

Collaborative Projects

Open Up – New Research Spaces for the Humanities and Cultural Studies

Profile area: Exploration

Deadline: 09.04.2024 (14:00 CEST)

To 'open up' something is associated with the curiosity to take the first step into something new and unknown. In this sense, we are looking for projects that not only offer new perspectives on already known research subjects, but also explore entirely new research spaces and topics. The funding offer assumes that these topics are currently characterized by a particular complexity and require a multi-perspective approach in order to reveal and understand this complexity.

We therefore aim to support researchers who open up new areas of research and knowledge in the humanities and cultural studies by jointly exploring complex and hitherto unexplored research topics. By funding collaborations between two or three researchers, the Foundation intends to facilitate the full creative potential of the interaction of different expertise and perspectives.



Humanities, cultural studies, theoretical social sciences



Collaborative research projects, funding of a teaching substitute



Research teams of two or three researchers (main applicant must be affiliated to a German university/research institution)



up to 300,000 or 400,000 Euro for two or three partners respectively



up to 1.5 years



Short proposal, anonymized application process, distributed peer review

1 Objectives

The funding initiative is aimed at teams of two or three researchers who wish to explore new and original areas of research. In particular, we are looking for projects with a high degree of exploration, which may be accompanied by an appropriate level of risk - the possibility of not achieving the intended project outcomes is therefore not a reason for rejecting a project.

At this point, we would like to invite you to consider whether your project fits into the 'Open Up' funding initiative. In the view of the Volkswagen Foundation, a project does not fit 'Open Up' if there are already:

- recurring courses on the topic of your project.
- numerous articles on the topic of your project.
- journals on the topic of your project.
- expert associations on the topic of your project.
- discussions / debates on the topic in the supplements / feuillets.

2 Scope of Funding

The funding initiative is open to

- **teams of two or three researchers** from the humanities, cultural studies and theoretical social sciences who wish to explore new and original areas of research. Projects involving mainly empirical studies, data analysis or interviews cannot be funded under this initiative;
- researchers of **all career levels** after the PhD;
- researchers from foreign institutions are welcome to apply as co-applicants.

The **total budget** is limited to **€300,000** for projects with two partners and **€400,000** for projects with three partners (excluding overheads). The maximum project duration is 1.5 years.

An essential part of the funding is the discussion of (preliminary) results at a **workshop** or **small conference** in the **last third of the funding period**. On the one hand, this is intended to facilitate the transfer of research results to the respective scientific communities, which, due to the explorative nature of the projects, may be difficult to communicate via common forms of scientific publication. On the other hand, it is intended to create an opportunity for critical reflection on ongoing research processes, both with scientists and, where appropriate, with non-academic actors (e.g. from the cultural, arts or business sectors), and to incorporate this into the final project work.

An additional **kick-off meeting** at the **Xplanatorium Herrenhausen in Hanover**, organized by the Volkswagen Foundation, will facilitate exchange and networking of the grantees at the beginning of the funding period.

A timely start of the project is assumed.

Overheads

State and state-recognized universities and universities of applied sciences can apply for 10 % overheads. For more information on overheads see the document "[Information on lump sum for overheads](#)".

Open Science

The Foundation is committed to Open Science ([Open Science Policy](#)). It is therefore expected that project results will be published open access and that data collected will be made available for scientific use via recognized repositories (see [NFDIs](#), [re3data](#), and [RIsources](#)). If data collection is intended, the essential information is to be presented in a data management plan ([basic data management plan](#) of the foundation or a more detailed data management plan of the respective discipline). In case no data is generated in the project, this needs to be explicitly stated in the application.

Note: For the later preparation of the project's research data, in the case of a grant, the offer '[Data Reuse - Additional funding for the preparation of research data](#)' is available.

General Information

The Foundation cannot be held responsible for any obligations entered into prior to the receipt of grant approval.

Applications that have been or are intended to be submitted in this or a similar form to another funding organization will not be processed by the Foundation. Applications that do not meet the formal requirements will not be submitted for review. The Foundation can only award funds to scientific institutions.

3 Application and Selection Procedure

Please note that you cannot submit more than one proposal as main or co-applicant.

3.1 Selection Procedure

Within the framework of this call, the Volkswagen Foundation will run an **experiment with Distributed Peer Review (DPR) in parallel to the Panel Review Procedure (PRP)**, which is the standard procedure for 'Open Up'. In DPR, applicants for funding review each other's proposals.

By submitting a proposal, **the applicants (main and all co-applicants)** accept the following terms and conditions:

- all applicants (main and co-applicants) will receive on average 5 proposals to review;
- failing to provide the reviews by the deadline will lead to the automatic rejection of the proposal submitted by the given applicant/co-applicant;
- the reviewer is expected to carefully read all the assigned proposals, rate them and provide feedback to the applicants following the rules and guidelines.

This means that all proposals that are formally correct will go through DPR and PRP. In the **conventional PRP**, all submitted proposals are screened and shortlisted by the Foundation's

funding department. The resulting shortlist is then evaluated by an interdisciplinary jury in a double-blind process, i.e. only using the anonymized documents.

In contrast to the PRP, where only a pre-selected shortlist is evaluated by an interdisciplinary jury, the **DPR evaluates all formally correct proposals**. The final ranking is determined by the average of the overall scores. In the unlikely event of a tie in the final ranking of two or more proposals, a lottery will be used.

The Foundation has made funds available to fund proposals selected through both the conventional panel review and DPR mechanisms. This ensures that no applicant or discipline will be disadvantaged by the trial. Due to our trial of DPR, up to 20 projects may be funded this time (up to 10 through the traditional selection process and up to 10 through DPR). Please note that there are no quotas for subject areas. The grants will be awarded to the best proposals from all submissions.

The process and outcomes will be formally evaluated, with the support of researchers from The Research on Research Institute, to enable comparisons and provide evidence on how research funding can be made more efficient, effective and equitable.

[Detailed information on the implementation and handling of the DPR can be found in our DPR Rules and Guidelines \(PDF\).](#)

3.2 Review criteria

The same review criteria apply for the conventional panel review as for the DPR:

- Opening of a new research space (exploratory nature and novelty of the topic)
- Added value of the constellation for exploring the research object
- Originality of the research project
- Scientific quality of the project

Anonymized (double-blind) evaluation is intended to ensure that only the exploratory nature and quality of the research idea is taken into account.

3.3 Time schedule

23 February 2024,
10:00 to 11:30 CET

Online consultation (German)

1 March 2024,
10:00 to 11:30 CET

Online consultation (English)

9 April 2024, 14:00 CEST

Submission deadline

July

- All proposals that are formally correct will be sent to reviewers,
- disclosure of conflicts of interest,
- at least 6 weeks to complete the reviews.

15 August 2024	DPR: Volkswagen Foundation receives assessment reports.
September	PRP: Panel review meeting
November	Board of Trustees makes final decision.
Mid December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decisions are communicated. • Feedback from DPR is provided to applicants.
January 2025 onwards	Follow-up interviews with participants and qualitative analysis.
11 - 12 March 2025	Kick-Off Meeting for grant recipients.

Due to the DPR experiment and associated unforeseen issues, there may be delays in processing. If this happens, you will be notified separately. Please do not make individual enquiries.

4 Application Checklist

4.1 Electronic Application – Instructions

Please read the information about the electronic application system on the website of the Volkswagen Foundation prior to submitting your application. Information can be found in the document “[Electronic Application System – Instructions and Tips](#)”. **It is important that applicants register all involved parties early on in the process.** Without a user profile it is not possible to invite co-applicants or to submit an application.

Please invite all co-applicants. Once they have registered, they will have access to this application to enter data and upload files. Your co-applicants will also be able to enter separate budgets if required. Please note that you cannot submit more than one proposal as main or co-applicant.

If you have technical questions about using the electronic application system, please contact support@volkswagenstiftung.de.

4.2 Application documents

4.2.1 Proposal

Anonymized **short proposal** in English. In order for the application to be considered, the “[Template Short Proposal \(PDF\)](#)” available on the [Open Up Website](#) must be used. **Please note that due to the DPR experiment, proposals in German cannot be accepted in this round.**

4.2.2 Curriculum Vitae of every applicant

Short tabular CVs of all applicants (max. 2 pages per applicant), including your position at your institution and a list of five selected publications. The CVs will be used for internal purposes only and will not be made available to the jury members or in the distributed peer review.

4.2.3 Individual consent and application form

The document “**Individual consent and application form (PDF)**” **must be completed and uploaded by each applicant**. It contains:

- Consent form: You will be asked to confirm your understanding and compliance with the terms and conditions of this call.
- Disciplinary self-identification: Proposals are assigned to reviewers according to the [DFG subject area structure](#). You will be asked to select up to three subject areas in which you can review proposals based on your expertise.
- Expectations of the DPR: Here you will be asked about your expectations regarding the DPR process. These questions will be used for the scientific evaluation of the DPR. It has no influence on the evaluation of the proposal.

4.2.4 Budget Plan

The budget can be freely structured according to the needs of the project. Funding will be provided on a lump sum basis to allow for flexible reallocation of funds as the project progresses. Funding may be provided to cover the following costs:

- personnel costs (own position or teaching substitute, but no additional scientific staff);
- non-personnel costs (such as travel and conference expenses, costs arising from the involvement of project partners within Germany and abroad, research stays at other institutions, workshops, translation costs etc.);
- mid-term workshop (a lump sum of €10,000 should be budgeted for planning and implementing this workshop);
- for state and state-recognized universities and universities of applied sciences: additional 10 % overheads.

4.2.5 Further application documents

- **Summary of the project in German and English** (max. 200 words each)
- **Self-assessment (in English) addressing the following questions** (max. 70 words each):
 - Where do you see the 'open up character' of your project?
 - Where does your project take risks?
 - What difficulties or counter-arguments do you anticipate and how do you intend to address them from the outset?
 - Which academic and non-academic target groups do you want to address with your project-related workshop?
- **Miscellaneous** (optional)

5 Contact

Dr. Pierre Schwidlinski
E-Mail: schwidlinski@volkswagenstiftung.de
Tel.: +49 511 83 81 - 228

For organisational/administrative questions and phone appointments:
Barbara Neubauer
E-Mail: neubauer@volkswagenstiftung.de
Tel.: +49 511 83 81 - 232

VolkswagenStiftung
Kastanienallee 35
30519 HANNOVER
GERMANY

<http://www.volkswagenstiftung.de/en>

6 More Information

- [Website VolkswagenStiftung](#)
- [FAQs for applicants](#)
- [Application System](#)
- [Electronic application made easy - instructions and tips](#)
- [Useful Information and downloads](#)
- [Recommendations for sustainable traveling](#)
- [Influence of generative models of text and image creation in research and in the funding activities of the Volkswagen Foundation](#)