

# DIZH Innovation Program 3rd Rapid-Action-Call

## Digital resilience: the tension between deep fake and cyber creativity

The innovation program of the Digitalisation Initiative of the Zurich Higher Education Institutions (DIZH) uses the Rapid-Action-Call format to support projects that respond to immediate social challenges with quickly realisable measures.

Current developments such as AI and ever easier access to digital tools are accelerating and multiplying the possibilities for creative but also uncontrolled use of digital content and formats. New forms of participation and hateful exclusion, creative disruption and destructive misinformation, personal forms of expression and AI-generated influencers meet in the field of tension of digital access. A safe compass through the thicket of challenges seems more urgent than ever, especially for teenagers and young adults. The Rapid-Action-Call addresses projects that use innovative applications, creative programmes or target group-specific exchange formats etc. to help strengthen the digital resilience and digital security of inexperienced users.

Project funds totalling CHF 392'000 are available. Projects with a **maximum duration of 12 months** can apply for the DIZH special credit **between CHF 15'000 and CHF 75'000**. The projects should **begin within 3 months of approval**.

### Conditions for the DIZH Rapid-Action-Call

**Application – content and structure:** An application comprises a **maximum of three pages** and must cover the following points (a Word template for submission is available on the DIZH website):

The application must explain how the project relates to the topic of "digital resilience". It is important to explicitly include the direct target group of the project (e.g. adolescents and young adults) as well as the **early and close involvement of one or more practice partners** (e.g. NGOs, cantonal authorities, etc.). It also makes sense to involve the specific knowledge and expertise of people with a clear connection to the topic (e.g. security experts, extremism and violence experts). A **letter of intent from at least one practice partner** is mandatory, clearly stating that the planned project will create a concrete benefit for the target group and that there are no redundancies with existing projects. All disciplines that are taught and researched at DIZH institutions are eligible to apply. Employees from the "Third Space" area of the DIZH universities with a connection to the topic are also eligible to apply.

**Impact:** The Rapid-Action-Call projects funded as part of the DIZH innovation program should be able to be implemented quickly and contribute to digital resilience through a proven connection to digitalisation. The impact of the project should primarily be achieved in the Canton of Zurich.

Applicants must explain accordingly:

- *which* issue is to be addressed or which problem is to be solved,
- *what* impact is to be achieved, particularly in relation to the direct target group
- *how* and *where* a clear impact can be achieved by the end of the project at the latest,
- *what* potential the proposed solutions have for similar challenges in the future.

**Budget and financing:** The DIZH funds applied for must be between CHF 15'000-75'000 (excl. own contribution/"matching funds"). The DIZH funds may be used for personnel and material costs or for the acquisition of equipment and facilities, provided they are below the threshold value.<sup>1</sup> They may also be used for applicants' salaries. DIZH funds cannot be used for expenses incurred by practice partners. The subcontracting of individual tasks to third parties using DIZH funds is possible if this is essential for the project<sup>2</sup>. Applicants must provide valid own contributions ("matching funds") in the same amount as the funds applied for. Advance contributions related to the submitted project can also be recognised as own contributions (as in-kind contributions from DIZH universities; in-kind contributions from practice partners cannot be considered). Such preliminary work may be claimed up to 12 months before the project is submitted. If practice partners make their own direct financial contributions, letters of confirmation must be enclosed. As part of their own contributions, the partner universities may claim overhead costs amounting to 20 per cent of the total project costs (consisting of the special credit and their own contributions including overhead surcharge)<sup>3</sup>. In the budget calculation table (available on the DIZH website), applicants indicate the specific form of their own contribution. Funds from other DIZH projects may not be used. Likewise, funds that have already been used as own contributions for approved DIZH projects may not be credited again. If applicants have any questions regarding personal contributions, use of funds or other budget aspects, they can contact the contact points at their universities and/or the DIZH Program Office at any time. The contact details can be found on the website.

**Timetable:** Projects in this Rapid-Action-Call should not exceed a duration of **12 months**. The application should show how the project objectives are to be achieved in terms of content, methodology and time and what expenditure is to be expected in the individual project phases.

## Evaluation criteria

When selecting projects for funding, the innovation program is guided by the following criteria and corresponding indicators, which are taken from the "[Innovation program rules \(German\)](#)". For the Rapid-Action-Call, **criteria 1, 2 and 6** take centre stage:

1. **Impact:** The project aims to implement research and/or technology-based findings in society and the market as quickly and pragmatically as possible and is accompanied by economic, social, political, cultural, artistic and/or ecological added value. The expected impact should be addressed by the practice partner in a Letter of Intent (LoI) (see also 6. Practical orientation). *Key indicators: feasibility, near-term horizon, scope, relevance for social stakeholders, differentiation from existing projects.*
2. **Topicality:** The project addresses issues that are particularly important in the current social context. *Key indicators: plausibility of the time-critical nature, follow-up funding.*
3. **Scientific and technical quality:** The project is based on the latest findings and meets the high standards of the disciplines involved. *Key indicators: Relationship to the "state of the art", adequacy of the methodology.*
4. **Inventiveness:** The project has a pioneering character. *Key indicators: Novelty of the application, opportunities.*
5. **Cooperation and disciplinary dialogue:** The project contributes to the networking of the partner universities through its inter- or multidisciplinary character. *Key indicators: suitability of the interdisciplinary approach to the problem, synergy effects between universities and departments.*
6. **Practical orientation:** The practical orientation should be expressed in cooperation with at least one practical partner. *Key indicators: plausibility of the strategy for generating practical impact, existence of existing (or thematisation of missing) stakeholder groups, target-oriented integration of practice partners, reference to a significant practical issue, letter(s) of intent from practice partner(s).*

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<sup>1</sup> Procurement of equipment, facilities and infrastructure that are indispensable for the project and have a useful life of at least one year. The following threshold values apply per purchase: **UZH: CHF 10,000 / PHZH, ZHAW, ZHdK: CHF 50,000**. Purchases that exceed these thresholds are categorised as "investments" and must be procured within the university. These cannot be financed with DIZH funds. However, purchases of equipment and systems below this threshold may be declared for the DIZH loan. For example: laboratory equipment, machines, instruments, tools, hardware (incl. operating software), printers, vehicles, furniture, software, licenses, patents, etc.

<sup>2</sup> A maximum of 20% of the total project sum may be used for subcontracting.

<sup>3</sup> The overhead surcharge applies at the level of the individual project, i.e. it is a fixed imputed surcharge per project. In total, a project incurs 25% overhead on the primary funds and 20% of the total project costs (incl. overhead), regardless of the financing split.

Regarding the interpretation of the evaluation criteria, please refer to the document "[Understanding innovation and evaluation criteria \(German\)](#)". The [database of funded projects](#) on the DIZH website is available for further empirical values.

**Eligible applicants:** All members of DIZH universities who are employed are eligible to apply. By submitting the application, applicants confirm that they are authorised to submit and implement project applications within the specified budget in accordance with the guidelines of their institution. A main applicant is named for each project, who is responsible for submitting the application and is considered the contact person. If the application is approved, this person usually takes over the coordination and is responsible for meeting (monitoring) the deadlines as well as the DIZH regulations and requirements (e.g. reporting) and represents the project. In addition, when submitting the application, the DIZH university is specified as the leading house. The main applicant and coordinator must be a member of the "Leading House". Financial and personnel responsibility lies with the individual universities. Students at DIZH universities can be team members but are not eligible to apply themselves. In addition, university members and practice partners must be financially and personally independent of each other<sup>4</sup>.

**Intellectual property (IP):** When submitting an application, it is ensured that possible third-party rights have been clarified and that the necessary rights of use are available. The rights are regulated in a case-specific agreement with the 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 guaranteed. In the event of approval, the IP issues will be regulated in accordance with the provisions of the [regulations for the DIZH innovation program](#) (§7).

**Submission and duration:** The template must be used for submitting applications and the table for calculating the budget, both of which can be downloaded from the [DIZH Website](#). Further information on the submission modalities can be found at the same web address.

Submissions for this 3rd Rapid-Action-Call of the DIZH Innovation Program will be processed according to the following procedure:

- On **11.03.24** the call for proposals will take place;
- The submission portal will be available in **end-March 2024**;
- by **30.04.2024 at 12 noon** the submissions will be accepted;
- a decision on the award will be made **by mid-June 2024**
- a formal start of the projects is possible **immediately** after approval.

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<sup>4</sup> Independence is guaranteed if the natural persons involved on the part of DIZH-Hochschule:

- 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 that work together as university members and practice partners are deemed to be independent of each other if neither party holds 20% or more of the participation rights of the other partner.

## Mission of the DIZH

### Digitalisation Initiative of the Zurich Higher Education Institutions (DIZH)

Digitalisation places great demands on the economic, technological, social and cultural innovative strength 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 society, culture, business and science. It is a joint task of all these players to meet the opportunities and challenges and to create innovations. The Canton of Zurich's digitalisation initiative (DIZH) aims to strengthen the Canton of Zurich's competitiveness as a research and development location. It supports society, culture and the economy in seizing the opportunities of digitalisation and using them profitably for 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 networking in the DIZH to drive forward research, innovation and education in the field of digitalisation with 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 between Zurich's universities and the private and public sectors in the field of digitalisation. Within the framework of partnerships, the findings from research are to be brought closer to practice. Conversely, the challenges and questions from practice should flow into science and contribute to researching practical solutions. All non-academic institutions, such as organisations and companies from culture, business and civil society, are regarded as practice partners. The following characteristics of innovation are essential for the innovation program: willingness to take risks, disciplinary diversity, value creation and collaboration. The DIZH innovation program awards funding in a transparent, competitive process. The focus is on promoting projects and structures that produce innovations that make the new possibilities of digital transformation possible in the first place or expand these possibilities. Different calls are launched each year for this purpose. The Rapid-Action-Call are intended for the realisation of time-critical ideas. The types of calls launched as part of the DIZH innovation program are explained in the "[Innovation program concept \(German\)](#)".

The "[Innovation Program Concept \(German\)](#)" and the "[Innovation program rules \(German\)](#)" are available at [www.dizh.ch/innovationsprogramm](http://www.dizh.ch/innovationsprogramm).