

Funding of Groundbreaking Key Projects May 2026

Targeted objective

With this call for applications we are looking for projects that exhibit the potential to bring forth fundamental discoveries with a groundbreaking character for an entire field of research. For example:

- proof of a causal link for which evidence thereof had been lacking until now
- the testing of a heretofore non-existent or non-workable hypothesis
- the questioning of a theory generally accepted until now
- a “proof of principle” or a “first-in-man” study of an innovative intervention approach
- clinical study bearing the potential to decisively change guidelines (with the exception of pharmaceutical Phase III studies)
- answering a new, fundamental question in an already established cohort

Eligible applicants

The lead applicants are scientists, international leaders in their area of research who have prominently published in that field. They must be employed at a university research institute or extramural research facility in Germany, or at a university hospital in Germany. Co-applicants and co-operation partners can also be active abroad. The applicants must be able to convincingly present that their work group – even when viewed within international competition – is predestined towards solving the problem addressed.

The validation and further development of a decisive new finding can subsequently be a key project when said finding is the outcome of applicants’ own preliminary work phases.

Project managers of a currently ongoing EKFS funding project are not eligible for renewed application prior to conclusion of the project and publication of the project’s findings.

Application submission

As a rule, only projects that have not yet been started can be applied for.

The awarding of resources takes place in a two-step procedure:

The submission of an application draft outline precedes the more complex formulation of a comprehensive application. The project idea’s potential for designation as a “Key Project” is evaluated using the draft outline. [“Instructions for preparing a key project draft outline”](#) can be found on the website.

A possibly ensuing comprehensive application to be made in the second step serves towards assessing experimental enactment. Instructions for the preparation thereof are sent together with the invitation for a full proposal.

Only a very limited number of outstanding projects can be financed within this line of funding.

Resources that can be applied for

Application can be made for both personnel resources and consumables which are necessary for enactment of the planned project and scientifically well justified.