

## **Call for Applications - FUturist 2025/26**

Innovating Climate Protection and Sustainability with Your Ideas

**Application deadline: November 30, 2025 (11:59 pm)**

The ideas and innovation management at Freie Universität Berlin is guided by the goals of our 2019 [climate emergency declaration](#) and our 2016 [sustainability mission statement](#). It invests in new approaches to social and ecological change that have a positive impact on teaching, research, administration, and our university campus. For the fifth time, all students and employees can submit their project ideas by the end of November 30, 2025 (11:59 pm).

### **I. Objective of the Call for Applications in 2025**

Under the banner “FUturist,” we want to promote ideas that have a positive impact on shaping social and ecological developments at Freie Universität Berlin. The call for proposals is open to anyone who wants to address social, ecological, and/or economic aspects of everyday university life with an innovative idea. There are no further thematic restrictions. However, it is important that the project ideas are problem-based, impact-oriented, and novel. For more information on the latter point, please refer to the FUturist projects since 2021<sup>1</sup> and the existing activities within the framework of sustainability management<sup>2</sup>.

Examples for guidance:

Of central importance, for example, is the development of responses to the social and environmental risks of AI applications in the higher education context. Equally relevant is the examination of alternative facts in the sustainability discourse.

We are also looking for new approaches to resource conservation, solutions for innovative waste management, additional climate protection measures, or incentive models for sustainability-oriented behavior.

Your proposals may also address ways to embed sustainability-related topics or processes in teaching or research in the long term. You can show how students can be better prepared for practical work in sustainability-oriented professions, or how learners can be empowered to design effective, future-proof solutions. You can also develop methods that illustrate the social impact of your sustainability research.

Taking into account the most pressing global challenges, including the climate emergency, the loss of biodiversity, and the depletion of finite resources, Freie Universität Berlin can point to the fact that it has significantly reduced its ecological footprint since 2000. This is based on the consistent reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.fu-berlin.de/en/sites/nachhaltigkeit/stabsstelle/Innovationsmanagement/Futurist/projects/index.html>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.fu-berlin.de/en/sites/nachhaltigkeit/handlungsfelder/index.html>

However, we also know that important steps still need to be taken: on the one hand, not all sources of emissions are covered, and on the other hand, considering the footprint alone is insufficient.

Funding within the framework of ideas and innovation management aims to provide significant impetus. It is intended to contribute to a vibrant culture of sustainability at our university and to strengthen the commitment of employees and students to sustainability. In addition, funding can support the transfer of teaching and research into practice in order to advance the development of social solutions.

## **II. Target Groups, Funding Criteria, and Application Documents**

This call for applications is open to all students and employees of Freie Universität Berlin. Funding can be allocated to individual applicants as well as teams, whereby one person serves as the primary applicant and point of contact for the project. Only one idea can be submitted per person. The project ideas can be carried out in collaboration with other departments, divisions, and institutions - this has proved to be helpful in implementation and for subsequent consolidation.

Only ideas that have not yet been initiated in another project will be allowed to receive funding within the scope of the competition. You are, however, permitted to submit ideas that build on the results of ongoing activities.

In total, five ideas can be funded with up to 25.000€. Fundings for each project are endowed with up to 5000€. The funding is solely designated for the specific purposes of the project.

The funds are earmarked for the project and must be spent sustainably and in the public interest within the project year. Any funds not spent will be returned to the account so that they are available for future projects.

Applications and all supporting documents must be submitted electronically via email as a single PDF file by the end of the day on November 30, 2025 (11:59 pm). [Please use this template.](#)

Please provide the following details on the application (max. 6 pages including budget):

- 1) General information on all members of a project, including proof of FU membership
- 2) Brief description of the idea/project and its intended effect
- 3) Approach/method
- 4) General project schedule
- 5) General budget with a short description of the budgetary items
- 6) Risk assessment

In addition:

- 7) Informal declaration of consent to the publishing of the results
- 8) Declaration that the rights of third parties have not been infringed

**Please note:** Only full applications will be considered in the selection process.

The applicants will be notified during the week of January 19-23, 2026.

An interdisciplinary [jury](#) composed of experts in sustainability and innovation in teaching, research, and management, as well as the administration of Freie Universität Berlin will be appointed to select the winning ideas.

The assessment criteria will be primarily oriented toward the feasibility, relevance, and novelty of the project, the quality of the submissions, the expected short- and medium-term impact, and the communication and transfer concept (transferability and visibility) within Freie Universität Berlin. Applicants will not be entitled to take legal action to contest the decisions of the jury.

All ideas that receive funding, the project participants, and the results will be made open to the public and presented on our website<sup>3</sup>, among other places. For the further development and to share know-how with the FU public, the ideas and the current state of progress will be presented at the FUTurist-Midterm event in summer 2026.

The funding period begins with the kick-off date on February 2, 2026, and runs until December 31, 2026. The funding amount of up to 5000€ can be used until the close of business in early December 2026. Unused funds will be reversed.

### **III. Contact and Further Information**

An online information event in German language will take place on October 07, 2026, from 12:30 p.m. to 1 p.m. Please inform Sabine Heckmann if you are interested in an English-speaking talk. We will be happy to organize that.

You can find further details on this call for applications in the [FAQ](#), which are available on the website of the Unit for Sustainability and Energy Management.

Sabine Heckmann, Project Coordinator for Idea & Innovation Management within the Sustainability & Energy Unit, will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Schwendenerstraße 17, 14195 Berlin | P: 030/838 70984 | E: [sabine.heckmann@fu-berlin.de](mailto:sabine.heckmann@fu-berlin.de)

We are very much looking forward to hearing your suggestions for how to improve social and ecological developments at Freie Universität Berlin – good luck!

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.fu-berlin.de/en/sites/nachhaltigkeit/stabsstelle/Innovationsmanagement/Futurist/index.html>