

Programme document Leibniz Collaborative Excellence

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1. Purpose of the funding

The Leibniz Association stands for collaborative, mission-oriented science in diverse networks, and for interaction between excellent basic research and high application potential. Thanks to its structure and overarching networks, the association boasts unique systems competence in the German science system.

The Leibniz Collaborative Excellence funding programme funds projects that are particularly innovative, and which require collaborative networking within and/or beyond the Leibniz Association in order to succeed. The aim is to strengthen interdisciplinary collaboration, cooperation in terms of developing research locations and regions, and research conducted in participative structures. There is a focus on high-risk research with the potential to achieve scientific breakthroughs, particularly if they help overcome complex challenges.

2. Target of the funding

The programme funds projects that combine academic excellence with high social relevance. The projects are characterised by an aspiration to go beyond established approaches by means of collaboration and networking and new concepts, to enable innovations in terms of scientific breakthroughs, to set in motion fundamental changes of perspective or to provide important stimuli for the development of a research field.

Projects that see themselves as ‘high-risk/high-gain’ projects need to meet particularly high requirements regarding the scientific breakthrough that can be expected in the event of success, as described above. However, these projects are not disadvantaged in the assessment by the fact that the probability of success may be lower than for established concepts because of the particular risks associated with new research approaches.

The programme can also fund projects whose innovative character derives from the form of collaboration and networking itself; in these cases, collaboration and networking must be necessary conditions of the project, without which it would be impossible to achieve the research objectives.

Leibniz Research Alliances,¹ Leibniz ScienceCampi and Leibniz Research Networks are expressly invited to submit an application via one of their institutes.

Level of funding: Up to 1 million €

Duration of funding: Up to three years

3. Eligibility criteria

A collaborative project must involve at least one university or non-university partner in addition to the Leibniz institute submitting the application. For projects of the type “particularly innovative collaboration”, there is a requirement for a transfer of funds (at least 200.000 EUR) to a Leibniz institute which is collaborating with the lead institute within the project.

¹ The projects in the Leibniz Collaborative Excellence funding programme must differ from the Leibniz Research Alliances and Leibniz ScienceCampi in the following ways: Projects in this funding programme are geared towards a result or product which is created collaboratively. Leibniz Research Alliances examine and structure a topic, resulting, among other things, in specific research questions which can be proposed as a project within the Leibniz Collaborative Excellence funding programme by one or several of the institutes participating in the Research Alliance. Leibniz ScienceCampi, which for their part develop the reputation of a research field at a single site through collaboration between Leibniz institutes and universities, will also be given the opportunity for their respective lead Leibniz institute to submit specific projects from the ScienceCampus to the funding programme for consideration.

The aim is to optimally combine the various strategic tools of the Leibniz Association with one another and effectively implement them to achieve the qualitative strategic objectives.

4. Applications

Applications should be addressed to the Senate Competition Committee (SAW). The proposal and all documents must be submitted in English. The chairperson of the SAW will decide on any potential exceptions. Leibniz Headquarters will provide an application template for every project proposal.

The application to the Leibniz Collaborative Excellence programme must meet the following requirements: It must encompass a work programme lasting three years. The detailed project proposal must be structured according to the template provided and should not exceed a total length of 12 pages (excluding the bibliography). 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 should be submitted directly via the electronic application system. The application has the following structure:

A) Quality and innovativeness of the research project (weighting: 40 %)

- An introduction to the academic field
- Summary of the planned project, including its research question and methods
- A work programme with milestones and work packages
- A rationale for the originality and innovativeness of the research project
 - Presentation of the academic need for collaborative networking and the expected synergies resulting from the collaboration
 - For 'high-risk/high-gain' projects: Presentation of the academic breakthrough to be expected in the event of success, and how it will help overcome complex challenges; presentation of risk assessment and management
- An explanation of the research project's relevance in terms of its contribution to solving current academic and social issues

B) Quality of the network/partners (weighting: 40 %)

- Presentation of the partners'/institutions' track record in the field in question
- Brief CVs of the project and, if applicable, sub-project leaders including the ten most relevant publications (in one document, max. two pages)
- Explanation of the type and scope of involvement of national and international partners and disciplines relevant to the project's success
- Presentation of the participating partners' previous collaboration

C) Strategic impact of the proposed research project (weighting: 10 %)

- Contribution to strengthening established Leibniz topics, e.g. by showing how the planned project fits within the context of existing Leibniz Research Alliances,

Leibniz ScienceCampi or Leibniz Research Networks, or its contribution to developing a new field of research

- Explanation of research data management
- Brief presentation of a publication strategy for open access publications
- Presentation of outreach activities, where applicable
- Explanation how the Leibniz Equality Standards² are taken into consideration during the recruitment process
- Explanation how the Leibniz Guidelines on Career Development are considered³
- Contribution to developing the research locations in question

D) Finances (weighting: 10 %)

- Presentation of the intended use of funds in a financial plan which encompasses the direct and indirect project-related costs over the duration of the funding period, including the annual figures for personnel costs, material costs (including travel costs) and investments, and briefly justifies their necessity

For additional general information, please see the applicant guidelines for the Leibniz Competition.

5. Criteria for assessing applications

Academic excellence is the necessary criterion for funding.

The assessments should be guided by the following criteria that underpin the SAW evaluation.

A) Assessment of the project:

- Academic and methodological excellence by international standards
- Assessment of the work programme
- Originality and innovativeness
 - Academic need of the collaboration and expected synergies
 - For 'high-risk/high-gain' projects: The academic breakthrough expected in the event of success, e.g. how it will help overcome complex challenges; presentation of risk assessment and management
- Academic and social relevance

² [Leibniz Equality Standards](#)

³ [Leibniz Guidelines on Career Development](#)

B) Assessment of the quality of the network/partners⁴:

- Academic excellence and international track record of the project leaders and/or institutions in the relevant field
- Type and scope of involvement of relevant national and international partners and disciplines

C) The SAW may also take account of strategic impact aspects in its assessment, such as:

- Consolidation of existing Leibniz topics or development of new fields of research
- Contribution to implementing the Leibniz Equality Standards and achieving the Leibniz diversity target
- Quality of research data management
- Adequateness of the open access publication strategy
- Quality of outreach activities, where applicable
- Observance of Leibniz career guidelines
- Contribution to developing the research locations in question

and

- Appropriateness of the cost and financial plan

6. 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 conducting their research in compliance with the rules of good scientific practice.⁵

7. Contact for questions and advice on applying

Leibniz Association

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⁴ When submitting the application, it is possible to indicate individual biographical circumstances to be taken into account during assessment. These include for example periods of childcare, care of dependents as well as (health) impairments and periods outside of academia.

⁵ [Guidelines for Good Scientific Practice in the Leibniz Association](#)