

Call for applications

January 31, 2020

Funding of first-time professorial appointments of excellent women scientists (W2/W3)

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



Within the framework of the *Joint Initiative for Research and Innovation*, the Helmholtz Association is intensifying its efforts to attract and fund excellent women scientists – especially from abroad – to top positions. The current concept of the Initiative and Networking Fund (2017–2020) aims to support these efforts through the first-time professorial appointment program (W2/W3) for women scientists who are at an early stage in their careers and demonstrate outstanding scientific performance.

A. Goal of the funding

The fundamental goal of the funding instrument is to facilitate the establishment of highly qualified candidates as professors at an early stage in their careers. Therefore, the program aims to support the first appointment of excellent women scientists to universities at the W2 or W3 level and to help them to establish themselves as professors. The strategic objectives of this funding program are to increase the proportion of women at the medium levels of Helmholtz management and to strengthen cooperation with partner universities. With respect to the target group, the program aims to recruit and retain highly qualified women scientists and create reliable career prospects by funding only permanent appointments. The additional resources also create scope for financing and equipping this first W2 or W3 position and, for example, for early appointments (so-called “vorgezogene Berufungen”). Women scientists who have already been employed at Helmholtz Centers can be funded if the appointment involves a clear career step for junior professors, young investigators group leaders, or other postdocs and if the candidate shows an outstanding scientific performance.

B. Purpose and duration of the funding

The funding volume for both W2 and W3 professorships amounts up to 1 million euros over a period of five years (200,000 euros p.a.). The funding can be used to finance the position and its equipment.

Funding can be granted for activities at the applying Helmholtz Center and at the appointing partner university. An essential prerequisite for funding is a concept for the use of the funds that details their deployment as well as additional services provided by the Helmholtz Center and the partner university. Furthermore, a statement must be submitted, which contains the planning for the time after expiry of funding from the Initiative and Networking Fund.

If funding is granted, the successful appointment as professor (submission of the certificate of appointment) is a prerequisite for the provision of funds. For the selected group of candidates, the Helmholtz Head Office plans to offer coaching in addition to the funding.

C. Target group

The funding program aims to support outstanding women scientists from both Germany and abroad who are at an early stage in their careers, demonstrate outstanding scientific performance and for whom a decisive step towards a professorship can be supported. Such “rising star” candidates include:

- Internal and external candidates who will be appointed for the first time to the W2 or W3 professorship level from a junior professorship, young investigators group leadership position, or another post-doctoral position, as long as the desired professorship is permanent. The candidates should be top-level scientists within their respective fields.
- External candidates who are currently in a fixed-term professorship and are to be recruited to a permanent position at Helmholtz, such as from a fixed-term W2 position at another institution to a W3 position at Helmholtz. Candidates who are already in permanent professorships or are to be appointed from a fixed-term W2 position at Helmholtz to a permanent W3 position are not eligible for funding.
- Women researchers who currently hold professorial positions at foreign institutions and are to be recruited to a Helmholtz Center, with a focus on women scientists in the early phases of their careers (in contrast to the call for applications for “Helmholtz Distinguished Professorship – Funding to recruit top-level international women scientists”).

D. Funding criteria

The most important selection criterion is the outstanding scientific performance of the applicants (CV, publications, citation index, awards, etc.). For German candidates, documentation of relevant research experience at foreign institutions is another key criterion. Other criteria include:

- Originality of the planned research work,
- Outstanding qualifications, documented by such accomplishments as an ERC Starting Grant or comparable funding, on the part of the applicant,
- Suitability of the candidate’s research profile with the applying Helmholtz Center and the research program,
- The joint commitment of the Helmholtz Center and the partner university to support the successful establishment of the candidate as a professor. It is imperative that aspects of equipment, but also structural concerns (such as support for integration into university departments) and supporting personnel development measures and, if applicable, dual-career measures will be addressed. The current status and further plans for the appointment procedure must be outlined by the partner university.

E. Application procedure

The call for research topic-independent applications will be issued internationally.

The application procedure involves several steps (see **Annex 5**):

1. Interested women scientists should contact the Helmholtz Centers directly and get in touch with the contact persons indicated (see **Annex 4**). Conversely, the Helmholtz Centers are called upon to actively recruit suitable candidates.

2. Helmholtz Centers are encouraged to organize an internal pre-selection process and enter into negotiations with their partner universities.
3. The applications for funding will then be prepared jointly by the Helmholtz Center and the candidate and submitted to the Helmholtz Head Office in Berlin via the Helmholtz Centers' Boards of Directors. Applications sent by candidates directly to the Helmholtz Head Office will not be accepted.
4. At least two written reviews from international peers will be obtained for each application.
5. In the event that the program is greatly oversubscribed, the President reserves the right to make a pre-selection on the basis of the written reviewer appraisals that have been obtained.
6. Not later than six weeks before the meeting of the review panel, the applying Helmholtz Centers will be informed of whether the relevant application will be considered in the procedure's next step.
7. The final selection decision will be based on the recommendation of an independent, interdisciplinary panel of experts. Invitations for the candidates to give a personal presentation will be issued via the applying Helmholtz Centers about six weeks before the date of the selection meeting.
8. After the candidate's presentation at the selection meeting, the Helmholtz Centers' Boards of Directors will be informed of the results of the funding decision.
9. The selected candidates must be appointed as professors not later than 18 months after funding has been approved. Otherwise, the funding lapses.
10. The prerequisite for funding is the submission of a copy of the certificate of appointment to the Helmholtz Head Office.

F. Dates and deadlines

June 12, 2020: Deadline for submission of complete applications by the Helmholtz Centers to the Helmholtz Head Office in Berlin

October 9, 2020: Deadline for submission of the statement by the partner university to the Helmholtz Head Office in Berlin

November 4 and 5, 2020: Final selection meeting in Berlin

Not later than 18 months after funding approval: Deadline for submitting a copy of the certificate of appointment and start of funding

G. Documents to be submitted

Annex 1 is a template for preparing the application. **Using this template is a formal prerequisite for application submission.** A further prerequisite is that **all components of the application must be written in English.** Specifically, the following documentation must be submitted:

I. Letter from the Helmholtz Centers' Boards of Directors (separate document, English, PDF)

We ask that the letter from the Helmholtz Centers' Boards of Directors is written in English. The letter from the Board of Directors should address the following aspects:

- Strategic importance of the appointment for the Helmholtz Center, suitability for the Helmholtz, program, and relevance to the research field,
- Resources commitment with reference to the financial plan,
- Assignment to a program or defined division into several programs,
- Information on the status of the arrangements with the candidate and the partner university.

II. Assessable application (based on the application template with the following structure / components, English, one PDF):

1. Overview of the application

- Stakeholders and thematic focus,
- Nominated candidate,
- Summary of the planned research program for the five-year funding period.

2. Role of the activities of the nominated candidate in the strategy of the applying Helmholtz Center and the relevant Helmholtz research program(s) (max. 2 pages)

- Strategic goals of the appointment,
- Collaboration and networking with universities and non-university research institutions.

3. Motivation of the nominated candidate (max. 2 pages)

- Motivation to join the Helmholtz Center,
- Motivation to join the partner university.

4. Curriculum vitae of the nominated candidate (max. 3 pages)

5. Description of the planned work program (max. 15 pages)

- State of the art and preliminary work,
- Objectives,
- Five-year work program including proposed research methods,
- Long-term research plans.

6. Financial plan

- Direct costs for the five-year funding period with annual data on personnel costs, costs of materials and supplies, and investments. No funding will be granted for overheads.
- Financing contributions by the Center and funding by the Initiative and Networking Fund.

7. Publications and patents

- Publication metrics,
- Five selected key publications,
- Publication list,
- Patents (if applicable).

8. Declaration of consent regarding data protection

9. Recommendation letter from the Scientific Advisory Board of the Helmholtz Center submitting the application (English, PDF) (max. 2 pages)

10. Letters of reference from Helmholtz external experts (English, PDF) (max. 2 pages each)

III. Proposal of six unbiased reviewers in the relevant field (separate document, English, PDF)

Please consider the notes in **Annex 2** and use **Annex 3** (Excel sheet) for listing the expert proposals.

IV. Partner university statement (separate document, English, PDF)

The partner university statement must be written in English and should be signed by high-ranking officials (president, vice president or dean, including official stamp). This statement should address the following aspects:

- Intended appointment (denomination, integration into the department and any other relevant structures),
- Promised resources, if applicable planned dual-career measures,
- Appointment procedure outlook.

The partner university statement must be submitted both as original and electronically to the Helmholtz Head Office in Berlin by October 9, 2020 at the latest.

Applications must be submitted as **single original copies** by the Board of Directors of the Helmholtz Center to the President of the Helmholtz Association at the Helmholtz Head Office in **Berlin**, Anna-Louisa-Karsch-Str. 2, 10178 Berlin, Germany and **sent by e-mail** to Daniel Riesenberg (daniel.riesenberg@helmholtz.de; technical questions) and Martina Carnott (martina.carnott@helmholtz.de; financial and contractual questions) by **June 12, 2020 at the latest** (with exception of the partner university statement, which must be submitted by October 9, 2020 at the latest).

Annexes

Annex 1: Application template (mandatory use)

Annex 2: Declaration with regard to the proposal of six unbiased reviewers in the relevant field

Annex 3: List of six unbiased potential reviewers

Annex 4: Contact persons at the Helmholtz Centers

Annex 5: Overview of the selection procedure

Annex 6: Frequently asked questions

Annex 7: Information about the processing of personal data in the application and assessment procedure