

Applicant guidelines:

General information on applying for the Leibniz Competition

Last update: 10 June 2024

1. Eligibility and funding capacity

Every institute within the Leibniz Association can submit applications.

Each institute can submit one application for funding (up to 1 million EUR) or two applications - as long as their combined funding volume does not exceed 1 million EUR – as a lead institution. The minimum funding threshold per application is EUR 250,000. Lead institutions may choose – in accordance with the collaborating Leibniz institutes – to finance funds transfers over EUR 200,000 to cooperating Leibniz Institutes from their own application budget or opt for the transfers to be charged to the co-partner's application budget. The maximum funding limit of EUR 1 million per institute and application still stands.

Each institute can also make an additional application twice a year for the Leibniz Programme for Women Professors. This programme can usually support up to five projects per year. The Senate Competition Committee (SAW) selects in its summer session in May up to three projects in the Leibniz Programme for Women Professors for funding recommendations to the senate.

An annual sum of approx. EUR 24 million is available to fund projects as part of the Leibniz Competition.

2. How the procedure is implemented

The procedure for applying, for assessing applications and for deciding which projects to fund encompasses the following stages:

- Drawing up and submitting an expression of interest, including a short summary of the proposal, a complete list of cooperation partners as well as the nomination of four potential reviewers
- Drawing up and submitting a completed application
- Leibniz Headquarters assesses whether the applications are complete and meet the formal criteria

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- Leibniz Headquarters procures two written, academic assessments by external, internationally accredited academic experts
- Suitable candidates in the Leibniz Junior Research Groups programme are invited to present their project in person as part of a pre-selection process
- All applications are discussed in four subject-specific SAW panels, resulting in preliminary rankings according to funding priority. The Senate Competition Committee (SAW) decides which funding recommendations to make to the senate.
- The senate of the Leibniz Association decides which projects to fund

When submitting their expression of interest, the institutes nominate four potential reviewers. Only such persons may be nominated who can assess the project without any risk of bias. The criteria for potential bias can be found in the separate [information leaflet](#). The persons nominated by the institutes should not be informed about their nomination. There must be no consultation between the Leibniz Institutes and potential reviewers.

Applications and all accompanying documents should be written and submitted in English in order to enable international assessors to participate in the assessment process. The chairperson of the SAW will decide on any potential exceptions.

Applicants whose application has been denied can submit a revised application in the next application round, i.e. generally after half a year at the earliest.

The president of the Leibniz Association and the chairperson of the SAW declare the approval of the senate. They inform the responsible government departments, both nationally and in the state in which the successful institute is located, that funding has been approved. Leibniz Headquarters provide the projects with the funds in accordance with the decisions of the senate. The usage guidelines¹ of the Leibniz Competition procedure regulate the use of funds in more detail. In April, the Leibniz Association submits an annual report to the Joint Science Conference (GWK) on the competition's implementation and the approved projects. Leibniz Headquarters is responsible for documenting and evaluating all the stages in the procedure.

¹ [Usage guidelines of the Leibniz Competition procedure \(Verwendungsrichtlinie\)](#)

3. Application schedule for the Leibniz Competition 2026

Applications are submitted electronically via a dedicated portal, and are only deemed to be complete upon Leibniz Headquarters' receipt of the signed application form. In terms of deadline adherence, receipt of the application via the electronic application system will be deemed sufficient.

Publication of the call for applications for the Leibniz Programme for Women Professors (1 st round)	1 July 2024
Publication of the calls for applications for the Leibniz Junior Research Groups, Collaborative Excellence, Transfer and Programme for Women Professors (2 nd round)	1 July 2024
Selection for Leibniz Programme for Women Professors (1st round)	
Expression of interest in applying with nomination of four potential reviewers	30 September 2024
Submissions deadline for submitting the completed applications ²	30 October 2024
Spring session of the SAW (Selection for Programme for Women Professors; 1 st round)	15 May 2025
Senate session	15 July 2025
Start of funding of the approved projects in the Leibniz Programme for Women Professors (1 st round)	from 1 August 2025 ³
Selection of Leibniz-Junior Research Groups, projects of Collaborative Excellence, Leibniz Transfer and Leibniz Programme for Women Professors (2nd round)	
Expression of interest in applying with nomination of four potential reviewers	30 March 2025
Submissions deadline for submitting the completed applications ²	30 April 2025
Preselection of the Leibniz Junior Research Groups	Summer 2025
Selection session of the SAW	18/19 September 2025
Senate session	Is being planned
Funding start of the approved projects	from 1 January 2026

² We here stress that expression of interest and submission of an application does not represent a two-stage assessment procedure. Expression of interest in applying merely serves the purpose of facilitating a speedy implementation of the procedure, i.a. by being able to select assessors in good time.

³ In the case of the Leibniz Programme for Women Professors, this period starts with the date on which the professor assumes office. The professor must assume office within 18 months of the agreement entering into force.

4. Information regarding the expression of interest

The expression of interest must be submitted via the electronic application system. The expression of interest comprises information regarding the applying institute, the project leaders and the project (including the estimated requested funding), a brief summary of the proposal (max 2,000 characters), a complete listing of cooperation partners, and the nomination of potential as well as to be excluded reviewers. The listed cooperation partners must include all subproject leaders. Please note that the summary submitted with the expression of interest will be the final version and may not be changed when submitting the completed application.

5. Information regarding the application form

- a) The detailed project proposal should not exceed a total length of 12 pages (excluding title page and bibliography). In order to make the relevance of the project clear to the interdisciplinary committee, even from a non-specialist perspective, a "lay summary" should be submitted with the application. This must not exceed 100 words in length, but is also not included in the page limit. The page limit for resubmitted applications is 12.5 pages as these applications may comment on changes made in the application in the addendum. Administrative information and the financial plan are to be submitted separately via the electronic application system. When submitting the application in the e-system, please also indicate whether and to what extent generative AI models were used for the creation of text or images.
- b) To ensure comparability of the submitted documents, the Leibniz Association provides a template for the application text.⁴
- c) The following documents must be submitted with each application:
 - Declarations of participation ⁵ may be submitted for all cooperation partners. This is recommended for all close academic partners in order to underline their motivation for the cooperation. For associated cooperation partners, the submission of declarations of participation is optional in any case.
 - The submission of declarations of participation is mandatory for all commercial and all international partners that are close academic partners. In their declaration of participation, these partners should confirm that no funds will be transferred to them or (if applicable) to what extent they will contribute to the project costs. In exceptional cases, funds may be transferred to non-commercial cooperation partners abroad; in this case, a separate justification must be submitted. The SAW decides on the approval of this exception.
 - For close collaborations with commercial partners, a declaration of participation is sufficient for the application. If the project is funded, a

⁴ The templates are available [here](#).

⁵ Please be aware that you must have a declaration of participation from the legal (not: natural) person which meets the minimum formal requirements (in particular, it must contain a letterhead and signature) and contains a binding memorandum of understanding.

cooperation agreement based on the DFG's model agreement (DFG form 41.026) must be concluded with the commercial partner and submitted in order to set out the regulations on cooperation, rights of use, etc.

- Declaration (by submission of the application in the electronic application system) that the application in this or a similar format has not been funded by any other funding body (DFG, BMBF, EU, etc.) or been registered as a specific special case (a so-called 'Sondertatbestand'). Applications submitted to alternative funding bodies have to be mentioned in the application.
- Please see the respective calls for applications for documents required by the specific funding programme. This information is also available via the electronic application system.
- If one or several mandatory documents are missing, or if you submit applications which feature substantial formal errors or fail to meet the formal standards, this may lead to your application being excluded from the competition procedure.
- Surplus documents or ones which have not been requested will not be taken into account in the procedure.

- d) Applications should be composed and written in English. If individual documents are submitted in another language, they must be accompanied by a translation into English. The chairperson of the SAW will decide on any potential exceptions.

The application and all necessary documentation must be submitted electronically. Additional submission by mail is not necessary.

6. Information on the presentation of the cost and finance plan

- In the application, a lump sum of up to 20 percent of the entire funding requested can be listed for indirect costs.
- The finance plan must be completed in such a way that it provides information about how the requested funds will be allocated to the different institutes involved.

7. Measures to promote the compatibility of family and career

The Leibniz Association is strongly committed to promoting gender equality which is anchored in its statutes as a goal. It is therefore possible to submit applications for targeted measures to combine family life with an academic career in the framework of the Leibniz Competition. The measures financed in this way should contribute to reinforcing family-friendly working conditions in research.

For childcare measures the following applies: Primary childcare must already be in place. Financial support for childcare is usually only available for additional offers that fall outside the normal opening hours of day care facilities and where the parents themselves are unable to care for their children for project-related reasons.

No money may be paid to the parents directly. The so-called ‘Besserstellungsverbot’ must be observed. This regulation, which is anchored in budgetary law, states that individuals supported in the framework of the Leibniz Competition may not be better paid than individuals paid according to the locally valid collective bargaining law, including collectively-agreed bonuses.

The costs for childcare may not exceed four percent of the total amount stated in the respective application.

8. Reporting and quality assurance

At the beginning of the third calendar year of funding, the funded projects submit an interim report (of no more than five pages in length, excluding all appendices), which focuses particularly on the extent to which the milestones formulated in the application have been achieved. Leibniz Headquarters examine this interim report and may submit it to the SAW for information, which may make recommendations to the project. After the end of the funding phase, a final report will be submitted to the SAW. All researchers involved in the project commit to conduct their research in compliance with the rules of good scientific practice.⁶

9. Publication of results and data management

It is expected that the results generated within the funding framework of Leibniz Competition will be disseminated, digitally published wherever possible, and made freely available online (open access). Two percent of requested funds must be earmarked as costs for open access publications. The framework for this is provided in the current version of the “Open Access Policy of the Leibniz Association”.⁷

If systematic data have been generated as part of the project, these – as equally valuable research results – should be stored for posterity and made available for future use to the greatest extent possible. Where available, the standards of the respective field and the offerings of existing, sustainably managed data repositories should be taken into account. The “Guidelines on the Handling of Research Data within the Leibniz Association” adopted by the General Assembly provide guidance on safeguarding and reusing scientific data.⁸

⁶ [Guidelines for Good Scientific Practice in the Leibniz Association](#)

⁷ [Open Access Policy of the Leibniz Association](#)

⁸ [Guidelines on the Handling of Research Data within the Leibniz Association](#)

10. Contact for further questions and advice on applying

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