ALZHEIMER FORSCHUNG INITIATIVE e.V. (AFI)

2027 GRANT APPLICATION GUIDELINES

Statement of Purpose:

In the European Grant Cycle, Alzheimer Forschung Initiative e.V. (AFI) awards grants for biological, biochemical or biomedical 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 diagnostic, primary prevention or 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:

- Public State Universities
- State Medical Centres
- Employees of the following institutions:
  EMBL, Fraunhofer, Helmholtz, Leibniz, Max-Planck-Institute
- The research group to which the Principal Investigator (PI) is affiliated (not to individuals).
  Note: The PI must be employed at one of the institutions mentioned above.

AFI funding cannot be used for:

- Salary of the PI, this is only possible within the Early Career Grant (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*)
  - "Salary" includes wages (including employer's contribution) and social-security costs, no administrative costs, benefits or general costs of the institution
- Research conducted in test animals other than Caenorhabditis elegans, Drosophila melanogaster, zebrafish, mice and rats
- Institutional overhead (no "Vollkostenrechnung")
- Large capital equipment
- Construction of buildings
- Tax-free scholarships (stipends/ Stipendien)

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

- Research Grants — max. €225,000, duration between 2 and 3 years
- Early Career Grants — max. €70,000, duration between 1 and 2 years
- Cross Border Grants — max. €200,000, fixed duration of 2 years

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Table 1: Grant Specifications 2027

	Research Grant	Early Career Grant	Cross Border Grant
Project duration	2 or 3 years	1 or 2 years	2 years (fixed)
Maximum budget	€225,000 for 3 years €150,000 for 2 years	€70,000 for 2 years €35,000 for 1 year	Cross Border Grants with AN or FVA: €200,000, divided over the PI and co-PI. Max. budget split allowed PI:co-PI is 60:40. Cross Border Grants with BFF: The Co-PI can request a maximum of **$**100,000. This is the 50:50 split.
Budget distribution	AFI pays the requested amount not in total, but in equal quarterly payments. Funds from one year are carried over the following years.	AFI pays the requested amount not in total, but in equal quarterly payments. Funds from one year are carried over the following years.	AFI pays the requested amount not in total, but in equal quarterly payments. Funds from one year are carried over the following years.
Funding specifications	Funding goes to the group/institute to which the PI is affiliated. Funding cannot be requested for the salary of the PI.	Funding goes to the group/institute to which the PI is affiliated. Funding can be requested for the PI's salary.	Funding goes to the group/institute to which the PI is affiliated. Funding cannot be requested for the salary of the PI**.**
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 31st of December of the year in which they apply for the Early Career Grant. With the submission of the full application at the submission platform AIMS the PI must send a letter of their supervisor to forschung@alzheimer-forschung.de in which is confirmed, that the PhD/MD will be obtained within time. 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	- 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

		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.	

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 2027 call will open on January 4th, 2027 and the deadline for the Letter of Intent (LOI) is February 1st, 2027 13:00 CET.
- 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 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 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 is January 1st, 2028. It is possible to start the project max. 6 months later (latest start July 1st, 2028), but only after a request for a start shift after having received the award. Projects cannot start earlier than January 1st, 2028.
- 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.
- We strongly encourage applicants to discuss the project budget with a financial controller of their institution prior to applying to make sure their budget is realistic and takes cost increase due to inflation into account.
- 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.

Note: In case the LOI in the category "Research Grant" is regarded as "insufficient", the applicant has to miss the next year's turn and may not apply again in 2028, but earliest in 2029 again. Not being invited to submit a full proposal does not mean automatically the application was insufficient. The applicant will be informed about this when the denial is communicated.

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 2027.

Table 2: Timetable European Grant Cycle 2027: Research Grants and Early Career Grants

Call for applications with LOI open	4 January 2027
Deadline for LOI	01 February 2027 at 13:00 CET
Confirmation LOI was received and is eligible is sent to the applicant by the European Grant Manager	Within 4 weeks
Request for full application or denial letters are sent to the applicant by the European Grant Manager	Early May 2027
Deadline for full applications	21 June 2027 at 13:00 CEST

Confirmation full application was received and is eligible is sent to the applicant by the European Grant Manager	Mid July 2027
Final decision is communicated to the applicants by AFI	November / December 2027*
Research project start	1 January 2028 A start shift up to max. 6 months (latest start 1 July 2028) is possible when requested after being awarded.

*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 reserves the right to deny applications if they do not adhere to the Funding Guidelines or the mission of AFI. AFI staff is not authorized to provide information on eligibility check outcomes, 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 for Cross Border Grants – aimed at the German part of the CBG

- See Table 1 for general specifications of Cross Border Grants.
- The call for Cross Borders Grants (CBGs) opens once per year, in January, and has two tiers. The 2027 call will open on January 4th, 2027 and the deadline for the Letter of Intent (LOI) is February 1st 2027 at 13:00 CET.
- CBGs are awarded to international collaborative projects between two researchers: a PI working in Germany, the Netherlands, or France, and a co-PI working in any other country different than the PI's country. These projects should benefit from this international collaboration, which should be highlighted in the project application. Articles resulting from this collaboration should also be published jointly.
- Each organization funds in its own country, meaning AFI will exclusively fund the part of the CBG project that is done by the researcher working in Germany. The other part of the project will be funded by the organisation that corresponds to the location of the collaborator, respectively:
    - Alzheimer Nederland (AN) The Netherlands
    - Fondation Vaincre Alzheimer (FVA) France
    - BrightFocus Foundation (BFF) Other countries

  The PI working in Germany will need to adhere to these AFI Funding Guidelines, the co-PI will need to adhere to the Funding Guidelines of their respective funding organisation. These can be found here:
    - AN: AN Call Biomedical Research
    - FVA: FVA Research Funding
    - BFF: should adhere to the Funding Guidelines of the PI's funding organisation.

  No funding can go to any person or entity on the U.S. Department of the Treasury, Office of Foreign Asset Control (OFAC)'s Specially Designated Nationals and Blocked Persons List. Researchers working in the following countries are excluded from applying for Cross Border Grants:
    - Iran
    - Iraq

- Kuwait
- Lebanon
- Libya
- Qatar
- Russia
- Saudi Arabia
- Syria
- Yemen

- The duration of the project is 2 years and the project should be active for this period in both research groups.
- The maximum allowed split of the total budget between the PI and co-PI is 60:40, with a maximum budget for Cross Border Grants with AN and FVA of €200.000. This means that the maximum amount that can be requested by the PI is €120.000, resulting in a minimum amount that has to be requested by the co-PI of €80.000. For Cross Border Grants with BFF included, the co-PI can request a maximum budget of $100,000. This meets the 50:50 split. In case the PI requests €120,000, the co-PI can request $80,000. We strongly encourage applicants to discuss the project budget with a financial controller of their institute prior to applying, to make sure their budget is realistic and takes cost increases due to inflation into account.

- In order to determine who will be the PI and co-PI, the collaborators should take the following into account:
  - The PI of a CBG should carry out their part of the project in either Germany, the Netherlands, or France. There are no location restrictions for the co-PI, as long as it differs from the PI's country.
  - The PI of a CBG should request at least 50% of the total budget. If a PI and co-PI are both working in either Germany, the Netherlands or France and are both requesting 50% of the total budget, they can decide themselves who will be the PI and the co-PI. Both researchers will receive all communication regarding the application and funding decision. The co-PI will not have to submit a separate application.
- There are no limitations to the number of Cross Border Grants you can apply for or receive throughout your career. However, both the PI and co-PI can only apply for 1 AFI, AN, or FVA grant during the same grant cycle. It is not allowed for either the PI or co-PI to be included in the personnel section of another AFI, AN, or FVA grant application submitted in the same cycle. They can be a consultant (time spent <5%) in other submitted 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 AFI 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 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 2027.

Table 3: Timetable European Grant Cycle 2027: Cross Border Grants

Call for applications with LOI open	4 January 2027
Deadline for LOI	01 February 2027 at 13:00 CET
Confirmation LOI was received and is eligible is sent to the applicant by the European Grant Manager	Within 4 weeks
Request for full application or denial letters are sent to the applicant by the European Grant Manager	Early May 2027
Deadline for full applications	21 June 2027 at 13:00 CEST
Confirmation full application was received and is eligible is sent to the applicant by the European Grant Manager	Mid July 2027
Final decision is communicated to the applicants by AFI	November / December 2027*
Research project start	1 January 2028 A start shift up to max. 6 months (latest start 1 July 2028) is possible when requested after being awarded.

*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.

AFI reserves the right to deny applications if they do not adhere to the Funding Guidelines or the mission of AFI. AFI staff is not authorized to provide information on eligibility check outcomes, 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. The remaining budget of one year is carried over to the following project years.

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. As a donation-dependent organization, we only support research conducted in the test animals Caenorhabditis elegans, Drosophila melanogaster, zebrafish, mice and rats. Applicants must provide, if necessary, 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.

Additionally, a profile of the PI will be requested for AFI's website. A short video is also required to inform about the project via AFI's website and social media to ask for donations. Acceptance of grants constitutes consent by the PI and the institution to the publication of this information.

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.