

VRG26 / Selection and decision process

Call jury

- The core element of WWTF's decision making processes is an international jury mandated to provide a funding recommendation to the WWTF boards.
- Depending on the scope of the call, the jury is comprised of 5-8 outstanding international experts who have no current affiliation to an Austrian institution.
- Jury members are selected by WWTF prior to the submission deadline according to their expertise with regard to the call topic, and after a conflict-of-interest check. For details see section on reviewers below.
- Members of the jury will be published after the WWTF Board of Directors' formal funding decision.
- Please note that WWTF does not allow for rebuttals to 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 and in this document.
- Substantial deficiencies and missing items in the application will lead to the exclusion of the funding 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 improvements and supplementing documents.

Preparatory meeting 1

- Each proposal is independently assessed by at least two jury members based on the evaluation criteria.
- The jury decides if a proposal should be reviewed or rejected. This usually takes place 1 month after the submission deadline.
- Proposals that are not in the thematic focus of the call and that do not meet international scientific quality standards will be rejected at this stage and will not be considered for the review process.
- All applicants will be promptly informed about the decision. Rejected applicants will be provided with a short jury statement explaining the decision. Successful applicants will be informed that they have been admitted to the next stage.

- After the preparatory meeting, additional members may be added to the jury if additional expertise is required to cover the topics of the proposals.

Evaluation of proposals / Review process

The proposals admitted to the next stage of the evaluation process will undergo a review process.

- WWTF will obtain a minimum of two (usually 3-4) written reviews for each proposal.
- Reviewers are recognized international experts in the topic(s) of the proposals. WWTF does not consider reviewers with an Austrian affiliation. WWTF aims for diversity in the cohort of reviewers (gender, age, countries).
- All reviewers are checked for potential conflicts of interests with the applicants by WWTF. As a rule, reviewers should not have close professional relations with the applicants. 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 applicants over a longer period of time, the reviewer will not be contacted. Joint publications in edited volumes / proceedings, “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 provide their assessment via a standardised questionnaire in the WWTF Funding Portal.
- The expert reviewers remain anonymous to the applicants.
- In the proposal submissions, applicants are asked to suggest 5 experts, whom they deem qualified to review the proposal. WWTF will check the reviewers for potential conflict of interests. WWTF is free to choose / not to choose any of the suggested experts. Jury members also nominate reviewers.
- Applicants may also exclude up to 3 persons without stating any reasons. Reviewers on the negative list will not be contacted.

Preparatory meeting 2

- The jury decides which VRG candidates are invited to the hearing.
- Each proposal is again independently assessed by at least two jury members based on the evaluation criteria and taking into consideration the written reviews.
- This usually takes place 1-2 months before the hearings.
- All applicants will be promptly informed about the decision. Rejected applicants will be provided with a short jury statement explaining the decision and the anonymized reviews. Successful applicants will be informed that they are invited to the hearing. Invited applicants will receive the anonymized reviews after the formal funding decision by WWTF boards.

Hearings and jury meeting

- At least two jury members are assigned to each proposal and act as rapporteurs for the proposals.

- The basis for the evaluation by the jury are the proposal, the candidate's performance at the hearing, as well as the reviews.
- The VRG candidate's attendance at the hearing is mandatory in order to be considered for funding. Candidates will participate online in the hearing.
- The result of the jury meeting and hearings is a funding recommendation by the jury for each application: "to be funded" or "not to be funded" or "reserve candidate".

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.

- Applicants will be promptly informed about the decision.
- The decision may include budget cuts as well as additional conditions and recommendations.
- Applicants will receive anonymized full text reviews. Unsuccessful applicants will also receive a short statement by the jury explaining the main reasons why the application was not selected for funding.

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