

Call for modular flexible synthesis projects

All financing is dependent upon successful renewal of DFG funding for iDiv (defense in March 2021). Financing after September 2024 is subject to approval of iDiv funding beyond DFG funding.

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1 General information and rules

This is a call to support synthesis research projects with a budget, to be used flexibly for different approaches (i.e. modules), potentially to be combined. Creativity is encouraged.

Examples for potential funding approaches/modules are

- Short term guest (e.g., travel, housing, potentially other expenses)
- scientific support staff (based in Leipzig)
- Working group meetings
- Travel costs (e.g., conferences/ workshops/ inquiries/ meetings with project partners)

This call is divided into two different subcalls, which do not compete. Unless stated otherwise, rules apply for both calls. Applicants may only submit one proposal as a PI.

1. **SynFlexMembers - one project PI has to be [full iDiv member](#)**
2. **SynFlexWorld - any suitable researcher worldwide can be PI**

sDiv, like iDiv, is committed to establishing and maintaining a diverse and inclusive community that collectively supports and implements our mission to do great science.

Please thoroughly read about the **general mission and ideas behind iDiv and the sDiv synthesis centre [here](#)**, as they are important and helpful for framing a successful sDiv proposal.

Most activities should take place either at iDiv (working group meetings, hosting of visitors, workplace of support staff) or have to involve the iDiv collaborator (outgoing visit). Alternatively sDiv is supporting in various ways virtual collaborations.

2 Proposal

The aim of the sDiv SynFlex calls is to conduct synthesis projects in a stimulating and supportive international environment with the flexibility to use a diverse set of approaches to be successful. The maximum number of principle investigators (PIs) is two.

The projects topics should fall into one of the five research areas of [iDiv's biodiversity research](#) and should have strong links to iDiv's research mission regarding [Integrative Biodiversity Research](#). After a decade of successful platform building and data generation at iDiv/sDiv, we perceive a need to synthesize biodiversity knowledge in order to develop a more coherent theoretical framework for biodiversity science.

Projects should address novel questions or examine known problems from an innovative synthesis perspective. All synthesis topics in biodiversity research are welcome, ranging from biology to social, economic or computer sciences. Though the project may be risky, applicants should provide evidence that sufficient data and appropriate analytical tools are available or will be developed during the project lifetime to tackle novel questions.

3 Collaboration in iDiv

Any project needs a minimum of one [iDiv member](#): **SynFlexMembers** need to have a minimum of one **full iDiv member as PI**, **SynFlexWorld** a minimum of one **iDiv member as participating collaborator**.

4 Application process

4.1 Pre-proposal

You are only eligible to submit a full sDiv proposal if you were invited to after a successfully reviewed pre-proposal. The mandatory pre-proposal should briefly describe the project and the aims. Pre-proposals have to be submitted via the [iDiv application portal](#) before **16 March 2021 (11:59 PM CET)**. Decisions whether you can submit a full proposal will be made within 3 weeks following the pre-proposal deadline.

The pre-proposal shall include:

1. Information about the PI and Co-PI(s), including the supporting iDiv member (a pre-proposal without an iDiv member agreeing being collaborator will not be further evaluated)
2. A brief description (1000 words max.) of the novelty, the synthesis aspect and scientific objectives of the planned project, a brief description of the planned approaches (e.g. meetings, guests but also methods, used data etc.). What is the relevance of your research particularly for biodiversity questions? Please note that due to the potential complexity of the project structure, the use of different modules/approaches don't have to be final at this stage.
3. **SynFlexWorld**: Letter of support by iDiv member using the template provided on the [sDiv website](#).

4.2 Full proposal

After invitation to submit a full proposal, complete the **proposal template** provided on the [sDiv website](#). Submit your proposal including all attachments in **one PDF file** via the [iDiv application portal](#) by **8 June 2021 (11:59 PM CET)**.

5 Research data management

Upon invitation to submit a full proposal and submission of the resulting application, it is required that the data owners agree to make the data and code that result from sDiv funding publicly available. This should be achieved within 3 years after the end of funding, and under the least restrictive licence possible.

The project PI(s) will therefore be required to read and accept the iDiv Data Sharing and Data Portal Usage policies. These are currently undergoing revision, but in general follow widely accepted Open Science principles.

Funded projects will receive intensive support in any needed code and data management demands by iDiv's Integrative Biodiversity Data and Code Support Unit.

6 Budget

The budget of a project is restricted to a total of 45.000 €.

Financial resources can be requested for consumables as well as for support staff. This could include e.g. travel costs, training but also short term contracts for scientific helpers and guests. No additional data generation or sampling e.g. field or lab work will be funded. Administration of the budget will be handled by sDiv staff. Any later financial deviations of funded proposals have to be discussed with the head of sDiv.

Any hiring of staff, purchasing etc needs to be carried out by sDiv, as administrative rules by Leipzig University apply and costs need to be eligible with the DFG funding regulations. When invited for full proposals, you can clarify details with sDiv staff via sdiv@idiv.de.

For an overview on basic conditions of potential approaches please see appendix.

For calculating costs please use the sDiv budget tool for working groups meetings and rates in proposal template for calculation of scientific support staff.

7 Evaluation procedure

7.1 Selection criteria

Generally, selection criteria are based on scientific excellence, the relevance and novelty of the research questions, work plan (timeline, deliverables etc.), expertise and fit of the project PI(s) and collaborators and the rationale of the combination of approaches. The project's objectives have to be highly relevant to iDiv's central missions.

7.2 Proposal evaluation

Pre-proposals will be evaluated within 2 weeks after the submission deadline by the sDiv executive board.

Full proposals are usually evaluated within 6 weeks after the submission deadline by the sDiv evaluation board and external expert reviewers.

8 Reporting

The PIs of funded working groups are obliged to provide a summary of every deliverable or milestone immediately afterwards. Furthermore, it is expected that a final report will be delivered within six months after the last meeting. All reports will be published on the individual [sDiv project webpages](#).

The report should include specific working group deliverable(s): i.e. manuscript(s) of multi-author scientific publication(s) (ideally high-impact), proposals for other funding sources, a written description of dissemination concepts (e.g. software, websites), databases etc.

sDiv support has to be acknowledged in any kind of sDiv project publication/outcome ([see guidelines](#)). Copies of published products should be sent to sDiv.

Appendix I - Description of potential main project approaches/modules

- **Working group meetings**

All in-person working group meetings should take place at iDiv in Leipzig. Please check our sDiv calendar for available dates. The following are general recommendations for sDiv working groups. However in this call working groups can be more flexible in size and duration according to the needs of the project. Group size can range from 2 to 20 participants. Larger meetings usually run for four or five full working days, up to two weeks. We encourage working groups to meet several times, with at best 4 or 5 full days per meeting. If the main project modules are large working group meetings, an approval for a funded third meeting will be based on a mid term evaluation by the sDiv board after the second meeting.

In general, longer stays are considered more effective but costs should be balanced by a smaller group size to stay within the funding limit.

The PIs are responsible for communication with sDiv. It is expected that the PIs provide a list of all participants (including themselves) who have agreed to participate (if large working group meetings are considered a list of 10 core participants is sufficient). After approval of a working group, replacement or admission of new participants can be allowed when agreed jointly with the head of sDiv and the PIs.

The admission criteria will be also the group composition, the participants' particular competences, their contribution to maximize complementarity of skills within a meeting and available funding. The participants should reflect the goals and objectives of the group, for example, working groups that address socio-economic aspects of biodiversity science should involve stakeholders and social scientists.

Following the spirit of iDiv and the science about successful synthesis groups, PIs should strive for a well-balanced group of participants in terms of gender balance, career stage, international and scientific expertise diversity. sDiv aims to have at least 40% female participation as well as at least one PhD student at meetings. Please consider to include PhD students of iDiv's graduate school yDiv. Successful groups consist of people with excellent expertise but also with dedication and time to participate in the meetings and to contribute significantly to the working group goals.

Although, working groups should include internationally renowned scientists across stages, we ask the PIs work to minimize the carbon footprint of travel as much as possible. To that end, we suggest that large working groups should be composed of not more than 1/3 participants travelling from outside of Europe.

Budget calculation for working group meetings is to be done via the budget tool provided on the [website](#). Any financial deviations from the budget or change in participants of funded proposals have to be discussed with the head of sDiv.

- **Short-term-guests**

If an exchange of collaborators (i.e. short term visits) is considered, the iDiv member has to be involved. Either the iDiv collaborator is travelling or is hosting visitor(s). Funds can be requested to cover expenses of the visit(s), (e.g. travel and housing). Furthermore a desk and access to (iDiv) IT infrastructure will be provided by the host or by the sDiv lab (if possible).

- **Scientific helpers/support staff**

Scientific helpers must be enrolled at an German University during the time of the contract as bachelor/master students or PhD students. Workplace would be generally iDiv's headquarters in Leipzig. Working time is 19 hours per week maximum, average costs 1.500 € per month. Any proposed deviation from these circumstances (e.g. place of work) need to be well justified and described and will be considered with regard to feasibility.