

“AI Research Groups Lower Saxony”: Guidelines and Format Requirements for Proposal Documents

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1 General Requirements

All proposal documents must be provided in English for an international review panel.

With the exception of the Expenditure Plan, please combine all documents into a single PDF file and upload this file to the application portal. To make the document clear and easy to navigate for the reviewers, please ensure that the PDF file includes a clickable table of contents, as well as the title of the application and the applicant's name in the header.

Please name the PDF file 'YourName_YourProposalShortTitle'.

Further documents are not required. Please omit additional enclosures such as unpublished work, cost estimates for technical equipment, or language certificates.

2 Matching the Review Criteria

Ensure your proposal explicitly addresses all six review criteria.

Review Criterion	Proposal Section
How excellent is the applicant (relative to career stage and field norms) regarding scientific track record, independence, and potential to lead a research group?	• Description of the Research Project • References • Curriculum Vitae • Letter from the Host Institution
How innovative/original is the proposed project (questions and/or AI methods), compared to the state of the art? How big is its academic or societal impact?	• Description of the Research Project
How plausible is the integration into the research environment?	• Integration into the Host Institution and Research Environment • Letter from the Host Institution
How plausible is the work plan, the budget and the structure of the research group?	• Description of the Research Project
How plausible is timely access to and usability of the required data (quality, rights, documentation) and availability of required software/compute and expertise?	• Description of the Research Project • Data Management Plan • If applicable: other Letters of Intent
To what extent are gender and diversity equity aspects and, where applicable, aspects of ecological sustainability adequately considered?	• Description of the Research Project • Letter from the Host Institution

3 Expenditure Plan

Please follow the advice provided and use the template from the application portal.

If you are applying for an internationalisation module, please note that its expenditure is not included in this plan. List these in the internationalisation module section only.

4 Project Description

The following format requirements apply to the project description:

Max. 15 pages, including all figures and tables but excluding references. Font Arial, font size 11 pt, line spacing 1.5.

Please use the following numbered headings to structure your description. You may use subheadings as required. Include the contents addressed in the bullet points within the following sections.

Title of the Proposal

1. General Information

- Research area according to the [subject classification of the German Research Foundation](#) plus complementary cross-disciplinary classifications where applicable
- Participating institutes, facilities and other partners
- Funding period and requested budget

2. Description of the research project

- Topic, objective and justification of the project, including academic and/or societal impact
- State of the art in international comparison
- Research approach
 - Hypotheses and research goals
 - Applied methods, including references demonstrating your methodological competence (e.g. selected publications or prior projects).
 - Description of the data to be used and their availability: Provide a summary here; for details, refer to the Data Management Plan.
 - Specification of the software and computing requirements (if applicable, supported by section 3 and/or Letter from Host Institution)
- Description of the doctoral dissertation work packages, including timeline, budget share and key deliverables. Show the interconnections of the work packages within the overall project.
- Timeline (e.g., Gantt-style) highlighting dependency between data acquisition, method development, validation, and PhD supervision milestones
- Leadership experience or a description how you would develop the skills required to lead the research group; describe your prospective level of independence within the research institution.
- Transfer of intended results to the economy and/or society, if applicable, and outreach
- Gender equity and diversity considerations in team recruitment, research design, data collection, and implementation
- Algorithmic efficiency strategies, hardware/software sustainability metrics, or green compute practices employed in model training/data pipelines, if applicable

3. Integration into the Host Institution and Research Environment

- Professional (inter-/intradisciplinary) integration of the working group into the host institution and further research environment; access to relevant existing compute facilities and further equipment

4. References

5 Data Management Plan

Data management must be set out in a data management plan. For this purpose, you may use either the [basic data management plan of the Volkswagen Foundation](#) or a more detailed template specific to your discipline. If no data is used or generated during the project, this must be explicitly stated here.

Include the costs for data management in the Expenditure Plan.

6 Curriculum Vitae

Please provide your CV using the current [template of the German Research Foundation](#). Only the CV of the main applicant is required.

7 Letter from the Host Institution

The letter from the host institution should be signed by the president of the university or management board of the research institution. An additional signature by the Faculty Dean, Head of Institute, or Head of Research Department is possible.

The letter should cover the following statements:

- Structural integration of the research group into the host institution and opportunities for collaboration;
- Statement that the group leader will be able to lead the research group independently, has control over the funds and will be staffed with the required rooms and facilities by the host institution;
- Statement of the applicant's right to confer doctoral degrees, or a statement explaining how the PhD students of the research group will obtain their degrees;
- Perspective of the group leader after the end of funding;
- Implementation of gender equality and diversity of recruited scientists and other group members, as well as reconciliation of work and family life;
- Support for members of the research group, in particular further training opportunities from the career and qualification areas of science, business and transfer, as well as self-employment/spin-offs.

8 Other Letters of Intent

If there are any further partners who provide an essential contribution to the project, you may consider adding a Letter of Intent from them to prove their commitment. However, please include only partners whose contributions are critical for the success of the project.

9 Internationalisation module

The internationalisation module is optional. If you would like to apply for it, please place it here. Further information on the internationalisation module and the contact person is available [here](#).

