

DIZH Innovation Program – Rapid Action Call “The Last Mile”

With the "Rapid Action Calls" of the Innovation Program, the Digitalization Initiative of the Zurich Higher Education Institutions (DIZH) supports smaller projects that will respond to immediate challenges through measures that can be implemented quickly. The first Rapid Action Call has the slogan "The Last Mile". Projects will be supported for which concepts and implementation plans already exist to digitally address societal challenges and which still must go "the last mile", so to speak, to become a functioning tool or service or provide an effective societal impact.

The first Rapid Action Call is aimed, in particular, at junior researchers or younger professionals from DIZH institutions who wish to contribute to the digital innovation potential of the Canton of Zurich. The focus is on projects with solid preliminary work: those where concepts have been defined and presented in publications, implementation plans are available, a proof-of-concept has been delivered or first prototypes have been created, but a "final kick" is needed. Successful projects would be, for example, those that can be used in teaching, utilized by civil society organizations, have an impact on the cultural sector, or succeed on the market. **In particular, it must be demonstrated that a rapid conclusion is important for the success of the project.**

Projects for the Rapid Action Call "The Last Mile" can claim a **maximum of CHF 80,000** in funding from the DIZH Special Credit, must begin **within three months of being approved**, and may last a **maximum of 12 months** after the start of the project. According to the general conditions for DIZH support, each proposal for a DIZH project must include **at least an equal contribution from the institutions themselves**; it is also possible to show that the applicants have made synergistic contributions as counter-financing. Collaboration between DIZH institutions and/or practice partners (non-academic institutions, for example, organizations, companies, and institutions from culture, business, and civil society) is not mandatory but is considered advantageous in the evaluation of applications. The project must produce a practice-relevant result that can achieve a public impact within a defined framework. The additional conditions for applications that may be submitted under "The Last Mile" Rapid Action Call are detailed below.

Conditions for the current DIZH Rapid Action Call

Application – content and structure: An application comprises a **maximum of three pages** and must address the following points:

- **Description of the starting point:** The application must show what preliminary work already exists for the project objective. Examples include existing concepts (e.g., for digital tools, social initiatives, mediation formats, exhibitions), implementation plans (e.g., for processes, structures, live events), proofs-of-concept, or prototypes (e.g., software or hardware). The extent to which these preliminary works have already been subjected to a "reality-check" should be demonstrated, for example: (i) through publication of the concepts in professional journals; (ii) description of the application of a technology; (iii) peer review of implementation plans; (iv) empirical preliminary studies of educational formats or social interventions; (v) through a demonstration of the functionality of a technology/service; (vi) through the testing of prototypes; or (vii) through innovative exhibition and performance formats that have already been tested. In particular, it should be shown to what extent the potential end-users or audience/public have already been involved in these planning efforts and what role they will have in the application itself. This preliminary work can refer to all types of innovations — examples include technical and artistic solutions (hardware or apps) for applications in areas such as health, arts or media, process and organizational support by means of digital tools (e.g., for systematizing problems), digital tools for teaching, knowledge and cultural mediation (e.g., game-based), legal tech, etc. Applicants are free to choose the content of their projects as long as it is relevant to the topic of digitalization (by using digital tools or addressing a phenomenon of digital change); representatives of all disciplines taught at DIZH institutions are explicitly invited to apply.
- **Description of the realization of the "last mile":** the application should describe what further work is required to bring the preliminary work to a defined result, end product, or innovative social or artistic format. Planning, key milestones, and involvement of any partners should be outlined. In addition, a clear explanation of the urgency of the project's implementation must be included.

- **Impact:** The projects funded by the DIZH Innovation Program should have a clear impact and create value in the social, cultural, and economic region of Zurich. Accordingly, the Rapid Action Call "The Last Mile" should specifically state which issue is being addressed or which problem is being solved and how its impact can be demonstrated. The application should outline within which existing vessels or collaborations the new solution will be integrated so that its practical use or cultural or social impact can be anticipated. All applicants should demonstrate how an initial impact will be achieved by the time the project is completed, i.e., no later than 12 months after the start of the project.
- **Budget and financing:** For the Rapid Action Call "The Last Mile", funds in the amount of CHF 10,000 to CHF 80,000 from the DIZH special credit can be requested (without contribution of the involved DIZH institutions, which must be at least matched to the amount requested). These DIZH funds may be used for personnel and material costs or the procurement of equipment and facilities, as long as these are below the threshold value.¹ They may also be used explicitly for the salaries of the applicants. DIZH funds may not be used for the expenses of practice partners. Subcontracting of individual tasks to third parties using DIZH funding is possible, as long as it is indispensable for the project.²

Applicants must demonstrate valid own contributions of at least the same amount as the requested funds (matching funds). In the case of the Rapid Action Call "The Last Mile", previous funding of applicants may also be reported as matching funds (as in-kind contributions by DIZH institutions; in-kind contributions by practice partners do not count as matching funds). Such previous funding may be claimed up to 12 months before the project is submitted and must be clearly related to the creation of the concept, implementation plan, proof-of-concept, or prototype that forms the basis of the application; see also the DIZH Innovation Program Rules (§17) for the crediting of overhead costs.³ If practice partners provide cash contributions, corresponding letters (signed by authorized persons) must be enclosed. Within the scope of own contributions, the partner institutions may charge overhead costs on the total project costs (consisting of the special credit and own contributions including overhead surcharge) to an amount of 20 percent.⁴ In the budget calculation table (available on the DIZH website early in October), applicants must indicate the specific form of their institutions' contribution. Note that funds from other DIZH programs may not be used as own contributions.

Evaluation Criteria: In selecting the projects to be funded, the Innovation Program is guided by the following criteria and associated indicators taken from the "Innovation program rules":

1. **Impact:** The project is aimed at the implementation of research and/or technology-based knowledge in society and the market and is guided by economic, social, political, cultural, artistic, and ecological value creation. *Key indicators: feasibility, scope, relevance for societal actors, differentiation from existing knowledge.*
2. **Topicality:** The project concerns issues that are particularly important in current social discourse. *Key indicators: plausibility of time-critical nature, follow-up funding.*
3. **Scientific and professional quality:** The project is based on the latest findings and meets the high standards of the disciplines involved. *Key indicators: relation to the "state of the art", adequacy of methodology.*
4. **Inventiveness and risk taking:** The project has a disruptive and forward-looking character and pursues radically new approaches. *Key indicators: novelty of application, opportunities, risks, degree of disruption.*
5. **Cooperation and disciplinary dialogue:** The project contributes to networking of partner institutions through its inter- and/or multidisciplinary character. *Key indicators: suitability of the*

¹ Procurement of equipment, facilities, and infrastructure that are indispensable for the project and have a useful life of at least one year.

The following thresholds apply per acquisition: UZH: 10 TCHF / PHZH, ZHAW, ZHdK: 50 TCHF. Acquisitions exceeding these thresholds are classified as "investments" and must be procured internally by the university. These cannot be financed with DIZH funds. Purchases of equipment and facilities below this threshold may be reported for DIZH credit.

Examples are laboratory equipment, machines, instruments, tools, hardware (including operating software), printers, vehicles, furniture, software, licenses, and patents.

² A maximum of 20% of the total project costs or a maximum of 100 TCHF may be used for subcontracting.

³ Contacts of the respective universities for inquiries regarding personal contributions and other questions regarding funding and the call can be found at <https://dizh.ch/en/innovationprogram/>.

⁴ The overhead surcharge applies at the level of the individual project (i.e., it is a fixed imputed surcharge per project). In total, 25% overhead on primary funds and 20% of total project costs (including overhead) are incurred in a project and this is independent of the funding split. For the innovation program, 50/50 funding applies.

interdisciplinary structure to the problem, synergy effects between DIZH institutions and departments.

6. Practical orientation: The practical orientation could manifest itself in the cooperation with a practical partner (not mandatory). *Key indicators: plausibility of the strategy for generating practical impact, existence of stakeholder groups (or addressing missing stakeholder groups), targeted involvement of practical partners, reference to a significant practical issue, letters of intent from practical partners.*

Eligible Applicants: Employees of all DIZH institutions are eligible to apply for this Rapid Action Call; in particular, junior researchers (e.g., PhD students or persons with less than 5 years of research experience), professionals, young cultural workers, or lecturers who teach and research at a DIZH institution are also addressed. For example, through this program, the results of projects can be finalized, doctoral study results can be put into practice, or concepts of performing arts can be realized. The application can be submitted by an individual or by a team. The inclusion of applicants from more than one DIZH institution is not mandatory but is considered advantageous in the evaluation of applications. Likewise, it is not mandatory that practice partners are integrated into the application; however, such inclusion is also likely to be considered positive for the proof of the impact and practical orientation of the project. Please note that if practice partners are involved, they must be financially and personally independent from the research partners.⁵

Intellectual Property (IP): With the submission of an application, 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 are regulated in a case-specific agreement with the practice partners before the start of the project. The right of the partner institutions involved in the structure to use the results free of charge for research and teaching in all areas of application must be ensured. In case of a commitment, IP issues will be regulated according to the DIZH Innovation Program Rules 2020-2029 (§7).

Submission and duration: For the submission of proposals the template is to be used, for the calculation of the budget the table is to be used, both of which can be downloaded at <https://dizh.ch/en/innovationprogram>. Further information on submission instructions can be found at the same web address.

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

- **Beginning of October 2021:** submissions portal ready;
- **1 November 2021:** deadline for submissions;
- **December 2021:** decisions on submissions made;
- **1 January 2022:** earliest date to start projects;
- **1 April 2022:** latest date to start projects.

⁵ Independence is guaranteed if the natural persons involved in the project on the part of a DIZH institution:

- do not work for a practice partner at the same time;
- have no economic interests in the business activities of a practice partner and do not financially support a practice partner for other reasons.

Legal entities working together as DIZH institution members and practice partners are considered independent if none of the parties holds 20% or more of the participation rights of the other partner.

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. 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 higher education institutions 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 Program

The Innovation Program 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 higher education institutions 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 program 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 program include willingness to take risks, disciplinary diversity, value creation and collaboration.

The DIZH Innovation Program awards grants through transparent, competitive procedures. The focus of the program 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 Program are explained in the document 'Innovation program concept'.

The 'Innovation program concept' and the 'Innovation program rules' are available in German at <https://dizh.ch/en/innovationprogram>.