

iDiv Synthesis Centre Working Group Call 2026

Call for proposals (Funding period: 2027–2029/2030)

1 General Information

This call is aimed at synthesis working groups that can meet in-person several times at iDiv, starting their work from January 2027 at the earliest. Submissions are limited to one proposal per PI.

We strongly recommend familiarising yourself with [iDiv's general mission and the iDiv Synthesis Centre's core principles](#) (formerly known as sDiv). A deep understanding of these objectives is essential for preparing a successful proposal.

2 Proposal Information

2.1 Topics

All synthesis topics tightly linked to [iDiv's Science Strategy](#) are welcome. Please note that iDiv's strategy document is currently under review and therefore restricted; access can be requested via sdiv@idiv.de). Topics can range from biodiversity-related biology to the social or computer sciences, as long as they are relevant to the iDiv Science Strategy. These topics can involve fundamental, purely conceptual research to actionable policy and industry-relevant applications. Proposals should address novel questions or examine known problems from an innovative synthesis perspective related to iDiv's five integrative biodiversity research topics: Functions, Complexity, People and Biodiversity, Integrative Approaches, and Transdisciplinary Research.

We welcome:

- Theory and Conceptual synthesis
- Data synthesis
- Actionable science, relevant for policy and sustainable transformation of industry, economy and finance

We encourage applicants to propose forward-looking theory and synthesis topics and perspectives, which can pave the way for novel research themes, going beyond traditional and conventional perspectives.

2.2 Integration of iDiv Members

A core objective of this call is to bridge global research perspectives with iDiv's specific scientific mission. **Each working group project should actively involve several iDiv Members as participants. Of the maximum of three PIs, at least one must be an iDiv Member employed at a research institution in Central Germany.** iDiv Members are a select group of biodiversity researchers within the iDiv consortium. For an overview of current iDiv Members please refer to [this list](#).

If you have any member-related questions or would like assistance finding the right collaborators in the iDiv consortium, please contact [Marten Winter](#), Head of the iDiv Synthesis Centre.

3 General Rules

Golden Rule

The PIs are responsible for communicating with the iDiv Synthesis Centre and iDiv's Events team, who are in turn responsible for all organisational matters, including meeting arrangements and travel support.

Leadership

A maximum of three PIs per working group at least one of which is an iDiv Member.

Meetings

Working groups can have several in-person meetings; a meeting should ideally entail four to five full working days. All in-person gatherings are to be held in Leipzig, Germany. Any deviation from this format requires a detailed justification and approval by the Head of the iDiv Synthesis Centre. Please note that if you apply for three meetings or more, funding beyond the second meeting is contingent upon a successful mid-term evaluation. The mid-term evaluation requires a written proposal justifying the continuation and is provided by the PIs after the second meeting.

Participant Selection and Group Size

Working group sizes can vary depending on budget and expertise requirements. Based on the iDiv Synthesis Centre's extensive experience of, groups of no-more than 15 participants are the most effective for manageable and successful synthesis work. Applicants must provide a list of all confirmed participants, including the PIs, with the full proposal. This list must specify the gender, career stage, and institutional affiliation of every participant. **Please note that given the mandatory participation of iDiv Members in each working group, applicants should invite potential iDiv collaborators and co-PI(s) early on in the pre-proposal stage.** Once a working group has been officially approved, any changes or substitutions of participants require formal authorisation by the Head of the iDiv Synthesis Centre.

Letter of Support

Successful groups should consist of people with the relevant expertise, dedication, and time to participate in the meetings, and a desire to significantly contribute to the working group goals beyond the meetings. To ensure the genuine involvement and integration of iDiv researchers, it is therefore required that all involved iDiv Members, excluding the PIs, complete a Letter of Support at the full proposal stage.

Group Diversity

The iDiv Synthesis Centre is committed to establishing and maintaining a diverse and inclusive community that collectively supports and implements our mission to do great and relevant science. In line with this commitment to foster inclusive and productive synthesis environments, PIs must prioritise a well-balanced group composition. Diversity in gender, career stage, and international representation is a mandatory requirement for every working group. Specifically, the iDiv Synthesis Centre sets a standard of **at least 40% female participation** and requires the inclusion of at least one doctoral researcher at every meeting. We strongly encourage you to involve doctoral researchers from the [iDiv Graduate School](#) if their expertise aligns with your project's focus. For assistance with identifying suitable candidates, please reach out to [Marten Winter](#), Head of the iDiv Synthesis Centre.

Representation of Under-represented Regions

We encourage proposals that engage with topics, data, and researchers from regions under-represented in research to foster broader international synthesis. While this is optional and not a mandatory requirement, projects focusing on these regions should prioritise genuine co-design and collaboration with local scientists. Such partnerships should recognise differences in scientific culture and needs, ensuring that research connections are based on mutual benefits rather than mere data acquisition.

Carbon Footprint

Although working groups should include internationally established scientists across career stages, we aim to minimise each working group's carbon footprint as much as possible. Therefore, no more than 50% of the participants should travel from outside geographical Europe.

Impact Strategy

Given that iDiv's scientific mission extends beyond knowledge generation to addressing societal challenges, we strongly encourage applicants to strategically consider where and how their synthesis project can make an impact, both academically and beyond. (see [iDiv Science Strategy](#) section 3 – please note that this document is currently under review and therefore restricted; access can be requested via sdiv@idiv.de).

Your impact strategy (submitted with the full proposal) should include plans for disseminating and communicating your academic products (for example peer-reviewed publications, R packages/code, open workflows, databases, etc.) to academic and public audiences (where relevant). Include also (if applicable), meaningful plans for stakeholder engagement, knowledge transfer to policy and/or businesses or educational activities (for example offering training courses to the iDiv Graduate School).

To develop a strong impact strategy for your project please seek support from [iDiv's Impact team](#) (presse@idiv.de).

4 Research Data

Data Strategy and Feasibility

Projects should provide evidence that sufficient data and appropriate analytical tools are available or will be developed during the project to tackle novel questions. The status of data availability has to be indicated in the pre-proposal.

Data and Code Sharing Policy

To support the principles of Open Science, all data and code resulting from iDiv funding must be made publicly available under the least restrictive license possible. This should be achieved within three years of the final project activity. Upon approval, PIs are required to sign and return the [iDiv Data and Code Sharing Policy](#), which aligns with global Open Science standards. To facilitate this process, funded projects will receive support for their data and code management needs from iDiv's Data, Code & Statistics team.

5 Budget

The budget of the project must be described in the full proposal. **It is restricted to a total of €30,000.** No additional data generation or sampling (for example field or lab work) will be funded. If the project anticipates needing more money, it must be very well justified.

Budget calculations for working group meetings have to be conducted using the budget calculation table provided [here](#). A screenshot or PDF export of the filled-in calculation table must be merged into the full proposal as a single PDF document. Please ensure the highest level of precision regarding budget details (for example number of participants, place of work for travel cost calculations). Deviations from the submitted budget require prior written approval by the iDiv Synthesis Centre.

Administration of the budget will be handled by the iDiv Synthesis Centre and iDiv e.V.'s finance department. Funding regulations and guidelines of iDiv e.V. apply. The iDiv Synthesis Centre will do its best to assist with budget discrepancies due to uncertain and rapidly changing financial situations.

6 Reporting

Meeting Reports

PIs are required to submit a summary of every milestone or deliverable immediately following each meeting. All reports will be published on the respective project webpages. These reports should detail specific outputs – such as manuscripts, funding proposals, code, and databases – as well as plans for future collaboration.

Project Outputs

iDiv support must be formally acknowledged in all publications and outcomes resulting from the project. Please refer to iDiv's [acknowledgment guidelines](#) (currently under revision).

Furthermore, PIs are responsible for informing the iDiv Synthesis Centre of any publications or major outputs as soon as they occur to ensure proper documentation and promotion.

7 Commitment and Adherence to Regulations

The successful implementation of synthesis working groups relies on the commitment of all participants to our established guidelines and iDiv's [Code of Conduct](#) (currently under revision). Please note that an unjustified failure to adhere to the call regulations or the iDiv Data and Code Sharing Policy may be taken into consideration during the evaluation of future proposals submitted by the PIs involved.

8 Application Process

8.1 Pre-proposal

You are **only eligible to submit a full working group proposal** only if you have been **invited to do so** following the successful review of the pre-proposal. The mandatory pre-proposal should briefly describe the project idea, its novelty and the aims and justification as to why a synthesis working group with iDiv funding is needed. **Pre-proposals must be submitted via an online form in the [iDiv application portal](#) before 28 May 2026 (11:59 PM CET)**. If selected, you will be informed in early **June 2026** and asked to submit a full proposal.

The pre-proposal online form includes:

1. Information on the PI(s), including the iDiv Member PI(s)
2. A brief description of the planned project (no more than 750 words, no references, text only) including the novelty, the synthesis aspect and scientific aims, approaches (methods, used data, etc.) and relevance for biodiversity.
3. Integration. Demonstrate how your research aligns with the iDiv research topics. Identify the specific iDiv research topics and questions your proposed working group addresses, explaining both the nature and the significance of this fit. This will help you identify suitable project partners among iDiv's Members.
4. A list of data to be used. Clarify the source and availability status (for example available, to be mobilised, etc.) of the data you plan to use. If data is not available, explain why.
5. A preliminary list of participants, including all supporting iDiv Members.
6. A list of minimum five potential reviewers without obvious conflicts of interest for the full proposal pending successful pre-proposal.

8.2 Full Proposal

Following the invitation to submit a full proposal, it is necessary to complete the full proposal template provided on the iDiv Synthesis Centre's website (available after the pre-proposal deadline). **Submit your full proposal including all attachments as a single PDF file via the online form in the [iDiv application portal](#) by 10 August 2026 (11:59 PM CET)**. Please familiarise yourself with the online form well in advance of the deadline, as it requires several detailed entries to facilitate the processing of your application.

The final funding recommendation will be made by the iDiv's Extended Executive Board. **Final funding decisions will be made in October 2026** and anonymised feedback will be sent to all? applicants a few days later. Information on successful proposals will be published on the iDiv website.

9 Evaluation Process

9.1 Selection Criteria

Selection criteria are based on scientific merit, the relevance, and the novelty of the research questions, a strategic fit to iDiv research, work plan, expertise and suitability of the project participants, and the PIs. The project's objectives have to be highly relevant to iDiv's Science Strategy. Furthermore, a strong degree of active involvement from iDiv members is essential and will be prioritised during the evaluation.

The admission criteria also includes the group composition, the participants' particular competences, their contribution to maximise 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.

9.2 Proposal Evaluation

Final decisions will be made by an iDiv internal Evaluation Board. Pre-proposals will be evaluated within 2 weeks after the submission deadline by the Evaluation Board. Full proposals are usually evaluated within ten weeks after the submission deadline by the Evaluation Board based on external expert reviews.

The final funding decision will be made by the EEB (iDiv Extended Executive Board). All decisions will be communicated to the applicants in writing. Reviews will be anonymised and forwarded to the applicants for both pre-approved and rejected proposals. Information on successful proposals will be published on the iDiv website.

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The Executive Board, consisting of the Scientific Director, Prof Dr Martin Quaas, and the Chief Operating Officer, Dr Anne Wesemann, acts on behalf of iDiv e. V., the representative body of the German Centre for Integrative Biodiversity Research Halle-Jena-Leipzig. Leipzig University, Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg, Friedrich Schiller University Jena, and the Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research GmbH – UFZ are founding institutional members of iDiv e.V.