

Guideline for ZALF Integrated Priority Projects (IPP)

Background

In light of the inherent complexity of agricultural landscapes and the diversity of societal challenges, the development of a new environmentally friendly, productive, digital and knowledge-based agriculture requires integrated research approaches across the disciplinary boundaries of natural, technical, life, social and cultural sciences as well as across different temporal and spatial scales. Since 2019, ZALF has been promoting these integrated activities, which are essential for successful agricultural landscape research, with **Integrated Priority Projects (IPP)**. As a targeted **impulse to promote integrated research**, this instrument aims to better link the ZALF expertise required to develop solutions for complex challenges such as climate change, food security, biodiversity protection and resource scarcity. In addition, the topical clustering of integrated research activities in the IPP also helps to further increase the **international visibility of ZALF**.

What is an IPP?

An IPP is an **institutionally funded ZALF research project** in which at least three working groups from at least three research areas or platforms collaborate regarding an integrated research question. Each IPP receives institutional funding for three doctoral students for a **duration of 3 years** as well as funding for infrastructural and material expenses.

How to apply for an IPP?

Once per year (application period approx. May-August), ZALF issues an **internal competitive call for proposals** with reference to one of the five main ZALF Research topics ("narratives") to initiate one new IPP. Important **criteria for funding** include internal collaboration (research integration), potential visibility (branding), the development of methods for integrated systems research, and previous ZALF research activities relevant for the IPP. Proposals must be submitted using the provided template (see Appendix 1) before the deadline specified in the call.

Which scientific criteria must be fulfilled by an IPP proposal?

- **Scope and objectives:** A successful IPP proposal needs to clearly address the outlined scope of the respective IPP call. IPP proposals must state concise and overarching objectives to be addressed by the IPP. These objectives may be deduced from specific research questions or hypotheses.
- **Perspective:** The IPP must feature a research perspective beyond the 3-year funding period, ideally aiming for a substantial scientific achievement ("branding") within the context of the topic (narrative).
- **Consistency:** All work packages of the proposal should be consistently linked to the project objectives and to each other. Individual work packages should concisely describe steps (and the methods to be applied) to achieve the planned milestones and outcomes.
- **Feasibility:**
 - The proposal needs to clearly state the responsibilities and contributions of the applying WG and scientists for/to the individual work packages.
 - The proposed doctoral projects must be adequate yet realistic in terms of scientific objectives and work planning to allow for the successful completion of PhD degrees within the project duration.
 - All applicants should have sufficient project-related expertise and relevant previous scientific achievements (i.e. third party-funded projects, publications).

Which formal requirements must be fulfilled by an IPP proposal?

- **Duration:**
 - The project duration is limited to a maximum of three years (36 months).
 - Projects are expected to officially start between January and March of the respective year.
- **Budget:**
 - Proposals may request a budget of up to 500,000 € for staff, consumables, travel, conferences, etc. Follow-up funding of an IPP after the initial funding period is possible, but will be based on successful evaluation of the initially funded project after three years.
 - The requested resources (staff, consumables, travel costs, etc.) must be clearly associated to the individual work packages (separated along the funding period in years).
- **Time planning:** A GANTT chart must be included describing the time plan of the work packages and activities resulting in publications and other outputs.
- **Applicants / Consortium:**
 - The project consortium must consist of scientists (= "applicants") from at least 3 ZALF research WG of at least 3 ZALF Research Areas/Platforms.
 - The following persons are eligible as main applicant (IPP Principal Investigator) and co-applicants (WP Leader):
 - all permanent institutionally funded ZALF scientists
 - ZALF Tenure Track candidates and other ZALF Postdocs with a fixed-term institutionally funded contract (Note: Tenure Track candidates and postdocs with fixed-term contracts must be able to support the IPP throughout most of its duration!)
 - For all applicants who are not WG leaders, the respective WG leader must sign the proposal, thus consenting to strategically support the IPP. If the applicant is a Tenure Track candidate or a postdoc with a fixed-term contract, the signing WG leader thereby also agrees to ensure the successful completion of the IPP in case the applicant were to leave ZALF.
 - Third-party funded scientists may participate in and contribute to the IPP (cooperation), but cannot act as IPP Principal Investigator or Co-applicants.
 - Each of the participating ZALF research WG must make a considerable contribution to the project, justifying one doctoral researcher per WG.
 - ZALF service groups may also be involved in an IPP, but are not eligible to receive funding for a doctoral researcher.
 - For each main applicant, the IPP proposal must include a CV highlighting the project-related expertise (i.e. third party-funded projects, publications) as well as relevant scientific achievements.
- **Doctoral researchers:** The proposal must clearly state (i) the scope of each doctoral position, (ii) 3 planned publications, (iii) the respective collaborating Universities and faculties, and (iv) the applicants which will act as ZALF supervisors.
- **Layout:** The IPP proposal must be written in English using the provided template (see Appendix 1). The proposal must not exceed 20 pages (plus CVs; Arial font, single line spacing, and 11 pt. font size).
- **Submission:** Proposals need to be submitted via email (pdf format) before the call deadline, as specified in the respective call.

How are successful IPP proposals selected?

All formally eligible proposals are evaluated and ranked by the ZALF Research Commission. Based on the recommendation of the Research Commission, the Scientific Director will then select the successful IPP proposal and the Executive Board will decide on the allocation of project funding.

Reporting obligations

Project start:

- Projects are expected to officially start between January and March of the respective year. The official project starting date is to be communicated to the directorate. If an earlier or later starting date is required, this needs to be negotiated with the directorate in advance.

Interim review:

- Approx. 12-14 months after the starting date of the IPP (date determined by the directorate in consultation with the project management), the IPP Principal Investigator (PI) is asked to give a 20-min presentation on the project progress to the Research Commission. All WP leaders of the IPP are also requested to be present.
- Following the presentation, a 40-min discussion will focus on the implementation of the project in comparison to planning (proposal) and current developments. Project progress will be reflected along the above-listed selection criteria for the IPP; with a particular focus on the added value of integration.
- The presentation and discussion are open to all interested ZALF staff members (via videoconferencing).

Final reporting:

- The project will end exactly 36 months after the official starting date (see above). If required, the IPP Principal Investigator can apply for a project extension (no new funding will be allocated) by submitting a respective request (incl. reasons) to the directorate.
- Within 6 weeks after the official end of the IPP, a final report (10-15 pp.) on the project results, publications, data management and outlook must be submitted to the Research Commission. A particular focus should be placed on a critical reflection of the success of the integration
- Project consortia are also asked to present their results in an internal colloquium, using one of the two regularly scheduled colloquia for the respective research topic (narrative).

Further questions?

Please address any questions to the ZALF Research Commission or the Directorate (Ulrike Hagemann; ulrike.hagemann@zalf.de).

Proposal for an Integrated Priority Project (IPP) Call 202x within the “Agriculture and xxxxxxxx” Narrative – “xxxxxxx xxxxxxxxxx xxxxxxxxxx xxxxxxxxxx”

Template to be used for application – see call text for details (published on Month xx, 202x)
Submission deadline: **Month XX, 202x, 18:00h** as pdf file to forschungskommission@zalf.de
Max. of 20 pages excl. CVs

Short title of the proposed IPP

...

Working group (WG) where the proposed IPP would be located

...

Main Applicant

(Coordinator; WG leader being responsible for the overall management of the project and accountable for the use of the funds)

...

Research consortium

(ZALF scientists; Principle Investigators from at least 3 Working Groups and at least 3 Research Areas and/or Platforms need to build a project consortium)

...

Application period

01.01.202x – 31.12.202x

Summary

(Please summarize the main goals of the project, max. 1600 char.)

...

1. State of the art and preliminary work

1.1. Description

(clearly describe the context of the proposed project from which the research questions are derived)

...

1.2. Project-related list of publications of the applicants

...

2. Objectives and work programme

2.1. Objectives and hypotheses

(also highlight the expected innovative contributions and integrative aspects of the project)

...

2.2. Work programme

...

2.3. Time planning (incl. GANTT chart)

...

2.4. Data management

...

3. Funds requested and justification:

(describe how the requested funds will be used)

3.1. Staff costs

(for each requested position describe what this person will do and who will supervise the position)

...

3.2. Scientific instrumentation

...

3.3. Consumables

...

3.4. Travel

...

3.5. Publication expenses

...

3.6. Other costs

(e.g. services rendered by third parties, documentation and scientific literature, project-specific software, operating and maintenance/running expenses for major scientific instrumentation)

...

4. Project requirements

4.1. Your team

(names, academic titles and employment grades of everyone who will be working on the project)

...

4.2. Cooperation with other scientists (internal and external)

...

4.3. Use of scientific infrastructures and equipment

...

4.4. Additionally inferred costs (i.e. running cost for materials, IT, etc.)

...

4.5. Conflicts of interest with commercial activities

...

5. Signatures

*Signature of the **IPP Principal Investigator (Main applicant)***
WG xxx

*Signature of the **WG Leader of the main applicant [if applicable¹]***

*Signature of **IPP WP Leader (Co-applicant)***
WG xxx

*Signature of the **WG Leader of the co-applicant [if applicable²]***

*Signature of **IPP WP Leader (Co-applicant)***
WG xxx

*Signature of the **WG Leader of the co-applicant [if applicable²]***

¹ Only required if main applicant is not a ZALF WG Leader

² Only required if the respective co-applicant is not a ZALF WG Leader

6. Attachments

6.1. References

...

6.2. CVs

(For each applicant provide a CV highlighting supportive expertise and previous scientific achievements like third party funded projects and publications relevant to the proposed IPP)

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