

Helmholtz Distinguished Professorship – funding to recruit international top-level female scientists (W3)

from resources of the Joint Initiative for Research and Innovation
(2019 call for applications)

- *I am interested in the call for applications. Where can I apply directly?*

A candidate cannot apply directly to the Helmholtz Association, but must contact a Helmholtz Center that fits her field of study. The Board of Directors of the Helmholtz Center in question will decide which candidate to nominate. Only Helmholtz Center Boards of Directors are authorized to submit applications.

- *Is the call for funding applications linked to certain chairs (that become vacant), disciplines, or denominations?*

No. The call for applications is not dependent on any subject or discipline. However, relevance to the Helmholtz research programs and the focus of a given Center will be an essential part of the decision by that Center to nominate a given candidate. The precise alignment of the appointments with the structural development plans of the appointing partner universities is a question to be resolved between the nominating Helmholtz Center and the partner university.

- *Why is it only permanent professorships that are funded?*

The program aims to permanently increase the proportion of women in scientific management positions at Helmholtz and create reliable career prospects. This can only be done through permanent positions.

- *Can candidates who are already working at a Helmholtz Center be funded?*

As the title of the program implies, the goal of the program is to recruit top-level female scientists to Helmholtz. A fundamental prerequisite of the funding is that the nominated candidates are not yet employed at the Helmholtz Center submitting the application at the time of submission. Instead, the funding program is aimed at outstanding female scientists who are currently (that is, when the application is submitted) conducting research at foreign institutions. That is why applications to fund internal Helmholtz scientists are out of the question. One exception is if the nominated candidate is hired by the Helmholtz Center after the application is submitted.

- *Can candidates who already have an appointment at the partner university or at another German university be funded?*

No. Another important prerequisite for the funding is that the nominated candidate is not appointed before the selection meeting. Nevertheless, it is a very good idea for discussions regarding a joint appointment with the relevant partner university to begin as soon as possible, and for specific agreements regarding the next steps in the desired appointment procedure to be reached before the selection meeting. This will in any case accelerate the planned appointment.

- *A candidate from abroad is to be appointed to a W3 position at a Helmholtz Center. How should she decide whether it is best to apply for the “first-time appointment” program or the “Helmholtz Distinguished Professorship – Funding to recruit international top-level female scientists” program? Can a candidate apply for both programs at the same time?*

The two programs differ in terms of the seniority of their target groups. The “Helmholtz Distinguished Professorship – Funding to recruit international top-level female scientists” program sets very high standards of experience and performance for the scientists to be recruited, while the “first-time appointment” program is aimed at scientists at earlier stages in their careers whose performance relative to the current stage of their career has been outstanding.

Nominations for both programs are not out of the question. But candidates should be aware that a joint panel will consider the applications for both programs. If a candidate is nominated for both programs at the same time, that circumstance will be immediately obvious and indicate that the nominating Helmholtz Center is not sure which career phase the candidate is in. It would be advisable to provide an explanation for this approach if such a parallel nomination is pursued.

- *What should be done if the partner university wants to or has to make a public call for applications for the professorship in question?*

It is incumbent on the partner university to provide in its statement information about the design of the appointment procedure. If there are no prospects for a person-specific procedure, the reasons should be explained to avoid giving the impression that the partner university is not entirely convinced that the candidate is the right one.

- *Can a Helmholtz Center nominate as many candidates as it wants?*

In principle, yes. However, many applications give the impression that the Center has not been particularly selective in its decision to nominate. This approach also increases the probability that a pre-selection will be made based on written peer reviews and that not all nominated candidates will be able to present before the panel of experts.

- *Who evaluates the applications?*

Several written peer reviews relevant to the candidate's field of study will be obtained for each application. The final step in the selection involves an interdisciplinary, independent panel of external reviewers deciding on a selection recommendation.

- *Are there formal requirements or a sample structure for the application?*

Yes. Starting with this round of applications, there is an application template whose structure and scope must be adhered to. Deviating applications will not be considered in the selection process.

- *Can financial plans include the costs for dual-career measures?*

The Helmholtz Centers are expressly requested to describe dual-career measures for the partners of nominated candidates and identify any contributions on the part of the Center and/or the partner university in the financial plan.

- *What does it mean for the funding to increase the starting value of the recruiting Center's budget?*

This simply means that the funding is permanent. Until the beginning of the new program period within the framework of program-oriented funding (PoF), funds will be earmarked for a specific purpose, and thus for a specific person. If the recruited scientist leaves the Center shortly after accepting an appointment, the basis for financing no longer exists, and the funding will therefore be withdrawn. In such a case, the recruiting Center has the opportunity to nominate another candidate, who will be appointed if the nomination holds up to scientific appraisal in line with the program's criteria. At the beginning of the program period after the funded scientist has been recruited, the funding is permanently paid into the basic budget of the Center in question and is thus no longer dependent on the recruited scientist remaining at the Center.