

ALZHEIMER FORSCHUNG INITIATIVE e.V. (AFI)

2024 GRANT APPLICATION GUIDELINES

Statement of Purpose:

In the European Grant Cycle, Alzheimer Forschung Initiative e.V. (AFI) awards grants for basic, translational, and clinical research into the underlying mechanisms of, and possible therapeutic treatments for Alzheimer's disease (AD) and Alzheimer's disease related dementias (ADRD). Research projects on AD or other (rare) dementias (for example Frontotemporal dementia, Lewy-body dementia, Chronic traumatic encephalopathy) can be submitted. Projects are mainly evaluated on whether the proposed research is likely to improve our understanding of the pathophysiology and underlying mechanisms causing AD or ADRD and/or is likely to effectively promote therapeutic strategies. Funding decisions are based on the results of a formal, rigorous peer-review process, taking program goals and the availability of funds into consideration. In addition, AFI strives to maintain a good balance in funding between:

- (i) Experience level of investigators (established versus young/promising candidates)
- (ii) Applications from scientists never before funded by AFI and applications from scientists seeking to renew funding from AFI
- (iii) Topics/areas of study within the dementia research field

The applicant is advised to focus on a project with a clear, well-defined hypothesis and specific aims. Moreover, the project should be completed within a reasonable time (set by the duration of the grant). Please keep this in mind when preparing the research/work plan section of the application.

Terms and Restrictions for AFI grant applications:

AFI grants are awarded to:

- Universities
- Medical Centres
- Independent non-profit research institutions
- The research group to which the Principal Investigator (PI) is affiliated (not to individuals)

AFI funding cannot be used for:

- Salary of the PI (not applicable for all grants, please see the specification in Table 1)
- Salary or financial reimbursement of international collaborators (for specifics for Cross Border Grants with AN, BFF, or FVA, see *Cross Border Grants*)
- Institutional overhead
- Large capital equipment
- Construction of buildings
- Tax-free scholarships

Grants Overview: See table 1 for grant details or use the links to jump to more information on:

- [Research Grants](#) max. €200,000, duration between 2 and 3 years
- [Early Career Grants](#) max. €60,000, duration between 1 and 2 years
- [Cross Border Grants](#) max. €200,000, fixed duration of 2 years

Table 1: Grant Specifications 2024

	Research Grant	Early Career Grant	Cross Border Grant
Project duration	2 or 3 years	1 or 2 years	2 years (fixed)
Maximum budget	€200,000 for 3 years €134,000 for 2 years	€60,000 for 2 years €30,000 for 1 year	€200,000, divided over the PI and co-PI
Budget distribution	Be aware of AFI's quarterly payments. 3 years: max. 50% of the budget can be requested per year. 2 years: max. 70% of the budget can be requested per year.	Be aware of AFI's quarterly payments. 2 years: max. 70% of the budget can be requested per year.	Be aware of AFI's quarterly payments. Max. budget split allowed PI:co-PI is 60:40. Max. 70% of the (co-)PI's budget can be requested per year.
Funding specifications	Funding goes to the group/institute to which the PI is affiliated. Funding <u>cannot</u> be requested for the salary of the PI (except under extraordinary circumstances that must be clearly justified and agreed upon by AFI).	Funding goes to the group/institute to which the PI is affiliated. Funding <u>can</u> be requested for the PI's salary.	Funding goes to the group/institute to which the PI is affiliated. Funding <u>cannot</u> be requested for the salary of the PI (except under extraordinary circumstances that must be clearly justified and agreed upon by AFI).
Eligibility criteria PI	- Works at a German University/research institution - Academic rank of employed research associate with PhD or MD, assistant professor (or equivalent) or higher	- Works at a German University/research institution - Post-doctoral level at the project start, max. 6 years after obtaining the PhD or MD, with some exceptions* *If still a PhD/MD student, the PI should obtain their PhD/MD before the 31 st of December of the year in which they apply for the Early Career Grant. The 6 years is counted from the 1st PhD/MD date to the date of the beginning of the funding. For maternity leave(s), the effective elapsed time since the PhD/MD defence/obtaining the doctor title will be reduced by 1 year per child. For paternity leave(s) the elapsed time will be shortened by the leave taken for each child born. For time taken off due to long-term illness, the elapsed time will be reduced by the duration of the absent period.	- Works at a German University/research institution - Academic rank of employed research associate with PhD or MD, assistant professor (or equivalent) or higher - See the "Cross Border Grant" paragraph down below for more information

Additional information for Research Grants and Early Career Grants

- See Table 1 for general specifications of Research Grants and Early Career Grants.
- The call for Research Grants and Early Career Grants opens once per year and has two tiers. The 2024 call will open on 2 January 2024 and the deadline for the Letter of Intent (LOI) is 1 February 2024 at 13:00.
- There are no limitations to the number of Research Grants or Early Career Grants you can apply for or receive throughout your career. However, applicants can apply for 1 AFI grant only during the same grant cycle. Furthermore, a PI cannot be included in the personnel section of another application submitted in the same cycle to AFI, Alzheimer Nederland (AN, the Netherlands) or Fondation Vaincre Alzheimer (FVA, France). They can be a consultant (time spent <5%) in other projects, which should be mentioned in the embedding section of the application.
- A new grant cannot overlap in funding or in topic with that of an active grant, or with a grant that has been extended. **This means that current grantees can submit a new grant application only in the last budget year of their active grant.**
- Alternatively, they can submit a renewal if the application is a direct continuation/follow-up of the previously received grant. Both a new project and a renewal will undergo peer review in the same manner. In case of a renewal, the application should clearly state the yield (publications, preliminary data of the former grant). Progress made during the previous funding period will then be considered during review of the renewal application.
- The starting date of the projects applied for should be between 1 January 2025 and 1 July 2025. Projects cannot start before 1 January 2025 as the formal awarding only occurs at the end of the year in November/December (please also see Table 2).
- In the grant application, the scientific research plan should be hypothesis driven, coherent and focused. The research plan should be efficiently worked out and it should be described in a convincing manner that the proposed research can be completed within the time available.
- Investigators from the same lab can apply if there is no scientific/funding overlap.
- The PI should not include an [AFI AN](#), or [FVA](#) Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) member as collaborator of the study in the personnel section of their application or as a potential external reviewer in the second tier of the application phase. For ethical reasons a SAB member can be a consultant only (time spent <5%), which should be mentioned in the embedding section of the application. The SAB member will be excluded from the review of the project.
- AFI funding may be used for the purchase of necessary supplies or expenses directly related to performed research done by researchers working outside of Germany, but this should be clearly specified in the proposal. AFI funding may not be used for salary or financial reimbursement of international collaborators.
- Please note that AFI applicants and grantees can be requested to review future AFI, AN, FVA applications that fit their expertise.

Grant Cycle Procedure – Review of Research and Early Career applications:

Awards are granted based on scientific merit and quality of the applicant's research proposal, and its relevance for improving our understanding of the etiology of Alzheimer's Disease or other related dementias. Funding decisions are based on the results of a formal, rigorous peer-review process, taking program goals and the availability of funds into consideration.

AFI uses a two-tier peer-reviewed process in which applicants are first asked to submit a short summary of their project (LOI). The applicants that have submitted the best LOIs are subsequently asked to submit full applications.

In the first tier the LOIs are reviewed and selected based on feasibility of the research plan, the applicant’s past performance, and relevance of the topic for Alzheimer’s Disease or other related dementias, as assessed by 3 members of the European SAB.

Upon selection, applicants are invited to submit a full proposal that will be peer reviewed by 3 members of the European SAB, as well as a 4th external expert. The scope and main aims of this full proposal should not differ significantly from the LOI submitted in the first tier. In October, the applications and evaluations are discussed and ranked in a joint meeting of the European SAB.

For the submission of the proposals, AFI uses an online grant application portal which can be found [here](#).

Please see Table 2 below for more details on the Grant Cycle timelines for 2024.

Table 2: Timetable European Grant Cycle 2024: Research Grants and Early Career Grants

Call for applications with LOI open	2 January 2024
Deadline for LOI	1 February 2024 at 13:00
Confirmation LOI was received and is eligible is sent to the applicant by the European Grant Manager	Within 3 weeks
Request for full application or denial letters are sent to the applicant by the European Grant Manager	Late April / early May 2024
Deadline for full applications (subject to change)	13 June 2024 at 13:00
Confirmation full application was received and is eligible is sent to the applicant by the European Grant Manager	Early July 2024
Final decision is communicated to the applicants by AFI	November / December 2024*
Research project start	Between 1 January and 1 July 2025

*Usually, applicants will be notified in writing of the AFI Board of Director’s decision concerning their application in November, but at least before **December 31st**.

AFI staff is not authorized to provide information on priority scores, ranking, or likelihood of funding of applications prior to written notification of applicants. Please do not contact AFI or SAB members to request such information.

Your application will be handled in a confidential way at all times.

- Alternatively, they can submit a renewal if the application is a direct continuation/follow-up of the previously received grant. Both a new project and a renewal will undergo peer review in the same manner. In case of a renewal, the application should clearly state the yield (publications, preliminary data of the former grant). Progress made during the previous funding period will then be considered during review of the renewal application.
- In the grant application, the scientific research plan should be hypothesis driven, coherent and focused. The research plan should be efficiently worked out and it should be described in a convincing manner that the proposed research can be completed within the time available.
- Researchers from the same lab requesting AFI funding for a CBG can apply if there is no scientific/funding overlap.
- The PI should not include an [AFI](#), [AN](#), or [FVA](#) Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) member as collaborator of the study in the personnel section of their application or as a potential external reviewer in the second tier of the application phase. For ethical reasons a SAB member can be a consultant only (time spent <5%), which should be mentioned in the application's embedding section. The SAB member will be excluded from that project's review.
- AFI funding may not be used for salary, financial reimbursement, purchase of supplies, or other expenses directly related to performed research done by the co-PI or other researchers working outside of Germany.
- Please note that AFI applicants and grantees can be requested to review future AFI, AN, or FVA applications that fit their expertise.

Grant Cycle Procedure – Review of Cross Border applications:

Awards are granted based on scientific merit and quality of the applicant's research proposal, and its relevance for improving our understanding of the etiology of Alzheimer's Disease or other related dementias. Funding decisions are based on the results of a formal, rigorous peer-review process, taking program goals and the availability of funds into consideration

AFI, AN, BFF, and FVA use a two-tier peer-reviewed process in which applicants are first asked to submit a short summary of their project: a Letter of Intent (LOI). The applicants that have submitted the best LOIs are subsequently asked to submit full applications.

In the first tier the LOIs are reviewed and selected based on feasibility of the research plan, the applicants' past performance and relevance of the topic for Alzheimer's Disease or other related dementias, as assessed by 3 members of the European SAB.

Upon selection, applicants are invited to submit a full proposal that will be peer reviewed by 3 members of the European SAB, as well as a 4th external expert. The scope and main aims of this full proposal should not differ significantly from the LOI submitted in the first tier. In October, the applications and evaluations are discussed and ranked in a joint meeting of the European SAB.

AFI, AN, and FVA all have a dedicated CBG budget that allows them to fund at least 1 CBG project between their country and any other one. BFF has a dedicated CBG budget to fund at least 3 CBG projects, ideally 1 with each of the 3 other organisations. Proposals will be funded in accordance with the final ranking order, starting with the highest ranked that is recommended for funding.

When going down this ranking order, it will be verified for each proposal that is recommended for funding if sufficient budget is still available from the involved two organisations. In the case that the remaining budget is no longer sufficient, the organisations will decide if they increase the dedicated budget for the call. If this is not possible, the proposal will not be funded.

For the submission of the proposals, the organisations use a common online grant application portal which can be found [here](#).

Please see Table 3 below for more details on the Grant Cycle timelines for 2024.

Table 3: Timetable European Grant Cycle 2024: Cross Border Grants

Call for applications with LOI open	3 January 2024
Deadline for LOI	1 February 2024 at 13:00
Confirmation LOI was received and is eligible is sent to the applicant by the European Grant Manager	Within 3 weeks
Request for full application or denial letters are sent to the applicant by the European Grant Manager	Late April / early May 2024
Deadline for full applications (subject to change)	13 June 2024 at 13:00
Confirmation full application was received and is eligible is sent to the applicant by the European Grant Manager	Early July 2024
Final decision is communicated to the applicants by the organisations	Late November / early December 2024*
Research project start	Between 1 January and 1 July 2025

*All CBG applicants will be notified in writing of the funding decision concerning their application on the same day by all 4 organisations. This can only be done after the funding decision has been made official by the board of each organisation. The organisations strive to be ready to communicate this decision around late November or early December, but will make sure the applicants have been informed by December 31st at the very latest. The exact outcome date is usually known in June and will be communicated to CBG full proposal applicants after their submission in the second tier.

AFI staff is not authorized to provide information on priority scores, ranking, or likelihood of funding of applications prior to written notification of applicants. Please do not contact AFI or SAB members to request such information.

Your application will be handled in a confidential way at all times.



Additional information and rules after funding approval:

Shifting Dates of the Grant

After the approval of the grant, the grantee should inform AFI immediately if the project is delayed. In this case, the grantee can request a project start-shift (max. 6 months).

Budget

The project will receive funds only when operational.

Grant payments are made on a quarterly basis.

If budget revisions are necessary, requests must be made in writing to AFI with clear justification:

- A request of cost-neutral prolongation for max. 12 months
- Transfer of more than € 2.000 from one budget category to another

Human/Animal Research Subjects

AFI requires that research supported by AFI meets or exceeds national regulations regarding the use of human subjects or animals in research. Applicants must provide written certification of approval by the appropriate Ethic Commission before funding begins.

Sharing of Reagents

AFI believes that biological reagents (e.g. recombinant DNA clones, cultured cell lines, hybridoma cell lines, mutant or unique organisms etc.) developed during the course of AFI-sponsored research must be made available to qualified investigators after the publication of reports using or describing the reagents. These materials represent a valuable resource for the scientific community at large, paid for by the generous contributions of AFI's donors.

The availability of these reagents directly affects the ability of the members of the scientific community to replicate the experiments of others and the pace and cost of future research. Therefore, AFI requires that the Principal Investigator and the grantee institution accept the responsibility of providing biological reagents developed during the course of AFI-sponsored research to investigators who request them.

Public Education and Acknowledgement

AFI is a publicly supported charitable organization funded by donor contributions and has an active public education program that informs donors and other interested individuals about the research we sponsor. Information provided to the public by AFI may include the title of the project, the name and institutional affiliation of the Principal Investigator, the total budget of the award, and the non-technical project description provided by the applicant. Therefore, the non-technical description should not contain confidential information. The submission of this application shall be deemed consent of the applicant to the publication of this information should a grant be awarded.

Awardees may be asked by AFI to assist AFI in other ways to inform the general audience, e.g. by providing information on new developments in their research field or give a presentation, lecture at meetings, lab tours or workshops supported by AFI. Photos of the PI and his/her team must be made available without restrictions.

All publications, papers, book chapters or presentations, resulting from research sponsored by AFI must be acknowledged as follows: “Funding was provided by Alzheimer Forschung Initiative e.V. (AFI)”, followed by the number of grant application.

Open Access Publication

AFI supports open access: [Publication Grants](#)

We strongly encourage researchers to publish in open access journals or to publish in a repository that is freely accessible.

Press Releases

If press releases on research results sponsored by AFI are planned, the scientists must contact AFI. In the press releases AFI should be mentioned as a sponsor with the name Alzheimer Forschung Initiative e.V.

Overlapping Grant Awards

AFI awards funds with the express understanding that AFI is the main financial supporter of the research project for which grant monies were requested. Although combinations of complementary, non-overlapping approaches are possible, AFI does not allow AFI grant funds to be used for identical and/or overlapping research projects that are already funded by another source without written AFI permission and full knowledge. The applicant is therefore asked to report if they have submitted the same project to another funder.

Failure to report the submission or receipt of overlapping grant funds may require, as determined at the sole discretion of AFI, the return of all, or part of, the monies awarded by AFI to the grantee. Furthermore, the grantee is responsible for all costs expended by AFI in obtaining the return of the grant award funds including but not limited to reasonable attorney’s fees incurred.

Discontinuation of Grant Funding

Although AFI has committed grant funding for the stated term of the grant, it reserves the right to discontinue the grant at any time in the event the work performed is in breach of the terms and obligations stated herein. AFI reserves the right to discontinue or reclaim the grant in case of incomplete reports and/or reports being received by AFI later than the deadline.