

Background

Digitalisation Initiative of the Canton of Zurich (DIZH)

Digitalisation places great demands on the economic, technological and social-innovation power of the Canton of Zurich. Society is undergoing fundamental change because of digitalisation. This process offers great opportunities in all areas of society, but also requires new skills and poses new challenges for culture, business, science and society as a whole. It is the joint task of all these players to meet the opportunities and challenges of digitalisation and to generate innovations.

The Digitalisation Initiative of the Canton of Zurich (DIZH) aims to strengthen the competitiveness of the Canton of Zurich as a location for research and development. The initiative supports culture, the economy and society in taking advantage of the opportunities offered by digitalisation, and in using them to benefit Zurich as a business location.

The central foundation of the DIZH is the cooperation between Zurich's universities in the field of digitalisation. The University of Zurich (UZH), the Zurich University of Applied Sciences (ZHAW), the Zurich University of the Arts (ZHdK) and the Zurich University of Teacher Education (PHZH) are systematically networked within the DIZH to promote research, innovation and education in the field of digitalisation using interdisciplinary approaches.

DIZH Innovation Programme

The Innovation Programme is a central instrument of the DIZH. It aims to strengthen the competitiveness of Zurich as a business location through various research and development projects in the field of 'digitalisation' between Zurich's universities and the private and public sectors. Within the framework of partnerships, research findings are to be brought closer to practical application and made available for practical use. Conversely, the programme allows the needs and experiences of practice-based institutions (Practice Partners) to flow into scientific research. The Practice Partners are all non-academic institutions, such as organisations and companies from the fields of culture, business and civil society. Characteristics of innovation that are essential for those wishing to participate in the innovation programme include willingness to take risks, disciplinary diversity, value creation and collaboration.

The DIZH Innovation Programme awards grants through transparent, competitive procedures. The focus of the programme is on the funding of projects that generate innovations that initiate or expand the new possibilities of digital transformation. For this purpose, different calls are launched every year. The types of calls launched within the framework of the DIZH Innovation Programme are explained in the document 'Innovation Programme Concept'.

The 'Innovation Programme Concept' and the 'Regulations for the DIZH Innovation Programme 2020–2029' are available at www.dizh.ch/innovationsprogramm (currently only in German).

First DIZH Project Call

The first call for the DIZH Innovation Programme is a 'Project Call'. With this type of call, the Innovation Programme supports multilateral projects that address specific questions. What differentiates the DIZH research cluster is based on the proposed projects' clear impact outside the university setting. While research funding is directly related to scientific research and may generate innovation, funding from the DIZH Innovation Programme aims directly at the practical benefits to be drawn from research and research transfer.

The aim of the first call in particular, is to support projects that focus on different forms of cooperation between the participating universities and Practice Partners. Project funds totalling CHF 2 million are available for the first call.

Conditions for the current DIZH Project-Call

Project application – contents and structure: An application comprises a maximum of five pages and must address the following points (a Word template for submission is available on the DIZH website):

- **Key points of content:** The projects supported by this call are aimed at finding forward-looking and beneficial solutions to relevant questions and problems of digital transformation from social, cultural and economic practice. The applicants proposals must accordingly present,
 - o which practice-relevant questions and problems are addressed in the context of digital transformation,
 - o the relevance of the questions and problems specified,
 - o how the project is embedded in the current state of knowledge or in the preparatory work of the applicants, and
 - o which explicit innovation objectives are pursued.
- **Multilateral Collaboration:** In this first call of the DIZH Innovation Programme, the focus is on addressing specific questions and problems through multilateral projects. Accordingly, the project submission must show how different partner institutions, actors, disciplines and expertise are to be networked and integrated. The inclusion of applicants from more than one DIZH institution is a desirable but not a necessary criterion for funding; the focus should be on the interdisciplinary character of the cooperation (see fifth evaluation criterion below). The application should also show how Practice Partners will be involved in the project, which can be done in one of two ways. If Practice Partners are part of the project team, the Practice Partners can testify to their interest and participation in a letter of intent, in which the form, content and responsibilities of the partners are outlined more concretely. If no Practice Partners are present when the application is submitted, in justified exceptional cases a strategy can be set out in the application to show how the project will achieve an impact in practice.
- **Impact and value creation:** The projects financed by the DIZH Innovation Programme aim to have the most direct impact or create value in the wider Zurich economic and societal sphere. The projects can target scientific, political, social, economic or cultural value creation. Applicants must accordingly set out,
 - o how their project can generate innovation and added value in practice,
 - o where their project will generate potential value-added effects,
 - o what accompanying measures they intend to take to support this effect with the interested public.
- **Budget and financing:** The DIZH funds available for a project range between CHF 50,000 and 250,000 (without co-financing). These DIZH funds may be used for personnel and material costs, including employment costs or project expenses of the applicants. Applicants must provide valid proof of their university's contribution of at least the same amount as the funds for which they have applied. Valid contributions here include the reallocation of existing university revenues, the release of reserves and third-party funds directly related to the project (see Regulations for the DIZH 2020-2029 Innovation Programme, §17).¹ If Practice Partners provide co-financing, letters of support (signed by authorised persons) must be enclosed. In the budget section of the template, the applicants must indicate the concrete form of the co-financing. Funds from other DIZH programmes may not be used for co-financing.
- **Timetable and milestones:** Projects funded through the first call should not exceed a duration of 2 years. The application should show how the project objectives are to be achieved in terms of content, methodology and time, and what expenditure is required for each of the individual project phases and milestones.

¹ Contacts of the respective universities for enquiries regarding co-financing can be found at www.dizh.ch/innovationsprogramm.

Evaluation criteria: In selecting the projects to be funded, the Innovation Programme is guided by the following criteria and associated indicators taken from the 'Regulations for the DIZH 2020-2029 Innovation Programme' (the German text is authoritative, the English text only serves for informational purposes):

1. **Impact:** The project aims at the implementation of research and/or technology-based knowledge in society and the market and goes hand in hand with economic, social, political, cultural, artistic and ecological value creation. *Possible indicators: Feasibility, scope, relevance, differentiation from existing knowledge.*
2. **Topicality:** The project concerns issues that are particularly important in the current social discourse. *Possible indicators: plausibility of the time-critical nature, follow-up financing.*
3. **Scientific and professional quality:** The project is based on the latest findings and meets the high standards of the disciplines involved. *Possible indicators: relation to the 'state of the art', adequacy of the methodology.*
4. **Inventiveness and willingness to take risks:** The project has a disruptive and forward-looking character and is pursuing radically new approaches. *Possible indicators: Novelty of the application, opportunities, risks, degree of disruption.*
5. **Cooperation and disciplinary dialogue:** The project contributes to the networking of partner institutions through its inter- or multi-disciplinary character. *Possible indicators: Suitability of the interdisciplinary approach to the problem definition, synergy effects between DIZH-institutions and departments.*
6. **Practical orientation:** The practical orientation should manifest itself in the cooperation with a practical partner who is already won over in the application phase. Alternatively, a strategy can be presented on how appropriate networks can be established in the course of the project. *Possible indicators: plausibility of the strategy for generating a practical impact, the existence of existing (or addressing missing) stakeholder groups, involvement of the Practice Partners in a targeted way, reference to a significant practical issue.*

Authorised applicants: Academic staff of all DIZH universities are eligible to apply for this call. Applicants confirm in their application that they are entitled to submit and implement project proposals within the budget they have been given, in accordance with the requirements of their institution. For each project, one person is named as the main responsible applicant and is considered the contact person. Students of the DIZH universities can be part of the project teams but are not themselves allowed to be applicants in this call.

Intellectual Property (IP): When an application is submitted, it is guaranteed by the applicant that possible rights of third parties have been clarified and, if applicable, that the necessary rights of use exist. The rights will be regulated through case-specific agreement with Practice Partners before the start of the project. The right of the partner universities involved in the project to use the results free of charge for research and teaching in all areas of application must be ensured. In the event of a commitment, IP issues will be regulated in accordance with the regulations for the DIZH 2020-2029 innovation programme (§7).

Project submission and duration: For the submission of applications, the template for project submissions must be used, which can be downloaded from www.dizh.ch/innovationsprogramm. Further information on entry modalities will be available on the same web address on 15 January 2021.

Submissions for this first call of the DIZH Innovation Programme will be processed according to the following procedure:

- Deadline for project submissions is 1 March 2021.
- The decision on the awarding of the grant will be made by 1 May 2021. Projects can formally start from this date.
- Projects must officially begin no later than the beginning of the 2021 autumn semester for which the formal deadline is 1 October 2021.