



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

From September 16, 2024

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 funding for the period from January 15, 2025 to July 15, 2025.

FAQs

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What are the goals of the funding?

As a society, we are facing challenges that research can help to solve. In order to be able to address these current and future problems and to initiate societal change through research, non-scientific actors and/or affected persons should already 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 non-scientific 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 hitherto non-participatory 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
- interest in knowledge: generating new impulses for gaining transformation-oriented knowledge to increase the societal benefit of research
- project development: initiating or deepening networks between science and practice in order to stimulate 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.) in order to work on scientific questions together 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. 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 formulation 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 work package to be applied for should build on an existing research project in order to make it more participatory and/or transdisciplinary and to increase 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.

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 staffed by representatives from science and practice, or to establish a network to support the participatory research project. Process and method 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 together with non-scientific actors tools, apps or websites that are useful for citizens, politicians, companies or civil society organizations. 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.

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 non-scientific actors, 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, there will be an expert panel of citizens, programmers, and subject matter experts, which will exchange ideas about what the app must be able to do, what good user-friendliness looks like, or which tools would be desirable for citizens, etc. Such an expert panel would be eligible for funding through the TD-Lab Funding Program.



Which topics and disciplines are supported?

At least three of the fifteen selected work packages are to be funded on the topic of water. Projects with a recognizable connection to the research topic of water, which are to be supplemented by a participatory and/or transdisciplinary work package, are particularly encouraged to apply for funding. Possible topics can be conflicts on water, sustainable water use, the water habitat, adaptation strategies to climate change, feminist or historical water perspectives or water justice (the list is not exhaustive).

Apart from the focus on water, the TD-Lab Funding Program is thematically open. Participatory and/or transdisciplinary work packages on all research topics and from all disciplines are cordially invited to submit an application. 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 employees without a qualification position and
- Doctoral Candidates

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 of the application form ([on this website](#)).

Only one funding application can be submitted per applicant.

What is the funding period?

The funding period begins on 15 January 2025 and ends on 15 July 2025. The invoices for expenditures must bear an invoice date within this period.

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.

The application form ([on this 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 can be applied for per work package.

What should a funding application look like?

The application form ([on this website](#)) provided by TD-Lab must be used for the application. The completed application form must be submitted by e-mail to td-lab@berlin-university-alliance.de no later than 31 October 2024, 23:59 CET 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 ([on this website](#)) is available in both languages.

What criteria are used to review the funding applications?

The reviewers will assess the following criteria:

- **Objectives of the participatory and/or transdisciplinary work package:** Are the objectives of the planned work package well structured and comprehensibly described? Do the applicants address at least one goal of the TD-Lab Funding Program and do they credibly present how they intend to achieve this goal?
- **Quality of the methods and formats:** Are the methods and formats presented suitable for achieving the goals?
- **Scientific and societal added value:** How convincingly do the applicants present the desired added value of the participatory and/or transdisciplinary work package? How can the societal impact of existing research be increased? What scientific questions are addressed?
- **Cooperation with non-scientific actors:** Does the application justify the selection of non-scientific partners to be addressed with the planned work package? Is it shown how the non-scientific partners will either a) actively participate in the planned work package or b) actively participate in the project after the end of the funding period of the proposed work package?
- **Schedule:** Is the described work package realistically feasible during the funding period?
- **Financial plan:** Is the financial plan comprehensible and convincing with regard to the feasibility of the planned work package?
- **References:** Are the references given in the list convincing for the implementation of the work package?



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 the coordinator of the TD-Lab Funding Program (if all documents are available, the applicant is eligible to apply, the character restriction of the application form has been complied with and the application has been submitted on time).

2nd stage – content pre-selection: In the second stage, program managers of the TD-Lab who are not involved in the TD-Funding Program carry out the assessment of the applications on the basis of an evaluation form with standardized evaluation criteria. Each application is reviewed independently by two program managers. A total of 44 points can be achieved (a maximum of 22 points can be achieved per review).

3rd stage – selection meeting: Out of a maximum of 25 applications with the highest score (including the 7 best-rated applications on the topic of water), a maximum of 15 applications will be finally decided on funding by a selection committee in the second stage of the review process. In addition to the subject-specific and methodological evaluation criteria, the following aspects are also considered by the selection committee: diversity of the applications in terms of status groups and disciplines as well as a balanced distribution across the BUA houses. The selection committee is made up of the members of the Steering Committee of Objective 2 – Fostering Knowledge Exchange¹, the project lead of the TD-Lab and two external representatives from funding and participation practice. Any biases will be communicated and documented transparently before the meeting. If there is bias, the relevant persons do not take part in the vote on the corresponding motion.

¹ Members of the Steering Committee of Objective 2 are: Prof. Dr. Swen Hutter – Freie Universität Berlin, Prof. Dr. Eva Ehninger – Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Prof. Dr. Martina Schraudner – Technische Universität Berlin, Prof. Dr. Marc Dewey, Charité – Universitätsmedizin Berlin

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

The TD-Lab Funding Program pursues the idea of giving scientists the opportunity to gain their own practical experience in participatory and/or transdisciplinary research and to reflect on it in a low-threshold manner.

Since reflection on the experiences made is particularly important for individual and societal learning, the TD-Lab offers an accompanying program for the funded students during the funding period. This consists of a three-hour kick-off meeting on January 15, 2025 (1-4 p.m.), a two-hour reflection workshop in April 2025 (expected in calendar week 15) and a three-hour closing event on July 2, 2025 (1-4 p.m.). Participation in the accompanying Program is binding. It serves to network and the individual and joint exchange of experiences for participatory or transdisciplinary research.

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 evaluations of the TD-Lab Funding Program carried out by the NaWik – National Centre 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 31 August 2025

What deadlines must be taken into account?

- Publication of the call for applications: September 16, 2024
- Closing of the call for applications: October 31, 2024; 23:59 CET (applications received after this deadline can no longer be considered)
- Information events on the call:
 - Wednesday, September 25, 2024, 3-4 p.m. CET
 - Thursday, October 17, 2024, 1-2 p.m. CET
- Selection meeting: End of November 2024
- Funding information for applicants: beginning of December 2024
- Funding period: January 15, 2025 – July 15, 2025
- Deadline for settlement of the project: July 30, 2025
- Kick-off event: Wednesday, January 15, 2025, 1-4 p.m. CET
- Reflection workshop: tbd; in Week 15 (April 4 to 11, 2025)
- Closing event: July 02, 2025, 1-4 p.m. CET
- Submission of the project report: August 31, 2025 (outline to be specified)

How can I find out about TD-Lab Funding?

Take part in one of the two information sessions on the call:

- Wednesday, September 25, 2024, 3-4 p.m. CET | [Link for the registration](#)
- or**
- Thursday, October 17, 2024, 1-2 p.m. CET | [Link for the registration](#)

Who can you contact if you have any questions?

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

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