

Call for proposals 2026

Healthy Ageing

A complex systems approach to healthy ageing



The call for proposals at a glance:

Research projects that

- **Go beyond single-cause thinking.** Study how environmental and contextual factors interact to shape functional ability in later life.
 - **Show the interaction, not just the factor.** Capture pathways of risk and resilience, and identify which features are modifiable enough to act on.
 - **Match method to ambition.** Use systems thinking in established designs, or complex-systems methods directly and translate findings into scalable, context-sensitive solutions.
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Focus areas

- **Changing the narrative of age and ageing**
- **Heat and out-of-home mobility & activity in later life**

For more information see pp. 5-6

Funding details

- **Deadline:** 24 November 2026, 23:59 CET
 - **Final decision:** June 2027
 - **Grant size:** Max. CHF 75'000 per year, for projects up to 4 years
 - **Available funding:** Approx. CHF 2 million for this call
 - **Geographic scope:** Results need to be relevant for at least one of the following countries: Switzerland, EU member states, the United Kingdom, Canada, the United States, Australia, New Zealand, South Korea, Singapore, or Japan.
 - **Thematic scope and focus areas:** See pp. 5-6
 - **Application requirements:** See pp. 7-8
 - **Overhead or indirect costs are not supported**
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Please read the details of the call: pp. 3-10

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A. The foundation's funding policy

Velux Stiftung is a science-funding foundation based in Switzerland supporting healthy ageing research aimed at sustaining functional ability of older people. We focus on neglected topics with significant leverage and using interdisciplinary approaches to address complex challenges.

DISCOVER. TRANSFER. CHANGE. IMPACT.

We seek to support researchers who see themselves as knowledge entrepreneurs who have a clear vision of how their science-based knowledge can be transferred beyond the academic community into action and positive change. This ultimate objective determines which audiences need to be targeted, and in which form the results should be transferred.

To learn more about Velux Stiftung: <https://veluxstiftung.ch>

B. Thematic scope & focus areas

1) **Introduction:** **A complex systems approach to healthy ageing**

Rising life expectancy is straining health and social-support systems, but it also creates opportunities for each one of us as well as for society. Functional ability (as defined by the WHO's Decade of Healthy Ageing) – the capacity arising from the interaction between a person's intrinsic capacity and their environment, to live with independence and self-determination, learn, make decisions, maintain relationships and contribute to society – is key for living a fulfilling life, as well as a decisive lever for ensuring that long-lived populations thrive.

Current research often isolates single dimensions and neglects the dynamic interactions among contextual or environmental domains that shape everyday choices, opportunities, outcomes and long-term health trajectories. This gap limits the development of sustainable, context-sensitive solutions and evidence-informed policy.

The call therefore seeks to advance pivotal knowledge on how modifiable contextual and environmental factors interact in order to maintain and enhance functional ability in later life. It aligns with Velux Stiftung's vision to generate knowledge that enables evidence-informed decisions, to support sustainable solutions and to bridge the knowledge-action gap.

2) **Thematic scope**

In consultation with a group of interdisciplinary researchers in the field of healthy aging, we have developed a framework to serve as the starting point for this funding program on modifiable environmental and contextual factors.

This call invites research that develops an integrated understanding on how modifiable environmental or contextual factors interact to shape functional ability in later life - moving beyond single-cause or single-domain approaches.

Proposals should show how the chosen factors affect everyday functioning, and capture interaction effects, pathways of risk and resilience, and which environmental features are modifiable enough to inform interventions or policy.

We strongly encourage studies that either (a) apply systems thinking within established designs (e.g., longitudinal, life-course, qualitative, or mixed-methods); or (b) use complex systems methods directly (e.g., systems mapping, causal loop diagramming, system dynamics, agent-based modelling, network analysis). Either way, proposals should translate findings into scalable, context-sensitive solutions.

Changing the narrative of age and ageing

Public and scientific narratives of ageing still lean heavily on decline and dependency. They are produced and reinforced by interacting media, policy, family/community, and technological environments shaping which images of older age circulate and which everyday roles are available to enact alternatives. We encourage research that helps shift this picture – not by replacing one simplification with another, but by better integrating the genuine heterogeneity between domains, people, and contexts into how ageing is understood and how shifting one or more of these factors could change the prevailing narrative and, in turn, older adults' agency, contribution, and wellbeing.

A particular interest is research that helps quantify the economic costs of ageism alongside the social and economic contributions older adults make to their families, communities and society, so that public debate rests on a systems-informed evidence base rather than isolated statistics.

Heat and out-of-home mobility and activity in later life

Rising heat exposure can change older adults daily activities. We invite research on how older adults can maintain routine mobility and everyday activity, specifically outside of the house, under increasing heat exposure driven by climate change. What are modifiable environmental and contextual factors that shape out-of-home mobility and activities. Proposals should examine how these factors interact to sustain functional ability, reduce heat-related avoidance of activity, and support continued independence and participation in later life.

Note that the current call does not support

- Research investigating the biology of ageing to slow, pause, or reverse the ageing process itself.
- Biomedical research on the aetiology, diagnosis, or therapy (development and evaluation) of specific age-related diseases.

These exclusions concern biological and biomedical research as the object of study. Health status and intrinsic capacity may still feature as mediators, moderators or secondary outcomes.

C. Requirements for applications

1) Eligibility

General eligibility and exclusion criteria apply (Please refer to the [eligibility sections](#) on our website). In addition:

Who can apply?

- The Principal Investigator (PI) role is open to researchers
 - a) holding a permanent position
 - b) at career stage R3 or R4 (established or leading researcher, according to the [European research profiles descriptors](#)).
 - c) at an academic research institution in Switzerland, EU member states, the United Kingdom, Canada, the United States, Australia, New Zealand, South Korea, Singapore, or Japan.

Researchers and professionals with fixed-term contracts, or affiliated with non-academic institutions, are warmly welcome to join as co-PI or collaborator. Co-PIs and collaborators from non-listed countries are permissible.

- Applicants with core expertise in this field (or established collaborations providing it), showing clear commitment to advancing it beyond the funding period.
- An application requires at least two project partners (PI and co-PI) from different institutions. The PI needs to be from an academic research institution. Other partners or collaborators can be non-academic stakeholders.
- An organisation or institution (e.g., a university) can only submit a maximum of two applications per call in the role as institution of the PI and two applications per call in the role as institution of the co-PI, otherwise all applications will be excluded.

Contact your institution's Grants Office early to coordinate submissions from the same institution.

Geographic scope

- Research results need to be relevant for at least one of the following countries: Switzerland, EU member states, the United Kingdom, Canada, the United States, Australia, New Zealand, South Korea, Singapore, or Japan.

Partnerships

- Multi-disciplinary teams are encouraged.

Where the proposed research engages directly with practitioners, policy-makers, or community organisations, we welcome letters of support from these partners.

Other conditions

- The Principal Investigator (PI) must confirm their institution has approved the submission and accepted the foundation's general funding terms.
- Note that applications which do not meet all the requirements can be rejected without further explanation.

2)

Approach

We seek applications for research projects:

1. Generating scientific insight in one of the focus areas – into how environmental or contextual factors interact to influence functional ability in older adults. Of particular value are studies that identify pathways of risk and resilience, clarify which environmental features are modifiable, and generate evidence that can inform practical interventions, planning, or policy reform.
2. Using either established research designs (e.g., longitudinal, life-course, qualitative or mixed-methods) or complex systems methods (e.g., systems mapping, agent-based modelling, network analysis) to capture how factors interact rather than relying on single-factor models.
3. Optionally, co-creating the research with the stakeholders it concerns: older adults themselves, other actors and institutions that shape the environments under study. Proposals can budget for this explicitly; see Section C.3).

If you are unsure about the fit of your application to the scope of the call, please send an abstract to info@veluxstiftung.ch and state the reasons why you are unsure about its alignment with our funding interests.

- Total program budget: Approx. CHF 2 million per year
- Grant size: Max. CHF 75'000 per year, for projects up to 4 years
- Co-funding: Not mandatory, but welcome and positively considered where it broadens a project's reach or partnership

3)

Use of the funding

A project budget of up to max. CHF 75'000 per year, for one to four years can be requested. Pilot and feasibility projects running up to 2 years are welcome.

The budget can be used for the following cost categories:

- Salaries (for research staff – we expect salaries for the PI or other senior contributors to be covered through their employment)
- Consumables
- Knowledge transfer (workshop organisation, communication to stakeholders, participation fees and travel to conferences, etc.)
- Stakeholder engagement (coordination of stakeholder engagement, stakeholder engagement activities, remuneration of stakeholders where applicable and justified)
- Equipment (computers and laptops are considered infrastructure paid by your institution)

Note that the foundation does not support overhead or indirect costs – confirm your institution can accommodate this before applying.

D. Application guideline & selection procedure

1) Timeline

- Submission deadline: 24 November 2026, 23:59 CET
 - Funding decision: June 2027
 - Earliest project start: 1 September 2027
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2) Application guideline

Submission platform

Applications must be submitted through our [web portal](#). The PI needs to [register a user account](#) well before the submission deadline. Registration for user accounts for this call will start in August. Registrations submitted beforehand will be ignored.

Required documents

- Research proposal (template provided, limited to 15 pages)
- Budget (template provided)
- (Narrative) CV of key personnel
- Letters of support from co-PIs (and where relevant from practice partners)
- PLUS: Additional information requested on the platform during the submission process (e.g. Impact statement, etc.)

Information requested on the web portal is described in the [application factsheet](#). For details about the [application procedure](#) please refer to our website.

3) Selection procedure

A – Selection

Formal screening by the foundation management

Project applications are screened for compliance with the [eligibility criteria](#), and requirements of the call. Applications that do not fulfil these criteria will not be considered and are rejected.

Preselection by an international and multidisciplinary scientific committee

The scientific committee (SC), with expertise in healthy ageing research, preselects a subset of applications that are promising based on the alignment with the call criteria, the impact potential and innovation of the approach.

Please note that preselection is based primarily on the information you provide in the following web portal sections: Impact statement and the proposal abstract. These sections must clearly demonstrate how your application aligns with the call's thematic scope and criteria.

In-depth review & shortlist

All preselected applications are peer-reviewed by one or two members of the SC, or external experts based on the [funding criteria](#). In a meeting, the SC discusses their evaluations and establish a shortlist of applications that is presented to the board of the foundation for final selection.

The foundation board of Velux Stiftung takes the final funding decision among the shortlisted applications.

B – Funding criteria

In addition to the funding criteria below, the foundation's general eligibility criteria, the objectives of this call, and its respective requirements apply. The text below gives a short overview of the funding criteria:

Impact potential (assuming the goals of the project are achieved)

Relevance

Potential for change

Transfer potential & Knowledge transfer

Project quality

Novelty and originality

Approach / Interdisciplinarity (if applicable)

Probability of success / Risk

Resources

(Scientific) competence of the project lead

Leadership competence of the project lead

Working environment

Collaboration & Stakeholder engagement

Budget

See the full [funding criteria on our website](#) for more information.

E. Grant agreement terms and conditions

The [general funding terms](#) of the foundation apply. The Principal Investigator (PI) is responsible for ensuring compliance with any internal approval processes required by their institution for submitting research funding proposals. This includes confirming that the institution agrees to the general funding terms of the foundation. Please refer to our [website](#) for more information.