

Shared Research Facilities Funding Programme

Shared Research Facilities Call 2015

Call for Proposals

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1. Name of Call

Shared Research Facilities Call 2015

2. Legal bases

This Call is based on the City of Vienna's guideline entitled "Shared Research Facilities - Strategic development and expansion of research infrastructure centers focusing on joint utilisation by the scientific and business community" (by resolution of the Vienna Municipal Council of 26 November 2014, ref. Pr.Z. 03040-2014/0001-GFW). The said guideline (hereinafter "Guideline") is available for downloading at www.wirtschaftsagentur.at or www.zit.co.at. The Guideline is treated in accordance with the provisions of Section 4 of the General Block Exemption Regulation¹ (GBER) of the European Commission.

3. Background

In recent years the role of research infrastructure and the awareness of availability of research infrastructures for economic progress has gained central importance. They are essential for generating new knowledge and new technologies in all areas of science and ultimately constitute the basis for excellent research. This is also reflected by different European initiatives (e.g. ESFRI², ERIC³, Horizon 2020⁴) and national strategies. The Austrian Federal Government's RTI Strategy⁵ considers research infrastructure (RI) as the basis for excellent research and strongly supports coordinated development of the same. The "Strategy 2020"⁶ of the Austrian Council for Research and Technology Development mainly deals with joint utilisation of large-scale infrastructures because a study commissioned by the Council showed that, although there is quite an acceptable number of research infrastructure facilities in Austria, the number of large research infrastructures is below average compared to other European countries engaged in intensive research activities.

Already in its Strategy for Research, Technology and Innovation⁷ the City of Vienna resolved to invest in RTI centers and to develop the same by means of competitive infrastructure facilities. Since then initial investments have been made in new research infrastructure centers under two pilot projects.

¹ Commission Regulation (EU) No 651/2014 of 17 June 2014 declaring certain categories of aid compatible with the internal market in application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union ("General Block Exemption Regulation" or GBER).

² ESFRI - European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructure is a multidisciplinary platform of EU Member States and the countries associated with the EU Research Framework Programme for discussing and coordinating projects and general developments in the field of research infrastructures.

³ ERIC - Legal Framework for a European Research Infrastructure Consortium. By means of the programme a legal framework was created designed to facilitate the joint development and operation of research infrastructures of European interest by several Member States and countries.

⁴ Endowed with a budget of 80 billion euros Horizon 2020 is the largest transnational programme of the European Commission for research and innovation.

⁵ Federal Chancellery, *inter alia*: 2011. Becoming an Innovation Leader: Realising Potentials, Increasing Dynamics, Creating the Future; strategy of the Federal Government for research, technology and innovation.

⁶ Austrian Council for Research and Technology Development. 2009. Strategy 2020.

⁷ City of Vienna, Municipal Department No 27, EU Strategy and Economic Development: 2007. Vienna's Strategy for Research, Technology and Innovation.

Apart from acquisition of new research infrastructure, establishment of a research infrastructure company was also made possible, whose core tasks are acquisition and renting of research infrastructure to neighbouring research institutions and businesses⁸.

Although Austria in principle has a broad and sophisticated funding system, there has been no adequate funding instrument that explicitly supports the development and expansion of research infrastructure centers so far.

Against this background the Vienna Business Agency for the first time initiated a pilot process on behalf of the City of Vienna and created a new funding instrument for coordinated development and expansion of high-quality research infrastructure centers and research services for joint use by the scientific community and businesses.

4. Focus and objective

By means of the Shared Research Facilities Call 2015 it is intended to establish internationally visible and competitive research infrastructure centers (so-called Shared Research Facility Centers) with pioneering thematic research focuses for joint utilisation and to develop innovative service models and use models. Clusters of research resources in central facilities are intended to ensure a high availability of infrastructure of a high technical quality and to professionalise services. It is therefore important that research infrastructure will be acquired and used jointly by scientific organisations and business enterprises.

Another objective is to open research infrastructures to global players because excellent research is hardly possible without international cooperation.

The Shared Research Facilities Programme pursues the following goals:

- quantitative and qualitative expansion of existing or establishing of new research infrastructure facilities and research competences in Vienna to strengthen the City's function as a science and business location
- easier access to and improved availability of research infrastructure at Vienna, in particular for business entities
- strategic positioning of Vienna's research facilities and innovative enterprises
- boosting excellent research and strengthening unique selling propositions
- utilisation of research infrastructure also by global players
- clustering and linking of different R&D⁹ players
- strengthening international visibility and competitiveness

⁸ The abovementioned projects concern the limited liability companies Equipment BOKU Vienna Institute of Biotechnology GmbH at the Muthgasse location of the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences (BOKU) and Campus Science Support Facilities GmbH at the Vienna Biocenter Campus.

⁹ R&D - research and development

5. Eligible projects

Under this Call for proposals the City of Vienna supports the development and start-up of Shared Research Facility Centers (SRF Centers) in Vienna, the core tasks of which include acquisition, operation and making available of high-quality research infrastructure and developing technical expertise in scientific fields that are important to Vienna and are required by the scientific community and businesses for research purposes. The objective is continued operation of the SRF Center beyond the term of the grant.

Additional tasks of the SRF Centers include development and implementation of reasonable use models and business models as well as research services enabling efficient use of research infrastructure and ensuring high capacity utilisation. In addition, advanced interdisciplinary research cooperation is supported.

A prerequisite for being awarded a grant for an SRF Center is a medium-term research strategy and a research programme focusing on a particular topic derived therefrom and a research infrastructure development plan tailored to the needs of science and businesses, which must be implemented in the course of the project.

The research programme and the research infrastructure development plan must be designed in such a way that the research infrastructure to be acquired and the research competences developed will be able to serve a wide but reasonably combined range of different science disciplines.

The research infrastructure to be acquired and the related research programme must make a significant contribution to an enhancement of the research level and to expansion of research capacities. Apart from making available research infrastructure that can be noticed internationally to a wide group of users, an involvement of international partners is also desirable.

6. Definition of Shared Research Facilities

For the purposes of this Call Shared Research Facilities means jointly used central research infrastructure, resources and services which are required for R&D by working groups or research groups, institutes and companies engaged in the fields of research or innovation in various science and technological disciplines. Such research infrastructure must stand out against common basic research infrastructure both at a regional and national or international level due to its clear added value or a unique selling proposition for the selected science disciplines.

For the purposes of this Programme research infrastructure means:

- large equipment, large plants and/or instruments, IT infrastructure such as knowledge-based resources of scientific research, e.g. data processing systems, method databases, etc.

- information and communication technology infrastructure, such as grid services, (large) computers, special software, etc.
- any other infrastructure used for scientific research which is indispensable for research purposes
- research infrastructure may be "at a single location" or "spread" (an organised network of resources)

7. Terms and conditions of the Call for Proposals

Under this Call development and start-up¹⁰ of an SRF Center in Vienna may be funded through cash grants, provided that

- a medium-term research strategy and a research programme derived therefrom and a research infrastructure development plan tailored to the needs of science and businesses are available,
- the focus is on acquisition of new high-quality tangible and intangible research infrastructure and making available of the same for projects in the field of research and technological development,
- when selecting the required research infrastructure the strengths and needs and, above all, the strategic importance for Vienna as a science and business location will be considered,
- research infrastructure is acquired in accordance with the research infrastructure development plan presented,
- facilities and research competences will be made available in research cooperation projects and as research services also to external users from the scientific community and in particular from the business community,
- by offering new and/or expanded use models and business models as well as research services capacity utilisation of high-quality research infrastructure will increase,
- an important contribution is made to enable top-level research in the relevant fields of research.

8. Eligible applicants

Eligible applicants are consortiums¹¹ consisting of at least two partners that plan to develop and operate an SRF Center at a location in Vienna. In particular, the involvement of businesses, be it as consortium partners or potential users of the future research infrastructure and R&D services, is desired.

The application must state whether

- a. the SRF Center will be integrated into an existing research facility in Vienna/into a Viennese business or

¹⁰ The project must be divided into a development stage and a pilot stage, with a maximum pilot stage of 2 years being accepted as eligible for funding.

¹¹ Consortiums means associations of business partners and/or science partners who plan to jointly implement a project for the purposes of this Call.

b. it is planned to establish a separate legal entity (a Viennese business).

If "a." applies, the existing business or research facility located in Vienna must be appointed the lead partner. Only after the grant has been approved, needs a cooperation agreement to be signed by all partners that lays down the roles, rights and duties of the partners to be concluded and submitted to the funding agency by the date stated in the Grant Agreement.

If "b." applies, a separate legal entity must be established with all partners once the grant has been approved. The legal form may be chosen freely as long as the selected governance structures contribute to the development, control and regulation of the SRF Center in a reasonable and adequate manner. The organisational forms of "*Verein*" [association] or "ARGE" [joint venture] or "*GesbR*" [civil-law association] are excluded in any case. The SRF Center must be formed within the time limit stated in the grant notification.

Eligible organisations include businesses and legal entities in the area of research and education as defined in para 2.3.1 of the underlying Guideline. The lead partner must have a permanent establishment in Vienna as laid down in para 3.2.3 of the underlying Guideline.

9. Project structure

The maximum term of the SRF Center is five years. The project must be divided into two stages.

- In **Stage 1, i.e. the "development stage"** the organisational structures, scientific and business competences and capacities as well as the know-how must be developed according to the research strategy selected. In addition, the research infrastructure must be acquired according to the plan, and the research programme must be implemented by appropriate research activities. In addition, new specialised and customised support services and use models must be developed for intensified joint utilisation of the research infrastructure, in particular by businesses.

In that development stage projects commissioned by scientific institutions and business entities must be solicited and evidenced already.

- In **Stage 2, i.e. the "pilot stage"** the development stage will be consolidated, which means that development activities will decrease and the actual pilot run will start. In that stage the commissioned projects that were solicited in the development stage must be carried out and more cooperative research projects must be solicited and carried out.

The knowledge gained in the course of the research activities should also be made available for use by the business and scientific community in the form of R&D services and cooperation projects.

Commissioned projects are not part of the funded project. A maximum period of two years will be accepted as pilot stage.

10. Eligible costs

Funding will be provided for

1. Capital expenditure for research infrastructure

- (1) tangible and
- (2) intangible assets

2. Costs for research services

Costs for research services¹² means staff costs, costs for external services, cost of materials and costs for instruments and equipment required in connection with research work¹³ to implement the research strategy and/or programme of the SRF Center. The costs must have been incurred directly and clearly in connection with implementation of the project for research work.

Staff costs are only eligible for staff members employed at the Vienna location. For more details on the cost categories listed herein see para 2.8.2.f of the Shared Research Facilities Guideline.

3. Costs for the development and expansion of operation of the SRF Center

This cost category includes staff costs¹⁴ and administrative costs incurred in connection with

- (1) supporting the SRF Center to facilitate cooperation, exchange of information and provision and forwarding of specialised and customised support services for businesses;
- (2) advertising measures designed to solicit new businesses or facilities to participate in the SRF Center and to raise its visibility;
- (3) administration of the facilities at the SRF Center;
- (4) organisation of training and continuing education measures, workshops and conferences to foster knowledge sharing, networking and transnational cooperation.

For costs under items (2) and (4) a maximum of 10% of the grant or EUR 150,000 can be awarded.

11. Funding intensity; Maximum grant

The funding intensity is 50% of the eligible costs. The maximum grant awarded per project is EUR 1,500,000.

12. Available budget

The total budget made available for this Call is EUR 2,500,000.

¹² Research services must be fully attributable to one or more of the following categories: basic research, industrial research and feasibility studies. See also GBER Art. 25

¹³ Costs for research work incurred in connection with projects commissioned by third parties are not eligible.

¹⁴ Staff costs are calculated according to para 2.8.2.1 of the Guideline. Only costs for staff employed at the Vienna location are eligible.

13. Managing authority

The Call is managed by the Vienna Business Agency, 1010 Vienna, Ebendorferstrasse 2. The necessary funds are provided by the City of Vienna.

14. Call procedure

For this Call a two-stage procedure was selected.

In **Stage 1** short applications may be submitted between Thursday, 4 December 2014, 00:00 hours, and Thursday, 5 February 2015, 24:00 hours via <https://cockpit.wirtschaftsagentur.at>. The required content, scope and form of presentation is specified on the online application form for Stage 1. Science partners and business partners must confirm their willingness to participate in the project by means of a Letter of Interest (LOI). All short applications received will be evaluated according to a standardised evaluation system in mid-March 2015. Only those consortiums whose short applications were assessed positively in the first round will receive an invitation from the Vienna Business Agency to submit a full application.

In **Stage 2** full applications must be submitted between Wednesday, 7 April 2015, 00:00 hours, and Monday, 13 July 2015, 24:00 hours via <https://cockpit.wirtschaftsagentur.at>. Applications must contain a detailed description of the project, a comprehensive research strategy, including a detailed research programme, use and business models, all science partners and business partners involved as well as a detailed cost and finance plan. The exact scope and the required information is specified on the online application form for Stage 2. The information provided in the full application regarding the required contents must not deviate significantly from that of the short application. If such deviations are noticed in the full application, the application may be excluded from the subsequent evaluation process.

After a comprehensive individual assessment full applications will also be subjected to a comparative evaluation at a jury meeting where the applicants will be heard. The hearing will take place in Vienna and serves the purpose of collecting additional information. Hearings will be held in English. Questions of the jury, if any, will be sent to the lead partner at least one week before the hearing. They, among others, are supposed to be dealt with in the course of the hearing. After the jury meeting the selection procedure will be over.

Application documents are accessible from the date of announcement of this Call until the end of the relevant submission period upon registration at <https://cockpit.wirtschaftsagentur.at>.

Short and full applications must be completed in English and sent online within the time limits stated above. The duly signed Certificate of Application Authenticity (on the final page of the online form)

must be sent by registered mail by the last day of the submission period (the date of the postmark being decisive) or delivered personally to the Vienna Business Agency, 1010 Vienna, Ebdorferstrasse 2.

15. Evaluation

Applications must comply with the above objectives and terms of the Call and will be evaluated in accordance with the evaluation criteria listed in para 3.3.4 of the Shared Research Facilities Guideline according to a standardised evaluation system, which is available at www.wirtschaftsagentur.at or www.zit.co.at. The assessment will be carried out by a jury of international experts.

Prior to commencement of the evaluation process applicants may ask that one member only (an individual or an institution) of the jury be excluded from the evaluation process if there are doubts about his impartiality, stating the name and address of that member.

The contents of the applications and the detailed evaluation results are only accessible to the managing authority and the members of the jury. However, the agency is entitled to publish the names of those applicants who have been awarded a grant. The name of the project, a short description of the project and the amount of the grant will also be published.

16. Subsequent procedure

After conclusion of the evaluation process the Executive Committee of the Vienna Business Agency will be handed over a list of all applications, including a funding proposal according to the jury's recommendations and the budgetary means on the basis of the budget provided for the Call.

On the basis of such recommendation the Municipality of the City of Vienna will make its funding decision. The applicants will then be notified of the decision in writing. The funding amounts stated are always maximum amounts.