

### **Who can apply?**

All researchers who have completed their doctorate and are employed by a university, with at least one year left on their contract. We accept joint applications from groups of up to three individuals who must not have worked together previously. Up to two of the three individuals may be based at a non-university research institution or a university of applied science ("Hochschule") with a strong research focus. The main applicant is the researcher with university affiliation.

### **When can I apply?**

From when the call for proposals opens to the specified deadline

### **Where do I apply?**

From the end of January 2026, please submit your applications via our online application portal. The link will be available online on our program page from this date onwards.

### **What language should my application be written in?**

Applications must be written in English

### **What do I need to send?**

A research idea (Part A) that fleshes out the general topic in an original way (anonymously and in no more than two pages), and in a separate document (Part B), a CV with your research topics to date and a budget plan

### **What additional information do I need to provide?**

Please suggest eight potential participants from suitable disciplines with whom you have not collaborated in the past and include them in a separate document, along with suggested dates and ideas for possible venues (Part C).

### **Do you need CVs from all participants?**

We only need the CVs of the applicants. For the suggested participants we just need a list of names with their disciplines and institutional affiliations. Please ensure that the participants are as diverse as possible in terms of the variety of academic cultures, biographies and subjects they represent. The prerequisite for participation is usually a doctorate. Exceptions, e.g. for representatives from professional practice, are explicitly possible.

### **Should I ask the suggested participants in advance?**

That would be helpful from our point of view.

### **Can international researchers be involved in the sandpit?**

Yes, this is something we explicitly encourage.

### **Do the participants receive an honorarium?**

No, an honorarium should generally not be paid to participants. Only travel and accommodation costs will be reimbursed. Please include these in the budget for all participants, that means for those proposed by you and for those proposed by the experts (for up to 16 people in total). As the travel distances are not yet fully known, we recommend calculating the travel costs a little more generously in the budget.

**Can the funds also be used to pay a student research assistant?**

Yes, that is possible by setting up a work contract ("Werkvertrag").

**How are proposals selected?**

The Foundation's sandpits offer a place for experimentation, where different disciplines and perspectives can connect and interact to generate new research questions and projects of relevance to society. We see the sandpits as incubators for ideas that push boundaries – "off-the-wall" ideas that hold potential. Proposals are reviewed in a two-step process. In the first step, a diverse group of experts assesses the anonymized idea pitches and rates the unusualness of the proposals. In the second step, the idea pitches are assessed together with the applicants' CVs, both technically and in terms of their impact and development potential.

**What happens if my proposal is approved?**

The grant offer letter will include recommendations for further participants from which you may choose six to eight additional participants. In addition, the Foundation also nominates two moderators.

**When will the sandpit take place?**

The sandpit event on the annual theme of bureaucracy should take place between the beginning of January and the end of July 2027.

**How often are proposals invited for the sandpit program?**

The Foundation plans to invite proposals on a yearly basis.

**Are there key topics? What topics are covered in the calls for proposals?**

The calls for proposals will be on different topics from across all disciplines. The topics are usually announced in the third quarter of each year for the following year.

**How will the outcomes be communicated?**

A range of formats are possible in consultation with the organizers – from a publication or memorandum to a press conference or interactive online format.

**How will the Foundation ensure that approaches and results that disrupt established methods and knowledge have a chance of being developed after the event?**

We will be happy to advise the organizers on possible funding bodies to which they can apply to develop the topic further.