Frequently Asked Questions

1. Eligibility

1. **Who is eligible to apply for the Helmholtz AI call?**
Only Helmholtz employees/scientists are eligible to apply, which means that they must have an employment contract with a Helmholtz center. Helmholtz AI projects shall combine substantial and reasonably balanced contributions from scientists from at least two Helmholtz centers. If you also meet all the other thematic and general requirements, you are eligible to apply for a project. In addition, other Helmholtz centers or external partners from research or industry can be involved. Please check our website Helmholtz Associated Centres for more information.

2. **Does my project topic fit the criteria?**
You can intersect any topic, as long as you retain the focus on AI and ML and the focus on data analysis, method application and method development (or similar).

3. **Does the call support machine learning hardware-related proposals?**
We typically do not support projects planning to use funds to acquire hardware. There are sufficient available Helmholtz hardware resources so project funding requests for hardware are unnecessary. However, projects **developing** (SoTA) hardware as an outcome etc. are welcome to apply to the call.

4. **Is it possible to have two partners from the same Helmholtz center or do they have to be from different ones?**
Two partners from the same Helmholtz center are not allowed. At least two distinct Helmholtz centers must apply jointly. This is a hard formal condition as this grant aims at expanding network and collaboration between centers.

5. **Can I apply through my university?**
No. You cannot apply only through a university. To submit an application, scientists from at least two different Helmholtz centers have to be involved in the proposal. The university can be brought in as an external partner.

6. **Can private companies apply to a project call?**
   As the main task of Helmholtz AI is to promote the development and distribution of AI methods across all Helmholtz centers, private companies cannot apply for projects on their own. However, it is possible for a private company – or any other external entity – to submit a project in cooperation with at least two research groups from the Helmholtz Association. If you want to do so, you will have to find suitable research groups as project partners and discuss further plans with them.

7. **Can I participate in multiple proposals for the upcoming Helmholtz AI call?**
   Yes, it is possible to participate in different proposals. You should of course consider how to plan your staffing and matching for participation in different projects.

2. Timeline

1. **How often will the Helmholtz AI project call be announced?**
   It will be announced once a year. The announcement takes place in August/September. The annual call with the deadline will be published again on our website at www.helmholtz.ai.

2. **When is the final deadline for submission?**
   Please check the annual [call announcement](). Documents can be uploaded on the given date until 11:59pm CET.

3. **When will the final funding decision be announced?**
   After a swift external review process, we aim for funding decisions for the 2024 project call to be announced by the end of Q1 2025. For every call there is a timeline with estimated dates, including for the funding decision.

4. **What is the current Helmholtz AI project call criteria? How likely will the Helmholtz AI project call criteria change in the future?**
   The Helmholtz AI steering board reviews the Helmholtz AI project call criteria annually. To stay up to date, please check the Helmholtz AI project call and template document each year.

3. Proposal documents

1. **What is the format of the CV?**
A CV template is provided on the website, in addition to the call text and application template. Each CV should be written in English, scientific in nature, and no longer than one page. Please note that your CV should also contain references to relevant accomplishments beyond scientific papers and citation metrics (e.g. software packages, policy papers, standards, datasets, patent filings, entrepreneurship, and industry collaborations).

2. **Where do I find a proposal template?**
Please check our website Project Call 2024 for all project call related documentation and information. All criteria are listed in the main document.

3. **Where can I add a reference list and appendices?**
The proposal's main body is limited to 5 pages. It is best to use these 5 pages for the most important points. The (short) bibliography/references can be included in the appendix under the "Appendix H - Reference List" heading (see "02 appendix 1.1 Template Application" in the project call documents and templates folder here). In the application tool, there is a tab for "additional documents" where you can attach further project information and graphics. If uploading to "additional documents" please merge all additional documents into one PDF file.

4. **How detailed should the work packages be described in the appendix?**
The work packages should be described briefly as:
a) A goal-describing title or sentence ('objective')
b) An outline of the tasks (1 to approx. 5) using key points/key words ('tasks')

The deliverables can be described in a descriptive sentence (e.g. 'provision of dataset on xyz platform' or 'publication of benchmarked algorithms').

5. **Can I have work packages dedicated to preparing datasets (e.g. preprocessing and labeling)?**
The focus of your project should not be on data generation, labeling, cleaning or similar, but could be a minor part of a successful project. Therefore, a work package on dataset preparation could be included (if necessary), as long as the wider project focus is retained and apparent.

6.   Where do I submit the abstract?
The abstract only needs to be submitted in the online submission system. You should not include this additionally on your cover page.

7.   Where can I find PoF-IV research fields?
Please visit the website of [Research Fields - Helmholtz](#) for more information.

8.   How/when should deliverables/milestones be reported?
Reporting is required once per year. It is not required to share each deliverable/milestone.

3.1 Online Application portal

1.   How can we upload the document in the application portal?
You can upload the document in the application portal via the following steps:

1) Please login to the application portal.
2) Go to "my proposals".
3) Choose your project.
4) Choose the menu "documents" and upload the document (pdf) there.

2.   Who can register and submit the application?
The main contact person of the project can register and submit the application. The coordinating PI or scientific coordinator can also do so.

3.2 Support Letters

1.   Who is required to sign the letter of support?
A letter of support is needed from each of the participating Helmholtz centers. As described in the call, the letters have to be signed by the center's board of directors (DE: "Vorstand"). A letter from the head of the institute is unfortunately not sufficient.

2.   Do we need to provide a letter of intent/support from our external academic/industrial partners?
No. For projects with partners providing this within Helmholtz, this is not applicable and for any external academic or industrial partners, an LoS is not necessary.

3.   Does the original letter from the Board need to be mailed, or will a scan suffice?
A scanned copy is sufficient for the application.

3.3 Ethics Assessments

1. **Can the ethics assessment be conducted by the applicant/project PI or should the relevant department of the corresponding center be contacted?**
   There is no requirement for this assessment to be done by an ethics relevant department of your center, the applicant can also complete this. However, it is a good idea to check with your center for existing guidelines, protocols and in-house experts on these types of statements.

4. Partners / Collaborations

1. **What is the maximum number of PIs and experts that can join a proposal?**
   The maximum number of PIs that can be registered in the project portal is 8. One of the PIs has to be registered as the coordinating PI (you can do this in the online application form) and at least 2 PIs need to be from two different Helmholtz centers.
   The maximum number of external experts is 6.

2. **Who can be an external partner?**
   Academic institutions, companies or non-profits can be external partners.

3. **Are external partners expected to contribute financially?**
   There are no financial contributions expected from external partners.

4. **Do potential external partners make their own contract with Helmholtz AI or are these partners handled as subcontractors of one of the Helmholtz centers which submit the proposal?**
   Helmholtz AI will only make a contract with the submitting Helmholtz centers. The centers must take care of communication and agreements with external partners.

5. **How do we identify a suitable project partner at another Helmholtz center for the Helmholtz AI call?**
   Firstly, please visit our website Helmholtz Associated Centers for more information on Helmholtz centers and partners.

   Secondly, we suggest that you engage with us. For example, i) attend our events, ii) work with consultants, iii) check Helmholtz AI associates.

Thirdly, please attend our Project Call Information Events in September & October. There will be opportunities there to pitch your project idea and look for potential partners.

Finally, we have recently established a collaborative workspace on Mattermost for prospective partners to network. You can pitch your project ideas to other Helmholtz researchers and look for complementary expertise. To access the 2024 channel follow this link.

6. **Is it advantageous to have industrial partners? Would we need an IP statement?**
   As projects are for early, high risk/high gain projects, industry/SME partners are not required. However, it may be advantageous to include such a partner if it fits into your project design. For IP issues we strongly recommend that you talk to the experts at your center/host institution.

7. **Do both of the Helmholtz centers need to focus on AI methods, or can the goal also be the transfer of knowledge of AI methods from center 1 to center 2?**
   Both are valid. The original idea was to bring method expertise and domain data together to confer knowledge to both sides.

8. **Does the lead researcher have to be a PI? Can a non-permanent employee be an applicant (and PI)?**
   There are no restrictions; what's important is the ability to procure a letter from the center's board vouching for matching funds. If you are unsure, first contact your local administration. You should be able/allowed to host your own projects depending on the governance of your host institution and on your qualification.

9. **Is it possible to incorporate an existing consultation with Helmholtz AI Consultants into the application?**
   It is possible and highly encouraged. Asking if consultants are involved in the project is part of the application form.

5. Finance

1. **Is the 250K from INF the total budget for all participating centers? Or each center gets 250K from INF?**
   The 250k from INF is the budget ceiling for the entire project, i.e. for all participating centers. It would have to be complemented by at least the same amount in matching funding or in-kind contributions as is common for all INF funded projects

2. **Where is the 250k matching money coming from? Helmholtz core function or can it be third party funding?**
Third party funding cannot be used for matching funds, based on the rules of (most) funding agencies.

3. **Is it possible to concentrate the funding on 1 center?**
Contribution must be (mostly) balanced, e.g. 70/30 is the maximum imbalance permitted.

4. **What elements are not eligible for funding?**
Data collection, preparation, cleaning or validation and indirect costs. Moreover, there is no funding for investments (e.g., GPU hardware, infrastructure) and overhead costs are not eligible and should not be included in the budget.

5. **What counts as in-kind funding?**
This could include contribution of work hours of funded staff or data- or compute time with a plausible cost report.

6. Miscellaneous

1. **Is there an add on opportunity this year?**
No, this year's project call welcomes projects of all topics from Helmholtz employees/scientists as long as they retain the focus on AI and ML and the focus on data analysis, method application and method development (or similar).

2. **Do you have any tips for successful applications?**
Read the entire Project Call application and follow the instructions carefully. Missing or incorrect documents (e.g. going over the 5-page main proposal limit, putting unrequested information on your cover page, or forgetting to include the board letter) will lead to delays in processing your application.
Pay close attention to the scoring and exclusion criteria. When writing your proposal, be clear and concise, and establish your major points in a logical way. A lot depends on the way you represent your main project objectives. The goals of the project should be clear and the milestones/deliverables should be clearly mentioned. The innovation and ambition of your project should be easily discernible to the extent that it is even apparent to AI experts from outside of your domain.

3. **Where can I find successful project applications from previous years?**
   You can find successful projects from previous years on our website: [Successfully Funded Projects](#).

4. **What is the necessary scope for funding? Is only the development of AI-functionality fundable or also its assurance for safety-critical use-cases?**
   The panel consists of groups of experts not focused on a particular domain; if you present a good case, it will likely be recognised as important.

5. **Do the applications get reviewed by the same set of reviewers, or are the reviewers different?**
   A number of proposals will be assigned to each reviewer to review; all proposals will then be reviewed by several reviewers. The ranking is then determined in a structured discussion by the entire panel of reviewers.

6. **We/I have been awarded a Helmholtz AI Project in the past. Is it possible to apply for a follow-up project which would build upon the progress we have made so far?**
   From an administrative (INF) perspective, it is possible to be funded multiple times. The new application would need to convince the panel on the basis of the call criteria. It should be ensured, for example, that it is a truly novel, high-risk and high-gain project, that the composition of the project partners makes sense or, where necessary for expertise/implementation, could be flexibly adapted.

7. **Where can I find out more?**
   See the [Project Call](#) webpage for further information including the call text and application templates. The application portal can be reached [here](#) and is now live until the deadline (14th November 2024).
   Get in touch with us at projects@helmholtz.ai and we can provide materials.