



Digital Futures Fund - 2023 Call for Projects

1. Goals and benefits

For the 2023 Digital Futures Fund (DFF) Call we are looking for projects **at the intersection of digital and sustainable transformation**. Specifically, we are looking for projects that can plausibly show how aspects of digital transformation are uniquely suited to address one - or several - of the [17 UN Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#) across their social, economic, and ecological dimensions.

After the 2019 COVID Call, this represents the second DFF call with a more specialized focus to address issues with particularly high societal relevance.

The DFF is aimed at *all* ZHAW employees from the areas of education and research, as well as technical, administrative and operations staff, who would like to implement an idea at the intersection of digital and sustainable transformation. They must be able to plausibly demonstrate that the implementation of this idea *mainly*:

- creates overarching benefits (impact) **or**
- represents an innovative step in how digital transformation addresses the SDGs (innovation).

There are two categories available with different application and selection procedures to cover these two aspects. Applicants decide for themselves which category is more suitable for their application.

2. Categories

The following table serves as a *guide for the selection* of the category. Accordingly, projects do not have to be a perfect fit:

	Impact	Innovation
Benefit	Projects primarily generate broad, overarching benefits (e.g. for several organizational units of the ZHAW, society).	Projects generate benefits, but these are not necessarily overarching.
Reference to the digital transformation	Projects deal with questions of digital and sustainable transformation, but do not necessarily actively push it forward.	Projects actively drive digital and sustainable transformation.
Risk	The risk that the planned results will not be achieved is low.	Projects can be risky and the expected results may not be achieved. ¹
Results	Projects generate concrete, applicable and tangible results whose benefits are obvious.	Projects may generate results that are not directly applicable.

¹ However, this is not due to quality of work, lack of time or resources (see 3.1).

Comprehensibility and assessability	Projects are comprehensible to, and can be evaluated by, a broad community even without specific expertise.	Projects require in-depth expertise in order to be assessed, for which specialist consultants may have to be called in.
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Projects have to be entered into one or the other category (see 3.2). The submission and selection procedure is organised differently according to the chosen category (see 6). For both categories, funds are guaranteed to be available (see 5).

3. Criteria and framework conditions

3.1 Formal criteria

All applications must meet the following formal criteria:

- Budget of maximum kCHF 20.
- Projects have to be implemented within the funding year (2023).

3.2 General conditions

The following general conditions apply:

- A person can be in the lead of only one project in 2023. They can however be involved in any number of projects in 2023.²
- A person can only enter one project per award date (i.e. it is not allowed to enter three different projects on three different topics at the same time).
- A project may not be entered into both categories at the same time.
- A DFF project must be coherent on its own. That means:
 - The results of the project must not be dependent on other (external or internal) funding, such as another DFF project or an SNF grant.
 - The second award date may not be used to extend or add to an existing project.
- Projects that are funded in the first award date must have started before the second award date (first bookings). Funds from projects that have not been started by then will be withdrawn after consultation with the applicants and reallocated at the second award date.
- In the case of projects with similar content, ZHAW digital reserves the right to impose conditions on cooperation.
- If a project is not funded at the first award date, it may be resubmitted at the second award date.

4. Connection between the DFF and the Digital Futures Lab (DFL)

[Membership in the DFL](#) is not a prerequisite for submitting an application. However, successful applicants automatically become members of the DFL as important stakeholders in the ZHAW's digital transformation ecosystem, because:

- The DFL provides an environment from which ideas for DFF projects can emerge.
- The members are part of the evaluation panel (see 6).
- Exchanges and links between people involved in DFF projects are encouraged by the DFL.
- The results of the DFF projects are disseminated in the communication channels of the DFL.

Successful applicants' names will also be communicated to ZHAW sustainable to be included in the sustainability community.

² "In the lead" means that they are responsible for planning and coordinating the project and are responsible for its outcomes.



5. Time structure

Applications may be submitted on a continuous basis. They will be evaluated at two fixed award dates. The total budget for the DFF is divided between the two award dates in such a way that funds are guaranteed to be available for both categories at both times. Due to the principle of annuality, less but sufficient time is available for the implementation of the projects at the later award date.

5.1 Award Date 1

Applications submitted by **23:59 on 14 November 2023** will be considered at award date 1. Successful applications will be communicated by the end of January and thus have approx. 11 months for implementation until the end of 2023.

Applications submitted after November 14, 2023 will flow directly into the second award date.

5.2 Award Date 2

Applications submitted by **23:59 on 27 March 2023** will be considered at award date 2. Successful applications will be communicated by the end of May at the latest and thus have approx. 7 months for implementation until the end of 2023.

Submission will not be possible after 27 March 2023 (see also 9 - Future Calls).

6. Evaluation and selection procedure

To assess the sustainability aspects of the projects, ZHAW digital will collaborate with [ZHAW sustainable](#).

6.1 Formal criteria and framework conditions

The ZHAW digital Program Office first checks whether an application meets the general conditions and formal criteria and contains all the necessary information. Applications will be rejected without the possibility of rectification if a formal criterion or general condition is not met.³

The Program Office evaluates whether applications have a clear connection to digital transformation and rejects applications if this is not the case. The ZHAW sustainable Team does the same for sustainability aspects.

This evaluation takes place for both categories.

6.2 Category "Impact"

All applications in the "Impact" category that pass the Program Offices' review will automatically move on to the next evaluation step, which is a vote in the Digital Futures Lab (analogous to the previous call) and the ZHAW sustainable community.

Voting in the DFL is of central importance to ZHAW digital and manifests the principle of the desired bottom-up movement. Accordingly, ZHAW digital expects its members to actively address their responsibility to the community and to the ZHAW as a whole. The responsibility is primarily to support and promote projects that best meet the goals and criteria of the DFF, even if these projects do not come from their own environment.

The rules for voting for both communities are:

- Each member gets 5 votes, which can be distributed among those projects that generate the most **impact** (see above).

³ For example, all of a person's projects are rejected without consultation if a person enters multiple projects.



- You may vote for your own project.
- You can give a maximum of one vote per project.

The applications are ranked according to the votes they receive. The ZHAW digital core team ultimately decides up to which rank funding will be provided.

6.3 Category "Innovation"

All applications in the "Innovation" category that pass the Program Offices' review automatically move on to the next evaluation step, which consists of an evaluation by a selection committee comprised of four representatives from ZHAW digital and four representatives from ZHAW sustainable. The committee decides which applications best match the call and the "Innovation" category (see table under 2) and should therefore be funded. This decision is made in a discursive voting process against the background of a common understanding of innovation.

7. Application

- Applications can be submitted at zhawdigital.grantplatform.com beginning September 20, 2022 (does not work with Internet Explorer).
- Accounts must be opened with a ZHAW e-mail address and your real name.
- All information entered is automatically saved once the first tab of the application is completed.
- After submitting, no changes can be made.

Please [contact us](#), if you have any questions about the tool, or if it is not usable for you.

8. Contact

All questions regarding the Digital Futures Fund should be directed exclusively to digital@zhaw.ch.

9. Future calls

ZHAW digital plans to launch a DFF Call every year. ZHAW digital reserves the right to narrow down the calls thematically (such as in this Call) and/or to make other substantial changes to the DFF. Therefore, projects entered after the deadline for the second award date cannot automatically be considered in the next call.

10. Questions in the application form ⁴

10.1 Category "Impact"

- Details of applicant (name etc.)
- Language of the application
- Title (70)
- Abstract (300)
- Keywords (Max. 3 keywords, ordered from general to specific)
- Project category
 - Research
 - Education
 - Management/Support

⁴ The available number of characters including spaces is indicated in brackets. e.g. "Abstract (300)" means that 300 characters including spaces are available for the description of the abstract.



- Project description (1000)
- How does the project address the intersection of digital and sustainable transformation? (400)
- Which of the 17 SDGs is the project addressing? (Checkboxes)
- What will the results of your project be? (400)
- What is the impact of your project's results and who will benefit from them? (400)
- What is the timeline of your project? What are significant milestones? (400)
- How are you going to disseminate the results at the end of the project? (400)
- Project members and their role
- Budget
 - Staff and material costs with brief justification (300)
- Project duration in months (must be completed by the end of 2023)
- Consent to general conditions

10.2 Category "Innovation"

- Details of applicant (name etc.)
- Language of the application
- Title
- Abstract (300)
- Keywords (Max. 3 keywords, ordered from general to specific)
- Project category
 - Research
 - Education
 - Management/Support
- Project description (1000)
- Which of the 17 SDGs is the project addressing? (Checkboxes)
- What are the innovative elements of your project? (e.g. methodology, outcome, field of application)? (600)
- In what way is your project an active driver of solutions from the area of digital and sustainable transformation in achieving the SDGs? (600)
- What are the results you hope to achieve with your project? (400)
- What are the methods you will use to achieve these results? (400)
- What are the risks that threaten the success of the project? (400)
- What is the timeline of your project? What are significant milestones? (400)
- How are you going to disseminate the results at the end of the project? (400)
- Project members and their role
- Budget
 - Staff and material costs with brief justification (300)
- Project duration in months (must be completed by the end of 2023)
- Consent to general conditions