

sDiv – Call for Working Group Research Proposals

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1 About iDiv

Please thoroughly read about the **general mission and ideas behind iDiv and sDiv, its synthesis centre**, [here](#) as they are important and helpful for framing a successful sDiv proposal. To get a better understanding of synthesis topics funded by sDiv, have a look at the descriptions of the [funded projects](#).

2 Working groups at sDiv

2.1 General information

This call relates to working groups that will meet from September 2019 onwards. All meetings scheduled after September 2020 are subject to approval of further iDiv funding by the DFG. Please check our [sDiv calendar](#) for available dates. All working group meetings take place at iDiv in Leipzig. Due to limited funding for the current call for proposals we would like to highlight that the subsequent selection procedure will be very competitive.

Working groups are ideally composed of 10 to 15 (maximum 20) participants. Meetings typically run for four or five full working days, up to two weeks. We encourage working groups to meet three times, with at least 4 full days per meeting. Approval for a funded third meeting will be based on a mid term evaluation by the sDiv board after the second meeting. Decisions will be communicated in written form.

Meetings should have a sufficient time devoted to product-focused work, e.g. manuscripts, 3rd party proposals or policy briefs etc. In general, longer stays are considered more effective but costs should be balanced by a smaller group size to stay within the funding limit (see section 2.5). sDiv offers all established working groups comprehensive support with administration, IT, bioinformatics, access to high-performance-computing, RStudio server, data sharing, storing & discussion platforms etc., as well as scientific support. Additionally, the application for a working group project can include a request for support by a postdoc (see section 2.7).

2.2 Working group composition

Applications are open to all scientists worldwide. The maximum number of principle investigators (PIs) is two. The PIs are responsible for communication with sDiv. It is expected that the PIs provide a list of about 10 participants (including themselves) who have agreed to participate and at least **one iDiv member should be included**.

The list of current **iDiv members** is provided on the [iDiv website](#). The [sDiv coordinator Marten Winter](#) can assist with finding and contacting suitable members. After approval of a working group, replacement or admission of new participants can be allowed when agreed jointly with the sDiv coordinator and the PIs. The admission criteria will be 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 may consider involving stakeholders.

Following the spirit of iDiv, 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**. Although, working groups should include internationally renowned scientists, avoid raising the carbon footprint too much by inviting a lot of oversea participants. Successful groups consist of people with excellent expertise but also with dedication and time to participate in the meetings and to work on the working group goals. **Please make sure that potential participants will be able to commit time to the group and associated research, both before and after the meeting(s)**. PIs may consider including participants with extraordinary quantitative skills, e.g. to facilitate quick preliminary analyses from disjunctive datasets. The availability of early results during the limited timeframe of a meeting typically boosts the intellectual progress.

A well-balanced group of researchers at all levels is an important criterion for accepting applications for working groups.

2.3 Working group outcomes

All fields involved in biodiversity research are welcome, ranging from biology to social or computer sciences. Working groups should focus on a concrete topic with the aim of delivering a specific product.

Working groups outcomes are typically multi-author high-quality and ideally high-impact scientific publications. Existing and new concepts, theories, approaches to data exploration, experiments, modelling and synthesis (including conceptual synthesis) can be discussed and developed with a strong and direct link to existing approaches and fostering predictive biodiversity theory, either directly or indirectly. Within this framework, all topics regarding the four elements of iDiv's biodiversity research (**Biodiversity Patterns, Processes, Functions, and Biodiversity and Society**) or aspects of [iDiv's research mission](#) regarding *Integrative Biodiversity Research* (**Integration across time and space, Integration across complexity levels, Integration across disciplines**) are welcome. For example, working groups that address socio-economic aspects of biodiversity science, could produce deliverables that include concepts for practitioners of how biodiversity can be safeguarded and tools to disseminate such concepts to policy makers and the stakeholder community (e.g. software, websites, and databases).

2.4 Full and pre-proposal application process

Pre-Proposal

You are only able 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. Pre-proposals have to be submitted via the the [iDiv application portal](#) before **06 December 2018 (14:00/2:00 PM CET)**. Decisions whether you can submit a full proposal will be made by the sDiv board within two weeks following the pre-proposal deadline.

The pre-proposal includes:

1. Information about the PI(s)
2. A brief description (3000 characters max.) of the aims, scope and scientific objectives of the planned project, its approach (methods, used data etc.), and its synthesis aspect
3. A preliminary list of participants, including the supporting iDiv member

Full Proposal

Complete the **template for the full proposal provided on the [sDiv website](#)** and add all required documents. **Submit the full proposal via the [iDiv application portal](#) and upload all documents as a single PDF file by 13 March 2019 (14:00/2:00 PM CET).**

Working groups that will compile datasets or make use of existing datasets have to clarify in the **data management plan** the ownership rights before the data are used (see section 2.6).

If a **postdoc position** associated with the working group is requested, a suitable candidate should preferably already be identified. The evaluation of the expertise of the suggested person is part of the overall proposal review. If no suitable candidate could be identified yet, the PIs of the funded working group need to recruit a suitable person before the working group starts. **A separate postdoc proposal is not required. All relevant information about the identified postdoc** (if applicable, full CV, workplan) **should be part of the working group proposal.**

2.5 Budget

The budget for one working group meeting is generally limited to 15,000 EUR. The financial support itemized in the approved budget includes care of all local arrangements (local transportation, per diem expenses etc.) and reimbursement for travel and lodging. Administration of the budget is handled by the sDiv staff.

Budget calculation is to be done via the [budget tool](#) provided on the website. Except for the postdoc position, no salary support for a working group project is provided by sDiv.

Any financial deviations from the budget or change in participants of funded proposals have to be discussed with the sDiv coordinator.

Open access publication costs can be covered on a first come first serve basis, no budgeting in the proposal is needed.

2.6 Research Data management support

It is required that the data owners agree, prior to the application, to make their data available to the participants for the aims of the working group and any resulting publication.

Every funded working group has to sign the iDiv [Data Sharing Policy](#) and the [Data Portal Usage Policy](#). The PIs of the working groups will be required to register on the iDiv data portal and provide information regarding their research project within a month after receiving the approval email. During the first working group meeting it will be mandatory for the PIs to provide any relevant metadata.

For further details please refer to the Data Sharing Policy that describes the regulations with respect to data sharing in the context of iDiv. The iDiv Biodiversity Data Portal Usage Policy describes the rules governing usage of this infrastructure and of the data provided through it.

Additionally, the Biodiversity-Informatics-Unit of iDiv also provides the following services if necessary:

1. Data storage and archiving on iDiv data portal.
2. Assistance and advice on:
 - a. Research Data (Textual and Multimedia) and Metadata management
 - b. Data structure and standards for data integration and sharing
 - c. Biodiversity data paper publications
 - d. Publishing data via national, regional or global data portals
 - e. Assigning DOIs to datasets
 - f. Submission of datasets to the global structured biodiversity data repository hosted in iDiv
3. Develop data integration pipelines, provided data is in standardized format.
4. Access to a High Performing Computing Cluster (via the General IT Support Unit at iDiv).

These activities will be carried out in close consultation with the domain experts from the working groups and would require frequent (online) conferences prior to the actual meeting. Further, the nature and extent of the support particularly for data cleaning, quality assurance, and integration have to be discussed and negotiated prior to the start of the working groups.

2.7 Working group postdoc

On request, sDiv may fund a postdoc position can be granted for scientific support for the preparation of all meetings of the working group and their outcomes, e.g. conducting analyses, leading the writing of the working groups' papers. **Postdocs are usually funded for 24 months with possible extension up to 36 months in total following a** positive evaluation of the postdoc project by the sDiv board in the 2nd year (full-time employment by Leipzig University, salary TV-L E13, place of work at iDiv in Leipzig only). Please note that the current DFG funding period ends on 30 September 2020. The employment beyond this date is subject to approval of further iDiv funding. Additional costs (e.g. travel costs) need to be requested (see proposal template). **sDiv does not fund any field nor lab work, i.e. any additional data generation or sampling.**

Please note that sDiv also supports individual postdoc projects; funding of working group support by postdocs is thus highly competitive. Please be aware that reviewers may not grant the request for a postdoc position, thus **it is necessary to include an alternative plan to finish the envisaged project successfully, in case the postdoc cannot be funded.**

It is expected that the postdoc works on the specific working group topic under the supervision of the PI(s) with additional supervision by the sDiv coordinator. **Any postdoc at sDiv will receive mentoring by an iDiv researcher**, preferably a participant of the working group. The sDiv coordinator will support the postdoc in finding a suitable mentor. The mentoring programme for postdocs at iDiv includes attendance in regular lab meetings, general support for career development via the possibility of attending and leading courses at iDiv's graduate school yDiv, co-supervision of PhD and/or master students (if applicable), and many other career counselling aspects.

The tasks of the postdoc before and after the meeting(s) should be explained in detail in the work plan of the proposal. Please make sure the justification for a working group postdoc is clear and well written.

2.8 Summary of pre- & full proposal application

Check list

- Read all relevant documents and information.
- Gather a group and collect acceptance letters of your group members.
- Identify and contact iDiv member(s) for your group.
- Register via the the [iDiv application portal](#) and submit the **pre-proposal by 06 December 2018 (14:00/2:00 PM CET)**.
- Successful pre-proposal evaluation and being invited to submit a full proposal.
- Calculate your costs and make sure to meet our (financial) criteria.
- Explore possible meeting dates according to the [sDiv calendar](#).
- Clarify the data management.
- Identify a working group postdoc, if requested.
- Submit the **full proposal via the [iDiv application portal](#) by 13 March 2019 (14:00/2:00 PM CET)**.

If you have any questions regarding the application procedure, please contact the [sDiv coordinator Marten Winter](#).

3 Evaluation procedure

3.1 Selection criteria

General selection criteria are based on the scientific excellence of the working groups' objectives, work plan, the expertise and composition of the group as well as, if applicable, the justification and excellence of the postdoc. The objectives of the working group have to be highly relevant to iDiv's central missions and may, for example, be related to one or more of iDiv's [key research areas](#) or iDiv's [research mission](#). Generally, working group proposals including a detailed and convincing preparation agenda (timeline, deliverables, task allocation etc.) and a balanced group of participants will have much higher chances of getting funded. Working group budgets should be kept within the given limits and a good level of detail and justification. If the budget exceeds the limit this should be well justified. Applications for a postdoc associated with a working group that rely heavily on the postdoc support may be more risky, but potentially also more productive.

3.2 Proposal evaluation

The [sDiv advisory board](#) consists of 13 members, consisting of leading biodiversity scientists from each of the four iDiv founding institutions (Friedrich Schiller University Jena, Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg, Leipzig University, Helmholtz-Centre for Environmental Research

GmbH – UFZ), the sDiv coordinator and the iDiv Managing Director. The sDiv board is appointed by the iDiv directorate.

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

Full proposals for working groups and postdocs are usually evaluated within 12 weeks after the submission deadline by the sDiv board and external reviewers.

Proposals clearly inappropriate for sDiv will be returned without review. Decisions will be communicated in written form. Reviewer comments on the full proposals need to be answered and implemented by the working group PIs.

3.3 Post-approval

After the approval of a working group proposal and its announcement on the iDiv website, there will be a chance for interested scientists to apply for attending working group meetings in a very limited number. **Participants can be actively invited, if jointly agreed by the sDiv coordinator and the main working group PIs.** Interested participants should provide an updated CV and write a short letter of interest (maximum one page) explaining how their personal interests and expertise relate to the topic in question. **Please note that the funding of additional participants should fit into the overall budget** (with some flexibility).

To promote interaction between sDiv visitors and resident iDiv scientists, working group participants are requested to offer at least one **public seminar session** during the meetings that will be announced institute-wide and will be broadcasted within iDiv. The seminar is combined with a joint informal get-together to meet iDiv researchers.

4 Reporting

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

Proof of having been a successful working group and/or postdoc is part of the reporting. 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. that are produced by the working group postdoc and/or the accompanying working group.

sDiv support always has to be acknowledged in any kind of sDiv working group (postdoc) publication/outcome ([see guidelines](#)). Copies of published articles should be sent to sDiv.

As an important part of the improvement of sDiv and the development of synthesis centers, we evaluate our working groups before, during and after the meetings. **sDiv is asking every working group participant to answer the evaluation survey(s)** after the meeting(s).

Failure to complete a working group successfully for unjustified reasons and non-compliance with iDiv's data policy will typically result in banning PIs from submitting future proposals to project calls for a time period specified by the directorate.