

GUIDELINES, PROCEDURE & REPORTING

AFA SUPPORT

AUSTRIAN FASHION ASSOCIATION

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ABOUT

AFA SUPPORT IS THE DIRECT FUNDING PROGRAM THROUGH WHICH THE AUSTRIAN FASHION ASSOCIATION SUPPORTS ASPIRING DESIGNERS AND LABELS WHOSE WORK IS INNOVATIVE AND OF REGIONAL INTEREST. EACH YEAR, PROJECTS BY DESIGNERS ARE FUNDED THROUGH AFA SUPPORT USING FUNDS FROM THE FEDERAL MINISTRY FOR ARTS, CULTURE, CIVIL SERVICE, AND SPORT (BMKÖS) AND THE CITY OF VIENNA. THE KEY CRITERIA FOR FUNDING A PROJECT ARE THE SUBSTANTIVE QUALITY OF THE PROJECT AND THE INTERNATIONAL COMPETITIVENESS OF THE DESIGNER'S WORK.

FUNDING PERIOD

Maximum of 12 months from funding approval

FUNDING AMOUNTS

Level 1: 2x EUR 13,000,-

Level 2: 2x EUR 21,000,-

Level 3: 1x EUR 32,000,-

Each grant includes three mentoring sessions with international experts commissioned by the Austrian Fashion Association.

FUNDING RATE

100% of the allocated funding amount

APPLICATION AND REQUIRED DOCUMENTS

Applications must be submitted online at: <https://www.austrianfashionassociation.at/en/awards/afa-support/>

CONSULTATION & INQUIRIES

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1 TARGET GROUP

AFA Support supports fashion and accessories designers in the initial steps of their career development in the fashion industry, the preparation for establishing a fashion label, the development of a label and the expansion of national and international distribution structures.

It is aimed at:

- Designers who critically engage with contemporary fashion and accessories design as a central form of artistic and cultural expression.
- Designers who have gained initial experience and wish to establish their own label
- Designers who aim to elevate their fashion label, execute more complex collections, and present internationally.

2 APPLICATION CRITERIA AND REQUIREMENTS

2.1. NATIONALITY AND RESIDENCE

Eligible applicants are designers with Austrian nationality or designers who have had their primary residence in Austria for the past 3 years.

2.2. APPLICATIONS FROM STUDENTS

Students are not eligible to apply. Individuals enrolled at a university or college are excluded from application.

2.3. DOUBLE FUNDING

Designers who have received funding through AFA Support may also apply for the AFA Mentorship Program but cannot simultaneously receive a Start Scholarship Fashion.

2.4. PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

To receive AFA Support funding of EUR 13,000, applicants must provide proof of a substantial collection (not as part of an educational program).
For AFA Support funding of EUR 21,000,- or EUR 32,000, applicants must demonstrate two such substantial collections (not as part of an educational program).

3 PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS

3.1. EXECUTION OF THE AGREED PROJECT/INITIATIVE

Recipients of AFA Support funding are obligated to execute the submitted project in the agreed-upon form.

3.2. REPORTING ON PROJECT PROGRESS

Applicants must regularly and timely inform the Austrian Fashion Association about their project's progress, any changes to the original concept, and the final results.

3.3. PARTICIPATION IN THE AUSTRIAN FASHION AWARDS

Applicants agree to publicly present their current collection as part of an event curated and organized by the Austrian Fashion Association if they receive AFA Support funding.

3.4. SUSTAINABILITY AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

A prerequisite for AFA Support funding is an active engagement with the environmental, social, and societal impacts of the planned project. Applicants are encouraged to integrate sustainability and social responsibility into their projects. A sustainability self assessment tool is available for continuous development during the project, downloadable under „AFA Support 2025“.

4 FUNDING AMOUNT & CONDITIONS

4.1. FUNDING AMOUNT

A total of five grants are awarded yearly. The amount of AFA Support for project financing is structured into three tiers: EUR 32,000,- (1 grant), EUR 21,000,- (2 grants), and EUR 13,000,- (2 grants).

4.2. DISBURSEMENT OF FUNDING

50% after confirmation of funding
40% after submission of a progress report, including documentation of expenses
10% after submission of the final report and final billing

4.3. PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

For a EUR 13,000,- grant: Design and realisation of at least one substantial collection (not as part of an educational program).

For a EUR 21,000,- or EUR 32,000,- grant: Design and realisation of at least two substantial collections (not as part of an educational program).

4.4. MULTIPLE APPLICATIONS

A designer can apply for multiple funding levels, but must submit the required documents with adjusted calculations for each funding level applied for.

5 MENTORING BY INTERNATIONAL EXPERTS

Each AFA Support funding includes three mentoring sessions with international mentors, who provide the recipient with feedback on strategy, collection planning, finances, and other areas. Participation in these mentoring sessions is mandatory for all funded designers. Those who wish to participate in additional mentoring sessions can apply for the AFA Mentorship Program.

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ELIGIBLE COSTS

Funds are designated solely for costs directly related to the submitted project, such as:

- Material and personnel costs for the development of prototypes and sample collections (e.g., material procurement, production of samples, etc.)
- Material and personnel costs for awareness, sales, and marketing activities (e.g., costs for public presentations, production of lookbooks and advertising campaigns, agency fees, PR material, etc.)

6.1.

FUNDING RATE

The funding rate is a maximum of 100% of the eligible project costs. Own contributions and external personnel costs for ongoing operations cannot be funded.

6.2.

FUNDING DURATION

Maximum of 12 months from the funding confirmation.

The final report, financial statement, and documentation material must be submitted no later than three months after the completion of the funded project and within 15 months of a potential funding confirmation.

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APPLICATION PROCESS

7.1.

STEP 1: SCHEDULE A CONSULTATION

The Austrian Fashion Association offers free consultation sessions to determine if AFA Support is suitable for the applicant and their project. Together, the application process will be discussed, and feedback on the portfolio and project proposal will be provided. Appointments can be made at support@afa.co.at.

7.2.

STEP 2: PREPARE APPLICATION MATERIALS

Before submission, the following steps must be completed:

- Download application documents: funding contract, cost calculation, sustainability self assessment tool
- Carefully read document „Guidelines, Procedure & Reporting“
- Compile and digitize portfolio
- Prepare and digitize project portfolio (design sketches, mood boards, drafts, etc.)
- Fill in and sign cost calculation
- Read and sign funding contract
- Compile press clippings
- Attach CV or label description
- For foreign nationals: Provide proof of residence or a copy of the official registration confirmation (Meldezettel) in .pdf or .jpeg
- For funding amounts of EUR 21,000,- and EUR 32,000,-, prepare financial statements and a business plan
- Complete the sustainability self assessment tool: The sustainability self assessment tool is a resource for fashion designers and creatives to evaluate responsibility and sustainability within their design processes. It helps define actions, track progress, and identify areas for improvement. The goal is to ensure continuous development throughout project implementation.

Please note: The Self-Assessment Tool is not part of the jury selection process.

The team of the Austrian Fashion Association is available for feedback on application documents up to one week before the deadline. The documents must not exceed a file size of 25 MB.

Only complete applications will be submitted to the jury.

7.3.

STEP 3: SUBMIT ONLINE APPLICATION FORM AND DOCUMENTS

Once funding is announced, an „Apply Now“ button will appear on the AFA Support page, leading to the application form. Applications are only saved when the „Save and continue later“ option is selected.

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SELECTION PROCESS

The allocation of AFA Support funding is determined by an independent expert jury with international representation, alongside a representative from BMKÖS, the City of Vienna, and the Austrian Fashion Association. The selection process is conducted in two stages. The Austrian Fashion Association carefully reviews all applications and submits only those that meet all criteria to the jury.

8.1.

DIGITAL SCREENING, SHORTLIST, AND HEARING

In the first online screening, the jury evaluates all valid applications based on defined criteria. Following this initial assessment, six to eight designers or labels are shortlisted.

The shortlisted designers are invited to a hearing during the jury session to present themselves and their label. They are expected to showcase 3-5 looks from their latest collection. If a designer is based abroad, the hearing will take place via video conference. In this case, the garments must be sent in advance to the Austrian Fashion Association's office, and the presentation will be conducted via Zoom. The exact time slots will be communicated in advance via email. The designer is responsible for the shipping costs.

8.1.1.

EVALUATION CRITERIA:

- Creative Excellence: Quality and innovation of the project
- International Development Potential
- Sustainability: Commitment to sustainable development
- Product: Quality of collections and market compatibility
- Brand Image: Quality of communication materials
- International Competitiveness: Market potential, strategic planning, and sustainability measures
- Motivation: Justification and intended use of funding

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FOLLOW-UPS, BILLING & REPORTS

9.1.

FOLLOW-UPS

Participation in three follow-up meetings with the Austrian Fashion Association team is mandatory for recipients. These meetings ensure compliance with funding guidelines.

9.2. PROGRESS REPORT

At the halfway point of the project duration, a detailed progress report must be submitted. This report must be fully completed via the online form "Progress Report" and include an initial statement of expenses. The second funding installment will be disbursed after the submitted report has been reviewed.

9.3. FINAL REPORT, FINANCIAL STATEMENT & DOCUMENTATION

The final report, financial statement, and documentation material must be submitted no later than three months after the completion of the funded project and within 15 months of the approval of the funding. To do so, complete the web form "Final Report" and upload, fully complete, and electronically submit the forms "Rights Guarantee & Work Usage," "Expense Report", and "Cost Calculation" to the Austrian Fashion Association.

9.3.1. FINAL REPORT:

- Comprehensive report and project description

9.3.2. DOCUMENTATION MATERIAL:

The documentation material should typically include:

- Created materials such as lookbooks, catalogs, invitations, and posters
- Video and audio material, screenshots from website and online documentation, etc.
- Documentation photos in print resolution (300 dpi, .jpeg, min. 1 MB, max. 10 MB) and videos including rights guarantee and usage permission
- Work Utilization: Rights guarantee and usage permission
- Publications and proof of success (e.g., nominations, competition participation, etc.)

9.4. USE OF THE AUSTRIAN FASHION ASSOCIATION LOGO

The grant recipient agrees to indicate the support from the Austrian Fashion Association in printed materials, on their website, and on social media by using the current logo and/or providing a direct link to the Austrian Fashion Association's website (www.austrianfashionassociation.at) and social media channels (@austrianfashionassociation).

9.5. STATEMENT OF EXPENSES AND ORIGINAL RECEIPTS

- Provide chronologically completed and signed Excel spreadsheet „Expense report“ (.xlsx and .pdf).
- Provide original receipts, including corresponding proof of payment (.pdf).
- Complete and sign the Excel spreadsheet „Cost calculation“ (.xlsx and .pdf). The totals must match the statement of expenses.
- Various invoices or costs may be entered in a single cell if the purpose of payment is identical.
- Add unforeseen cost items.
- Check the „Financial Billing Check“ field.

If the „Financial Statement Check“ field appears green: The financial statement can be submitted to the Austrian Fashion Association.

If the „Financial Billing Check“ field appears red: Expenses are missing according to the planned and submitted calculation (see „Notes“ in the Excel spreadsheet „Cost calculation“); the financial statement cannot yet be submitted to the Austrian Fashion Association. If no further expenses have been incurred, the full funding amount cannot be disbursed. In this case, please schedule a meeting with the Austrian Fashion Association.

9.6. FINANCIAL REPORTING CRITERIA

A key component of the final report is the financial statement of the actual project costs. This is based on statements of expenses, invoice compilations, and settled original receipts with proof of payment.

9.7. ELIGIBLE COSTS:

The funding criteria and details in the funding application are decisive for verifying the proper use of funds. It must be ensured that the submitted receipts correspond to the designated purpose of the funding.

9.8. NON-ELIGIBLE COSTS:

- Costs that cannot be attributed to the project;
- Investment costs and infrastructure costs;
- Ongoing costs such as personnel expenses, operating costs, or continuous services (e.g., tax advisory fees, studio rent, software, domains, etc.);
- Financing and insurance costs;
- Costs for serial production and expenses for services commissioned by third parties;
- Taxes, public duties, and fees;
- Unpaid invoice partial amounts;
- Costs for food and entertainment;
- Taxi receipts;
- Costs resulting from small invoices under EUR 50 net.

9.9. VAT:

If the funding recipients are eligible for VAT deductions, only net costs can be included; these must be shown on the receipts and in the statement of expenses. If the funding recipients can demonstrably not deduct VAT and therefore must bear the VAT cost, gross costs (including VAT) can be funded.

9.10. COST RECOGNITION PERIOD:

Cost recognition can begin at the earliest on the day of the funding confirmation and ends 12 months after the project start. If the project cannot be implemented within the deadline, an extension must be requested from the AFA.

9.11. SUBMIT ORIGINAL RECEIPTS:

Only settled original receipts that comply with legal regulations can be recognized. Invoice duplicates and copies are only fundable in exceptional cases. The authenticity of origin, content integrity, and readability must be ensured. Receipts that do not meet these criteria cannot be recognized. For advance payments, the actual incurrence of costs must be demonstrated in the final financial statement. For lump-sum invoices, a service specification must be attached. Settlement proofs: Original invoices must be accompanied by proof of settlement.

The following applies:

- Cash payments: Cash payments are accepted up to a maximum invoice amount of EUR 500 net. To verify payment execution, the following details must be included on the invoice: date, signature, and confirmation from the recipient of payment. Companies must also provide a company stamp. For cash sales (cash register receipts), the note „Paid in cash“ is already printed, and no additional confirmation is required. If the invoice amount exceeds EUR 500 net, a bank transfer must be proven.
- Bank transfers and online payments: A booking confirmation of the completed payment must be provided.

9.12. EXTERNAL PERSONNEL COSTS:

Persons working on the project based on a service contract (freelancers) can be accounted for with the hourly rate/monthly flat fee agreed in the service contract. Fee notes must describe the invoiced services and, if necessary, specify the hours and hourly rate precisely.

9.13. TRAVEL EXPENSES:

The most cost-effective travel option must be chosen. For flights, the online booking confirmation and boarding pass must be provided. When using transport or courier services, both the reason for transport and the route taken must be specified.

9.14. FOREIGN CURRENCY INVOICES/INVOICES IN FOREIGN LANGUAGES:

For foreign currency invoices, if not evident from the settlement proof (payment confirmation), a bank document proving the exchange rate at the time of payment must be attached.

For invoices in a foreign language (except English, French, and Italian), a certified translation must be provided.