

DIZH Innovation Program – Structure Call 2023.1

With the Structure Call, the Digitalization Initiative of the Zurich Higher Education Institutions (DIZH) supports new, long-term innovation structures for up to 5 years. Because digitalization generates new work structures and because innovative power can only develop in suitable structures, the DIZH Structure Call explicitly seeks innovative structures.

DIZH structures will be designed as formats that are adequate to digitalization and should be able to react quickly to developments. DIZH structures will form a central instrument for overcoming the boundaries of disciplines' and organizations' silos and finding practically relevant solutions. The organizational forms created by the Structure Call should outlast the DIZH and contribute to the higher education institutions of the Canton of Zurich by establishing sustainable cooperation.

The most extensive resources of the DIZH Innovation Program are used for these important goals. Structure calls are intended to sustainably link the DIZH partner institutions with each other and with relevant social actors in terms of structure and content, thereby enabling innovations that are difficult to realize through conventional funding instruments.

In total, there will be three Structure Calls, which are expected to be announced by 2026. For this second call, a funding volume of around 6 million CHF is planned. Each structure can be supported with **0.5 to 2 million CHF** (or with max. 250,000 CHF to 1 million CHF for the first period, which ends after 2.5 years at the latest) through the DIZH special credit. According to the general conditions for DIZH support, each proposal must have at least an equal contribution from the institutions of the proposal team and/or practice partners. Due to their central importance for the long-term and overarching goals of the DIZH, structures are accompanied by the innovation panel in terms of content. This accompaniment takes place, among other things, through a site assessment (usually one year after the start of the project); An interim evaluation (usually after two years) will decide whether the structure will continue to be financed by DIZH funds in the second period.

Conditions for the current DIZH Structure Call

Application – content and structure: An application comprises a **maximum of 10 pages** and must address the following points, in addition to the technical-thematic orientation and objective of the structure:

Cooperation: A core objective of Structure Calls is the networking of DIZH partner institutions with each other and with societal actors (practice partners). Accordingly, at least two applicants from different DIZH institutions must form the application team. The inclusion of at least one practice partner must also be indicated in the application. The form, content, participation, and responsibilities of the practice partners must be clearly stated in the application and confirmed by a letter of intent (LoI). Practice partners should contribute to the structure using identified resources (e.g., cash contribution, in-kind contributions using personnel expenses or infrastructure, as well as access to information); only cash contributions in the form of third-party funds to the DIZH institutions can be included in the contribution by the involved DIZH institutions (matching funds, see below). The proposal must also describe how the collaboration of the structural partners will be organized; the focus should be on the interdisciplinary character of the collaboration (see fifth evaluation criterion below). Accordingly, the proposal should specify which components the structure will consist of, which partners will contribute to these components, in what way, and what the collaboration between the partners will look like.

Quality: DIZH structures enable innovation with a dedicated digital focus in a broad spectrum of disciplines. This is explicitly based on a comprehensive understanding of innovation that is not limited to technologies in the narrow sense. DIZH structures should lead to networking and interdisciplinary cooperation among the relevant actors from the perspectives of research, development, and practice to enable value-creating innovations. Accordingly, the application must describe the applicants' competencies in these fields of activity (e.g., a track record of previous research or successful innovation initiatives). Furthermore, the proposal should explain which results are to be achieved with the structure and to what extent these results are novel and of high quality compared to existing ones.

Impact: The structures financed by the DIZH Innovation Program should generate resonance and create (added) value in the social, cultural, and economic region of Zurich. DIZH structures are to develop formats of collaboration, experimentation, and presentation to achieve impact over a long

period. The target dimensions of the intended impact can address the various dimensions of innovation, such as societal and social innovations, artistic and cultural innovations, economic innovations, pedagogical, scientific and technological innovations (see paper «Innovationsverständnis und Evaluationskriterien»¹).

Accordingly, applicants shall demonstrate:

- how innovation and value creation can be generated in practice through their structure and what role practice partners (as part of the application team and/or as beneficiaries of the DIZH structure) will have in this;
- which accompanying measures (e.g., knowledge transfer or information events for the interested public) will support this impact;
- how the impact will unfold and possibly change over a long period.

Formats and objectives: DIZH structures can use a wide variety of formats to enable networking and collaboration for innovation. Examples of formats include FabLabs, Hackathon series, Hubs, Makeathons, Open Spaces, Platforms, Living Labs, interdisciplinary workshops, or thematic networks. The objectives can also be very different. Examples are the identification of practical questions, the creation of prototypes, the launching of experiments/projects/studies, the organization of mediation formats, or the transfer of research results into practice. Applicants are free to choose the formats and objectives they wish to work with. However, the application must clearly state the objectives of the structure, the milestones and measurable partial results targeted at which point in time, the formats to be used, and how they will contribute to the desired impact. Furthermore, the application should also describe the distinction to already funded DIZH structures.

Budget and financing: The requested funds for a DIZH structure are to be in the range of 0.5 to 2 million CHF over the entire duration (without contribution of the involved DIZH institutions, which must be at least matched to the amount requested; see below). The first partial funding amounts to a maximum of requested DIZH funds (i.e., max. 250,000 to 1 million CHF) and is paid out during the first period, while the second amount is paid after the successful interim evaluation during the second period. Depending on the selected formats and objectives, DIZH funds may be used for personnel and material costs or the procurement of equipment and facilities, if these are below the threshold value.² DIZH funds may not be used for expenses incurred by practice partners. Subcontracting individual tasks to third parties using DIZH funds is possible as long as it is indispensable for the structure.³ Personnel resources charged to DIZH funds are to be used for profiles and functions that make an obvious contribution to the cross-institutional collaboration. Examples are coordinators of innovative formats and/or scientists or experts who contribute to novel interdisciplinary forms of co-operation.

The institutions represented in the team must show valid contributions in at least the same amount as the requested funds (matching funds). Valid contributions include the reallocation of existing institutional revenues, the release of reserves, and third-party funds directly related to the structure (see DIZH Innovation Program Rules 2020-2029, §17)⁴. Cash contributions from practice partners must flow as third-party funds to one of the DIZH institutions. In-kind contributions by practice partners cannot be credited but have a positive effect on the evaluation. For the crediting of overhead costs, the regulations for the Innovation Program (§17) must also be observed. If practice partners provide cash contributions, corresponding letters (signed by authorized persons) must be enclosed. Within the scope of their contributions, the partner institutions may charge overhead costs on the total costs (consisting of special credit and contributions of involved DIZH institutions including

¹ https://dizh.ch/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/20230616_Innovationsverstaendnis-und-Evaluationskriterien.pdf

² Procurement of equipment, facilities, and infrastructure that are indispensable for the structure 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.

³ A maximum of 20% of the total costs or a maximum of 100 TCHF may be used for subcontracting.

⁴ Contacts of the respective DIZH institutions for inquiries regarding matching funds and other questions regarding funding and the call can be found at <https://dizh.ch/en/innovationprogram/>.

overhead surcharge) in the amount of 20 percent⁵ (see DIZH Innovation Program Rules 2020-2029, §17). In the budget calculation table (available on the DIZH website early in October), applicants must indicate the specific form in which their contribution will be made. Funds from other DIZH programs may not be used as their matching funds.

It is possible to submit structures for which only a part (but sufficient for the first period; usually 2.5 years) of the matching funds is secured. In this case, the applicants must specify how the matching funds will be secured for the second period. During the interim evaluation, it must be proven that the second period's contribution is secured. If such proof is not available or only partially available, the second period of the structure will not be financed by DIZH funds or will only be financed in accordance with the secured matching funds.

Timetable and milestones: Within the framework of the DIZH, a structure has a duration of at least three and a maximum of five years. The total duration is divided into two sub-periods of equal length. During the first sub-period, an initial site assessment is usually carried out one year after the start of the project in order to ensure, in view of the interim evaluation, that the structure develops as planned and in accordance with the DIZH regulations. Whether the structure is funded over the two sub-periods is decided based on an interim report. In the case of a five-year duration, this report is to be submitted after 2 years; the decision on continuation will be available after about 3 months. If the structure within the DIZH is designed for a shorter duration, the dates for the submission of the interim report and the decision will be adapted accordingly. The application should show which expenses are incurred for the individual phases and milestones for the establishment and maintenance of the DIZH structure. In the interim evaluation, particular attention will be paid to how the structure has been received by the practice partners involved and how the funded structure will be continued and further developed after the DIZH funding has expired. On the latter point, a financial plan for continuation for at least two years after the end of the funding must be submitted as part of the interim evaluation. In the case of DIZH structures that cannot provide evidence of their performance in the second period, that do not demonstrate a sustainable strategy for further development after the end of DIZH funding, and/or for which there are reasonable doubts that the goals of collaboration, quality, and impact can be achieved, funding through DIZH will end after 2.5 years.

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

1. Impact: The structure 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, and differentiation from existing knowledge.*
2. Sustainability: The structure deals with issues that are significant for current social discourse in the long term. The structure can also respond to changing requirements. *Key indicators: plausibility of longer-term relevance, follow-up funding, and organizational measures to ensure flexibility.*
3. Scientific and professional quality: The structure is based on the latest findings and meets the high standards of the disciplines involved. *Key indicators: relation to "state of the art" and adequacy of methodology.*
4. Inventiveness and risk taking: The structure has a disruptive and forward-looking character and pursues radically new approaches. *Key indicators: novelty of application, opportunities, risks, and degree of disruption.*
5. Cooperation and disciplinary dialogue: The structure contributes to the networking of partner institutions through its inter- and/or multidisciplinary character. *Key indicators: suitability of the interdisciplinary structure to the problem, synergy effects between DIZH institutions and departments.*
6. Practical orientation: The structure's practical orientation should already be expressed in the application phase via cooperation with one or more practical partners. *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, Lots from practical partners.*

⁵ The overhead surcharge applies at the level of the individual structure (i.e., it is a fixed imputed surcharge per structure). In total, 25% overhead on primary funds and 20% of total costs (including overhead) are incurred and this is independent of the funding split. For the innovation program, 50/50 funding applies.

With regard to the interpretation of the evaluation criteria, reference is made to the paper «Innovationsverständnis und Evaluationskriterien»⁶

Eligible applicants: Employees of all DIZH institutions — who are employed during the DIZH funding — are eligible to apply for this call. The applicants' higher degree institutional unit (e.g., faculty, department) must confirm its support for the application, the provision of the necessary resources, and its willingness to back the structure together with the partner institutions, in compliance with the respective financial regulations (please contact the respective contact point of your institution in advance; see <https://dizh.ch/en/innovationprogram/>). The application must be submitted by at least two applicants from different DIZH institutions. For each structure, a main applicant will be named who will be responsible for the submission and serve as contact person. In the case of successful funding, this person will usually serve as coordinator and will be responsible for meeting deadlines and DIZH regulations and requirements (e.g., reporting); they will also represent the structure externally. Furthermore, with the submission of the application it must be indicated, which DIZH institution is in the lead ("Leading House⁷"). The main applicant and coordinator should be a member of the Leading House. However, financial competence, as well as personnel responsibility, lie with the individual institutions. Students of DIZH institutions can be team members but are not eligible to apply for this call. In addition, the research and practice partners must be financially and personally independent⁸.

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 structure. 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: The prescribed template should be used for the submission of proposals; the prescribed table should be used for the calculation of the budget. Both these documents can be downloaded at <https://dizh.ch/en/innovationprogram> as soon as they are ready. Further information on how to submit a proposal can be found at the same Internet address.

The timeline of the second call will be as follows:

- On November 1st, 2023, the call for applications will be published on the DIZH website.
- **Mid November 2023:** submissions portal ready;
- **April 4 2024, 12:00 PM (noon):** deadline for submissions;
- By **September 2024:** decisions on submissions made;
- Formal start of structures is expected to be possible as of **November 1st, 2024**. Structures must officially start no later than **May 1st, 2025**.

⁶ https://dizh.ch/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/20230616_Innovationsverstaendnis-und-Evaluationskriterien.pdf

⁷ The Leading House is a DIZH institution and cannot be changed during the first period.

⁸ 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

Digitalization Initiative of the Zurich Higher Education Institutions (DIZH)

Digitalization places great demands on the economic, technological and social innovative strength of the Canton of Zurich. Society is undergoing a fundamental transformation as a result of digitalization. This process offers great opportunities in all areas of society, but also requires new skills and poses new challenges for society, culture, business and science. It is a joint task of all these players to meet the opportunities and challenges and to generate innovations.

DIZH wants to strengthen the Canton of Zurich's competitiveness as a hub for research and development. The initiative aims to help industry and society take advantage of the opportunities offered by digitalization and use them to benefit the greater Zurich area.

The mission of Digitalization Initiative of the Zurich Higher Education Institutions (DIZH) is to promote cooperation on digitalization issues between higher education institutions in Zurich. The University of Zurich (UZH), Zurich University of Applied Sciences (ZHAW), Zurich University of the Arts (ZHdK) and Zurich University of Teacher Education (PHZH) are part of the DIZH network, which aims to advance research, innovation and education on digitalization by using interdisciplinary approaches.

Innovation program

DIZH's innovation program is one of the initiative's core components. Our partner universities are running various types of innovative digitalization projects with the private and public sector. This is intended to bring research findings closer in line with practical real world applications and also allows researchers to consider the needs and experiences of their partners in industry and government. Here the following characteristics of innovation play an important role: being open to taking risks, incorporating a variety of disciplines, creating value and working together.

Funding from the innovation program will be distributed in a transparent and competitive process. The focus is on funding projects that generate innovations that enable the new possibilities of digital transformation in the first place or expand these possibilities. To this end, different calls are launched each year. The calls launched as part of the DIZH Innovation Program are explained in the "Concept for the Innovation Program".

The "Concept for the Innovation Program" and the "Regulations for the DIZH Innovation Program 2020-2029" are available at dizh.ch/innovationprogram