

## **Procedures for awarding funds to pilot and cross-sectional projects**

### **Preamble**

The German Research Platform for Zoonoses is an information and service network for all research groups active in Germany in the field of zoonoses. Its goal is the rapid development of functional, flexible and sustainable solutions for the research, prevention and control of zoonotic infectious diseases, and the implementation of these solutions in cooperation with the relevant institutions.

In order to achieve this goal, the Platform for Zoonoses supports scientific and infrastructural work in the field of zoonosis research. This work is intended to provide an incentive for intensive research networking and cooperation between human and veterinary medicine on the one hand, and universities and non-university research institutions on the other.

The submission and organization of the appraisal of pilot and cross-sectional projects within the Platform for Zoonoses is the responsibility of the administrative office in Münster. The funds necessary to implement the projects are approved within the framework of their own grants by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF)/project management agency Health Research in the German Aerospace Centre, and by the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture or the Federal Ministry of Health in the case of projects that are thematically appropriate.

### **Eligibility**

All members of the Platform for Zoonoses are entitled to submit project applications and to be co-applicants. Persons with guest status are entitled to participate in projects as cooperation partners. The Internal Advisory Board is entitled to initiate projects. Applications can be made at any time.

Grants can only be awarded within Germany.

### **Types of project**

A distinction is made between two different types of project: pilot projects and cross-network projects (cross-sectional projects). The application procedure is identical for both project types.

Pilot projects are distinct individual projects with a high degree of originality and scientific risk. They point the way for new topics in zoonosis research. Pilot projects are based on an innovative hypothesis that is to be tested before further funding outside the Platform for Zoonoses can be acquired based on the results of the pilot project. They are therefore intended to provide start-up funding for subsequent research projects by the applicants.

For this reason, pilot projects are not a continuation of research projects already begun.

Pilot projects benefit from networking within the Platform for Zoonoses and the exchange between disciplines and institutions. The new method or groundbreaking knowledge for zoonosis research resulting from the project is the added value generated by pilot projects.

As a rule, duration of the project should not exceed twelve months, but applications with a duration of up to 18 months are permitted. Applications may be submitted by one or more applicants, and must have a defined and plausible temporal and

financial framework. Guideline for the maximum sum to be applied for (for 12 months): 120,000 Euro (the sum must be justified in a comprehensible way by the project structure and outlay).

Cross-sectional projects are projects that span networks, individual projects, disciplines and institutes; they have a defined financial framework and are jointly applied for and conducted at a minimum of two research locations in Germany. They are intended to establish structures, methods, sustainable networks, etc. to be used at the end of the funding phase (at the latest) not only by the research networks making the application, but also by all zoonosis researchers in Germany. A characteristic of cross-sectional projects is the interdisciplinary approach involving various institutes and disciplines. The scientific approach is therefore always multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary.

Duration of the project should not exceed 24 months.

Guideline for the maximum sum to be applied for: 240,000 Euro (the sum must be justified in a comprehensible way by the project structure and outlay).

### **Application process**

Applications for project funding are to be made in accordance with the following procedures.

#### **1. Submission of project application to administrative office in Münster**

Project applications can be submitted to the office of the German Research Platform for Zoonoses in Münster at any time, but no later than 14 days before the respective meeting of the Internal Advisory Board. Applications can be submitted in electronic form.

To help compare and assess the project applications submitted, the application documents of the Platform for Zoonoses are standardized. A template can be obtained from the administrative office or from the website [www.zoonosen.net](http://www.zoonosen.net).

The project application should describe the planned procedure for the project in detail. It should also present the research question to be addressed, its scientific innovativeness, the added value for zoonosis research, as well as its interdisciplinarity. The application is limited to ten pages (without appendices).

The administrative office checks the documents for formal correctness and sends them to the members of the Internal Advisory Board. If the formalities are not met, the applicant is given the opportunity to submit the relevant documents at short notice. The administrative office is entitled to reject formally incorrect applications at its own discretion.

Applications are dealt with by the Internal Advisory Board in the chronological order of their submission to the administrative office. There is no entitlement to a particular date for a meeting.

#### **2. Appraisal by the Internal Advisory Board**

Applicants are invited by the administrative office to a meeting of the Internal Advisory Board within a reasonable period of time. There, the applicants or a nominated representative presents the project application. Representatives of the funding ministries and the sponsors are expressly invited to participate in the

appraisal. Members of the Internal Advisory Board discuss and evaluate the application according to the following criteria:

Criteria for pilot projects:

- Expertise of the applicants with regard to the project idea and necessary prior knowledge
- Scientific novelty and originality with regard to innovation and pilot character of the project applied for, existence of a conclusive hypothesis
- Appropriate balance between the feasibility of the project and its risk character, feasibility of third-party support following the pilot phase
- Added value/relevance of the project or the expected project results for interdisciplinary zoonosis research in human and veterinary medicine
- Appropriateness of the temporal and financial framework presented
- Networking between different research institutions and human and veterinary medicine in the project or as a result of the expected project outcome

Criteria for cross-sectional projects:

- Expertise of the applicants as scientists and with regard to the project idea, necessary prior knowledge beyond the project idea, and networking competence
- Scientific novelty and originality, existence of a conclusive hypothesis on the object of research
- Feasibility of the project
- Added value and usability of the project or the project results for interdisciplinary zoonosis research
- Appropriateness of the temporal and financial framework presented
- Networking between different research institutions and inclusion of human and veterinary medicine within the project

After examining the project application in terms of content and form, the Internal Advisory Board can decide as follows:

- a) The project proposal is evaluated positively.
- b) The applicant is requested to incorporate the recommended modifications to the project and to resubmit the application.
- c) The project application is rejected.

The forwarding of a project application is accepted or rejected by a simple majority of the Internal Advisory Board. All members of the Internal Advisory Board are entitled to vote, provided that they do not have a conflict of interests.

Conflict of interests

If members of the Internal Advisory Board have a conflict of interests, they must leave the room during the discussion and voting on the application. A member of the Internal Advisory Board is deemed to have a conflict of interests if she or he is involved financially or substantively in the planned project, or if she or he is a member of the same institute or working group as the applicant. In addition, members of the Internal Advisory Board are requested to give truthful declaration of close

cooperation with the applicants in thematically similar projects or of competition, and where relevant to identify a conflict of interests. Employment in the same superordinate institution alone does not constitute a conflict of interests.

### 3. Final review by the project sponsors or the funding ministries

For the final funding decision, the administrative office forwards the application documents, the results of the vote, and the minutes of the appraisal by the Internal Advisory Board to the supporting ministry or its named project management agency. The necessary application form is completed and submitted by the applicant herself or himself.

A binding approval for funding can only be issued after a final review of the documents by the respective project management agency/funding ministry. Funding is granted in the form of a notice of funding issued directly to the project coordinator by the funding ministry or its project management agency.

### 4. Follow-up applications

Follow-up applications are in principle allowed. However, on the basis of the description of project type, they can only be submitted as cross-sectional projects. They shall be treated in the application procedure in the same way as new applications.

### 5. Duty to report

There is an obligation to report to the sponsor, which is indicated in the respective notice of funding and which is independent of the Platform for Zoonoses. The Internal Advisory Board is entitled to request written or oral interim or final reports on the projects. It is desirable that short project reports be given as part of the zoonoses symposium.