8th Call for proposals for Seed Fund Projects “RWTH Start-Up”

Background

The Exploratory Research Space @ RWTH Aachen (ERS) is the central instrument of RWTH to foster interdisciplinary research and to develop emerging fields with the potential to shape the University’s research profile. ERS comprises activities which give a leeway for creativity to both senior and junior researchers and which foster interdisciplinary exchange and discussion. One activity is the funding of Seed Fund Projects. The typical duration of a Seed Fund Project is 6 to 12 months. The intention of this special call “RWTH Start-Up” is to attract and keep young researchers with a high potential of excellence.

1. Type and aim of projects:
The RWTH Start-Up is a project-bound seed funding to support young researchers at an early stage of their career and to promote their own scientific independency. Proposals describing a well-developed project that is already qualified for third-party funding or applicants holding other scholarships or grants (e.g. Emmy Noether Programme) are not eligible for this Seed Funding.

2. Eligibility
This Seed Fund Call is addressed at

- PostDocs, young researchers with a doctoral degree (up to year 5 after PhD), who envisage a career in science (employed at RWTH Aachen University)
- Assistant professors (junior professors, W1), N.B. The amount of basic support will be taken into consideration for determining the funding. (employed at RWTH Aachen University)

3. Proposal structure and contents
Proposals must be divided into part A (personal information) and part B (research). Please submit your complete application (2 files) via online submission at http://portal.ers.rwth-aachen.de.

Language: English or German

Part A (file A): 3 pages max., Arial 11 font size
- CV including the five most important publications;
- Endorsement (2-3 lines) of your head of department outlining his/her agreement to promote your scientific independence (applicable for PostDocs only)
- A short “easy to understand” outline of your research project (one page max.)

Part B (file B): 5 pages max., Arial 11 font size,
- Description of your project idea
• State-of-the-art of your research topic and preliminary experiences (including bibliography)
• Work programme
• Budget and schedule

Please note: Proposals that do not comply with the formal criteria will be excluded from the reviewing process.

4. Selection and evaluation criteria:
The projects will be selected and evaluated by an evaluation group consisting of members of the ERS Steering Committee, the Vice-Rector Prof. Klee, two representatives of the junior professors and two representatives of the scientific staff.

Applications will be evaluated along the following criteria:
Part A:
• Scientific qualification of the applicant
• Emerging scientific independence
• Delineation of the originality of project idea

Part B:
• Originality, feasibility and relevance of the project idea
• Adequateness of research approach
• Appropriateness of implementation (budget/time schedule)
• Prospects for further funding

The process of evaluation follows a two-step approach.
Step 1:
Members of the evaluation group will review and evaluate Part A of the proposal. The ERS team will then rank the results. Only proposals with the best ranking will proceed to the second evaluation step.

Step 2:
The complete proposal (Part A + B) will be reviewed and evaluated by an expert based on the evaluation criteria.
A recommendation of the evaluation group is then sent to the rectorate for final approval.

5. Funding
The budget for a Seed Fund Project is provided by the Excellence Strategy of the German Federal and State Governments and makes allowances to the allocation model aiming for 30 % share of females. The total budget for all new RWTH Start-Up projects is at most 200.000 €. For each project, a maximum of € 20.000 is available.
130.000 € must be spent in 2020, the rest afterwards. This will require two separate accounts. Funds cannot be transferred from one account to the other.
Eligible costs are: Staff expenses including student assistants, travel and subsistence costs, support for workshops and conferences, consumables and equipment.

**Please note:** due to the type of funding, funded research staff needs to have a mandatory teaching assignment (Lehrverpflichtung) (4 hours per week for full time non-permanent staff)

6. **Reporting:**
A brief report at the end of the project and a final report 18 months after the end of the project.

7. **Deadline for submission:** 21st January 2020

8. **Project start:** May 2020

9. **Project duration:** 6 to 12 months

10. **Please apply at:** [http://portal.ers.rwth-aachen.de](http://portal.ers.rwth-aachen.de)  
    **Call:** RWTH Start-Up 2020

For additional information on the selection process, please refer to our website: [http://www.rwth-aachen.de/ers](http://www.rwth-aachen.de/ers)

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