

WE & ME
Foundation

WE&ME PROJECTS

GUIDE TO SUBMISSION
IN COLLABORATION WITH SCIENCE FOR ME



weandmecfs.org

INTRODUCTION

This is a guide to using the WE&ME Funding Portal to submit an application to the WE&ME Foundation's "WE&ME Projects" call. The call funds research teams of two or three Principal Investigators (PIs) that aim to advance the biological understanding of Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (ME/CFS). This call is jointly developed by the WE&ME Foundation and Science for ME, and is managed by the Vienna Science and Technology Fund (WWTF GmbH). The call is funded entirely by the WE&ME Foundation.

We strongly recommend working through the application in the order of the sections below. General information and FAQs are provided in the final section.

INFO

Only the Principal Investigator and Coordinator (PI&C) and the co-PIs must register in the WE&ME Funding Portal. Only they will be able to create and edit the proposal through their accounts. Further team members and collaborators are added inside the proposal without portal accounts.

REGISTER & LOGIN

Registration

1. Go to <https://funding.weandmecfs.org>
2. Go to "Register" in the top menu.
3. Enter your registration data (* indicates mandatory fields).
4. Confirm your registration via the email you receive.

The person who initially registers may be the PI&C or a co-PI. The remaining team members can be invited to the proposal at a later time.

Login

1. Go to <https://funding.weandmecfs.org>
2. Login with your credentials.

CREATING A NEW PROPOSAL

INFO

Either the PI&C or a co-PI can create the proposal.

1. Open the WE&ME Projects call in the WE&ME Funding Portal.
2. Click "Create new proposal".
3. Once created, the proposal appears under "My Proposals & Roles" in the top menu.

IMPORTANT

A researcher may appear as PI&C or co-PI in a maximum of two proposals in this call. If a researcher is involved in more than two proposals, they will be contacted and asked to withdraw from the surplus proposals.

INFO

You can create multiple proposals and delete proposals at any time. Proposals that are not submitted will be deleted automatically after the submission deadline.

PERSONNEL AND INSTITUTIONS

INFO

Only the PI&C and the co-PIs of the core team must complete the steps on this page.

Step 1 — Invite the PI&C and co-PIs

Go to the tab "Personnel and Institutions" in the proposal and invite the core team by providing their contact information.

- If you are the PI&C, click "I am the Principal Investigator and Coordinator". You can then invite co-PIs to the proposal.
- If you are a co-PI, add yourself as a co-PI to the proposal. You will need to invite the PI&C, who will receive an email to accept the invitation. The PI&C can either log in with an existing account or register as a new user. You and the PI&C can then invite further co-PIs.

Step 2 — Complete your Profile

Go to "My Profile" in the top menu to fill out or update your profile. Please ensure that all information, including your contact details, is up to date.

IMPORTANT

The PI&C and all co-PIs must be based at a university, non-university research institution, or other eligible non-profit research organisation. Researchers without an affiliation cannot be funded. Industry partners are not eligible to receive funding but may collaborate in-kind.

Step 3 — Complete your Role

1. Go to "My Proposals & Roles" in the top menu. Under "My Roles", click on your role below the title of the proposal.
2. Click "Refresh from profile" to import the latest information from "My Profile".
3. Under "Staff category", select "Speaker or Co-Speaker" (i.e. PI&C or co-PI) from the dropdown menu. The option "Consortium Member" is not used in this call.

INFO

A researcher may be PI&C or co-PI in a maximum of two proposals in this call. Career breaks (parental leave, care duties, prolonged illness, including ME/CFS or other chronic diseases) will be considered in the evaluation — please indicate relevant time periods in your CV.

BASIC INFORMATION

Go to the tab “Basic Information”:

1. Provide a title and an acronym for your proposal.
2. Enter at least three keywords describing the topics of your proposal.
3. Provide a project duration between 18 and 24 months.
4. Enter a lay summary (max. 1,000 characters) and a scientific abstract (max. 2,000 characters).
5. Select the number of PIs in the core team from the dropdown menu (two or three).

INFO

The Proposal ID is assigned after submission of the proposal.

STAGE 1 — SHORT PROPOSAL (OPEN)

The short proposal is the primary basis for selecting the teams invited to submit a full proposal. Proposals must be submitted in English.

INFO

The character limits below include spaces. For uploaded documents that contain primarily text, use font size 11 pt, line spacing 15–20 pt and margins of at least 2 cm.

Content of the short proposal

→ see Call Specifications

STAGE 2 — FULL PROPOSAL (BY INVITATION)

Teams invited after Stage 1 will be asked to submit a full proposal via the WE&ME Funding Portal. To enable meaningful comparative evaluation at Stage 2, approximately three times as many teams as funding allows will be invited.

Content of the full proposal (tentative)

- Project title, acronym, keywords and project duration
- Lay summary (max. 1,000 characters) and scientific abstract (max. 2,000 characters), plus a visual abstract
- Work programme — detailed work plan with milestones and deliverables, detailed methodology, statistical analysis plan, and risk mitigation (max. 5 pages including references; a template with structure and formatting details will be provided)
- Core team members — updated short CVs, including role and expertise of each core team member
- Detailed budget with justification per cost line
- Open Science statement regarding open research data (max. 800 characters)
- Patient involvement plan (max. 800 characters)
- Ethics statement; where applicable, an acknowledgement of receipt from the relevant ethics committee. Final institutional review board approval and/or ethics votum must be provided at the latest at project start (max. 800 characters)
- Statement regarding use of AI (max. 500 characters)
- Disclosure of other applications for funding — WE&ME does not allow double funding. If your proposal is selected for funding by both WE&ME and another funding organisation, you will be asked to decide which funding to accept (max. 300 characters)
- Signatures from the authorised representatives of all involved institutions and partners

Project Attachments

Provide the following documents as separate PDF uploads where applicable:

- CVs of all core team members — please use a short academic CV format and upload one PDF per person. The number of CVs must match the size of the core team.
- Letters of support / institutional commitment from each partner institution, where relevant (Full Proposal).
- Ethics documentation — an acknowledgement of receipt from the relevant ethics committee for the full proposal; the final ethics votum must be submitted before project start (Full Proposal).

PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

Once all sections show a green checkmark, the PI&C can submit the proposal by pressing the “Submit proposal” button at the bottom of the “Project” chapter.

INFO

Before submitting, please download and check all sections of the complete proposal by clicking on the “PDF” button at the bottom of the page.

IMPORTANT

The proposal can only be submitted by the PI&C.

The PI&C will receive an automatic confirmation email when the Funding Portal receives the completed submission. Please check your inbox after hitting the submit button. If you do not receive a confirmation email, please get in touch with the programme manager.

IMPORTANT

No changes are possible after the project has been submitted. After the indicated deadline, submission is no longer possible. Unsubmitted proposals will be excluded from the evaluation process and deleted shortly after the submission deadline.

GENERAL INFORMATION AND FAQs

INFO

The Funding Portal saves your entries and changes automatically. You can pause data entry at any time. All information will be available again upon your next login.

INFO

A chapter with a red alert symbol indicates that it is incomplete. Within the marked chapter, click on the red symbol(s) beside individual sections to highlight the fields requiring attention. A green checkmark indicates that the information in the chapter is complete. The symbols may not refresh immediately; switching chapters and back will refresh them.

Is this call open to researchers outside of Europe?

Yes. The call is open internationally, with no geographic restrictions on the host institution. The PI&C and all co-PIs must be based at a university, non-university research institution, or other eligible non-profit research organisation.

I work primarily on long COVID or another post-acute infection syndrome. Can I apply?

Projects investigating patients from other post-acute infection contexts are eligible provided participants fulfil established ME/CFS diagnostic criteria. Projects that mix participants with post-COVID organ damage — for example cardiac or pulmonary injury — into ME/CFS cohorts without clear separation are out of scope.

I am new to ME/CFS research but bring methods from an adjacent field. Can I apply?

Yes, and applications of this kind are highly encouraged. Research teams are strongly encouraged to pair ME/CFS expertise with complementary skills from adjacent disciplines such as immunology, neuroscience, mitochondrial biology, autonomic physiology, sleep research, computational biology, data science or other disciplines.

Can I apply as PI on more than one proposal in this call?

A researcher may appear as PI&C or co-PI in a maximum of two proposals in this call.

Can industry partners be part of the consortium?

Yes, as in-kind collaborators. Industry partners are not eligible to receive funding but may contribute to the project.

Will career breaks be taken into account in the evaluation?

Yes. Career breaks for parental leave, care duties, or prolonged illness, including ME/CFS itself, will be considered when assessing academic age and track record. Please provide the relevant time periods in your CV so this can be calculated fairly.

Do I need a formal ME/CFS diagnosis for every participant?

Yes. Clearly state the criteria for participant selection, using a definition of ME/CFS that includes Post-Exertional Malaise (PEM). Accepted diagnostic criteria are the Canadian Consensus Criteria (CCC) or revised CCC, the International Consensus Criteria (ICC), and the IOM 2015 Diagnostic Criteria. Pre-pandemic and post-pandemic onset must be distinguished.

Do I have to include severely affected (housebound or bedbound) patients?

Inclusion is not mandatory, but where feasible it is strongly encouraged. Options include home visits, remote measurements, or the use of existing data collected from this group.

What counts as meaningful patient involvement?

Involvement that goes beyond participation as study subjects. Examples include co-design of research questions and protocols, advisory roles during the project, contribution to dissemination, and co-authorship where appropriate. Tokenistic involvement will be assessed negatively.

Can patient experts be paid from the project budget?

Yes. Compensation for patient experts and patient organisations contributing substantively (co-design, advisory roles, dissemination) is an eligible cost, either as personnel or non-personnel costs.

Can I submit a full proposal directly without going through Stage 1?

No. The call uses a mandatory two-stage process. Only teams invited after Stage 1 may submit a full proposal at Stage 2. Approximately three times as many teams as funding allows will be invited to Stage 2.

Is there a rebuttal stage?

No. There is no rebuttal at either Stage 1 or Stage 2. The jury decision and the formal funding decision by the WE&ME Foundation are final. All Stage 2 applicants receive written feedback summarising the main reasons for the decision.

Are overhead costs covered?

A maximum of 10 % overhead costs of the project budget may be covered by the WE&ME Foundation. As the WE&ME Foundation is a private non-profit foundation, financing of university infrastructure cannot be at the core of this highly focused call.

What is the cap on non-personnel costs?

Non-personnel costs may not exceed 40% of the project budget. Smaller equipment items are eligible up to EUR 1,500 per item. The WE&ME Foundation encourages applicants to keep non-personnel costs low and to finance personnel primarily via the funding.

Are publication costs eligible?

Yes. Article Processing Charges (APCs) for open access publications are eligible as non-personnel costs. All peer-reviewed publications from funded projects must be published open access.

When must ethics approval be in place?

An acknowledgement of receipt from the relevant ethics committee should be submitted with the full proposal. Final ethics approval (Votum) must be submitted to the WE&ME Foundation before project start.

What are the expectations regarding open research data?

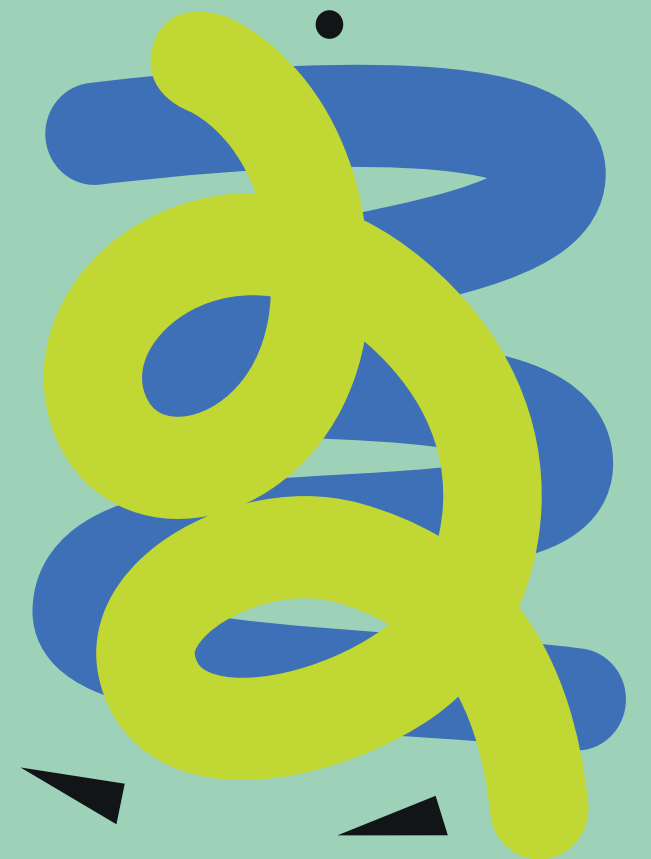
Data must be FAIR, machine-readable, and deposited in a trusted, discipline-appropriate repository such as MAP ME/CFS, the Open Science Framework, GitHub or Zenodo. Data should be released no later than the publication of corresponding results, and no later than twelve months after project end. Justified exceptions (for example for patient privacy or sensitive cohorts) must be well argued in the Open Science Statement.

Is the follow-up consolidation call in 2028/2029 guaranteed?

No, not at this point. A consolidation call is envisioned, and successful WE&ME Projects might be invited to apply if the consolidation call is confirmed.

Who do I contact for specific questions not covered in the FAQs?

For specific questions not addressed above, please get in touch with the Call Manager:
Dr. Benjamin Missbach, Vienna Science and Technology Fund (WWTF GmbH)
funding@weandmecfs.org and/or Phone: +43 1 402 31 43 19.





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