The iDiv Flexpool mechanism:

Call for postdoctoral research projects

15 May 2024

1. Mission:

The main purpose of this Flexpool call is to instigate **innovative research projects** that integrate across the wide expertise within the iDiv community and **increase the visibility of iDiv's integrative character** across all member institutions. Successful projects should specifically focus on topics integrating within and across the five research areas (RAs): *Biodiversity Change*, *Biodiversity and Complexity*, *Molecular Biodiversity and Adaptation*, *Biodiversity and Ecosystem Functioning* and *Biodiversity and Society*.

At a glance:

- **Available positions:** up to 7 Postdoc positions[1]
- **Components of the call:** Eligibility, selection criteria, submission process, evaluation, transparency and feedback, funding, monitoring, submission and deadlines
- **Applicants:** Full iDiv members (see details below)
- **Co-applicants:** iDiv members including iDiv core professors and iDiv researchers as well as external scientists heavily involved in the development of the proposal (including successful project PIs in the previous flexpool calls)
- **Selection criteria:** Scientific quality (50%), Integration (50%)
- **Flexpool Evaluation Committee**: Science Strategy Board (SSB) members and their deputies not included as main PI in any of the proposals. If needed, additional members or other scientists will be consulted to provide expertise.

Funding:

The call includes salary (100%, E 13) for one PostDoc position for up to 2 years starting from 01 January 2025, consumables, travel and publication costs. Consumables must be specified and are expected not to exceed a budget of 10 k€ *per year*. Exceptions must be well-justified, but approval cannot be guaranteed.

Deadlines and important dates:

- Obligatory letter of intent submission deadline   02 June 2024 (11:59 p.m. CEST)
- Proposal submission deadline: 23 June 2024 (11:59 p.m. CEST)
- Reviews & funding recommendation
  by the evaluation committee: until 24 July 2024
- SSB approval: 7 August 2024
- Advertising positions: starting from 01 September 2024
- Application deadline for candidates: until 04 October 2024
- Candidate selection: until 11 November 2024
- Project start: starting from 01 January 2025

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[1] contingent on the availability of resources

The letters of intent and the proposals shall be submitted to the Scientific Networks unit (flexpool@idiv.de) as single PDF-files. In case of positive evaluation of a project and the recruitment of a suitable candidate, funding can begin on **01 January 2025**.

2. Eligibility:

All full iDiv members are eligible to submit proposals as main PI. Members who have received Flexpool staff-funding in the Flexpool PD calls of 2022 or 2023, or the PhD call of 2020 as main PI are encouraged to refrain from applying, but are encouraged to participate as co-applicants (co-PIs).

The main PI needs to have an appointment at one of the iDiv partner institutions that lasts at least 2 years from the start of the postdoctoral researcher. Members may submit only one project proposal as main PI in this call or the PhD call, which is released at the same time.

Co-PIs should only include researchers who assume responsibilities for the smooth and successful realisation of the project. This is primarily based on their scientific expertise, and their role in mentoring the student, but could also relate to the provision of infrastructure. Co-PIs need to be involved in any decision on changes of the project (content, staff, budget). Collaborators are involved in the project (as members of iDiv or elsewhere) and will contribute to the project in substantial ways, but are not expected to contribute substantially to co-mentoring the student or budgetary topics.

3. Selection criteria:

A- Scientific quality (50%)

- Scientific quality of the proposal
- Potential of the research team and PI to successfully lead this specific project
- Successful projects may include high risk / high gain projects that may lead to further research proposals, though this is not a prerequisite
- Support iDiv's mission: To understand the biodiversity of life on Earth in its complexity, functions, and interactions with people; To develop scientific knowledge for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, together with the international scientific community and society; To advance the field of integrative biodiversity research, through scholarly contributions, education, capacity building, and the promotion of early career researchers

B- Integration (50%)

- Strengthen integration among iDiv members, including visibility at the iDiv partner institutions (please note that more people on the proposal does not necessarily mean better integration!) as well as among research areas (molecular / complexity / function / society / change)

In addition to these selection criteria, across proposals and relative to the number of submitted proposals, we aim to:
- Support efforts to make our research accessible for policy-makers from global to local levels, which is crucial to enhance the visibility and the impact of the broad range of highly relevant scientific work developed at iDiv
- Support member participation within iDiv (activity in the past and in the future, e.g. participation in boards / committees, internal reviews, teaching etc.)
- Balance iDiv's partner institutions (based on the main PI)
- Balance genders (based on the main PI).

4. Submission process:

Step 1: Letter of intent (please use the template)

1) General information
2) Short project description and fit to the iDiv strategy
3) Integration

Suggestions for internal / external reviewers: Please suggest at least four potential reviewers who could evaluate your proposal; these can be (1) iDiv members (preferably), (2) non-member scientists at one of the iDiv partner institutions, or (3) external experts.

Step 2: Full proposal (max. 5 pages for a, plus max. 2 pages for b-f using the provided template and page layout). Proposals not meeting those formal requirements will not be considered.

a) General information: keywords, summary, state of the art, research questions / hypotheses, work plan, project-related own publications.

b) Integration: Explain how this project will strengthen integration among the iDiv members, how the project will join iDiv's research areas (molecular / complexity / function / society / change), and how it links to existing themes or member networks, fills gaps in iDiv research and what key contributions will be provided to fulfil the iDiv strategic missions.

c) Impact: If applicable, please identify potential science-policy relevant outcomes of the project so that the iDiv Science-Policy Unit can work with you towards making these available for policy-makers and stakeholders.

d) Commitment plan: Please specify how the PI contributed and / or will further contribute to iDiv's activities; list all co-PIs and collaborators of the project and explain their specific roles.

e) Mentoring strategy: Please specify how you plan to supervise your postdoctoral researcher within this project. In case of Junior Group Leader, please specify if you have an appointment throughout the entire project.

f) Please list all current projects by the applicants that are related to this proposal (title & funding organisation).

g) Budget plan: Please state what amount of funding is requested with respect to personnel and consumables. Please explain why the funds are needed and how they will be used. Specify attendance at conferences / workshops etc. for the postdoctoral researcher (they are strongly encouraged to attend at least one conference per year); please list infrastructural and financial contributions of all co-applicants.

h) Bibliography: Please list max. 15 references.

i) Appendix: Please provide short CVs of main PI and co-PIs (see proposal template) and list abbreviations used in the proposal.

5. Evaluation:

Evaluation committee:

Evaluations will be made by a Flexpool Evaluation Committee consisting of at least 5 scientists and composed of:

a) SSB members and their deputies that are not included as main PI in any of the proposals,

b) if needed, additional iDiv members to represent an expertise in research areas not covered by a),

c) if needed, external non-members to represent an expertise in research areas not covered by a) and b).

To define whether expertise on all research areas is present in the committee, all committee members will indicate for each proposal whether they consider themselves knowledgeable. Committee members will be nominated by the Flexpool Board.

Evaluation procedure:

1) For all proposals, the Evaluation Committee will invite several (usually at least two) written reviews. Reviewers will be invited from the iDiv members and non-member scientists from the iDiv partner institutions as well as external researchers with the relevant expertise. Conflict of Interest criteria and procedures will be communicated to reviewers and committee members. Reviewers are obliged to provide a concise review and summary statement reflecting the score given based on the selection criteria.

2) Evaluation Committee members will evaluate all proposals and reviews and may adjust (or confirm) the overall ranking based on step 1. The final recommendation for funding will be submitted to and decided by the SSB.

6. Transparency and Feedback:

Decision on the pre-approval for funding flexpool projects is taken by the Science Strategy Board (SSB), based on the recommendation of the evaluation committee. All decisions will be communicated in written form to the applicants, reviews will be anonymised and forwarded to the applicants (both for pre-approved and rejected proposals). Information on successful proposals is published on the iDiv website.

7. Funding:

The call includes salary and consumable costs. Consumables must be specified in the budget plan and should not exceed the budget of 10 k€ per year. Within the 10 k€ per year, max. 1 k€ can be allocated for publications and min. 1 k€ should be allocated to conferences / lab visits / workshops. Investments and basic equipment (incl. IT-equipment, software) required for the project should be provided by the main PI. The funding for personal and consumables costs cannot be transferred between years.

Final project approval requires positive proposal evaluation and a selection of an excellent postdoctoral candidate during the recruitment process.

Each proposal may only request one scientific position.

All postdoctoral researchers (100%, E 13) are - depending on the PI's affiliation - employed via one of the three universities (Halle, Jena, Leipzig), the UFZ, or the University of Leipzig for projects led by non-university members.

Working space and additional infrastructure has to be provided by the PI's institution. iDiv may provide working space for short-term visits. Co-applicants being members in the iDiv building act as hosts for visiting Flexpool researchers. Employees of the Flexpool are fully integrated into iDiv with access to general iDiv resources (library, HPC, car park etc.) and are, in turn, requested to adhere to general iDiv regulations. They are expected to contribute to synergistic activities within the centre and adhere to the iDiv data policy. Flexpool employees are eligible to use iDiv support units (e.g., General IT Support Unit) and participate in institutional programs (e.g., female career fund).

8. Monitoring:

The postdoctoral researchers are encouraged to participate in the iDiv Postdoc Career Support Program of [yDiv - graduate school for young biodiversity researchers](), and in iDiv events. Part of this is the annual personal employee development meeting of the postdoctoral researcher and the project PI and Co-PIs. This should be documented and a copy of the confirmation should be submitted to iDiv.

All researchers employed via the Flexpool are expected to report on his / her progress by presenting his / her results at the annual iDiv conference. The main PI of the project is obliged to report on its progress and outcomes after the end of the funding period. A report template (or link to an online reporting tool) will be sent to the PI. Furthermore, the PIs of the funded projects are obliged to contribute proactively to the writing of the DFG end report.

Flexpool employees and their PIs are expected to keep a close communication and interaction with their Co-PIs. We encourage short term visits and other means of information exchange if regular personal meetings are hard to organize.

All Flexpool employees and PIs are obliged to use iDiv affiliation and mention Flexpool funding on scientific papers and publications arising from their projects. Details can be found in the guidelines for using the iDiv affiliation.

9. Submission and deadlines

A **Letter of Intent** shall be sent to the Scientific Networks unit ([flexpool@idiv.de]()) prior to a planned submission **no later than 02 June 2024** 11:59 p.m. CEST. Please use only the Word document provided as template.

Proposals shall be sent to the Scientific Networks unit ([flexpool@idiv.de]()) as a single PDF-file **no later than 23 June 2024** 11:59 p.m. CEST. **When submitting your proposal, please use only the Word document provided as template.** All documents mentioned in this call are available on the iDiv website. For further information, please visit the [Flexpool website]() or contact Scientific Networks unit.

A short glossary can be found at the end of the call.

Glossary:

Abbreviation	Definition
Applicant (= PI)	Scientifically independent researcher, leader of a research group, PhD-holder, the main supervisor of the project, full iDiv member
Co-applicant (= co-PI)	Any researcher with relevant scientific expertise and experience in supervision / mentoring students
External scientist	Scientifically independent researcher outside the iDiv consortium, leader of a research group, PhD-holder, co-supervisor of the project
HPC cluster	High-Performance Computing (HPC) Cluster
iDiv core professor	Leader (full professor) of a research group established at iDiv (total: 9 groups), for more details please see here
iDiv consortium	Full iDiv members plus partner institutions, universities and supporters, for more details please see here
Research Areas (RAs)	Biodiversity Change, Biodiversity and Complexity, Molecular Biodiversity and Adaptation, Biodiversity and Ecosystem Functioning and Biodiversity and Society, for more details please see here
Science Strategy Board (SSB)	Decision-making body of iDiv, composed out of all core professors, 9 full iDiv members, 1 JGL representative, sDiv coordinator and chief operating officer; main tasks are: a) Strategic and budgetary discussions enabling cutting-edge scientific advances and opportunities, b) Discussing, planning and supporting the strategic missions of iDiv, c) Delegation of tasks to committees and task forces