MEDIA ▶ FORWARD FUND

in cooperation with

wpk
Die Wissenschaftsjournalisten

Application Guidelines

Science and Data Journalism Funding Line

Launch Grants

Contents

About the guidelines

The selection process consists of multiple steps, which are divided into **oral** and **written stages**.

With these guidelines, we provide applicants with additional information on the **written procedures** and explain what to look out for when applying.

The aim of these guidelines is to present the application process as transparently as possible and to anticipate the most important questions that might arise.

Basic information can be found on our website under the Apply tab. There you will find concise answers to the most important questions, including a timetable for the current call for application and our five overarching selection criteria.

Should you still have questions after reading our website and the guidelines, we invite you to take a look at our detailed FAQs.

 If your question also isn't addressed in the FAQs, please contact us by email at: funding@mediaforwardfund.org

Thank you for your interest in a grant from the Media Forward Fund and for the time you invest in the application process!

Everything about the call for application

To the FAQs

Registration info-event

Focus: Science and Data Journalism Funding Line

Launch Grants

At a glance: With our funding, we provide support to organizations in the market introduction of a new offering, format, distribution channel or revenue source that they have not yet tested and is thus new.

In detail: The development of the project to be launched must be sufficiently advanced at the time of application that a successful launch and the establishment of an initial product/market fit can be achieved during the funding phase – as an important developmental step toward validating or refining the respective business model. This means that initial revenues are generated with the launched product.

Ideally: The project closes a gap in science or data journalism, and

... can create transformative added value in the media sector through the use of new approaches

... and has a particular focus on the participatory or interactive inclusion and/or reaching of target audiences that have thus far been underserved by the media.

Must-haves checklist

You must meet the following requirements in order to be eligible for funding:

1) The registered headquarters of your overall organization is in Germany, Austria or Switzerland.

2) Your organization does not have more than 30 full-time equivalent employees (FTEs).

3) The organization must serve the common good. This means that the revenues produced by its work are predominantly generated with the intention of strengthening journalism in its social mission of promoting public education and strengthening democracy.

4) Your work is based on recognized journalistic/editorial standards, which you document publicly (or plan to do so). You are committed to the principles of the press code in your country. If applicable, you also have established guidelines for media cooperations with scientific institutes.

5) You have a distinct structural and personnel separation between editorial and business management. If your company is younger than five years old and has fewer than 10 full-time equivalent employees (FTEs), there must be a demonstrable intention to implement this separation in the future.

6) Your proposed project is an offering, format, distribution channel or source of revenue in the field of science or data journalism that your organization has not yet tested on the market and is thus new.

7) You are able to demonstrate the science or data journalism qualifications of the designated member of the project leadership team in addition to previous collaboration (e.g. contractual or freelance basis).

Selection process overview

The selection process is divided into three stages:

Brief introduction

Funding application

3 weeks

Initial interview

Funding decision
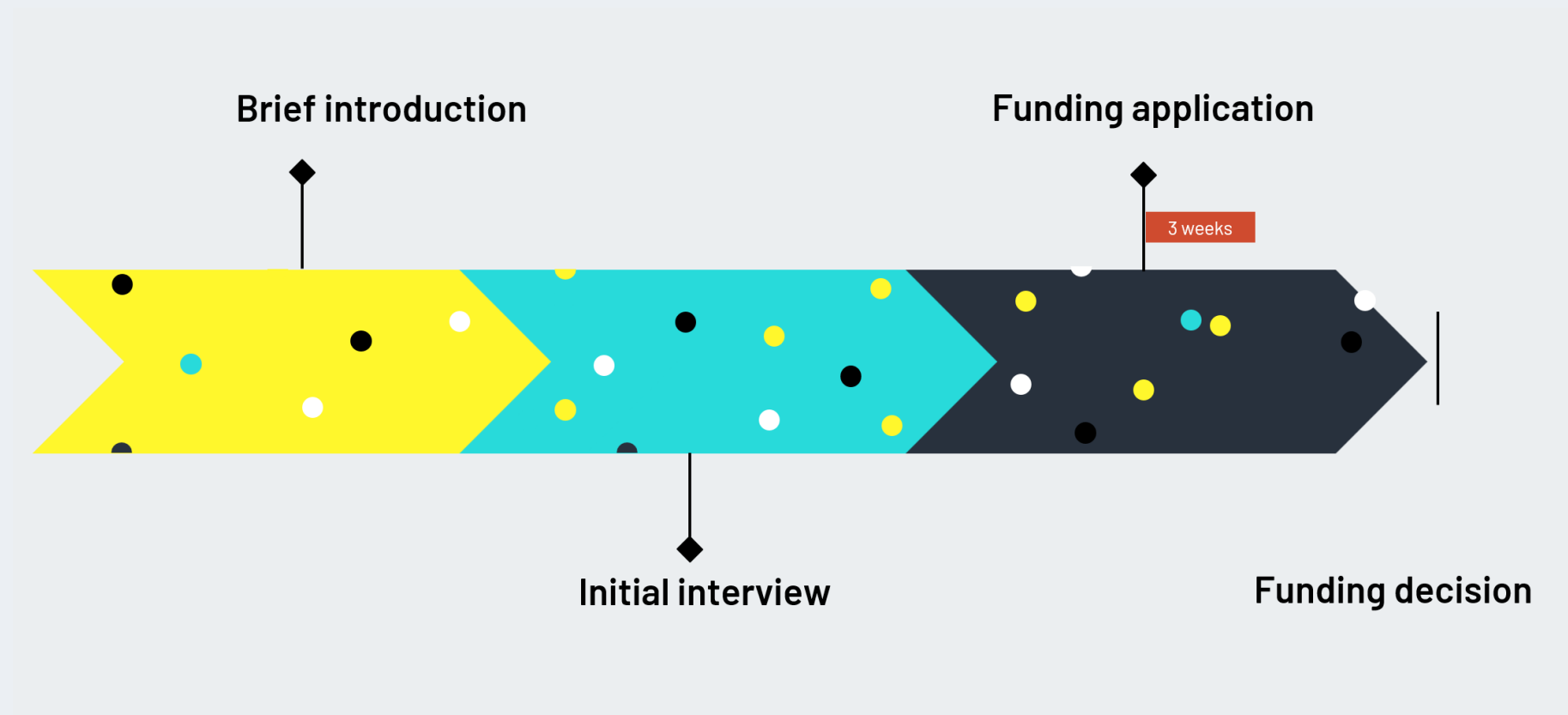
Brief introduction

The brief introduction is an online form which, for technical reasons, can only be called up once. Your answers to the questions cannot be cached. It is best to prepare your answers in advance using the brief introduction preview and then copy them all at once into the form before submission. Because of the large number of applications we receive, we are unable to send confirmation of receipt.
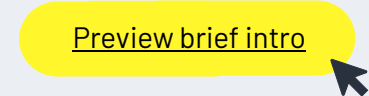
The aim of the brief introduction is to determine your eligibility and organization size based on the information provided and to gain a first impression of your organization, your journalistic work and your idea for using the grant. For this reason, most of the questions are single-choice questions. The number of characters for open answers is limited, as the focus should be on the essential information and therefore short, concise answers are initially sufficient.

In the brief introduction, you confirm your eligibility in line with our six must-haves (see page 5), briefly introduce your organization and your journalistic work, provide quantitative information on the size of your organization and the reach of your work, and briefly explain your proposed project. We are particularly interested in learning:

1. What specific science or data journalistic project you intend to introduce to the market with the help of the project financing.

2. How the proposed project will contribute to your long-term strategy and, especially, to the strengthening of your financial sustainability.

3. To what extent your proposed project relies on approaches that differ from existing methods commonly used in Germany, Austria and Switzerland (DACH region) and/or meet a specific need in science or data journalism.

4. Who you intend to reach with your proposed project and to what extent it addresses or involves target audiences that have thus far been underserved by the media.

Preview brief intro

Furthermore, we would also like to know how much funding you will need and for how long.

Please note that in the brief introduction, we also ask whether the applicant organization is dependent on an affiliated entity (e.g. company) or is under the control of a third party (e.g. parent company or companies). This aspect is important for determining the size of your organization. If the overall organization has more than 30 full-time equivalent employees (FTEs), it is considered a large media organization and is thus ineligible for Launch Grants awarded as part of the Science and Data Journalism Funding Line.

Once your eligibility for funding has been established by the information provided in the brief introduction and if your project fits with our funding goals, we would like to get to know you better by way of a telephone or video call lasting a maximum of 30 minutes. No additional preparation is required for the initial interview.

Funding application

Once your eligibility for funding has been established by the information provided in the brief introduction and during the initial interview, you will be permitted to submit your funding application within **three weeks** through a form in our funding portal.

The initial interview, as an intermediate step between the brief introduction and the funding application, is intended to ensure that only organizations or projects with a real chance of success invest the time and effort needed for the application.

Eligible organizations will receive a registration link from us by e-mail, which they can use to register and access the relevant application form. The upload function for the required attachments can also be found at the end of the form.

The aim of your funding application is to provide us with a comprehensive picture of your organization, your journalistic work and your idea for using the grant. The structure of the application form thus reflects those three areas.

Based on a set of 13 questions, we want to learn more about the skills in your team, the current state of your organization and your long-term goals in addition to the idea and developmental stage of your project and the target group you wish to reach. We would like to learn more about the extent to which your project stands out from existing science or data journalism developments and whether it has the potential to strengthen your unique selling point and what a promising business model would have to look like so that your project can successfully remain on the market beyond the funding phase and thus contribute to your financial sustainability.

For two of the questions, your answers will be automatically taken from the brief introduction so that you can use them as a basis for specifying your statements.

We have set guidelines for the number of characters per response. However, there is no default character limit so that you do not need to shorten sentences. Nevertheless, we recommend sticking to the suggested character maximum as orientation. Designated questions can also be answered in bullet points.

Preview funding application

Launch planning

Your funding application must also include a timeline in tabular form (e.g. in Excel) for the project launch on the basis of clearly defined milestones (10-12 milestones) that are to be reached on the path to the successful market launch of your project.

Milestones should be seen as results-oriented sets of steps that lead to one or more verifiable partial result(s). We suggest assigning each milestone a title, a deadline (e.g. month or quarter of a year), a description and possible proof of fulfillment. Milestones can also be structured according to categories (e.g. prototype development, initial production, validation & testing, development, market launch).

Over the course of our funding cooperation, the milestones will serve as an implementation plan and provide for joint reflection on the achievement of your targets.

Preview launch planning

Cost and financing planning

You must also submit a cost and financing plan along with your application. The main purpose of the overview is to allow us to assess the relationship between costs and the expected impact. We are also interested in learning if you are expecting initial revenues from your newly launched project.

Preview cost and financing planning

The detailed overview should be submitted in tabular form (Excel) and should depict the complete expenses your project is expected to generate. Please differentiate between different types of expenses, e.g. personnel costs, travel and accommodation and costs for services in addition to total expected project income and other revenue sources.

Information can be provided in either euros or Swiss francs. Only the total amount of funding requested along with specific details should be provided in euros in the designated spaces.

Please observe the instructions in the sample templates for the cost and financing plan as there are differences in tax law between for-profit media organizations and non-profit media organizations.

In the case of a cooperation with a for-profit media organization, the financial contribution made by the Fund to the cooperation partner is subject to VAT. Since, as a German non-profit organization, the Media Forward Fund is unable to deduct the VAT incurred, the VAT has the effect of increasing costs.

If the for-profit media organization is based in Austria or Switzerland, the "reverse charge" rule is in effect, whereby only the net amount can be paid out to the for-profit media organization.

Eligible costs

Personnel costs Wages that are neither paid out directly nor regularly, such as special payments, benefits in kind, bonuses, and other services as well as severance payments, are not eligible for funding.	- Employees (full and part-time)
Office and administrative costs	/
Travel and accommodation costs Travel expenses are based on the Federal Travel Expenses Act and the overview of accommodation allowances 2023/2024 abroad of the Federal Ministry of Finance	**Max. 10% of the requested funding amount** - Travel by public transportation and airplane - Car rental - Accommodation costs

Costs for services Fees for freelancers, consulting, contractual work	- Services in connection with conception, analyses and evaluation - Legal consulting pertaining to the project - Services related to the organization and holding of events or conferences (e.g. interpreter services, moderation, fees / expenses for experts, speakers, facilitators, entrance staff, technicians) - Translations
Costs related to own events or meetings (with the exception of service providers, see above)	- Catering - Rent for event/convention space
Training and further education	- Fees for training courses - Entry fees for events
Costs for the purchase of technical equipment and machinery, particularly capitalizable investments in tangible fixed assets	/

Please also note that we are unable to finance costs at non-profit media organizations that are attributable to commercial business operations. Such costs include, for example, expenses for the operation or development of an online shop for the marketing of products or the sale of food or drinks as part of the organization's own events.

In cooperations with for-profit media organizations, we are unable to provide support for activities that boost the commercial sales activities of that for-profit company (e.g. a newsletter that is only sent to paying customers or published content that is behind a paywall). In addition, no assets can be financed by the Media Forward Fund that become the property of the for-profit organization free of charge (e.g. the programming of an app that boosts the sales value of the app and thus of the company, or the development of an online platform).

Checklist of contract attachments

✓

Launch plan based on milestones ☐

Financing overview and planning ☐

CV of the designated science or data journalism project lead ☐

Budget plan for the current year ☐

Current or preliminary annual financial statement from the last fiscal year ☐

Extract from the register of associations or commercial register incl. list of shareholders ☐

Completed and signed form regarding non-profit status (only for non-profit organizations based in Austria or Switzerland) ☐

Prototype draft (optional) ☐

Latest annual report relevant to the grant project (optional) ☐

Editorial code of conduct (optional) ☐

Strategy or business plan (optional) ☐

Evaluation report(s) (optional) ☐

Due Diligence

After reviewing the applications, we continue the selection process with the most promising projects by deepening the due diligence process on your organization.

The due diligence process is integrated into the entire selection process and is finalized before we send your application to the jury.

The due diligence assessment is based on the information you have provided, desk research, internal documents you have submitted (attachments to the funding application). In addition, we reserve the right to consult the Media Forward Fund's Expert Council in addition to experts from science and data journalism from the WPK network about you and your project.

Should we determine that the internal documents submitted with your funding application are insufficient, we will request additional information.

Once due diligence has been completed, results will be summarized in a short report, which will further inform the jury's decision, along with the Media Forward Fund team's funding recommendation.

In conclusion, our jury, made up of several experts in addition to science and data journalism experts, will decide which of the projects will receive funding.