Instructions for preparing outlines when submitting a key project application

Status: October 14, 2026

A Project outline

The maximum 6-page idea draft (in English, Arial 11 or similar font) is to be structured as follows. Please upload your documents via our application portal on our website.

1. Formal data

- Project title
- Applicant responsible; applicant institution; complete contact data (email), co-applicants, project duration in months, sum total funding applied for

Notes: i) Funding approval recipient can only be an institute of higher education, university hospital or extramural research institution in Germany; ii) Project managers of a currently ongoing EKFS funding project are eligible to apply again only after completion and publication of the results of this project.

2. Summary

Half-page summary of the planned project

3. Hypothesis / Issue

- Brief explanation of the hypothesis/issue addressed by the project
- What is it that constitutes the specific originality of the project?

4. Rationale for the groundbreaking nature of the project

- Reason(s) why the project is considered to have groundbreaking potential (e.g. evidence of a significant, previously missing causal link, proof-of-principle, refutation of an accepted theory)
- Specific consequences that may emerge for the field of research (scenarios)

5. Reason(s) for the applicant group's particular suitability

- List of the five most relevant own publications for the project (list all authors; the applicant's name in bold). Applicants are expected to have at least two to three publications where they are the first or last author in leading journals in the field, as listed in the Journal Citation Report (JCR) Index.

- Applicants are expected to have successfully secured competitive external funding, such as a leadership role in an SFB, a research group, a clinical research group, a cluster of excellence, an ERC grant, or EU grants.

- Presentation of the expertise, preliminary work and infrastructure of the applicant work group in an international comparison, unique selling points of the applicants with respect to the planned project's prospect of success

6. Project implementation strategy

- Summarized presentation of the experimental approach
- Key cooperations within the project
- Rough schedule and time requirements

7. Resources

Rough planning:
- of the total resources required
- of the institutional or other funding available to the project. This ought to cover at least approx. 1/3 of the total costs.
- of the funds to be applied for from EKFS (stated in EUR):
    - of the personnel positions to be funded
    - estimate of non-monetary resources
    - indication in % as to which proportion of weekly working hours is going to be utilized for the project in the event of funding approval

The application sum total in the outline may not be exceeded in the full application.

8. Declaration

Declaration as to whether the project application presented or a similar project application has previously been submitted to another funding entity. In the event of a preceding rejection of the project application by another funding entity, we request notification of the reasons for rejection or of the reviewers' votes to the extent possible. In the event that a negative expert reviewers' opinion is presented, we request a point-by-point-response to the criticisms; the modifications performed in comparison to the rejected application should be marked in the outline or at least explained in an accompanying letter.
By signing, the applicant and co-applicants obligate themselves to comply with the "Recommendations for ensuring good scientific practice" (*Empfehlungen zur Sicherung guter wissenschaftlicher Praxis*) issued by DFG (German Research Foundation) as revised in 2019.

B Appendices

The following information is requested for each of the lead applicants and co-applicants, if applicable (summarized in one PDF file per person)

1. CV in tabular form (max. 3 pages) without photo and stating your date of birth

2. List of publications from the current year and the past 4 years in accordance with the template on our Website. Please list only peer-reviewed original publications and reviews (each category on separate lists) while citing the journal impact factors. Please include a list of all authors, highlighting the applicant author (bold font) and stating the title. Please do not enclose any publications or manuscripts. Please state your current h-index (Hirsch index).

3. A list of current and completed third-party funded projects, following the template on the website;
   If the title of a current project bears similarities to the proposed project, please provide a statement outlining the differences between the projects.

4. Study protocol and ethics vote:
   In the draft phase, we request a study protocol at least in a preliminary version. When submitting a full application, the submission of a study protocol is mandatory.
   If an ethics vote is available, please submit this, otherwise please provide information on the status of it's application.
   In the event of project approval, project work can only be started after an ethics vote has been submitted.