

ReALity Synergy Funding Call 2026

ReALity fosters interdisciplinary research excellence across the life sciences at Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz (JGU). Our overarching goal is to understand how complex cellular systems adapt to intrinsic and environmental threats and maintain homeostasis to promote longevity. ReALity's focus on *healthy aging* aligns with broad scientific interests and ongoing research at JGU, the University Medical Center, as well as neighboring institutes including IMB, TRON, and LIR.

Past and current ReALity Innovation Projects have already advanced interdisciplinary foundational research across campus and strengthened the impact of aging research programs such as ImmunYoAGe, SHARP, CHANCE, and CoAGE. With a new call for applications, ReALity aims to build on this momentum by supporting focused, collaborative research projects between 2–3 PIs with complementary technical expertise, preliminary data, and an innovative idea in aging research. We particularly encourage proposals that involve junior colleagues at the beginning of their independent careers.

The cellular and systemic hallmarks of aging provide a conceptual framework for studying aging processes from the molecular to the organismal scale, and they guide investigations into human aging-related diseases. Many of the cellular processes that become deregulated with age converge on chronic, systemic inflammation, which in turn impairs adaptation, tissue repair, and regeneration across organ systems. Understanding the detrimental effects of this so-called *inflammaging* on regenerative processes is therefore crucial for developing preventive and therapeutic strategies that promote healthy aging. **We consider the exploration of mechanistic nodes linking the primary hallmarks of aging with inflammaging and impaired organ-specific or systemic regeneration a priority for life science research in Mainz and foundational to future group-funding initiatives.**

Research proposals related to this theme should build on the applicants' existing data, conceptual advances, and established cutting-edge technologies, including computational approaches in biomedicine. Projects should be developed by small interdisciplinary teams (2–3 PIs) whose complementary expertise spans molecular hallmarks of aging and organ-specific or systemic aging/regeneration processes. We particularly encourage the participation of junior investigators who meet PI criteria for group-funding initiatives. Projects may also request support for retaining or recruiting postdoctoral researchers with an excellent track record and expertise in aging research gained during their PhD training.

Submitted proposals must include a timeline for developing the research into publications and outline how the project will contribute to group-funding initiatives aimed at connecting the primary hallmarks of aging with inflammaging and regeneration.

Timeline:

*New projects will start in the second half of 2026 for a duration until 31 December 2028. Complete applications must be received by **28 February 2026** to be considered for review by the ReALity Scientific Advisory Board. Applications that pass the first round of selection will be invited for oral presentations at the next ReALity SAB meeting where the final selection will take place and detailed budget proposals and milestones must be presented.*



ReALity

resilience
adaptation
longevity

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Formal guidelines and general information:

Please follow the instructions. Incomplete applications will not be processed!

- Page 3: Enter complete details for each participating PI (Arial size 10)
- Page 4-8: Description of the project and its impact for ReALity's goals; **not to exceed 5 pages** including full references (Arial, size 10)
- **CV** must conform to the template provided; **two pages maximum** (Arial, size 10)
- All funding requests must adhere to the regulations for economical and responsible use of state funds and fall within the approved funding period of the ReALity Innovation Funds.
- In this call, projects will be prioritized based on the expected impact for ReALity goals in relations to the requested funds. Proposed budgets must be justified by the complementary and unique contributions of all participating PIs and staff members.

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The information on these forms serves as justification and basis for funding decisions. A synopsis of successful applications will be posted on the ReALity website to document progress of the initiative.

Application to the ReALity Innovation Fund (2026-2028)

Cover page (Only complete forms will be processed; Arial size 10)

1. Collaborating principal investigators (max. 3 PIs):

Name of Co-PI 1: Affiliation:	
Expertise (max. 5 key words): • • • • •	Contributions to project (max. 3 bullet points) • • • PI contribution to overall project: %
Name of Co-PI 2: Affiliation:	
Expertise (max. 5 key words): • • • • •	Contributions to project (max. 3 bullet points) • • • PI contribution to overall project:%
Name of Co-PI 3: Affiliation:	
Expertise (max. 5 key words): • • • • •	Contributions to project (max. 3 bullet points) • • • PI contribution to overall project: %

Add sections as needed for additional Co-PIs.

Please attach a CV for each PI and Co-PI based on the template provided with this form.

2. Financial Contact Co-PIs:

Please name one Co-PI from above per institution (JGU, UMC) for the financial administration of the project.

Name (JGU):

Name (UMC):

3. Duration of Funding (start-end in mm/yyyy):

4. Requested Funding per year:

Personnel (please specify type, number and % of positions):

Consumables (please specify categories):

TOTAL per year:

5. Brief budget justification:

6. Description of the project (max. 5 pages, including references) with scientific background, preliminary data, proposed experiments, contributions of participating co-PIs and expected scientific impact.