

# HELMHOLTZ ADVANCE A YEAR FOR YOUR CAREER

Helmholtz Mentoring Program

2018 Call for Applications



## **Helmholtz Advance: Support during career decisions**

The Helmholtz Association strongly encourages and supports the personal and professional development of its staff. Helmholtz Advance is designed to support talented staff who find themselves at a critical juncture in their life and are about to make career-defining decisions. The program begins each fall, offering participants a combination of qualification opportunities, mentoring, and optional coaching over a period of just under one year.

The workshops give participants the opportunity to explore their career options – paths such as expert, management, and project careers, for example. During the course of the year, they can plan the implementation of their decision and reflect on the next steps, supported by mentors and, where desired, professional coaches. Helmholtz Advance supports talented, motivated participants from all areas of the Helmholtz Association in planning their careers both within and outside of the Helmholtz Association Centers and the academic system. The program brings together people from different disciplinary, professional, and personal backgrounds. The variety of participant perspectives is one of the program's most important resources.

## **Target group**

Our offer is aimed at the following groups:

- Scientists who completed their doctorates no more than four years ago.
- Administrative, technical, and management staff who have three to eight years of relevant professional experience and an academic degree.

The following applies to participants from all areas of work:

- They must currently be in the process of making decisions about their future careers.
- They must be employed at a Helmholtz Center or at the Helmholtz Association Head Office for the duration of the program.
- They commit to continuously participating in the program and its various elements.

## Program content

The workshop program provides participants with the opportunity to reflect on their professional development so far, their unique strengths and talents as well as their aspirations, options, and goals. The program provides information on career options within the field of science and beyond, helping participants to plan their next steps. Participants' personal skills are developed and they learn methods of self-management, communication, conflict management, self-marketing, and network building.

The workshop program encompasses three two-and-a-half-day workshops that will be held in the greater Berlin area. Participants complete the program in a fixed group of about 20 people. Three such groups will be offered annually. All groups start in the fall. The dates for the individual workshops will be announced with the selection decision.

- Workshop I: Taking stock

The workshop begins with an introduction to mentoring. This is followed by a personal analysis of potential and motives using Edgar H. Schein's career anchors method. Building on this self-assessment, participants develop their career plans and identify possible professional fields as well as individual goals for mentoring. In addition, they can look beyond their own Center to the wider Helmholtz Association – the participants will learn about the structure of the Association and its position in the academic system.

- Workshop II: Self-management

At the beginning of the second workshop, an interim assessment of the mentoring process to date will be made and further mentoring activities for the second half of the program prepared. Building on Workshop I, various professional fields and career paths will be explored. In doing so, the focus is also on success factors and career obstacles, especially in terms of equal opportunities and diversity. Participants learn how to use tools and methods of self-management and develop strategies for attaining greater visibility in their professional roles.

- Workshop III: Communication

At the end of the program, mentees summarize their own mentoring experience and prepare the bilateral conclusion in their mentoring tandem. Building on Workshop II, participants learn how to apply professional communication methods, especially in conflict and negotiation situations. One focus is on power processes and unconscious patterns of thought. Participants gain confidence and assertiveness in difficult situations and develop strategies to become more self-assured in their professional roles.

Each workshop includes a networking event within the group one evening, and a fireside chat with various professionally experienced personalities the other evening. Between the workshops, partici-

participants will pursue the workshop topics both in formats organized autonomously and as part of their mentoring.

A second core component of Helmholtz Advance is the mentoring tandem. Mentoring involves pairing junior staff with more experienced staff who are comparatively well-established in their careers. By sharing their experience, these mentors support their mentees in their personal and professional development. Mentors are experts from Helmholtz Centers, science organizations, and the private sector. The two-to-four-hour meetings are to be arranged individually between mentee and mentor. In a mentoring tandem, exchanges should take place approximately every four to six weeks. The workshop program includes support for the mentoring relationship. Mentors also take part in some of the networking evenings and receive brief training in parallel to Workshops I and II.

In addition, one-on-one coaching sessions are available to participants. Up to three two-hour **coaching** sessions may complement the workshops and mentoring, allowing participants to address topics they consider important for their professional development (such as career decision support, individual skills, and dealing with conflict situations). Coaching is also available to mentors, as an opportunity to reflect on their role and the mentoring relationship.

The program is offered in both German and English. In their application, participants indicate the language in which they can/would like to attend the workshops as well as the language they would like to use for interactions with their mentor. A pool of coaches allows participants to be supported by both German and English-speaking coaches.

## Network

The program promotes the networking of participants in academia in general and in the Helmholtz Association in particular. Collaborating during the workshops, participants from different Helmholtz Centers and work areas exchange ideas. The workshops also offer the opportunity to meet other mentors, experts, and leaders in addition to the participant's own mentor. A powerful network of more than 300 alumni has emerged from the previous "Network Mentoring" and "Taking the Lead" programs. The Helmholtz Mentoring Program supports their efforts through annual meetings that reunite alumni and introduce them to current mentees and mentors.

## Program financing

The program is financed from the Helmholtz Association's Initiative and Networking Fund. The funding covers the costs of participating in the workshop, including accommodation and meals. As part of the optional coaching component, participants also have the opportunity to receive up to six hours of coaching via a pool of coaches financed by the Helmholtz Association.

The costs of traveling to the workshops and, if necessary, to the meetings with the mentor and/or coach are to be borne by the participants or their employers. In addition, the Helmholtz Association charges a participant contribution of €300 per person to finance the workshop program. As a rule, Helmholtz Centers cover the travel costs and the participant contribution.

## How to apply

### What should be included in your application?

The application process to participate in Helmholtz Advance involves two stages:

- 1) First, pre-selection is conducted at the Helmholtz research center in question.
- 2) In a second step, a limited number of applicants per research center are permitted to apply at the Helmholtz Association level.

If you are interested in applying, please contact the mentoring contact person at your center, who will organize pre-selection. S/he can tell you the deadlines of relevance to you and which documents you need to submit. A list of mentoring contact persons can be found at the end of this call for applications. For your application during the pre-selection process, you will generally need to provide a letter of motivation, your resume (with a list of publications if applicable), and a letter of support from your manager/PI.

Please note the following guidelines for your letter of motivation and your manager's letter of support for your application at the research center.

- In your letter of motivation, please answer the following key questions:
  1. Based on your current situation, describe the extent to which you find yourself in a decision-making phase regarding your professional future.
  2. What career options would you like to clarify during the program? Why are these career paths of particular interest to you?
  3. How would you like to use the mentoring program to support you when facing special challenges in your career?
  4. What input do you expect from the exchange with the other program participants?

Adhering to the order of the key questions and visibly marking them in your letter will support the comparability of application documents.

- Your resume should reflect your professional development to this point, your educational background including further training, and your interests and commitments outside of work. Scientists are requested to enclose a list of publications.
- Your manager/PI should support your participation. To demonstrate support, he or she will draw up a letter of support which addresses the following key questions:
  1. From what contexts do you know the applicant, and how long have you known him or her?
  2. Please describe the applicant's outstanding successes in his or her area of expertise.

3. Helmholtz Advance promotes the career development of employees whose skills and potential suggest that they will succeed in future positions. Please elaborate on the following applicant skills, giving examples: analytical competence, willingness and ability to learn, attitude and motivation to shape matters in a committed manner, and ability to behave in an expedient manner in new situations.
4. Where do you see central personal development issues for further career development?

Note to the manager/PI: Adhering to the order of the key questions and visibly marking them in your letter will support the comparability of application documents.

Provided you receive a positive pre-selection decision, you can then apply at the Helmholtz Association level by June 29. For this application, we need the documents already mentioned (letter of motivation, resume with list of publications if applicable, and a letter of support). You will also fill out a profile form during this application stage. You will receive this from your mentoring contact person after pre-selection. The profile form facilitates the selection process via a standardized list of questions and helps match selected candidates with a suitable mentor.

- Prepare to fill out the profile by thinking about what you expect of your mentor (What questions would you like to discuss with an experienced partner? What area might your mentor come from? Is it important to you whether your mentor is a man or a woman? Should your mentor speak English? What forms of exchange/support would you like to see in the mentoring relationship?)
- You should also consider the languages you can speak and which should be used in the workshop program you attend (English and/or German).

The documents you submit will be stored and treated confidentially for processing your application, selecting participants, and matching each participant with a mentor.

### **Decision-making process**

The selection decision at Association level is made by a steering committee for the program chaired by Prof. Dr. Heike Graßmann, Administrative Director of the Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research and Vice President for Equal Opportunity of the Helmholtz Association Executive Committee. The committee also includes other members of the Helmholtz Association Talent Management working group's Development & Retention focus group.

Helmholtz Advance supports career orientation and planning. It therefore funds participants whose current career situation, successes and competencies, and presentation of their decision-making phase indicate that their participation in the program will come at the right point in their careers, allowing their potential to be realized. We are looking for talented, motivated applicants who will benefit the most from the program due to their own initiative and ability to reflect as well as their openness to suggestions.

### Important dates

by 6/29/2018	Application at Helmholtz Association level
9/13/2018	Steering committee selection meeting
9/17/2018	Applicants notified of the success of their applications and the dates of the workshops
around November 2018	Workshop I
around March/April 2019	Workshop II
around June 2019	Workshop III



## FAQs – Frequently Asked Questions

### Formal application admissibility

- *I am not an employee, but rather funded via an external scholarship. May I apply?*

Yes. Please submit a certificate stating that you are a guest at your Center, regularly use the research infrastructure, and are involved in its processes. Please note that your scholarship and guest status must be secured for the duration of the program.

- *I received my doctorate more than four years ago and/or started my career more than eight years ago. However, because I have been raising children, I worked less during this time. Are parental leave and care periods taken into account?*

Yes, parental leave and care periods are taken into account. You can provide information about these periods on the application form.

- *I completed my studies less than three years ago and work in administration/infrastructure. May I apply?*

The program is aimed at people who already have some years of professional experience and would like to explore professional options for their continued careers on the basis of that experience. As a rule, you should therefore apply at least three years after completing your studies.

However, working periods before or during your studies can be credited in exceptional cases – for example, if you attended postgraduate courses while working, or if you started your studies after several years of professional activity having completed an apprenticeship.

- *I completed my studies more than eight years ago and am working in administration or infrastructure and/or I received my doctorate more than four years ago. However, I have reached a point in my career where I am once again asking myself fundamental questions of professional orientation. May I apply?*

The program is aimed at people who, at the beginning of their professional careers, are looking for basic orientation for their further career on the basis of a few years of professional experience. Participants should be in a comparable career phase in order to make the exchange of ideas among participants as beneficial as possible and to gear the program toward this career phase as much as possible. Therefore, those with work experience that is longer than specified in the formal criteria cannot apply. Of course, appropriate counseling services are available to such individuals at the Centers. Please get in touch with the relevant Helmholtz Advance contact person.

- *My contract is limited and expires before the end of the program. Can I apply anyway?*

The program is funded by the Helmholtz Association and is aimed exclusively at employees of the Helmholtz Centers and the Head Office. For the cohort advertised here, this means that the employment contracts must run at least until the end of June 2019. If this is not the case, you can, however,

attach to your application an informal confirmation from the Center's directorate or your direct superior that an extension of the contract is planned.

- *I have management responsibility for other staff. Am I still in the program's target group?*

Usually not. Helmholtz Advance is aimed at people with only a few years of professional experience who are in a decision-making phase concerning their continued career development. If you are a post-doc and supervise Masters students or doctoral candidates, you are still welcome to apply. If you already have management responsibility, the Helmholtz Management Academy is usually the right place for your further training at Helmholtz Association level. Helmholtz Advance supports you in clarifying your professional orientation. If this is currently an important question for you despite the fact that you have already taken on management responsibility, please discuss a possible application with the mentoring contact person at your Center.

### **Will Helmholtz Advance help answer my questions?**

- *My career goal is already clear to me. However, I would like support in reaching that goal. Am I in the right place?*

The program is aimed primarily at those who want to clarify their career goals. At the beginning of the program, you will therefore assess your strengths and interests and inform yourself about various professional fields. This will allow you to reflect on your decision. In the further course of the program, planning the next steps and supervision of those steps on the way to implementing your career plan will become more important. This happens during mentoring, but also during the workshops and optional coaching. Please bear this in mind when considering the extent to which you can benefit from the program, and consult the contact person at your Center.

- *Actually, I have no idea what direction I want to take professionally. Is Helmholtz Advance the right program for me?*

The program provides a framework and tools that will help you make your own decisions. You will benefit most from the program if you have already developed initial ideas about the options open to you. These ideas will make it easier to find a mentor who is suitable for your questions, for example. They also make it easier for you to research information about your career options on your own initiative, information which you can then discuss further in the workshops or with your mentor. Please discuss this with the contact person at your Center.

### **During the program**

- *What happens if I change employers during the program?*

The program is funded by the Helmholtz Association and is aimed exclusively at employees of the Helmholtz Centers and the Head Office. If you leave the Helmholtz Association during the program, you can continue to participate in it in return for a financial contribution. In such a case, please contact the mentoring team at the Helmholtz Head Office well before leaving the Association.

## Contact

### Helmholtz Head Office

The Helmholtz Head Office will be happy to answer any questions you may have about the program:

- Dr. Christiane Kasack, Talent Management, +49 (0) 30-206 329 -224
- Mandy Ritsche, M.A., Helmholtz Academy and Mentoring Coordination, +49 (0) 30-206 329 -46

You can reach both by e-mail at [mentoring@helmholtz.de](mailto:mentoring@helmholtz.de).

### List of contact persons at the Centers

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