Vienna Research Groups for Young Investigators Call 2024

Info Session

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Wiener Wissenschafts-,
Forschungs- und Technologiefonds

WWTF

Agenda

► Introduction to WWTF

► About the Vienna Research Groups for Young Investigators Program

► Details of the Call 2024 „Information and Communication Technology"

► Using the WWTF Funding Portal

► Q&A

Agenda

W|W|T|F

▶ Introduction to WWTF

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Wiener Wissenschafts-,
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WWTF | Key facts

► Founded in 2002; funding activities since 2003: more than **265 m € have been awarded** (Banking Foundation, City of Vienna)

► WWTF Mission:

  ► We fund top scientific research in Vienna

  ► We provide substantial funding for larger research projects and international research group leaders coming to Vienna

  ► We run competitive calls according to highest international standards

WWTF | Funding Schemes

w|w|T|F

Instruments

Life Sciences (*2003)

Information- and Communication Technology (*2008)

Cognitive Sciences (*2008)

Environmental Systems Research (*2017)

Projects

Vienna Research Groups

Supporting Instruments

Agenda

W|W|T|F

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VRG | About the program (I)

▶ The program addresses Vienna-based universities and research institutions that intend to hire an excellent young researcher from abroad for setting-up and managing an independent research group.

▶ The prospective host institution in Vienna must provide a **clear-cut career plan**, i.e. steps leading to a tenured position (e.g."Qualifizierungsvereinbarung")

▶ Typically, the first "genuinely independent" group led by a young researcher.

▶ The WWTF funding (6-8 years) should enable the group members to take the next step in their career.

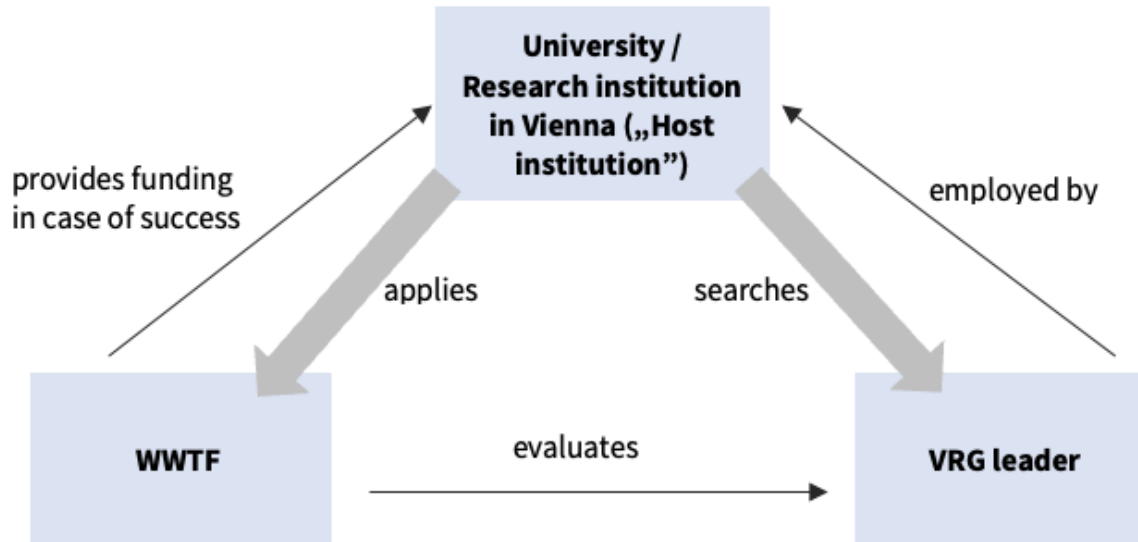# VRG | About the program (II)

Vienna Research Group leaders…

- ▶ assume leadership responsibility for group member
- ▶ are independent in designing their research work and recruiting staff
- ▶ apply for additional third-party funding over the years
- ▶ come from abroad to Vienna: (i) no current employment contract with an Austrian institution three months before the submission deadline until the submission deadline, (ii) being employed at a foreign research institution for at least two years in the last three years counting from the submission deadline
- ▶ are up to 8 years after PhD (care duties may extend this period), counting from the submission deadline

VRG | About the program (III)

There are two phases in the funding period (6-8 years):

(i)   first phase mainly financed by WWTF (4-5 years)

(ii)   an interim evaluation after the first phase (preferably co-organized by WWTF and the host institution)

(iii) increased in-kind contributions of the home institution in the second phase (i.e. years 6, 6-7 or 6-8)

VRG | About the program (III)

University /
**Research institution
in Vienna ("Host
institution")**

provides funding
in case of success

employed by

applies

searches

WWTF

evaluates

VRG leader

VRG | About the program: past calls

W|W|T|F

2010 Life Sciences:
- Funding Volume 4.5 Mio €
- Funded VRG Leaders: 3

2014 Life Sciences
- Funding Volume 4.8 Mio €
- Funded VRG Leaders: 3

2015 Computational Biosciences
- Funding Volume 3.2 Mio €
- Funded VRG Leaders: 2

2020 Computational Biosciences
- Funding Volume 3.2 Mio €
- Funded VRG Leaders: 2

2012 Mathematics and …
- Funding Volume 3 Mio €
- Funded VRG Leaders: 2

2017 Mathematics and …
- Funding Volume 3.2 Mio €
- Funded VRG Leaders: 2

2011 ICT
- Funding Volume 3 Mio. €
- Funded VRG Leaders: 2

2018 ICT
- Funding Volume 4.8 Mio €
- Funded VRG Leaders: 3

2019 ICT Interdisciplinary Data Science
- Funding Volume 3.2 Mio €
- Funded VRG Leaders: 2

2023 ICT
- Funding Volume: 4.7 Mio. €
- Funded VRG Leaders: 3

2013 Cognitive Sciences
- Funding Volume 1.5 Mio €
- Funded VRG Leaders: 1

2021 Cognitive Sciences
- Funding Volume 3.2 Mio €
- Funded VRG Leaders: 2

2016 Complexity Science
- Funding Volume 1.6 Mio €
- Funded VRG Leaders: 1

2022 Environmental Sciences
- Funding Volume: 3.2 Mio. €
- Funded VRG Leaders: 2

2023 ICT
- Funding Volume: 4.7 Mio. €
- Funded VRG Leaders: 3

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VRG24 | Key facts
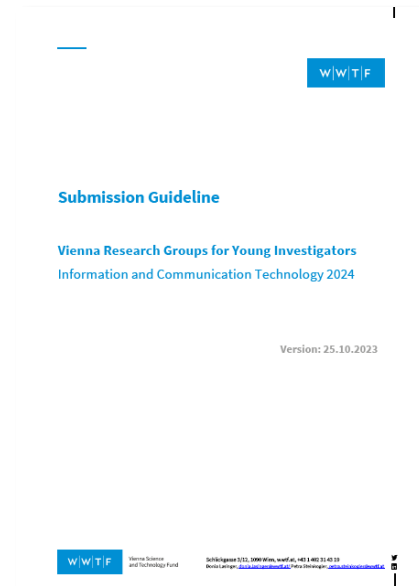
WWTF

▶ 15th call within Vienna Research Groups for Young Investigators Programme

▶ 2024: up to 3 positions with max. funding of € 1.6 million each

▶ **Proposal deadline: 2 pm CET, March 19th 2024**

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VRG24 | Scope

► The call is issued within the field of Information and Communication Technology

► The proposed field of research should

  ► advance theory and methods in Artificial Intelligence/Machine Learning

  ► traverse research disciplines (e.g. Medicine, Environmental Sciences, Physics, Social Sciences and Humanities, etc…) and demonstrate an interdisciplinary work with data and knowledge in its broader scope

VRG24 | Important documents

→ Download here: https://www.wwtf.at/funding/programmes/vrg/#VRG24_det

VRG24 | Process

► The call process comprises
  ► the submission of a **concise research proposal**
  ► followed by a **hearing** of selected candidates between **mid September to beginning of October 2024** (we will announce the final date as soon as possible)

► Obligatory job advertisement (by host institution) e.g. in a high impact journal that is relevant for the topic and/or via professional societies/mailing lists

► WWTF especially encourages Vienna-based research institutions to propose female group leaders
  ► **Successful appointment of a woman** → financial benefit for the Vienna host institution to support their gender mainstreaming activities

VRG24 | Finances

► The financial emphasis should lie on the **funding of scientific personnel** → should be balanced in relation to infrastructure/material costs

► **In-kind vs. overhead**: Basic infrastructure such as office equipment, rent, telephone, internet, basic lab equipment does NOT count as in-kind but is covered by the overheads (covered by WWTF)!

► The budget allocations with eventual partner institutions must already be specified at the application stage

► WWTF does **not** cover **any travel expenses** for candidates who are invited to the hearings (candidates will most likely be invited to participate online)

WWTF | Gender Equality Strategy & Plan (I)

WWTF aims to:

► play an active role in closing the gender gap in science and research

► further improve processes and conditions to increase the proportion of female scientists, their resources and career opportunities

► avoid bias in the assessment and evaluation process

→ https://www.wwtf.at/funding/our-principles/downloads/gender-equality-plan/

WWTF

Vienna Science and Technology Fund

WWTF
Gender Equality Plan & Strategy
Version 03.08.2022

WWTF | Gender Equality Strategy & Plan (II)

▶ Evaluation criteria that account for career breaks & atypical career paths (e.g. care duties), as well as gender dimension in research

▶ WWTF encourages **balanced teams** & more female researchers to apply as PIs of research projects (including financial incentive for universities)

▶ Childcare and / or career coaching costs for female funded personnel may be included to a small extent

▶ Gender aspects in the proposal: Guidance is given in the call specifications (checklist, p. 9)

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Vienna Science
and Technology Fund

WWTF
Gender Equality Plan & Strategy
Version 03.08.2022

WWTF | Open Science Policy

WWTF aims to:

► fund research guided by principle "as open as possible, as closed as necessary"

► provide funds related to the cost of OA publication and data management

► place more emphasis on Open Data by adoption of FAIR principles

→ *https://wwtf.at/funding/our-principles/downloads/open-access-and-open-science-policy*

VRG24 | Timeline

Oct 2023	March 19, 2024 2pm	April – July 2024	September/October, 2024	Oct 2024	End of 2024	Start VRG leaders
Call start	**Deadline** Online submission	**Review Process**	**Jury meetings and hearings**	**Decision by WWTF board of directors**	**Start of contracts**	**Start VRG leaders**

2023   **2024**

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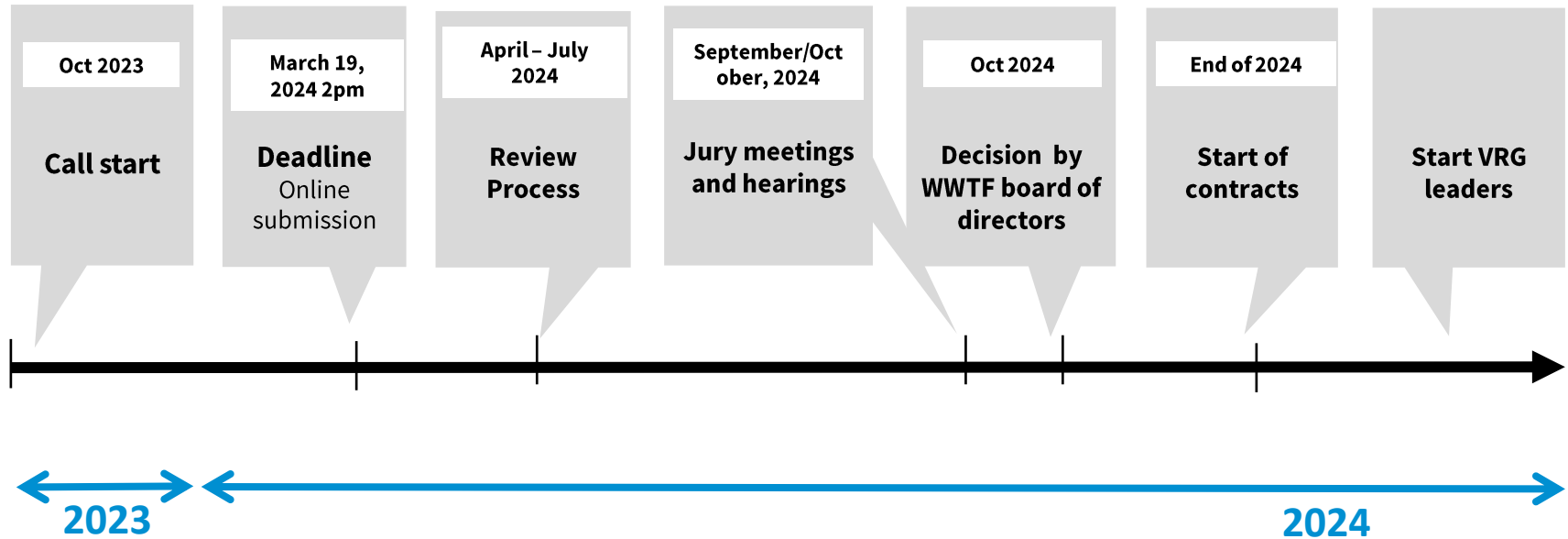
VRG24 | jury and applicants

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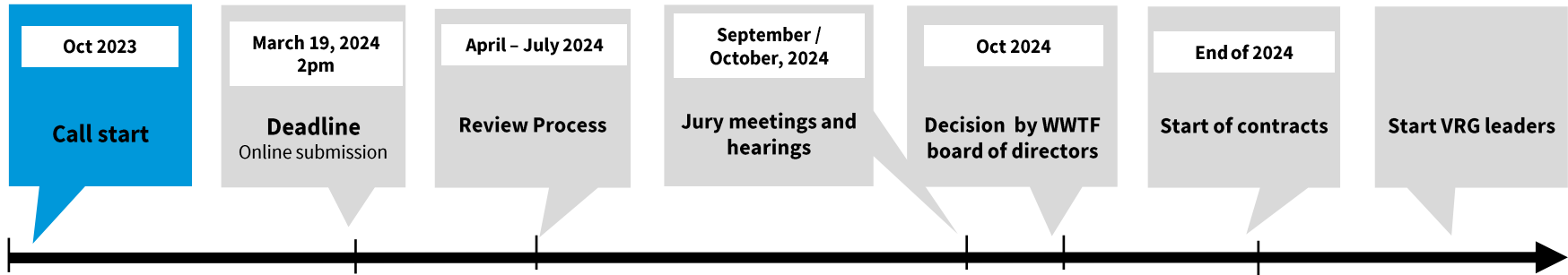
VRG jury

- About 6-7 excellent international scientists/experts with call-relevant expertise
- Duties within the process
  - Selecting proposals to be reviewed
  - Nominating reviewers
  - Inviting candidates to the hearing
  - Evaluating the performance at the hearing
  - Comparing assessments and formulating the funding recommendation

Applicants

- Universities and research institutions in Vienna (via a "proponent")
- Suggestion of
  - excellent young researchers from abroad who fall within the scope of the eligibility criteria
- Active search for female researches highly welcome and encouraged

VRG24 | Submission deadline and formal eligibility check

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Submission

– Submission via WWTF **new Funding Portal**
Have a look at **→ Submission Guideline**
– No funding of private companies
  – Self funded business partners are possible and welcome
  – Project relevant services from companies can be calculated as consumables (if these services can not be provided within the projects with reasonable effort)

Formal eligibility check

– Conducted by WWTF office
– Timely submission of proposal
– **Submission must include all relevant signatures = Proponent, Host Institution, Group Leader** (not on one page)
– In-kind contribution: >20% of total sum
– Overhead costs: the regulations of the host institutions must be observed
– Compliance with the academic age limit
– From abroad (criteria in call specifications)
– Active promotion by universities and research institutes (eg. mailing lists,…)

VRG24 | Review process and peer review

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Review process

– Proposals that lie outside the subject area as well as those that do not meet quality standards are not recommended for the review process by the jury
– Unsuccessful applicants will be briefly informed
– In case proposals are admitted to the review process: reservation of both hearing days **absolutely necessary** (if hearing is in Vienna: booking of a flexible ticket)

Peer review process

– 2-4 written reviews per proposal will be obtained
– Reviews only by international peers; remain anonymous
– Review reports form the basis of the jury's discussion for the invitation to the hearing as well as the funding decision after the hearing

VRG24 | Hearing, jury meeting and decision

W|W|T|F

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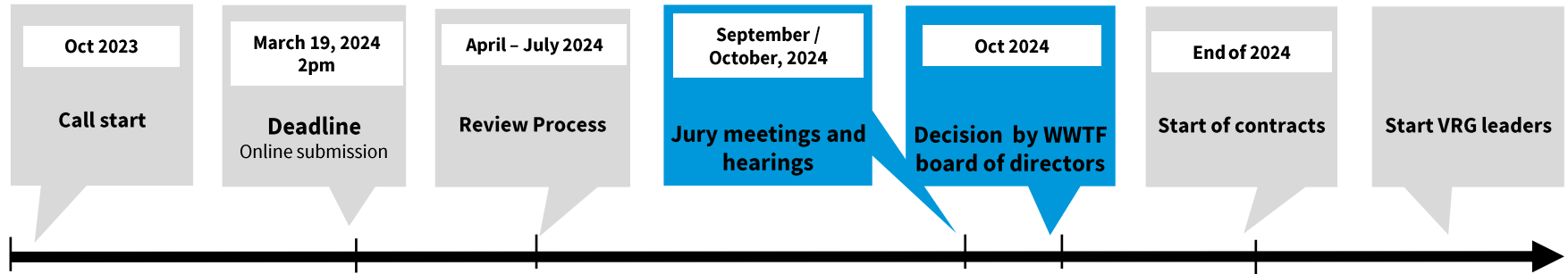
Hearing

- Invitation to hearing (selection after review process)
- Short-presentation online or in Vienna

Jury meeting

- Main evaluation criteria (see Call Specifications p. 6 and 7):
  - **Scope**
  - **Quality of the proposed VRG leader**
  - **Quality of the proposed research**
  - **Fit to the research environment offered**
  - **Other**

- WWTF does not cover travelling expenses.

Decision

- Formal decision by WWTF boards
- All applicants receive a decision letter (acceptances and rejections) with anonymised reviews via e-mail

VRG24 | Employment contract and funding contract

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Oct 2023	March 19, 2024 2pm	April – July 2024	September 21-22, September / October, 2024	Oct 2024	End of 2024	
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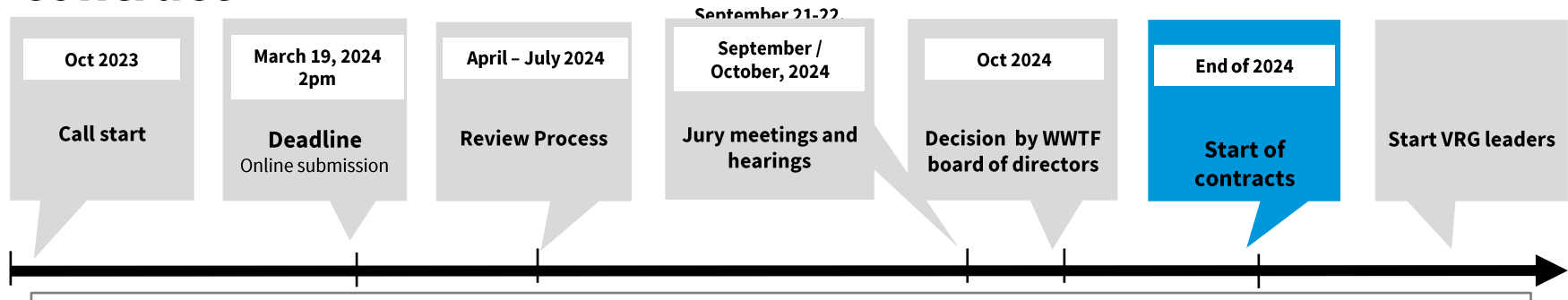
Employment contract
- The employment contract must be made available to WWTF no later than two months after the decision of the WWTF board of directors
  - Clarification until when a qualification agreement will be offered
  - Agreement on a coordinated evaluation of the candidate between the host institution and WWTF
  - If the employment contract cannot be achieved within two months, the funding will be offered to a reserve candidate

Funding contract
- Funding contract between WWTF and the host institution of the VRG leader (§ 27 according to UG2002 for universities)
- VRG leader has scientific and financial responsibility

VRG24 | Project start, duration and completion

W|W|T|F

Oct 2023	March 19, 2024 2pm	April – July 2024	September / October, 2024	Oct 2024	End of 2024	
Call start	**Deadline** Online submission	**Review Process**	**Jury meetings and hearings**	**Decision by WWTF board of directors**	**Start of contracts**	**Start VRG leaders**
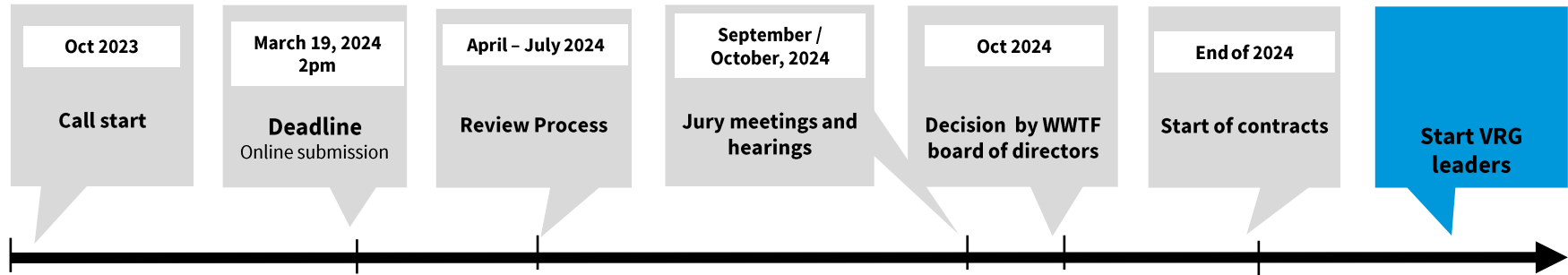
- **Project start**:
  - Latest start date: 18 months after decision by WWTF board of directors

- During **project duration**:
  - WWTF pays funding rates every twelve months in advance to the host institution
  - Short annual electronic reports to WWTF via Funding Portal as prerequisite for payment installments
  - Site visit by WWTF

- After **project completion**:
  - Comprehensive final report

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WWTF Funding Portal | General information (I)

► New WWTF Funding Portal: https://fundingportal.wwtf.at/

►There is a "Save"-button but **all entries are saved automatically** (refresh webpage)

►We aim to expand the system's features in due course.
Please be patient if problems arise with the new system! Make sure to use the "Report a Bug" button in case you encounter one.

WWTF Funding Portal | General information (II)

► Complete PDF containing all information is generated automatically after submission

► Signature sheet can be downloaded at any time ("Overview" must be inserted). Signatures do not have to be all on one sheet! Max of 3 pages can be uploaded, digital signatures possible.

► For signatures, please follow your institutional policies / ask the research service

WWTF Funding Portal | Error

Basic Information

✔ **ID, Title and Acronym**

Proposal ID
LS23-***
ℹ Will be generated after proposal submission

Project title *
Test project 1

➤ ❗ **Scientific Disciplines**

This will help to categorize your proposal. Please use the ÖFOS categories.

ℹ Provide at least one category; sum must equal 100 %

Main scientific discipline *	Share *	Other scientific discipline *	Share *	Other scientific discipline *	Share *
106052 - Cell biology	60 %	102019 - Machine learning	30 %	106002 - Biochemistry	5 %

➤ Sum of shares should equal 100%

▶ Within the flagged chapter, click on the red symbol beside the section title

▶ Help text in red will explain problem

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WWTF Funding Portal | Steps to submission

▶ Register or login

▶ Choose call and create new proposal

▶ Complete "My Profile" and "My Roles"

▶ Invite proponent

▶ Fill out the proposal

1. Basic information
2. VRG Leader & Proponent
3. Host & Partner Institution

4. Work Programme
5. Integration of VRG leader
6. Budget
7. Uploads

▶ Submit proposal
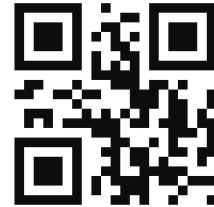
Link to Download of Submission Guideline

Register & login

► First register at https://fundingportal.wwtf.at/register/

► If you already have an account in the Funding Portal, you can <u>use this account again</u>

Choose call and create proposal
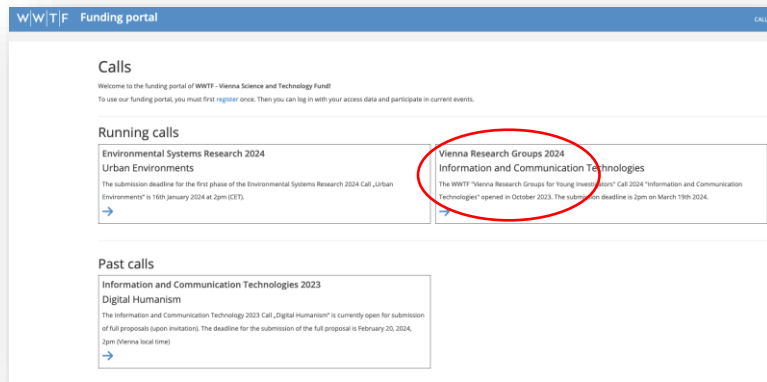
1. Choose call
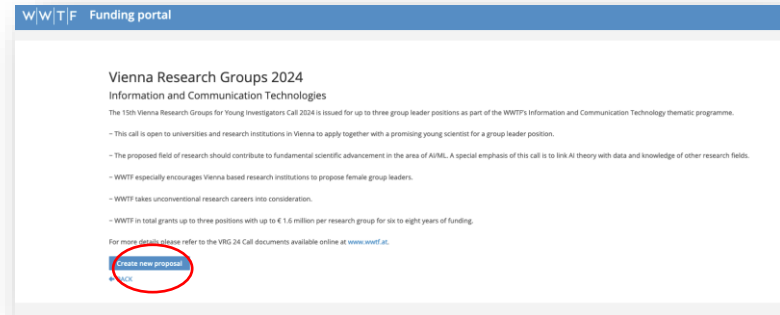
2. Click → "Create new proposal"

Proposal structure

▶ Proposal divided into seven chapters under tabs

▶ Click and scroll through chapters to see proposal requirements
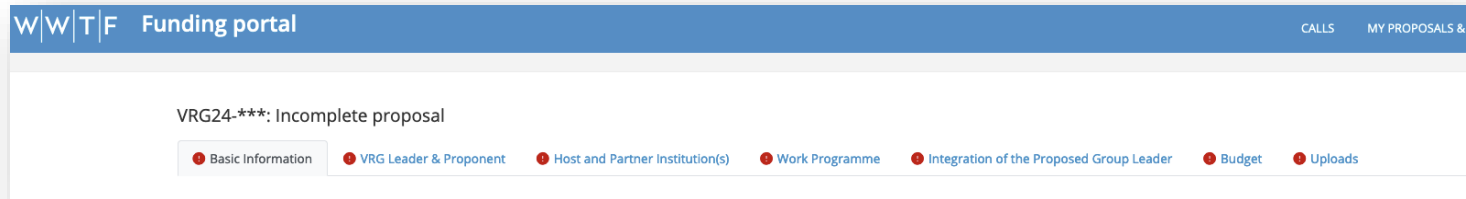
Choose your role

You need to complete your Profile!

Use the correct CV template

Complete "My roles" in proposal

Complete "My roles" in proposal

Data will be transferred from "My Profile"

Invite the proponent to the proposal

The proposal can only be submitted once the proponent has accepted the invitation

The proponent has to complete the same steps as described earlier, i.e. complete his:her profile and complete his:her role

Roles | VRG Leader & Proponent

► VRG leader

- ► Can fill out and edit all parts of the proposal
- ► Can submit the proposal

► Proponent

- ► Can fill out and edit all parts of the proposal
- ► Can not submit the proposal

Things to consider for your proposal

► Check the scope of the call

► Read the guidelines → Evaluation criteria (Call Specifications, page 6-7)

► Don't assume highly specific expertise of our Jury, especially in the first selection round

► Polish your CV, use the right template provided by us

► Pay more than lip service to gender equality & open science

nature

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nature > career column > article

CAREER COLUMN | 01 September 2023

A funding adviser's guide to writing a great grant application

Mireille Consalvey draws on years of experience to present a 13-step checklist for success.

https://doi.org/10.1038/d41586-023-02756-6

Proposal | Basic Information

WWTF

| Basic Information | VRG Leader & Proponent | Host and Partner Institution(s) | Work Programme | Integration of the Proposed Group Leader | Budget | Uploads |

▶ Project ID (will be set after submission), Project Title

▶ Keywords, Project Duration

▶ Scientific Disciplines (ÖFOS categories, must equal 100%)

▶ Suggested Peer Reviewers (5) and excluded peer evaluators (optional, up to 3)

 – Only visible for WWTF and jury
 – Please take care that these persons do not have a conflict of interest with the group leader / the proponent
 – Note: only peer reviewers with a non-Austrian affiliation will be considered for peer review

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Proposal | VRG leader & Proponent

✓ Basic Information   ❗ VRG Leader & Proponent   ❗ Host and Partner Institution(s)   ❗ Work Programme   ❗ Integration of the Proposed Group Leader   ❗ Budget   ❗ Uploads

▶ Details about VRG leader

    ▶ Previous career steps

    ▶ Highlights of recent work

    ▶ Description of (scientific) leadership potential

    ▶ Motivation for application as Vienna Research Group Leader

▶ Proponent

    ▶ is the scientist at the Vienna host institution responsible for the coordination of the proposal and will support the applicant at every stage of the application. He/she is also responsible for the integration of the applicant in case of funding

Proposal | Host & Partner Institution(s)

| ✔ Basic Information | ❗ VRG Leader & Proponent | ✔ Host and Partner Institution(s) | ❗ Work Programme | ❗ Integration of the Proposed Group Leader | ❗ Budget | ❗ Uploads |

▶ Host Institution

    ▶ Description (specific department or institute)

    ▶ Motivation to bring the proposed Group Leader to Vienna

▶ Description and relevance of partner institutions

    ▶ Note: these institutions must be different to those of the proponent and his/her host institution and must be of substantial relevance in the project (receiving or giving (monetary) contributions/funds)

    ▶ Option to allocate resources to this institution in the "Budget" chapter

▶ Wider Research Network

Proposal | Work Programme

► Scientific abstract: This will be used to ask reviewers if they regard the proposal as within their scope of expertise

► Work programme: one single PDF file upload (maximum 8 pages). Please adhere to the format specifications provided in the template!

1) the state of the art in the proposed field and scientific challenges in the next years

2) the research plan

► Potential ethical aspects

► Open science statement (check WWTF Open Science Policy)

► Disclosure of other applications for funding

► Relevant references (maximum 20; 10 most relevant references)

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Proposal | Integration of VRG leader (I)

✅ Basic Information   ❗ VRG Leader & Proponent   ✅ Host and Partner Institution(s)   ✅ Work Programme   ✅ Integration of the Proposed Group Leader   ❗ Budget   ✅ Uploads

► VRG candidate selection process at future host institution, including gender mainstreaming measures

► Advertisement procedures

   ► The international publication of a job announcement and/or distribution via mailing lists/professional societies is obligatory (upload only one!)

► Status and career advancement steps of the group leader during the funding period

   ► Please explain in detail the steps leading to a tenure position (e.g. the exact process of reaching a "Qualifizierungsvereinbarung" including time frames). These details will form the foundation of contractual elaborations in the case of funding

Proposal | Integration of VRG leader (II)

Basic Information   ● VRG Leader & Proponent   ● Host and Partner Institution(s)   ● Work Programme   ● Integration of the Proposed Group Leader   ● Budget   ● Uploads

► Interim evaluation process of the Group Leader (preferably co-organised by WWTF and host institution)

► Career perspectives of the Group Leader after the funding period

► Integration of the Group Leader

Proposal | Budget (I)

Basic Information ⦿ VRG Leader & Proponent ⦿ Host and Partner Institution(s) ⦿ Work Programme ⦿ Integration of the Proposed Group Leader ⦿ Budget ⦿ Uploads

▶ Calculation tables (personnel costs, non-personnel costs, budget per region, cost overview): everything in whole numbers, e.g. EUR 780,000, everything in €

▶ Description of the envisioned group

▶ Description of the equipment and consumables

▶ Statement of the monetary and in-kind contributions

  ▶ Please be aware that the cash and in-kind contributions are just the contributions from the host institution

▶ WWTF Overhead policy: max. 20% of the fundable direct costs

Proposal | Budget (II)

Basic Information ● VRG Leader & Proponent ● Host and Partner Institution(s) ● Work Programme ● Integration of the Proposed Group Leader ● Budget ● Uploads

▶ Please avoid short term employments! Minimum wage according to the „Kollektivvertrag" (collective agreement) or following the standards of the Austrian Science Fund FWF

  ▶ Attention: Wage for „Studentische Mitarbeiter*in" is calculated by FWF for 20 hours and a „DoktorandIn" for 30 hours per week

▶ Wages above "Kollektivvertrag" are possible and must be described. No additional wages for people who are already 100% employed. An increase of employment up to 100% through WWTF funding is possible

▶ Total funding applied for will automatically be calculated including a 6% annual salary increase

Proposal | Uploads

| Basic Information | ✓ VRG Leader & Proponent | ✓ Host and Partner Institution(s) | ✓ Work Programme | ✓ Integration of the Proposed Group Leader | ✓ Budget | ✓ Uploads |

▶ Affirmations and Authorization = signatures

   ▶ One PDF file containing the scanned sheets with all the required signatures (digital signature possible)

▶ Uploads

   ▶ Letter of references (you can invite experts to upload a Letter of Reference, they will not be accessible for the VRG leader)

   ▶ Photo of VRG leader (can be used for PR in case of funding)

   ▶ Other (max 5 documents, max 3 pages per document)

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Q & A

Any questions?

Q & A

All documents are available at www.wwtf.at

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