



Call for Funding // TD-Lab Funding Program of the Berlin University Alliance

July 1st, 2025

The TD-Lab – Laboratory for Transdisciplinary Research of the Berlin University Alliance is funding up to fifteen participatory and/or transdisciplinary supplementary work packages with up to €10,000 in material resources for the period from January 14, 2026 to July 15, 2026.

The call for funding is open from 1 July to September 30, 2025, 11:59 pm CEST.

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What are the goals of the funding?

As a society, we are facing challenges that research can help solve. In order to be able to address these current and future problems and to initiate societal changes through research, non-scientific co-researchers and/or affected persons should be involved in the research process, for example to think about potential use cases, to integrate practical knowledge into the knowledge process or to use the jointly produced, new knowledge in everyday practice.

The aim of the TD-Lab Funding Program is to increase the impact of current research projects by involving societal actors in research with their practical perspectives and practical knowledge. Specifically, work packages are funded that strengthen the exchange of knowledge between science and society. The TD-Lab Funding Program thus offers the framework to apply for work packages in order to either a) incorporate participatory elements into one's own research or b) strengthen one's own participatory research.

The proposed work packages must target at least one of the three **goals of the TD-Lab Funding Program**:

- method-based knowledge exchange: strengthening method-based knowledge exchange and joint learning between science and practice
- scientific research interest: generating new impulses for transformation-oriented knowledge production to increase the societal benefit of research
- project development: initiating or deepening networks between science and practice to initiate joint participatory and/or transdisciplinary research projects

What is participatory and what is transdisciplinary research?

The TD-Lab of the Berlin University Alliance understands participatory research to be the collaboration of scientific and non-scientific actors (practice experts, citizens, patients, affected persons, stakeholders, etc.) to jointly work on scientific questions on a selective basis. The TD-Lab Funding Program explicitly supports those participatory work packages that enable a direct exchange of knowledge and mutual learning between science and society. This corresponds to an understanding of participation beyond one-sided information, consultation, expert interviews or feedback that is heard but not processed in further research. Rather, participation is understood as a process of mutual influence.

A specific mode of participatory research is transdisciplinary research, in which non-scientific practitioners actively shape the research project: from the joint description of the problem and the definition of the research question(s) to the co-design of the research and its implementation as well as reflection. Transdisciplinary research focuses on joint learning and the integration of different bodies of knowledge – with the aim of gaining scientific knowledge and developing practical solutions to societal challenges. Transdisciplinary research is thus an intensive form of participatory research.

[Link to the explanatory video](#): *Transdisciplinary research – What is it actually?*

What is meant by "currently ongoing research projects" to which the work packages to be applied for are to be linked?

The proposed work package should build upon an existing research project with the aim of enhancing its participatory and/or transdisciplinary dimensions and strengthening its societal impact. This research project can already be funded by budget funds or third-party funds. Please check independently whether co-financing by TD-Lab Funding Program is possible (see funding notification).

However, a work package can also be applied for projects that have not yet been funded, such as clearly defined projects with a specific objective, doctoral projects or studies.

In your proposal, please explain how the work package is integrated into the overall project, how partial results from the funded work package are used or how work will continue with the co-researchers.

What are good examples of eligible work packages?

In the TD-Lab Funding Program, participatory and/or transdisciplinary work packages can be applied for in addition to existing research projects or other research projects. Please check that the co-financing of your existing project by the TD-Lab Funding Program does not contradict the requirements of your funding agency.

The work packages to be applied for can complement the existing research design in any project phase:

For example, at the beginning of a research project, it would be possible to jointly develop research questions between the scientists involved in the project and non-scientific actors, to establish an advisory board from science and practice, or to establish a network to support the participatory research project. Process and methodological consulting to professionalize cooperation or the implementation of exchange and learning formats are also conceivable.

In already ongoing, advanced projects, supplementary participatory and/or transdisciplinary work packages are conceivable through the integration of practical knowledge. For example, practical prototypes could be developed in a Design Thinking workshop based on previous findings. A participatory scenario process could be carried out to define development corridors. Or a series of workshops could be implemented to reflect on the results of the project so far with non-scientific actors and to absorb impulses from practice.

At the end of a research project, for example, the work packages can be used to develop practice-relevant recommendations for action based on scientific results or to develop tools, apps or websites that are useful for citizens, politicians, companies or civil society organizations together with non-scientific actors. In addition, joint reflection processes on research design or process design are conceivable. Further research ideas can also be developed in a participatory and/or transdisciplinary manner – for example, with the aim of follow-up funding.

In your application, please describe how the work package complements the overall project and what additional knowledge you expect.

What kind of work packages are not eligible?

Work packages that serve the unidirectional transfer of knowledge and science communication as well as pure data collection, e.g. surveys, interviews and other data collection via technical tools that do not allow interaction between researchers and co-researchers, are explicitly not eligible for funding. The award of a contract, for example to program an app or a website, is also not eligible for funding.

Non-eligible example: If the data collection is commissioned to a company and there is only one communication between the client and the contractor regarding the order, this is not eligible for funding.

Eligible example: The data collection in a citizen science project, for example, is planned digitally via app. In preparation, an expert panel of citizens, programmers and technical experts will be held to

exchange ideas, for example, on what the app must be able to do, what good user-friendliness looks like or which tools would be desirable for citizens. Such an expert panel would be eligible for funding through the TD-Lab Funding Program.

Which topics and disciplines are supported?

The TD-Lab Funding Program is thematically open. Participatory and/or transdisciplinary work packages on all research topics and from all disciplines are particularly encouraged to apply for funding. There is no restriction on the spatial focus of the research. For example, research can relate to Berlin, but also have a national or international focus. The proposed participatory and/or transdisciplinary work packages can complement all research projects that have so far worked in a disciplinary, interdisciplinary or participatory manner.

Who is eligible to apply?

All members of one of the partners of the Berlin University Alliance (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Freie Universität Berlin, Technische Universität Berlin, and Charité - Universitätsmedizin) in the following status groups are eligible to apply:

- professors,
- postdocs,
- academic staff without a qualification position and
- doctoral candidates
- non-academic staff with scientific tasks

regardless of whether the applicant has a fixed-term or permanent employment contract. For the duration of the funding, however, proof of employment with one of the alliance's partners must be provided (see self-declaration in the application form).

The application must state with whom the cooperation in the work package is to take place. Scientists from other institutions or organizations outside the Alliance and also practice partners (national or international) are not eligible to apply themselves, but can be remunerated, for example, through expense allowances, fee payments or other contracts. The funds required for this must be reflected accordingly in the financial concept in the application form ([see website](#)).

Only one funding application can be submitted per applicant.

What guidelines must be considered when applying?

There are a few guidelines to consider when applying.

- During the funding period, the applicant must have an employment contract with a university, the Berlin University Alliance or the Charité.
- The application must be submitted by September 30, 2025, 11:59 pm CEST, by email to td-lab@berlin-university-alliance.de with the subject "Application for the TD-Lab Funding Program".
- The application must be submitted in the application form provided ([see website](#)).
- The number of characters limited in the application form may not be exceeded.
- In the financial calculation, at least half of the proposed budget should be used for participation, exchange and cooperation between scientific and non-scientific actors. If half or more than half of the budget is calculated for the purchase of materials or infrastructure or programming, the application will not be considered in the further procedure.

What is the funding period?

The funding period begins on January 14, 2026 and ends on July 15, 2026. The invoices for expenditure must bear an invoice date within this period. They can still be submitted until July 30, 2026.

In principle, the proposed work packages, such as the establishment of a network for the participatory support of a research project, can also extend beyond the funding period. The costs for this must be financed by the employees themselves after the end of the funding period.

What funds can be applied for?

Only material resources will be made available for the implementation of the work packages.

Personnel funds are not eligible.

The material resources can be used, among other things, for conducting workshops, commissioning external expertise, paying fees and expense allowances, for material costs and contracts for work. Please make sure that the largest part of the sum is calculated for participation, exchange and cooperation. Applications for which more than half of the budget is calculated for programming or infrastructure acquisition are not eligible for funding.

The application form ([see website](#)) must describe the planned funds and their use.

How much is the funding amount?

A maximum of up to €10,000 in material resources (gross) can be applied for per work package. Material resources should be calculated in such a way that at least half of the budget is used for participation, exchange and cooperation. Applications for which more than half of the budget is calculated for programming or the acquisition of infrastructure, for example, are not eligible for funding.

A total of 15 projects will be selected for funding, regardless of the amount of funding applied for. The requested sum has no influence on the funding decision. It is expressly encouraged to make full use of the maximum available funds of €10,000.

How do the beneficiaries have access to the funds?

The office administering the funds is the TU Berlin, where the TD-Lab is located as a funding unit. All assignments, invoicing, and the issuance of lump-sum agreements or contracts for work and services must be processed through TU Berlin, in compliance with its procurement regulations. The TD-Lab provides support in the commissioning process, offers guidance to funding recipients during regular financial consultation hours, and conducts a mandatory information session on the use of funds at the beginning of the funding period.

Overall responsibility for project implementation and financial management lies with the grantees

What should a funding application look like?

For the application, it is mandatory to use the application form provided by TD-Lab ([see website](#)). The completed application form must be submitted by e-mail no later than September 30, 2025, 11:59 pm CEST, by e-mail to td-lab@berlin-university-alliance.de with the subject "Application for the TD-Lab Funding Program". Applications received later will not be considered.

In which language should the funding application be written?

The funding application can be written in German or English. The application form ([see website](#)) is available in both languages.

What criteria are used to review the funding applications?

The reviewers will make assessments on the following criteria:

- **Objectives of the participatory and/or transdisciplinary work package:**
 - It becomes clear how the proposed work package complements an already existing project in a participatory and/or transdisciplinary way or prepares a planned project in a participatory and/or transdisciplinary manner.
 - The objectives described explicitly refer to at least one of the objectives of the call for funding.
- **Quality of methods and formats:**
 - The formats and methods mentioned are approaches suitable for participatory/transdisciplinary research.
 - The formats and methods are sensibly selected to achieve the objectives. It is described in a comprehensible way for what purpose formats and methods are to be used and which results are to be developed.
 - It is described in a comprehensible way how the cooperation with non-scientific actors is to be structured in concrete terms.
- **Scientific and societal added value:**
 - Scientific added value: It becomes clear which research question is to be answered and to what extent the project is scientifically compatible, for example: in which discipline the project is located, which research gap is addressed, or how the results contribute to influencing theories, discourses, or models.
 - Societal added value: It should be clearly outlined how the project results will be prepared to enable societal impact—for example, through the development of specific products or by identifying networks and stakeholders that will further utilize or build upon the results.
- **Cooperation with scientific and non-scientific actors:**
 - The application lists which societal groups will be included in the work package. These are named specifically or by way of example.
 - The application describes the planned measures to attract participants (in the sense of participant acquisition).
 - In accordance with the objective of the project, the application plausibly describes why the actors, organizations or stakeholder groups are involved (for example, what knowledge they can contribute or what resources). Efforts are made to incorporate a balanced and appropriate diversity of perspectives.
- **Timeline:**
 - The planned measures can be implemented within the specified time frame. With the time available, they try to achieve the best possible.

- **Financial plan:**
 - The individual financial items are economically calculated. The planned measures are financially viable.
 - *Attention: The majority of the planned expenditure must be used to implement participatory formats. If this requirement is not met, the application will be excluded from consideration on formal grounds.*
- **References:**
 - The cited literature demonstrates the disciplinary and methodological expertise required to carry out the proposed project.
 - The focus should be on scientific sources authored by others. References to the applicant's own work are welcome. Where appropriate, selected grey literature may be included to complement the bibliography.

The criteria goals of the participatory and/or transdisciplinary work package, quality of methods and formats, scientific and societal added value, and cooperation with scientific and non-scientific actors are weighted twice.

What is a format? What is a method?

The terms format and method are not uniformly defined in the literature of participatory and transdisciplinary research.

In the context of the TD-Lab Funding Program, the term format is understood to mean a workshop or an event such as a hackathon.

Methods refer to specific, systematically planned procedures used within formats such as workshops—for example, fishbowl discussions or World Café sessions. For orientation, you are welcome to use the [td-net Toolbox](#) or the [ActionCatalogue](#).

Please make sure that your chosen formats and methods are suitable for participatory and/or transdisciplinary research. In addition, the formats and methods should be chosen in such a way that the objectives of the work package can be achieved. The reviewers should be able to understand the extent to which the formats and methods contribute to shaping cooperation between scientific and non-scientific researchers.

How is the review process structured?

The review process takes place in three stages:

1st stage – formal assessment: In the first stage, the formal criteria are checked by a coordinator of the TD-Lab Funding Program:

- The application was submitted on time based on the application form ([see website](#)).
- The applicant is entitled to apply.
- The character restrictions were complied with in the application form.
- The financial calculation corresponds to the specifications (only material resources and within the specified financial framework). The majority of the planned expenditure will be used to implement participatory formats.

2nd stage – criteria-based assessment: In the second stage, experts from the TD-Lab who are not involved in the TD-Funding Program carry out the evaluation on the basis of an evaluation form with

standardized evaluation criteria (see paragraph: What criteria are used to review the funding applications?). Each application is reviewed independently by two speakers. A total of 92 points can be achieved (= max. 46 points per review).

All applications with 87 or more points will be funded directly – without going through the lottery procedure (level 3).

3rd stage – lottery: All applications that have 65 points or more and less than 87 points will be considered in the lottery procedure. Selection is made according to the individual partner institutions of the Berlin University Alliance—HU, FU, TU, and Charité—in order to achieve an approximate balance of funded participants across the member institutions. If too few eligible applications have been received per house, more projects will be funded from the other houses.

In an accompanying research project, the Volkswagen Foundation was able to show that the lottery procedure is particularly suitable for application procedures with riskier research ideas. Compared to a selection session with reviewers, the lottery procedure reduces potential bias, unconscious bias or implicit biases and promotes diversity. The dynamics in selection sessions show that inexperienced jurors are more likely to subordinate themselves to the more experienced or assertive ones.

<https://www.volkswagenstiftung.de/de/news/aktuelles/der-lostrommel-sind-alle-gleich>

On the basis of the reviews from the second stage of the review process, there may be conditions or adaptation instructions for the funding recipients, for example with regard to the methods presented. After completion of the entire review process, all submitters will receive written feedback.

What is the aim of the accompanying program and what does it involve?

For the grantees, the TD-Lab offers a mandatory accompanying program, consisting of three events in the funding period from January 14 to July 15, 2026. The aim is to improve the impact orientation of the work package and to be able to reflect on the experiences made. The accompanying program also serves to network with the other scholarship recipients in the sense of a college and to make the projects visible to the outside world.

- Kick-off of the TD-Lab Funding Program January 14, 2026, 10 am - 1 pm
- Reflection workshop April 14, 2026, 2-4 pm
- Closing event July 1, 2026, 1-6 pm

The accompanying program will be conducted in German.

What obligations for the recipients of the funding are associated with the funding?

By accepting the funding, the scholarship recipients undertake to fulfil the following obligations:

- participation in the accompanying program of the TD-Lab Funding Program
- reference to funding in the TD-Lab Funding Program of the Berlin University Alliance ("funded by TD-Lab Funding Program of the Berlin University Alliance") for events, publications or other outreach carried out within the framework of the funded work package
- participation in the ex-ante and ex-post evaluation of the TD-Lab Funding Program, which is carried out by NaWik – National Center for Science Communication
- providing information about the project for the website of the Berlin University Alliance and for the digital map of participatory and transdisciplinary projects of the Alliance (currently in planning)
- final report on the project (max. 5 pages, an outline will be specified) by August 31, 2026

What deadlines must be taken into account?

- Publication of the call for applications: July 1, 2025
- Deadline for submission of applications: September 30, 2025, 11:59 pm CEST (applications received after this deadline can no longer be considered)
- Information events on the call:
 - Monday, July 14, 2025, 2-3 pm, [registration](#)
 - Friday, August 20, 2025, 10 pm - 11 am, [registration](#)
 - Monday, September 15, 2025, 12 noon - 1 pm, [registration](#)
- Review process: October to mid-November 2025
- Funding information for applicants: expected November 19-21, 2025
- Funding period: January 14, 2026 - July 15, 2026
- Deadline for settlement of the project: July 30, 2026
- Kick-off event accompanying program: Wednesday, January 14, 2026, 1-4 pm
- Reflection workshop accompanying program: Wednesday, April 15, 2026, 2-4 pm
- Closing event accompanying program: Wednesday, July 1, 2026, 1-5 pm
- Submission of the project report: August 31, 2026 (outline to be specified)

How can I find out about TD-Lab Funding?

Take part in one of the three information events on the call. The information events will be held in English.

- Monday, July 14, 2025, 2-3 pm, [registration](#)
- Friday, August 20, 2025, 10-11 am, [registration](#)
- Monday, September 15, 2025, 12-1 pm, [registration](#)

What are additional offers of the TD-Lab?

Take advantage of the TD-Lab Training and Consulting program to learn about the different approaches to participatory research:

- September 8, 2025, 11 am - 12 pm, Introduction to Transdisciplinary Research (Dr. Ina Opitz, TD-Lab), [registration](#)
- September 9, 2025, 11 am - 12 pm, Introduction to Citizen Science (Dr. Carmen Siller, ZSI Vienna), [registration](#)
- September 10, 2025, 11 am - 12 pm, Introduction to Real-world Laboratories (Dr. Anja Steglich, StadtManufaktur TU Berlin), [registration](#)
- September 11, 2025, 11 am - 12 pm, Introduction to Responsible Research and Innovation (Julia Backhaus, RWTH Aachen University), [registration](#)

Who can I contact with further questions?

You can contact the coordinators of the TD-Lab Funding Program directly:

Nadin Gaasch, Dr. Ina Opitz

Mail: td-lab@berlin-university-alliance.de

Phone: 030 838 522 98