Digital Futures Fund for Research – 2024 Call for Projects (1/2)

With the Digital Futures Fund (DFF) for Research[1], ZHAW digital exclusively supports research projects that respond to immediate challenges in the field of digital transformation with rapidly realisable measures. By digital transformation, we understand the far-reaching influence of digitalisation on individuals, our university, and society. All researchers employed at ZHAW are invited to apply. Projects for the DFF for Research Call 2024 will be supported with up to **CHF 20,000** each and should start as soon as possible at the latest within **three months** in case of a positive funding decision and may last **a maximum of 12 months** after the start of the project. After the summer, there will be a second call, the Digital Futures Fund for Research – 2024 Call for Projects (2/2). In total, projects can be supported with a funding amount of **CHF 250,000**.

1.) Evaluation Criteria

ZHAW digital bases its selection of projects on 4 core criteria and corresponding indicators:

1. **Relation to Digital Transformation**: Projects address topics of digital transformation. *Key indicators: Content related to digital transformation, use of digitalisation to solve relevant problems and questions.*
2. **Innovation**: The project leads to results with a disruptive and forward-looking character and pursues new approaches. *Key indicators: Novelty of the application, degree of disruption, differentiation from existing solutions.*
3. **Quality of Implementation and Methodological Foundation:** The approach is clear and methodologically considered, making it understandable for a broad audience. The implementation appears realistic within the given budget and timeframe. *Key indicators: adequacy and comprehensibility of the approach, realistic planning and feasibility.*
4. **Impact**: The project aims for a timely and pragmatic implementation of research-based findings. Moreover, the overarching benefit of the project results for one or more of the following target groups should be evident:
    a) scientific community, b) ZHAW as a whole institution, c) society
    Key indicators: Feasibility, near-term horizon, scope, relevance.

2.) Project Submission

Formal criteria for application and project duration:

-   Maximum budget CHF 20'000.

-   Applications can be submitted from 20 March 2024 on zhawdigital.grantplatform.com until 22 April 2024, at 23:59 (Internet Explorer is not supported).

-   Accounts must be opened with the ZHAW email address and full name.

-   All entered information is automatically saved as soon as the first tab of the application is filled out.

-   No changes can be made after submitting ("submit").

-   The funding decision will be communicated by the end of May 2024.

-   The maximum project duration is 12 months until the end of August 2025.

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[1] A separate call pertaining to education related projects will follow.

– Project can start at the earliest on 1 June 2024, at the latest on 1 August 2024.

General Conditions

– Per funding year and allocation date, a person may supervise a maximum of one project as a leader. However, a person can participate in any number of funded projects.

– A DFF project must be coherent in itself. This means: The implementation of the project must not depend on other (external or internal) funding commitments, such as another DFF project or an SNF grant.

– For projects that are similar in content, ZHAW digital reserves the right to suggest collaboration.

– Project proposals not funded in the past can be resubmitted.

3.) Selection Process

Formal Criteria Check by ZHAW digital Office
The ZHAW digital office checks, in a first step, whether an application meets the framework conditions and formal criteria. All applications that pass the programme office's check proceed to the next evaluation step.

Preselection by ZHAW digital
Note: If 20 or fewer applications are submitted, the preselection is omitted.

In the preselection process by ZHAW digital, two members of the preselection committee (ZHAW digital board and office) evaluate the projects based on the criteria formulated above: relevance for digital transformation, degree of innovation, quality and feasibility of the project, and expected impact. Projects that particularly convince in these areas receive a higher score. The board and the operational team of ZHAW digital form the preselection committee. Each project is randomly assigned to two members of the committee who rate the project with points 0, 1, or 2 on Good Grants.

2: This project meets all content and formal criteria: clearly eligible for funding

1: This project meets most of the criteria: undecided

0: This project does not meet most criteria: clearly not eligible for funding

The preselection committee selects the 20 highest-rated applications. These applications proceed to the next evaluation step.

Voting by the ZHAW digital Community (Digital Futures Lab; DFL)[2]:
– Each DFL member receives 5 votes that can be distributed across different projects but only one vote per project.
– Own projects can be included in the evaluation.

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[2] Membership in the DFL is not a prerequisite for submitting an application. However, successful applicants automatically become members of the DFL

- The voting is intended to promote the bottom-up movement within ZHAW digital and requires active engagement with the project proposals, independent of one's own field of expertise or interests.
- After the voting, projects are ranked based on the number of votes received.

Decision by the ZHAW digital Board

The ten applications with the most community points are assigned to two different members of the ZHAW digital Board[3] (if preselection occurred, they are two other persons) who then conduct a detailed review and note questions. The applicants (or a representative) are invited to remotely join the Board meeting on 23 May 2024, to answer open questions. Subsequently, the ZHAW digital Board as a committee decides on the funding of 6-8 applications.

Contact: Any questions about the Digital Futures Fund and the submission platform can be directed to digital@zhaw.ch.

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[3] ZHAW digital reserves the right to involve other persons as reviewers.

Appendix: Questions in the Application Form

- Details of the main applicant (name, department)

- Title (max. 70 characters incl. spaces)

- Abstract (max. 300 characters incl. spaces)

- Keywords (max. 3 keywords, ordered from general to specific)

- Brief project description (max. 1000 characters incl. spaces)

- What is the relation to digital transformation? (max. 600 characters incl. spaces)

- What are the innovative elements of the project? (max. 600 characters incl. spaces)

- What is the methodological approach? (max. 600 characters incl. spaces)

- What impact do the results of the project have and who benefits? (max. 600 characters incl. spaces)

- Milestones and timeline of the project (max. 400 characters incl. spaces)

- Project duration in months (max. 12 months)

- Project members and their roles

- Budget: Personnel and material costs with a brief justification (max. 400 words)

- Agreement to framework conditions