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About

This document specifies the process, criteria, and instrument of this call. It is aimed at applicants wishing to submit a proposal in the ME/CFS Call 2026 - Consolidator Call. For further information regarding the funding and submission guidelines, as well as references to WWTF policies, please consider the following documents:

Submission Guideline	Guide to creating, editing and submitting a proposal
WWTF Funding Guideline	General Guideline for WWTF funding activities
Guideline for Good Scientific Practice	Guidelines by the Austrian Agency for Research Integrity
Open Science Policy	Open Science Policy of WWTF
Gender Equality Strategy & Plan	Gender Equality Strategy & Plan of WWTF
Accounting Guideline	Specifies accounting for funded projects (german language only)

Scope of the call

> This call is issued within the WWTF instrument "project calls" (“Projekte”) specified in the WWTF Funding Guideline.

This call invites collaborative consortia to advance critical knowledge in post-acute infectious diseases, with particular emphasis on Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (ME/CFS), through innovative projects that push the boundaries of current understanding in etiopathogenesis, diagnostics, and therapeutic interventions. We seek novel research approaches that address unexplored questions in the field, building strategically upon preliminary findings from the first round of WWTF funding, while integrating experimental and clinical methodologies through interdisciplinary teams. Successful proposals must demonstrate meaningful partnerships between researchers, patient representatives, and relevant stakeholders, with particular encouragement for interdisciplinary collaborations that leverage diverse scientific expertise to tackle complex research challenges. While ME/CFS represents a primary focus area, this call recognizes the broader landscape of post-acute infectious diseases, welcoming projects that investigate other conditions within this complex disease cluster that feature post-exertional malaise as a key symptom, with the ultimate goal of accelerating breakthrough discoveries that will improve patient outcomes and advance scientific understanding of these challenging conditions.

Why ME/CFS?

Myalgic Encephalomyelitis / Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (ME/CFS) is a complex and poorly understood chronic disease. As part of the family of post-acute infectious diseases, it is characterised by a wide range of complex and serious, debilitating conditions with a variety of symptoms. This includes the cardinal symptom post-exertional malaise. Other symptoms like sleep dysfunction, pain, neurological/cognitive manifestations, as well as autonomic, immunological, and neuro-endocrinological symptoms are part of ME/CFS. Individuals with ME/CFS often do not return to pre-disease levels of activity. The cause of ME/CFS is currently unknown. ME/CFS affects individuals of all ages, ethnicities, and socioeconomic groups. It is estimated that in Austria up to 80.000 patients suffer from ME/CFS, with women being more likely to be diagnosed than men.

The goal of this call is to support larger consortia building upon promising preliminary findings that address fundamental research questions to advance understanding of post-acute infectious diseases such as ME/CFS. Highly welcome are:

- Projects that push the state of the art
- Projects that bring together experimental & clinical approaches and bring together approaches from different scientific disciplines

- Projects that demonstrate meaningful partnerships between researchers, patient representatives, and relevant stakeholders

The focus is on advancing the understanding of post-acute infectious diseases such as ME/CFS. However, projects investigating other post-acute infectious diseases that show substantial post-exertional malaise in their phenotype are also eligible for funding. Please note that solely observational projects in clinical settings and health service research do not fit the scope of this call.

Phenotypic Characteristics

ME/CFS: The definition of ME/CFS must be based on either of these international consensus criteria

- Canadian Consensus Criteria (CCC) or the revised CCC
- International Consensus Criteria
- NICE Guidelines for ME/CFS
- IOM 2015 Diagnostic Criteria

Post-acute infectious diseases (PAIS): Other post-acute infectious diseases can also be investigated as part of the proposed research projects. Recent research has shown significant overlap in the biological mechanisms between a wide range of post-acute infectious diseases. Projects investigating other post-acute infectious diseases are therefore also invited (e.g., Long COVID). To be included in the scope of this call, the disease to be studied must meet the phenotypic criteria of post-exertional malaise as defined by one of the above-mentioned international consensus criteria.

Preliminary data and continuity

In this call, it is important to demonstrate continuity in your research approaches. Proposals must demonstrate continuity with previously funded exploratory WWTF ME/CFS projects based on generated preliminary data. Research questions and work plans should be developed along these lines, offering new perspectives and avenues of research, and/or crossing fields. It is important to present the status quo (whether positive or negative results have been achieved) and provide strong arguments to further develop the intended research.

Partnerships between researchers, patient representatives and relevant stakeholders

Proposals must demonstrate a clear strategy for structured, long-term engagement of carefully selected stakeholders throughout the research process, including patients (if possible), patient representatives, and other relevant non-academic partners. Consortia should show how they will implement formal structures and formats for stakeholder involvement—for example, through project governance roles like advisory boards, co-design of research processes and/or research priorities through regular consultation.

We particularly encourage innovative approaches to building partnerships with societal stakeholders that go beyond traditional engagement methods (e.g. science communication, online dashboards) and create genuine collaborative relationships by granting non-academic partners ownership of selected project outcomes.

Interdisciplinary Collaboration

In this call we encourage the collaboration between biomedical, computer and clinical sciences and other disciplines. The interdisciplinary expertise required for the proposed research project may be based within the same research group that received funding in the first round or traverse research groups and institutions. WWTF highly encourages the collaboration beyond already exisiting working groups. Plans for collaboration between expertise groups must be demonstrated throughout all critical stages of the project, from formulation of the research question, experimental design to data analyses.

Financing of this call

This call is co-financed by the WE&ME Foundation and WWTF in equal shares. The WE&ME Foundation (formerly TEMPI Foundation) was established in 2020 by the Ströck family and is situated in Vienna, Austria, where the family is renowned for their "Ströck" bakeries, which have delighted generations with their baked goods. The Ströck family and the dedicated WE&ME team are committed to funding groundbreaking research that unveils the complexities of ME/CFS, moving closer to effective treatments and a cure.

Submission

For the submission of the proposal written in English, please go to the WWTF Funding Portal.

Important Information for your Submission

> **Proposal deadline**: June 23rd, 2026, 2 pm CET

- All core team members i.e., coordinating PI (PI&C) and co-PIs, may access and edit the proposal. **Only the PI&C can submit the proposal.**
- **Signatures of the authorized signatory at each partner institution** (“authorization”) are required in the application process.

Consortia Building

> Build interdisciplinary consortia that combine complementary expertise to create competitive, collaborative research teams.

Vienna's ME/CFS research community is smaller than other medical research communities, but this creates unique opportunities for collaboration and form synergies between groups to form a critical mass.

> The previous WWTF *ME/CFS 2024 - Understanding ME/CFS call* successfully funded seven projects by combining established researchers with newcomers to the field - demonstrating first synergies across different fields. WWTF welcomes cosortia who build upon these synergies, if possible.

For this call, we strongly encourage:

- **Interdisciplinary consortia** that leverage complementary expertise across different research areas
- **International collaboration** by including researchers and groups from other countries who bring essential skills or resources
- **Community building** by welcoming new researchers and research groups who want to contribute to ME/CFS research, but may have not been involved in this field yet

Eligibility of applicants and roles in the project

> **This is an invite-only call, meaning each WWTF-funded ME/CFS 2024 Understanding ME/CFS project is eligible to submit one proposal. This can be done by one of the Principal Investigators.**

The general eligibility of applicants is specified in the WWTF Funding Guideline. A project's **core team** may include **up to three Principal Investigators (PIs).** This includes a PI&C and up to two co-PIs.

- Core team members may share equal management and scientific roles in the projects.
- WWTF especially encourages young and female scientists to apply as PI.
- **Each core team member must submit a CV**, which will form part of the evaluation.
- A researcher may appear as a core team member (i.e., PI&C, co-PI) in a maximum of two proposals in this call.

One PI must be designated as **PI&C**.

- For legal and administrative reasons (contact person, funding contract, reporting), WWTF requires a PI&C to be named.
- The PI&C must have an affiliation at a Viennese research institution, which will serve as a legal contract partner.

Up to two **co-PIs** may also be named in the core team.

- Co-PIs may be based in Vienna, Lower Austria or elsewhere (in Austria or internationally) in fulfilment of the requirements of regular WWTF projects or Joint Projects (see below).

Additional **project partners and collaborators** are permitted in the research team.

- Non-academic collaboration partners (e.g., NGOs, patient advocate groups, etc.) are eligible for funding to a certain extent.
- Industry partners are not eligible for funding.

Research partners outside Vienna: Project partners outside of Vienna may receive up to 30% of the total requested funding.

Content and Structure of the Proposal

> The application has to be submitted via https://fundingportal.wwtf.at. A **user account (and registration)** is required. You can also log-in with your ACOnet credentials.

> Proposals must be written in **English**.

Structure of the proposal

The online form consists of five chapters and describes the entirety of the proposal:

- Basic information
- Personnel and Institutions
- Project
- Budget
- Signatures

Basic information

This chapter contains basic information about the proposal, including title, scientific disciplines involved, keywords, and duration, and type of project (i.e., regular WWTF Project or Joint Project). Fill out fields as required.

> **Scientific Disciplines**: Fields will be suggested as you type. WWTF uses the ÖFOS classification system of Statistik Austria. Take those disciplines most similar to your proposed project. WWTF will use this data only for statistical purposes. It is not relevant for the evaluation of your proposal.

Personnel and Institutions

This chapter contains information about the main parties in the project. Please note that the terminology used in the Funding Portal stems from scientific research projects. In the context of this call, they have to be understood as analogies.

- **Principal Investigator and Coordinator (PI&Co):** One Person must be named as PI & Coordinator. This persons signs the funding contact and is responsible for reporting to WWTF. This person should also have a coordinating role within the project and can be either a person with scientific or technical background.
- **Two Co-PIs** can be added to the project. Please note the maximum of three PIs in the core team.
- **Additional partner institutions** beyond those of the core team members can be added under “Further Partner Institutions”. (The institutions of the PI&C and co-PIs are automatically added by the system.) Entering an additional institution provides the option of allocating budget to this institution in the “Budget” chapter. This may be important in case of collaboration with researchers at institutes other than those of the core team members and non-academic partners in the consortium.
- A maximum of **three different institutions** may be involved in the proposal. This includes the institutions of the PI&C and co-PI(s).

> To include 2 or 3 PIs or additional partner institutions in the project is not mandatory, but optional.

> For each PI, an individual CV has to be uploaded in the "Profile". Please note, that the CV template has been made for scientific staff. Please feel free to adopt the CV template for technical staff.

Project

This chapter contains the work programme. Fill out the following fields (*please note that the character limit includes spaces*):

Lay summary in German language: Please provide a description of your proposed research that is suitable for the general public. This will primarily be used by WWTF for communicating your work to non-experts for fundraising and public relations purposes. *(1,000 characters)*

Abstract for experts: Please provide a concise project description. *(2,000 characters)*

Work programme: Please use the template provided for download in the WWTF Funding Portal. The headings in bold are mandatory.

Chapters of the work programme (PDF upload, max 15 pages incl. references):

1. Introduction, state-of-the-art and preliminary data

What exactly is the research subject, and why does it matter now for the ME/CFS or PAIS field? What are the critical unresolved challenges in the field, and how do your specific preliminary findings from the first WWTF project create a foundation that uniquely positions your consortium to address them?

2. Hypotheses and objectives

Are your hypotheses specific, testable, and clearly derived from your preliminary data? Do your objectives map logically onto the hypotheses, and are they achievable within 24–36 months?

3. Innovativeness and relevance

What is genuinely new here, in concept, methodology, or combination, compared to what the field is already doing? How will results concretely advance the PAIS/ME/CFS field, and will patient perspectives shape the research design rather than being added as an afterthought?

4. Research plan and methods

Is your cohort sufficiently powered, is recruitment realistic within the timeline, and how are sex and gender dimensions explicitly integrated into design and analysis? Does each milestone have a clear deliverable, and does the team demonstrably hold the methodological expertise required for every analytical approach proposed?

5. Consortia building and governance structure

Who are your stakeholders beyond the research team, and what concrete mechanisms ensure their sustained, meaningful involvement? How are decisions made and resources allocated within the project consortia?

6. Interdisciplinarity, project management and feasibility

What does each discipline contribute that the others cannot, and where exactly do they intersect in the research plan? What are the two or three biggest risks to project completion, what are your mitigation strategies, and how is data managed, shared, and prepared for dissemination from day one?

7. Key references

No prescription regarding number of references.

> Use the word template in the Funding Portal for filling out the application.

> Applicants can decide how much space they want to spend in each subheading.

> Upload the completed document as PDF. The **number of pages is limited to max. 15.**

Ethical Considerations: Please describe potential ethical aspects of your project (or why they contain none) and explain how you deal with them.

Gender Aspects: Please provide considerations on gender aspects in the project. More details can be found here .

Budget

- No in-kinds are required in this call.
- 20% overhead costs
- A maximum of 30% of the overall budget can go outside of Vienna.
- The personnel costs must be at least 60% of the overall funding.

The budget table to be filled out is divided in personnel and non-personnel cost.

> Please consider WWTF rules for eligible costs.

- For each person in the project a separate line in the budget table has to be provided.
- Non-personnel costs must also be detailed in the budget table. Try to aggregate cost positions in a meaningful way.

A text box is provided to explain costs.

Signatures

> Submission of the proposal requires the signatures of the authorized person(s) at the host institutions of each of the PI&C and co-PIs (“Authorization”).

- Please consult your institutional research services regarding the person mandated to sign the proposals and plan sufficient time to obtain their signatures.
- Enter the name of each authorized person in the online form. This information will be included in the PDF to be signed.
- Download the PDF using the link “You can generate the signature sheet here”.
- Signatures may be provided in various formats
  - Add a scanned or physical signature, and upload the form; or
  - Insert an electronic signature (e.g., A-Trust, Handysignatur) and upload the form. Please note that electronically signed PDFs cannot be merged into a single document.

> Please ensure signatures are dated. Undated signatures will not be accepted.

> Unlike proposals in the previous WWTF Legacy Submission System, signatures from the core team are no longer required in the new Funding Portal.

Eligible costs

> All costs that are directly attributable to the project and are regarded as commonly required in the respective scientific fields are eligible for funding. Please also consider your organization’s internal guidelines for eligible expenses/costs.

> Details: Anerkennung von Kosten bei WWTF Förderungen

Personnel costs

WWTF is dedicated to funding researchers. Hence, the larger share of the project’s budget should be allocated to personnel costs for researchers working on the project.

- Eligible forms of employment contracts are full-time and part-time contracts as well as marginal employments (“Arbeitsvertrag”). Contracts for services (“Werkvertrag”) are only permitted if the nature of the work means that it cannot be performed through employment contracts.
- All persons employed through a WWTF-funded project should receive a fair employment contract with at least a minimum wage according to the “Kollektivvertrag” (collective agreement) of the Austrian Universities / non-university research institutions. For staff employed at institutions without a collective agreement, the minimum wage should adhere to the standards of the Austrian Science Fund (FWF salary scheme).
- Salaries higher than those stipulated in the collective agreement are possible, subject to the agreement from the host institution and justification based on qualifications of the researcher.
- Due to projected inflation rates, the budget calculation for salaries in the Funding Portal automatically includes an increase of 3.5% p.a. for the duration of the project
- Applications for personnel costs must be in one of the following categories:
  - **Senior Personnel:** highly qualified scientists, usually permanently employed
  - **Post Doc:** or equivalent qualification, including Senior Postdocs
  - **PhD Student:** or equivalent qualification level
  - **Diploma Student:** Bachelor or Master students
  - **Office/Technician/Embedded patient researchers:** administrative or technicians (proportional funding only)

- Personnel costs **cannot** be claimed for permanent senior staff who are already fully financed by the institution. Exceptions apply in cases where senior staff must acquire third party funding for co-financing their own position (e.g., non-university research institutions and Universities of Applied Sciences). In these cases, permanently employed senior staff

may claim up to 20% of their annual salary from WWTF.

Non-personnel costs

Running costs for basic infrastructure (telephone costs, rents) as well as costs for the acquisition of infrastructure and basic equipment are **not** eligible for funding, as these should be covered by the category “overhead costs”. The following categories of non-personnel costs are eligible for funding:

- **Equipment:** Smaller equipment can be purchased with funds from the grant. This includes devices up to € 1,500 each, as well as software specific to the projects. General office software is not eligible for funding. Funding by WWTF in project calls is not intended to cover investment in general and larger infrastructure. However, pro rata depreciation rates over the project duration for equipment necessary to the project may be funded.
- **Consumables**: Costs for project-related expenses like consumables are permitted. WWTF does not fund consumables that are general and not project-specific (e.g., paper, printer toner).
- **Travel costs**: Costs for travel and accommodation for scientific meetings and conferences, field work, expeditions may be funded. Please also consider the regulations of your organization for travel costs.
- **Publication costs:** Costs incurred for publication activities, e.g., printing costs, article processing charges (for open science), etc. are allowed. This also includes costs for archiving research data in open repositories. Please also consider WWTF's Open Science Policy.
- **Workshop/conferences**: Costs for organizing events, workshops, and conferences as well as for hosting invited speakers are eligible.
- **Other costs:** Third-party costs, namely, for external collaboration, consulting, studies, and software development may be funded to a limited extent. This also holds true for involving stakeholders and non-academic actors in the research process. In general, individuals should be predominantly funded through employment contracts at the participating institutions and not through other types of employment. Under special conditions, costs for childcare and/or career coaching for female WWTF-funded personnel may be requested to a small degree.

> Non-personnel costs should not exceed 40% of the overall budget.

Indirect costs (overheads)

> WWTF pays a maximum of 20% overhead.

Overhead is calculated as a percentage of the direct costs of the project (i.e., personnel + non-personnel costs). Please note that WWTF offers the maximum 20% overhead lump sum to compensate for all administration costs. This means that flat fees for payroll or project accounting are not eligible. The total funding volume is calculated as direct plus indirect costs.

Applicants are required to comply with the overhead regulations of the involved institutions.

Funding and evaluation criteria

The following criteria are used in the evaluation.

- **Scope**: Does the project fall within the scope of the call, as described in the Call Specifications, and does it demonstrate clear continuity with the previously funded project?

The key criteria in the evaluation of proposals are **scientific quality, novelty, interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity**:

- **Scientific excellence and academic potential of the applicant(s):** Accomplishments and potential of the applicants to conduct the proposed research (measured by academic age).
- **Innovative character of the proposed research project:** Does the proposed research work meet the highest relevant international quality standards? Does the project show scientific originality and innovative aspects? Are the methods and research approaches appropriate and complementary? Does the project have the potential to explore novel research avenues and approaches?
- **Consortia composition and interdisciplinary collaboration:** Consortia should include an appropriate mix of expertise, bringing together researchers from complementary scientific disciplines. A clear description of the roles, responsibilities, and competencies of all core team members is mandatory.
- **Partnership with non-academic stakeholders:** Consortia must demonstrate how researchers, patient representatives, and relevant stakeholders will actively collaborate throughout the project. Roles need to be specified in e.g. project governance and/or how they will contribute to key research decisions and processes.

Further criteria include academic & clinical impact, feasibility of the proposed project plan, Data management and Gender aspects. Please note that **career breaks** such as for parental leave, care duty and prolonged illness will be taken into account in the evaluation of the proposals. In order for these to be considered, please provide the relevant time periods.

Selection and decision process

The core element of WWTF's decision-making processes is an **international jury** mandated to make a funding recommendation to the WWTF boards.

- The jury is comprised of outstanding international experts selected by WWTF that have no current affiliation to an Austrian institution
- Please note that the proposals are intended for a jury panel with expertise covering a range of proposals.
- Please note that there is no opportunity for rebuttals to either recommendations by the jury panel or decisions by the WWTF Board of Directors.

Formal eligibility check by WWTF

WWTF office conducts a formal eligibility check of the proposal based on the criteria outlined in the WWTF Funding Guideline. Substantial deficiencies and missing sections in the application will lead to the exclusion of the application from further evaluation and rejection on formal grounds. The strict timeline of the call does not allow for proposals to be sent back to the applicants for amendments.

Evaluation of proposals

- All duly submitted proposals are checked for formal aspects. Proposals which do not meet the formal requirements will be rejected at this stage.

Eligible full proposals will undergo a **review process**.

- WWTF will obtain a minimum of two written reviews for each proposal.
- Reviewers are international experts in the topic(s) of the proposals. WWTF does not contact reviewers based in Austria. WWTF aims for diversity in the cohort of reviewers for a call (gender, age, countries).
- All reviewers will be checked by the WWTF office for potential conflicts of interests with the applicants. As a rule, reviewers should not have close professional relations to any of the applicants in the project team. Practically, this excludes reviewers that

have published with the applicants within the last five years or have had a collaboration in a research project in this timeframe. In case of very close cooperation with the applicant(s) over a longer period of time, the reviewer will also be excluded. Joint publications in an edited volumes/proceeding, “community papers” with more than 30 authors or common attendances in workshops and conferences do not qualify as conflict of interest. Additionally, reviewers are asked to disclose any potential conflict of interest.
    - Reviewers will be asked to provide their assessment of the proposal through a standardised online questionnaire.
    - The expert reviewers remain anonymous to the applicants.
    - Jury members nominate reviewers. In addition, in the full proposal submissions, applicants are asked to suggest 5 experts whom they deem qualified to review the proposal. WWTF office will check the reviewers for potential conflict of interests. WWTF office is free to choose/not to choose any of the suggested experts.
    - Applicants may also exclude up to 3 persons without stating any reasons. Reviewers on the negative list will not be contacted.
- In addition, each proposal is independently assessed by at least two jury members.
- The jury decides in a meeting (on-site or online) if a proposal should be recommended for funding. The result is a recommendation for each project: “to be funded” or “not to be funded”.

Formal funding decision

The jury recommendation will be **formally confirmed** first by the WWTF Advisory Board and then approved by the WWTF Board of Directors.

- The decision may include budget cuts as well as additional conditions and recommendations.
- Unsuccessful applicants will also receive a short statement by the jury explaining the main reasons why the project was not selected for funding.

Gender aspects in the application phase

WWTF's Gender Strategy and Gender Equality Plan must be considered throughout the application. Please note that WWTF requests jury members and reviewers to take into account both gender and specific roles in research team composition, as well as gender in research content during evaluation processes.

The following questions should be considered during development of the proposal:

Equal opportunities in research

- Please take into consideration gender balance/equality in the project consortium at all levels, including in decision-making positions, e.g., what steps have been taken to approach / achieve it?
- Do working conditions allow all members of staff to combine work and family life in a satisfactory manner?
- Are there mechanisms in place to manage and monitor gender equality aspects, e.g., workforce statistics?

Gender in research content and in the research ideas phase

- If the research involves humans as research objects, has the relevance of gender to the research topic been analysed?
- If the research does not directly involve humans, have potentially differentiated relations of men and women to the research subject (e.g., relevance, impact of findings) been sufficiently considered?
- Have literature and other sources relating to gender differences in the research field been consulted?

Proposal phase

- Does the methodology ensure that (possible) gender differences will be investigated: that sex/ gender differentiated data will be collected and analysed throughout the research cycle and will be part of the final publication?
- Does the proposal explicitly and comprehensively explain how gender issues will be handled?
- If there are no identifiable gender aspects after a detailed review by the applicants, this must be justified, e.g., by providing reasons to demonstrate that no sex, gender, and other relevant differences have been found.

Research phase

- If there are further aspects of the project in which sex/gender could be a factor (e.g., samples, testing groups), are these gender-balanced?
- Are questionnaires, surveys, focus groups, etc. designed to unravel potentially relevant sex and/or gender differences in your data?
- Is data analysed according to the sex variable? Are other relevant variables analysed with respect to sex?

Further resources

- Gender in Research Toolkit by Yellow Window: https://www.yellowwindow.com/genderinresearch
- Gendered Innovations, Stanford University: http://genderedinnovations.stanford.edu/methods-sex-and-gender-analysis.html
- Canadian Institutes of Health Research: https://www.cihr-irsc-igh-isfh.ca/

Guidelines for good scientific practice and ethics

Compliance with the **rules for good scientific practice,** including the observance of ethical aspects in research, is mandatory. This pertains to the application process and, in case of funding, the actual research work. WWTF is member of the OeAWI and processes apply accordingly.

Project proposals may include **ethical aspects** that require the approval from an ethics committee/institutional review board.

- If the approval from the ethics committee/institutional review board is required for the planned project this must be clearly stated.
  - An acknowledgement of receipt from the ethics committee/institutional review board must be submitted with the proposal.
  - The final approval (“Votum”) must be submitted to WWTF the latest before project start.
- Should it not be possible to obtain a final ethical approval before the jury meeting due to reasons which are beyond the control of the applicant, the applicant must explain the reasons in the application and send the preliminary approval to the responsible call manager once received.
- The approval by the ethics committee should be specific for the planned WWTF project.
- Non-compliance will result in the rejection of the proposal on formal grounds.

Open Science

WWTF requires compliance with its Open Science Policy. This document outlines the rights, roles and responsibilities of WWTF, researchers, and research organizations.

Use of generative AI in the application process

WWTF recognizes that the use of genAI tools is pervasive and can facilitate proposal writing, for example in relation to improving written language. However, substantial use of genAI must be declared as such for the sake of transparency.

> “Substantial use” is defined in line with the European Commission’s definition: “[…] using generative AI as a basic author support tool is not a substantial use. However, interpreting data analysis, carrying out a literature review, identifying research gaps, formulating research aims, developing hypotheses, etc. could have a substantial impact.” (EC 2025: Living Guidelines on the responsible use of generative AI in research. *Second Version, April 2025*)

This mainly concerns critical parts of scientific relevance, such as hypothesis formulation and the scientific project plan. Applicants will be required to provide statements on the use of generative AIs at both the short and full proposal stages. WWTF emphasizes the importance of human responsibility for the content submitted at all stages of the application process.

> WWTF does not allow the use of genAI in the evaluation process.

Funding contract

In case of funding, WWTF office will contact the PI&C to draw up the funding contract.

- Projects may start immediately and should start no later than 3 months after the formal funding decision by the WWTF Board of Directors.
- The formal funding contract will be signed between WWTF and the host institution of the PI&C.
- For universities, this is a project according to §27 of the Universities Act 2002. The institution then authorizes the respective PI to sign for the full scientific and financial responsibility of the project

> Projects should start the latest in Q1 / 2027

Public relations and Community activities

Funded projects will be showcased via WWTF and WE&ME public relations activities. This includes displaying the projects via respective websites, contributing to other multimedia activities or presenting the work at stakeholder meetings relevant for making the outcomes of this call visible. To strengthen the ME/CFS research community, funded projects will also be invited to particpate in community actitivies.

Monitoring and reporting

Funded teams commit themselves to delivering reports and participating in evaluation and monitoring. WWTF offers the possibility to adapt the work plan according to project needs.

Details here