Research School.

Training program and supervision

- Compliance with the Helmholtz doctoral guidelines
- Discipline-related and interdisciplinary teaching and training in cooperation with the partner university. Intercultural elements and early sensitization to and preparation for transfer to business and society should also be taken into account.
- Transfer of basic good scientific practice and encouragement to reflect on scientific ethics.
- Quality of the supervision concept and career development measures.

Structure of the program and framework conditions

- Organization of the Research School, including a management, communication, and decision-making structure that promotes the planned interaction between everyone involved.
- Integration of the Research School into existing partner structures for doctoral training and young talent promotion, etc. (such as graduate schools).
- Quality of the doctoral student selection process to be established.
- Close interaction with the partner university.
- Integration of other strategic partners according to the scientific and educational programs (from science, business, society, etc.).
- Participation of doctoral students in designing the Research School.
- Quality of the measures with respect to equality and diversity as well as the internationality of the applying partner (welcome culture, language course offerings, translation of relevant documents, etc.).

Helmholtz Young Investigators Group (funding: 2x €150,000 per annum, matching in the same amount)

Helmholtz Young Investigators Groups combine consortium research focuses with targeted support for promising researchers on their path to professorship. Where possible, the leaders of Helmholtz Young Investigators Groups should be jointly appointed with a university and given professorships. In any event, they must hold a status equivalent to a W1 professorship at the university for the duration of the Young Investigators Group.

The funding from the Initiative and Networking Fund is up to €150,000 per year and group in the form of co-financing. The Helmholtz Center and university applying are jointly expected to contribute at least the same amount. Young Investigators Groups thus generally receive a minimum of €300,000 a year, which covers costs for:

- the group leader position, (normally at 14/15 TVöD),
- scientific or technical staff (normally three or four),
- expenses for materials, travel, and investment.

The term of the Young Investigators Group can be extended cost-neutrally past the term of the research consortium if this means that externally recruited candidates can thus achieve a term of up to six years for their Young Investigators Groups.

The Young Investigators Group can be based at a Helmholtz Center or both a Helmholtz Center and a cooperating university. Groups must perform specific scientific work for both partner institutions, and this work must be defined in the planned work program. Cooperation with foreign partners is welcomed. Helmholtz Young Investigators Groups cannot be established at institutions abroad, however. Commercial businesses are greatly desired as associated partners. However, they cannot receive funding from the Initiative and Networking Fund.

In the interest of providing the best possible support for the leaders of the Young Investigators Group to set up their own groups and prepare these leaders for their leadership responsibilities, they are required to attend the “Leading Your Group” course at the Helmholtz Management Academy in the first one or two years of funding. This course has been specifically designed for new Young Investigators Group leaders.

In addition, Helmholtz Centers also provide qualification and advisory services that are recorded as part of a personnel development concept to be submitted with the proposal. We welcome any further support offered by cooperating partners.

Excellent researchers with between two and six years of post-doctoral experience, including documented international research experience, are to be recruited to lead Young Investigators Groups. Young Investigators Groups are to serve as recruiting instruments, so internationally recruited researchers are especially welcome.

Assessment criteria:

- The most important criterion for the success of the proposal is the outstanding quality of the candidates (résumé, publications, citation index, awards, etc.)
- The quality and originality of the planned research project (innovation capacity, relevance, structure, coherence, and feasibility).
- The significance of the proposal for the research consortium.
- Clearly discernible synergy effects resulting from cooperation between the hosting Helmholtz Center and the partner university.

3. National and/or international networking

Synergy groups (funding: 2x €150,000 per annum, matching in the same amount)

Synergy groups are tandems made up of two groups in complementary positions that are linked by a common research interest. One of the groups is from the Helmholtz Association and the other from a German or foreign partner institution. Each group consisting of a Helmholtz Center or a German university will receive funding from the Initiative and Networking Fund in the amount of €150,000 per annum. Partners from non-university institutions or foreign countries can contribute with their own budgets. When a foreign or non-university partner with its own budget is involved, the profile element is to consist

of at least two Synergy Groups. The total scope of funding for the profile element is at least €300,000 per year.

The leaders of each group are to have outstanding reputations. The Synergy Groups represent an incentive for the Helmholtz Centers to deepen existing contacts with strategic partners in Germany and abroad and give young researchers the opportunity to gain or deepen their first scientific cooperation experience, for example through guest visits.

Assessment criteria:

- Quality of the research topics in the context of the research consortium
- Discernible research agenda complementarity
- Concept for cooperation between the two groups
- Scientific standing of the partner institutions

Helmholtz International Research Schools (funding: at least €300,000 per annum, matching in the same amount)

A Helmholtz International Research School focused on a scientific topic in the context of the superordinate research consortium should have a structured doctoral training program offered as a joint program by a Helmholtz Center, a foreign partner, and a German university partner. The structural characteristics and success criteria correspond to those for the Helmholtz Research Schools under the young talent promotion profile element. **A mobility concept for doctoral candidate exchange and a strategy for partner facility interaction will also be provided and assessed.**

Doctoral students are expected to spend a significant period of time (at least six months) at the foreign partner facility.

4. Explorative research (funding: at least €300,000 per annum – no matching)

The objective of this profile element is to fund activities that try out completely new approaches to the consortium's research question instead of incrementally expanding existing approaches. The following are possible examples:

- Evaluation of a new fundamental hypothesis,
- Transfer of a known method to a new research question,
- A new way of integrating data sets,
- A proof of concept for developing a new method.

These activities only run for a short period within the term of the overall research consortium; if they are successful, the approach's potential can be assessed in the form of pilot results or "prototypes" and integrated into existing activities.

In addition to exploring new research approaches, the profile element can be used to involve researchers who were not previously part of the joint research project.

The profile element is to include a competition for ideas once funding has been approved for the consortium. The consortium is to assume the following tasks and explain their design in the full proposal:

- Developing the question(s) relating to the project ideas. Ideally, they should be formulated as a problem to be solved. The question(s) are to be derived from the consortium's research context.

- Developing guidelines for formal project idea design (scope of funding, term, and, as applicable, project structure). The terms should be short enough for the results to be evaluated during the term of the consortium.
- Developing a concept for the call for proposals for the ideas competition (including what information applicants must provide) as well as advertising and running the competition. The consortium will assume responsibility for communicating the competition within the relevant communities.
- Developing criteria for selecting project ideas. The project’s ambition and its suitability to the defined problem should play a significant role.
- Proposing external reviewers to support project selection.
- The consortium should also develop a concept for how the progress and results of the ideas competition research are to be assessed and made useful for consortium research.

In accordance with funding law, the Head Office will coordinate the final project selection step and approve funding. Before the final funding decision, the consortium is to provide estimates on the suitability of the project ideas to the consortium’s research program.

- In the ideas competition, project ideas can be funded by one or more Helmholtz Centers and German universities. They can, but need not, be part of the consortium.
- No matching is necessary for project ideas. The overall consortium need not compensate for lack of matching in this profile element.

Assessment criteria:

- Stringent selection of the problem for the ideas competition
- Expedient design of the formal and structural project idea guidelines
- Concept quality that describes how the project ideas for the consortium’s research question are to be assessed
- Openness of the ideas competition to researchers outside the consortium

F. Criteria for consortium selection

The pioneering projects and their consortia should focus on the research topic and the effectiveness of research in finding solutions to problems. Accordingly, the choice of topic is the starting point for project assessment, which will be operationalized as follows:

	Criteria for draft proposal evaluation	Criteria for full proposal evaluation
Topic selection and anticipated impact	<p>Topic relevance to society and business; contribution to problem-solving and transfer</p> <p>Scientific relevance: Scientific added value, progress past the state of the art</p> <p>Use of the Helmholtz Association’s scientific strengths in the interest of elaborating on unique selling points</p>	<p>Expected effect of the selected approach to the topic (for instance: How completely is the problem addressed? How original is the approach? What progress can be anticipated for society and science?)</p>

<p>Work program and approach</p>	<p>Ambitious but achievable objectives</p> <p>Goal-oriented overall architecture and added value beyond the sum of the individual elements</p> <p>Reasonable sub-project and profile element content orientation</p> <p>Transparent budget approach</p>	<p>Scientific quality of the selected approaches and methods</p> <p>Work program design (clarity of objectives, coherence, depth of focus)</p> <p>Development of synergies between the various consortium elements and contributors</p> <p>Effective management to increase synergies</p> <p>Sub-project and profile element design meet the criteria</p> <p>Implementation of conceptual requirements in the consortium (see above under C.; p. 3)</p> <p>Appropriate budgeting</p>
<p>Contributors, competencies, resources</p>	<p>Anchoring in the Helmholtz Association (is relevant existing expertise integrated?)</p> <p>Consortium partner scientific and, as applicable, business expertise</p> <p>Partner complementarity and consortium balance</p> <p>Use of relevant Helmholtz research capabilities (infrastructures, data, etc.)</p>	<p>Scientific quality of PIs and relevance for the work packages they are responsible for</p> <p>Experience and preparatory work in the consortium that promise a consortium that can work quickly</p>

G. Procedure

1. Open nature of project development

Following the basic idea that the campaign-like pioneering projects that are part of the new initiative fund concept are holistic efforts on the part of the entire Helmholtz Association, focus their entire breadth on a single topic, and place granted initiative fund instruments under a single topical umbrella, the ideas for consortia and the compositions of consortia should be developed participatively through a Helmholtz-wide procedure. The objective of the call for applications is not competition between the various consortia for a similar project idea, but competition between different ideas, so there is no direct competition between the consortia based on similar approaches. If similar approaches are identified, they will be asked to pool expertise and resources and take a joint approach, ideally in the development phase, but no later than upon submission of the draft proposals. This principle also means that the entire Association is to participate in the conceptualization of ideas and consortia. That is why this call for applications is open for consortium and project development that follows open-source concepts.

The core of the open project development concept is Helmholtz-wide sharing of ideas for possible joint projects. This is to bring all interested scientists who could potentially contribute to a joint project into the discussion and position the consortium on a broad base of competence from throughout the Association. It is also to allow any contributions (tools, data, etc.) that are not specifically involved in an existing project idea to be offered openly on the platform so that consortia can integrate them into their

consortia as needed. The specific design of the joint project in question and the suitability of individual contributions should be developed in discussion.

To this end, the Helmholtz Association Head Office provides various support platforms:

HelmholtzCloud as an information platform

The following information and interaction opportunities are provided on the HelmholtzCloud document-sharing server:

- Information on the call for applications with templates and continuously updated FAQs on the call for applications
- Pitches with research ideas from the concept phase
- Topic proposals: A document folder will be set up for each project idea submitted to the Helmholtz Head Office in the form of an announcement of interest (see below), where the announcement of interest and any other outlines or contribution pitches by any interested Association scientists can be submitted, so that the consortium can develop openly and is mutually enriching.
- Contribution proposals: A document folder will be set up, where pitches for free contributions that have not yet been associated with specific project ideas can be submitted by any interested Association scientists, forming a marketplace that possible consortia can use as an ideas pool for further cooperation.

HelmholtzCloud accessibility: www.helmholtz.de/kampagne-pandemie

The folder on HelmholtzCloud is password protected. The password can be found in the Slack workspace (see below), which can only be accessed by Helmholtz Center staff, in the official notification channel (*#mitteilungen*). You will also receive a password after submitting an announcement of interest (see below) or upon request (contact kampagne@helmholtz.de).

Slack workspace as an interaction and discussion forum

Special channels in a central Slack workspace can be used by scientists to discuss various questions.

- Announcements by the Association regarding the call for applications
- Answers to questions about the call for applications
- Topic proposals: For each project submitted to the Helmholtz Head Office in the form of an announcement of interest (see below), an open channel will be created in which the respective idea can be discussed.
- Contribution proposals: For each contribution proposal, a separate open channel will be created in which the contribution and its suitability for potential project ideas can be discussed. Channels for contribution proposals can also be freely created by any participant.

Slack workspace accessibility: hgf-kampagne-pandemie.slack.com

Secured by participant registration requirement. Only participants with Helmholtz Center work e-mail addresses will be accepted.

2. Procedure levels

The procedure for applying for a consortium involves three stages:

1. Announcement of interest and open project development
2. Draft proposal
3. Full proposal

Details of the stages:

Stage 1: Announcement of interest and open project development

Participation in the open process of idea and consortium development is a formal requirement for acceptance of draft proposals in the second stage of the procedure. To start the development phase, announcements of interest must be submitted to the Helmholtz Head Office (kampagne@helmholtz.de). In this phase, an initial idea for a joint project is stated at the working title stage and submitted with a brief description and contact information. Based on this notification, corresponding discussion channels will be set up on the platform mentioned above and information provided about the new idea in order to prepare for a discussion on it.

A draft proposal will only be accepted to the second stage of the procedure if it can be shown that the draft can be traced back to one or more of the ideas previously submitted as an announcement of interest and presented for discussion through the channels stated above. The announcement of interest need only represent an initial basis; it does not have to determine the specific consortium design or the specific title at this stage.

The announcement of interest is informal, but must at least contain the following information:

- Working title (preliminary but informative), including a short title (and, as appropriate, an acronym/key word with no more than 20 characters) for further processing on the platforms
- Preliminary short description of the idea (abstract, no more than five lines/450 characters)
- Idea provider including contact data (Center and e-mail address at least)

The Helmholtz Head Office will provide an announcement of interest form. Using the procedure for open project development outlined above, the Helmholtz Association will publish announcements of interest to support the consortium-building process with mutual information. Announcements of interest will not be assessed.

It is recommended that further information about the project idea be included along with the required, basic information. Examples include information on preparatory work, resources (devices, data, etc.), approaches to consortium formation, and profiles requirements of new consortium partners.

Announcements of interest are only to be submitted in electronic form to the Helmholtz Association Head Office at kampagne@helmholtz.de by August 24, 2020. Announcements of interest should be submitted as soon as possible in order to generate a broad discussion.

Stage 2: Draft proposal

Draft proposals present the selected research question, the consortium, and the structure of the joint project. The draft proposals should explain the objectives and the basic approach. They should show how the individual sub-projects interact and complement one another to create synergies in addressing the research question. The selected profile elements and their functions and integration into the overall consortium should be stated as well as how they are to be used with potential instruments. Moreover, the draft proposal should include a schedule and a financial plan.

To this end, the draft proposals should contain the following information:

1. Scientific concept
 - Explanation of the central question and relevance
 - Description of the research and approach
 - Presentation of preparatory work and consortium partner strengths
 - Information about external partners and their planned involvement
2. Research consortium structure
 - Description of the overall consortium architecture as an interplay of sub-projects and profile elements

- Profile elements:
 - State the selected profile elements (at least two) and their integration into and function in the joint project
 - Outline of profile element design:
 - State the instruments selected to design the respective profile element,
 - Thematic focus,
 - Approach (outline of the work program),
 - Budget outline,
 - Mapping with consortium partners and concept to involve other partners.
 - Description of the structure and function of the backbone for project control, sub-project integration, networking with other partners and platforms, and tasks associated with the project such as young talent promotion, communication, data management, etc.
3. Schedule and financial planning
 4. Annex with résumés of the principal investigators
 5. Initial reviewer proposals for the full proposal phase

The draft proposals are to be prepared according to the enclosed template and submitted electronically to the Helmholtz Head Office (kampagne@helmholtz.de) by September 21, 2020.

The draft proposals will be published after the submission deadline in order to facilitate the design of profile elements by external partners/candidates (as appropriate).

After the draft proposals have been submitted, they will be assessed and selected by a panel of experts according to the criteria described above. The panel's selection meeting is planned for October 5 and 6, 2020 as a web conference. We ask that the draft proposal coordinators be prepared to present their project ideas on one of these two days. To assist them, a template will be provided in good time on the platforms mentioned above.

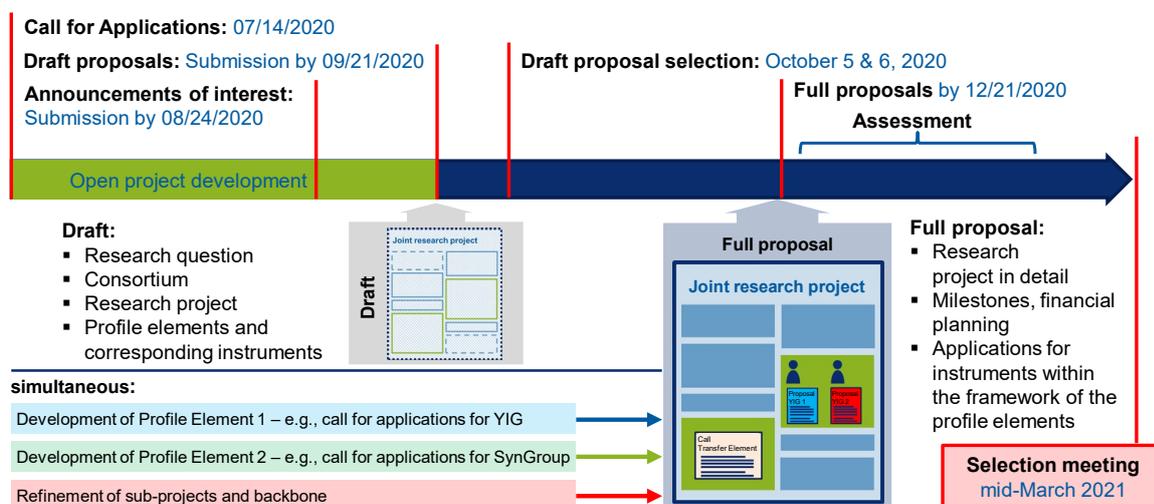
Stage 3: Full proposal

A full proposal submission will be requested for the draft proposals that are successful. Full proposals will be expected to include detailed presentations of sub-projects, including profile elements, and exact descriptions of contributions and resources provided by project partners. To assist in this effort, a template will be provided not later than the draft proposal selection process.

In the full proposal, the sub-projects to be implemented with the selected profile elements should be developed as differentiated sub-proposals. They should present a milestone and financial plan as well as a management and interaction concept for partner cooperation. The full proposal will be assessed in writing regarding its scientific quality. Moreover, each profile element will be assessed individually regarding the quality of the cross-cutting issue it addresses (young talent, transfer, proposed partnership (Synergy Groups, International Research Schools, etc.), and candidates for Young Investigators Groups).

The funding decision for full proposals will be made by a panel of experts following extensive presentations of the joint projects based on the written appraisal obtained beforehand. The consortium partner framework should be introduced and the representatives or candidates for the individual sub-projects presented. The panel will select up to three promising proposals and recommend them for funding.

The overall procedure is illustrated in the following figure:



H. Dates and deadlines

A tight schedule is to be followed in order to best exploit the exceptional underlying situation and achieve the greatest possible effect:

- Announcement of interest submission: August 24, 2020
- Draft proposal submission: September 21, 2020
- Panel session and draft proposal selection: October 5/6, 2020
- Full proposal submission: December 21, 2020
- Project presentations and selection: March 2021

I. Documents to be submitted

Open project development stage:

- Announcements of interest according to the enclosed template and as described on p. 13f

Draft proposal stage:

- Draft proposal according to the enclosed template
- Letter of support by the management of all consortium institutions involved (informal)

Full proposal stage:

- Full proposal according to the template. The template will be made available in good time before the end of the draft proposal stage at <https://www.helmholtz.de/aktuell/aktuelle-ausschreibungen/> and on HelmholtzCloud.
- Résumés for the principal investigators involved listing their ten most important publications. A template will be provided for this as well.
- Explicit agreement by the management of each co-financing partner institution to provide the matching funds indicated in the proposal.

J. Annex

- Template for announcement of interest
- Template for draft proposal
- Compulsory information according to Art. 13 GDPR