Deutsche
Forschungsgemeinschaft
German Research Foundation

Guidelines

for Proposals to Establish Priority Programmes
and
Points to Note in Connection with Existing Priority Programmes

DFG

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A. Guidelines for Priority Programme Proposals

As a topic-oriented funding programme with an open call for proposals, Priority Programmes provide the opportunity for interdisciplinary networking and nationwide coordination of research projects in fields of current research interest.

Priority Programmes are established for a period of up to six years, which can be divided into several funding periods. Once a Priority Programme has been established, the DFG announces a call for proposals for each funding period within the field of research as specified in the call for proposals. Projects to be funded will be selected from the proposals submitted.

Proposals to establish Priority Programmes should be addressed to the DFG Senate. The proposal should describe how the three programme objectives set out below will be met.

I. Programme Objectives

1. Novelty in terms of topic, cooperation or methodology

   This programme objective may be fulfilled if, for example:

   - the Priority Programme encompasses subjects which would have been inconceivable a few years ago, and/or

   - the Priority Programme explores bold, new methods and approaches, and/or

   - it establishes new avenues of research which may influence other research areas, and/or

   - the Priority Programme has the potential for increasing international importance, or is likely to have a lasting impact on the scientific landscape.

   Priority Programmes will not be announced for research areas that are already well established and currently receive adequate funding from other sources.

2. Added value through interdisciplinary cooperation (interdisciplinarity)

   This objective can be fulfilled by coordinating all of the areas of research that are relevant to the scientific objective of the programme and by including the necessary technical expertise.

3. Added value through cooperation between different locations (networking)

   A third objective of the programme is the formation of networks. Priority Programmes will only be established for topics that receive a significant boost as a result of nationwide networking. Potential participants must have demonstrated scientific expertise.

II.   Coordination of the Priority Programme

Those responsible for initiating the programme appoint a coordinator. In addition to fulfilling an advisory role for the applicants for the various individual projects, the coordinator has a guiding role for the programme as a whole, and also acts as a representative to the review panel. Ideally, the role of the coordinator should include holding the first roundtable discussion for preparation of the Priority Programme proposal, encompass the organisation of the preparatory stages and all activities within the Priority Programme, and extend to holding the concluding colloquium and writing the final report.

The coordinator submits a progress report on the overall development of the Priority Programme at each project renewal review and is also responsible for submitting the final report to the Senate. The coordinator is authorised to obtain the information required for this purpose from the Priority Programme participants (see also section B. IV below).

III.   Preparation of a Priority Programme

The DFG offers potential applicants the opportunity to hold roundtable discussions in preparation for submitting a proposal. These are particularly well suited to planning a Priority Programme that is in the course of preparation.

IV.   Selection Procedure

The decision to establish a new Priority Programme is made annually by the DFG Senate, with the involvement of members of the Review Boards, on the basis of a comparative review of written proposals.

V.   Evaluation Criteria

The following criteria, derived from the programme objectives, are used to evaluate the proposal to establish a Priority Programme, which should be clearly evident in the proposal. This list is not comprehensive.

- Novelty of the proposed area of activity, both in Germany and internationally
- Clearly defined short- and medium-term research objectives
    - Definition and concentration of the scientific problems to be addressed;
    - Coherency of the planned research work.
- Synergy – ways and means of planning cooperation
    - The plan and formation of networks within the Priority Programme;
    - Workshops, topical working groups, postgraduate summer courses, working visits, running a website.
- Coordination of the Priority Programme
    - Selection of a person who has the personal skills to work together with an interdisciplinary steering committee on planning collaborations within the Priority Programme (see point II above).

- Ways of promoting early career researchers
    - Integration of early career researchers into the Priority Programme;
    - Workshops, summer courses and training in research methods.
- Gender equality measures
    - Involvement of female researchers and support for participating women
    - Family-friendly options
- International involvement and prominence
    - International networking;
    - International conferences on the topic.
- Logical integration into the context of other funding activities
    - The relationship to other previous, current or planned funding activities (DFG or other).

VI. Proposal Process

1. Eligibility requirements

Proposals to establish Priority Programmes may be submitted by any researcher who is eligible to submit proposals to the DFG.

2. Submission deadline

Proposals must be received by the DFG Head Office in electronic format by 15 November of any given year.

3. Proposal length

Proposals should not exceed 20 pages, plus the appendices mentioned below under 6, 7 and 8, and should not include individual project outlines.

4. Proposal format

To facilitate a fair selection process we ask that all proposals be submitted in 10 point Arial font on DIN A4 pages. Should this be not feasible for technical reasons, you may use another font of a similar size. Proposals in other formats will not be accepted.

5. Funding period

The maximum funding period for a Priority Programme is six years. This period can be divided as required (for example, 3 x 2 years, 2 x 3 years, or 6 x 1 year).

6. Proposal contents

The proposal should set out the scientific programme and the main reasons why the programme is worthy of funding. It should also include a one-page summary of the research topic, which can also be used as the basis for the call for proposals for the programme.

In particular, the following points should be addressed:

- work programme;
- scientific objectives;
- the state of the art of research in Germany and abroad (taking the previous work done by the initiators and participants into consideration);
- explanation of how the programme objectives and evaluation criteria described in points I. and V. are to be achieved;
- distinction from other programmes currently receiving funding, such as Collaborative Research Centres, Research Units or programmes run by funding bodies other than the DFG;
- prospective applicants (appendix);
- the period being applied for and the envisaged funding periods;
- an estimation of the amount of funding required and justification thereof.

To illustrate and enhance your presentation you may refer to your own and others' publications. Make it clear whenever you are referring to other researchers' work and explain your own preparatory work. Please list all **cited** publications (appendix). This reference list is not considered your list of publications. Any unpublished work must be included with the proposal. However, note that reviewers are not required to read any of the works you cite. Reviews will be based only on the text of the actual proposal.

Please note that the DFG may reject any proposals not in compliance with these rules.

7. Curriculum vitae

For each initiator include a tabular curriculum vitae in the appendix. To allow reviewers to fairly evaluate the researchers' scientific achievements, we recommend that CVs mention any circumstances that may have impaired research activities. Applicants are free to mention any childcare leaves, long periods of severe illness, or disabilities that have prevented them from working continuously.

Each initiator's CV should also include a list of up to five of his/her most important publications. Please note the guidelines in *8. Lists of publications*.

8. Lists of publications

Your proposal must include the following lists of publications:

1. Each initiator's list of most important publications, regardless of relevance to the proposed project. This list is part of the CV.
2. A joint list of topic-related publications (appendix)

Please structure both types of lists as follows:

a) Articles which at the time of proposal submission have been published or officially accepted by publication outlets with scientific quality assurance, listed in standard format; book publications. For works that have been accepted for publication but not yet published, the manuscript must be submitted along with the publisher's acknowledgement of acceptance.
b) Other publications
c) Patents, subdivided into pending and issued

Please note the maximum number of works you may list under a) and b) combined:

1. Important publications: up to five per initiator

2. Topic-related publications:
- Single initiator: two publications per year of the proposed Priority Programme's duration
- Multiple initiators: three publications per year of the proposed Priority Programme's duration

Please note that the DFG may reject any proposals not in compliance with these rules.

VII. Final Reports

Once the Priority Programme has been concluded two final reports must be written, one programme-specific and the other a scientific report.

The DFG Senate discusses the programme-specific final report, paying particular attention to the programme's objectives and criteria.

The scientific final report is presented at the concluding colloquium, where reviewers are also present. Additionally, it shall be made publicly available in a suitable format. Subject to prior consultation with the DFG Head Office, the scientific final report for the overall Priority Programme may be submitted instead of final reports for each of the individual projects.

VIII. Obligations

By submitting your proposal or draft proposal you agree to:

1. Adhere to the **rules of good scientific practice**.[1]

   The general principles of good scientific practice include, among others:
   - maintaining professional standards,
   - documenting results,
   - rigorously questioning all findings, and
   - attributing honestly any contributions by partners, competitors and predecessors.

   In cases of scientific misconduct, the DFG may impose sanctions as listed below. Scientific misconduct is defined as the intentional and grossly negligent statement of falsehoods in a scientific context, the violation of intellectual property rights or impeding another person's research work. The circumstances of each case will be considered on an individual basis.

   Depending on the nature and severity of the established misconduct, the DFG may impose one or several sanctions. These include:

   - issuing a written reprimand to those involved;

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[1] The rules of good scientific practice are presented in detail in the white paper *Proposals for Safeguarding Good Scientific Practice* (published by Wiley-VCH) and in the usage guidelines for research grants, DFG form 2.01 and 2.02 (see DFG website: http://www.dfg.de/en ⇨ tab *Research Funding / Legal Framework Conditions*). They are based on the recommendations of an international commission on self-regulation in science and on a decision by the DFG's General Assembly, endorsed by the German Rectors' Conference, dated 17 June 1998. According to a decision made by the General Assembly on 4 July 2001, research institutions that have not implemented the rules of good scientific practice or do not abide by them will not be able to apply for or receive DFG funding as of 1 July 2002.

- exclusion from the right to apply for DFG funds for a period of one to eight years, depending on the severity of the scientific misconduct;

- revoking funding decisions (complete or partial cancellation of the grant, recalling granted funds, demanding repayment of funds spent);

- demanding that those concerned either retract the discredited publications or correct the falsified data (in particular by publishing an erratum), or appropriately indicate the DFG's retraction of funding in the discredited publications;

- exclusion from acting as a reviewer or from membership in DFG committees;

- denying voting rights and eligibility in elections for DFG statutory bodies and committees.

By accepting funding, the recipient agrees to:

2. Use the grant exclusively and in a targeted manner to realise the funded project. Usage of funds and accounting must be in compliance with applicable DFG guidelines.

3. Report to the DFG on the status of the project and document the use of the grant money on the dates specified in the award letter.

The DFG expects that the findings of the projects it funds are made available to the public.

IX. Declarations

1. Rules of good scientific practice

With regard to the rules of good scientific practice, please confirm the following:

"In submitting this proposal for a DFG Priority Programme grant, I agree to adhere to the rules of good scientific practice."

2. Lists of publications and bibliography

With regard to the guidelines for publication lists and bibliographies listed under sections VI.7. and VI.6., please state the following:

"My proposal is in compliance with the rules for lists of publications (VI.7.) and bibliographies (VI.6.)."

B. Points to Note in Connection with Existing Priority Programmes

Once the Senate has reached a decision to establish a Priority Programme, the DFG will announce it to the German research community by way of a nationwide call for proposals.

The submission of proposals is subject to the usual guidelines applicable to project proposals, in particular those for Research Grants as given in the "Research Grants – General Information and Guidelines for Proposals" (DFG Form 1.02e), noting the following points:

I. Eligibility Requirements

Proposals may also be submitted by researchers working at non-university research institutions.

It is also possible for foreign scientists to participate provided that their project is of paramount importance to the Priority Programme as a whole. This should be explained clearly in the proposal.

II. Application Period

The call for proposals also specifies the period for which applications may be submitted and the funding period.

III. Integration of the Project into the Priority Programme

Each proposal must be accompanied by a description of how the project is integral to the Priority Programme, both in terms of subject matter and organisation. This includes a description of the cooperation with others involved in the proposal within the Priority Programme, for instance on the basis of previous collaborative work or joint publications. The envisaged realisation of the project in cooperation with other applicants may be demonstrated in particular by the joint training of early career researchers or the use of methods by multiple projects as part of a network.

IV. Funding for Coordination of the Priority Programme

Sufficient funding is available to the coordinator within a separate project to facilitate the broad range of coordinated activities ("coordinator project"). These funds may be used for coordination tasks, for publication of results and other reports and for general programme tasks. It is also possible for the participants in the Priority Programme to use the funds to apply for travel expenses for the purpose of cooperation meetings and the exchange of results between groups.

The funds remain available to the coordinator even after conclusion of the Priority Programme in order to enable the work resulting from the Priority Programme to be drawn to a conclusion.

V. Funding for Measures to Promote Equality

As part of the coordinator's project, funds of up to € 15,000 per year may be applied for to

- increase the number of female researchers at the project management level,
- increase the career qualifications (in addition to scientific qualifications) of early career female researchers working in the network
  and
- create/maintain a family-friendly workplace in science and/or academia.

A detailed proposal is not required. Funds are earmarked and approved as a lump sum.

Funding can be used to enable young female researchers to participate in mentoring or coaching programmes. It can also be used to initiate networking between the participating female researchers.

The funds can also be used to cover child care costs incurred in combination with events organised by the Priority Programme. Funding can also be used to relieve female PIs with children of work-related tasks. This also applies to male project leaders who meet the requirements due to their family situation. The coordinator is responsible for examining requests.

In addition, funding can be used to implement all measures that the members of the Priority Programme deem suitable to meet the objectives listed above. Participating members can be advised by the equal opportunities officer.

VI. Start-Up Funding

Promising early career researchers are to be encouraged to remain in science and academia. Directly following completion of their doctorates they should therefore be enabled to define and design their own research topics, which can serve as the basis for an independent project proposal. For this purpose you may request up to € 65,000 in start-up funding per three-year funding period (or € 43,000 per two-year funding period).

When such funding is requested, a strategy plan for the proposed start-up funding must be presented, which should address especially the following points:

- selection criteria for the individuals to be funded;
- type of support the selected individuals will receive in their research with a view toward future proposals and scientific independence;
- description of a university environment that can further young researchers' careers during this transitional phase (incl. infrastructure and equipment).

VII. Funds for Colloquia and Coordination Meetings

Colloquia should take place on a regular basis throughout the duration of the Priority Programme, but at least once during each funding period. These meetings should enable the coordination of the individual research projects as part of the overall programme and the exchange of findings between the participants in the Priority Programme, and potentially also with other scientists and academics working in the same field of research, either at home or abroad. The funds needed to hold the colloquia (travel and maintenance costs for the participants) are provided by the DFG.

Additionally, the DFG also provides funding for coordination meetings (such as topical workshops or summer courses) involving individual participants or groups of participants (travel and maintenance costs for those involved). This funding may either be applied for in conjunction with the funds for the individual projects or as part of the coordinator project.

VIII. Obligations of Priority Programme Participants

All of those involved in submitting a proposal for a Priority Programme are obliged to promptly provide the coordinator with all of the information necessary for drawing up the interim reports and the final report for the Priority Programme.