

4th Call for Bridge Proof of Concept proposals

20 July 2017

Description of the Bridge Programme

Based on Article 7 paragraph 3 of the Federal Act on the Promotion of Research and Innovation (RIPA),¹ the Commission for Technology and Innovation (CTI) and the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) have jointly established the Bridge programme. The goal of Bridge is to foster knowledge transfer in the critical precompetitive phase when a vision of potential applications of a scientific result exists, but further efforts are needed to bring the corresponding product, technology or service to a marketable form.

The basic principles of Bridge are defined in the *Terms of Reference for the programme Bridge*, approved by the CTI Board on 25 February 2016 and by the Presiding Board of the SNSF Research Council on 4 May 2016.

Bridge includes two types of activities:

- **Bridge Proof of Concept** projects support young researchers who aim to develop an application or service based on their own research findings. These projects may feature any type of innovation or research field.
- **Bridge Discovery** projects aim to facilitate interactions between basic and applied research in order to realise the innovation potential of the research findings. Submitted projects must be focused on technological innovations but should also demonstrate the societal and economic impact of the innovation to be developed.

With the adoption of the *Terms of Reference*, the SNSF and the CTI appointed the seven-member **Bridge Steering Committee** (Annex 1), which is responsible for developing, launching and monitoring Bridge. The Steering Committee is also responsible for appointing the members of the evaluation panels, for allocating annual budgets to the Bridge funding schemes and, based on the recommendations of the evaluation panel members, for taking formal decisions concerning the funding, continuation or rejection of projects in keeping with available budgets.

¹ 420.1 Federal Act on the Promotion of Research and Innovation (RIPA) of 14 December 2012

Bridge proposals are evaluated by two different evaluation panels, one for each funding line. The evaluation panels are composed of experts with complementing experience in applied research and in the industrial or societal implementation of scientific results. They evaluate the submitted proposals, interview applicants, rank proposals according to their quality and draft recommendations for the attention of the Steering Committee concerning the funding, rejection or continuation of projects.

The SNSF and the CTI have also established a common **Bridge Office** that will provide administrative support to the programme and carry out lifetime management for projects.

Based on the *Terms of Reference for the programme Bridge*, the Steering Committee issues the following third call for Proof of Concept proposals.

1. General

Article 1 Goal and basic principles

¹ The funding scheme “Bridge Proof of Concept” fosters the further development of scientific results to evaluate market or societal potential. It supports researchers wishing to develop an application for their research results on their way to entrepreneurship or to implement their research results with an economic or societal partner.

² Calls for Bridge Proof of Concept proposals are announced periodically. Up to 4 calls may be announced per year.

³ Bridge Proof of Concept projects may cover any type of innovation or research field.

Article 2 Duration of grants, possibility of continuation

Bridge Proof of Concept grants are awarded for a duration of 12 months, with a possible continuation of up to 6 additional months (Article 20).²

2. Formal requirements

Article 3 Personal requirements

¹ The Bridge Proof of Concept funding scheme is open to applicants from all disciplines who intend to independently conduct and manage a project at a research institution such as a Swiss University, a Federal Institute of Technology, a University of Applied Sciences, a University of Teacher Education or any other research centre as defined in Articles 4 and 5 of the RIPA.

² In general, Bridge Proof of Concept grants are not extended beyond the maximum duration of 18 months. Exceptionally, extensions may be granted without additional funding if reasons stated in the General implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations 7.3 al. 3 and 4 of the SNSF apply.

² In the application, the applicants must provide proof that they will have the support of a host institution for the duration of the proposed project.

³ Furthermore, applicants must fulfil any of the following requirements:

- a. bachelor's or master's degree (within 4 years after the last degree); the degree must be recognized by the host institution;
- b. doctoral students within 6 months prior to graduation. Decisive date is the date of the thesis defence;
- c. postdoctoral researchers within 4 years after obtaining their doctoral degree; decisive date is the date of the thesis defence.

⁴ Bridge Proof of Concept projects are submitted by a single applicant.

⁵ For the duration of the grant, Bridge Proof of Concept grant holders are required to dedicate 100% of their time to the approved project.

Article 4 Requirements for the planned research

¹ Applicants must be able to show that:

- a. the submitted project is based on their own scientific results or on scientific results they have substantially contributed to;
- b. the underlying science has been peer-reviewed or documented by publications or another record of achievement (e.g. bachelor's, master's or doctoral thesis, scientific publication, patent).

² Applicants must make a substantial contribution to the proposed project and must be able to work independently without relying on instructions from third parties.

³ Applicants may only submit one Bridge Proof of Concept application per submission date.

⁴ Funding obtained or requested from other sources that is related to the project must be declared in the project proposal.

Article 5 Formal requirements for the application

¹ Bridge Proof of Concept proposals must be submitted via the electronic application platform³ by 11 September 2017, 17:00 Swiss local time.

² The proposal must be written in English and contain the following information and documents:

- a. administrative information as per the requirements set out on the online submission platform;
- b. a project description (5 pages, max 20'000 characters, excluding bibliography, plus max. 1-page summary) entered in the template available on the online submission platform;
- c. the applicant's CV (max. 2 pages), with a focus on personal scientific and innovation-based achievements;

³ <https://bridge.mysnf.ch>

- d. a reference letter from the advisor responsible for the applicant during the acquisition of the relevant scientific results, detailing the applicant's experience;
- e. a commitment letter from the future host institute detailing the support to be provided to the project and to the applicant;
- f. the CV of the head of the host research group (max. 2 pages).

³ The project description (paragraph 2b) is structured as follows:

- a. summary (max. 1 page);
- b. scientific background of the project, including clear proof that the submitted project is based on scientific results obtained by the applicant or to which the applicant has made a substantial contribution;
- c. innovative potential and market review;
- d. project description including an implementation plan or a scenario with targeted measures;
- e. project plan, milestones and deliverables.

Article 6 Re-submissions

Bridge only considers a re-submitted application if it is a significantly modified version of the rejected application.

3. Proposal evaluation procedure

Article 7 Non-consideration

¹ Proposals that do not fulfil the formal conditions laid out in Chapter 2 are not considered for evaluation unless the shortcomings can be resolved by minimal corrective measures.

² Applicants of non-considered proposals are informed in the form of a written appealable ruling signed by the Bridge Office.

Article 8 Evaluation criteria

The following criteria are applied during the evaluation of Bridge Proof of Concept projects:

- a. Innovative potential:
 - The project must be based to a large extent on the scientific results produced by the applicant or towards which the applicant has made a substantial contribution;
 - It provides a credible vision with a clear value chain for a new product, service or process which offers a significant competitive advantage to Swiss economy or has an important societal impact;
 - It includes a plausible implementation plan or a scenario with a convincing set of measures for achieving its goals;
 - It is feasible and goal-oriented according to its work plan and defined milestones;

- The applicant provides a convincing plan for cooperation with implementation partners or for founding a start-up company.

b. Applicant's qualifications:

- The applicant exhibits an appropriate level of innovation-based, entrepreneurial and managerial competences.

Article 9 Evaluation procedure

¹ The Proof of Concept Evaluation Panel members evaluate all proposals that fulfil the formal requirements.

² Bridge Proof of Concept grants are awarded after a two-level selection procedure.

³ Level 1 – Pre-selection: The Evaluation Panel assesses the submitted written proposal documents according to the criteria outlined in Article 8. It may take into account the opinions of external experts consulted during the evaluation. Candidates for the second assessment level are selected on the basis of these evaluation results.

⁴ Level 2 – Final selection: The Evaluation Panel invites the applicants admitted to the second level for a personal interview in English, in which they present their project and innovation plans and answer questions. The interviews form a central part of the overall evaluation of the project proposal.

⁵ The Evaluation Panel ranks the projects according to their quality, based on the assessment of the written documents and the oral presentation (interview).

⁶ The Evaluation Panel submits its funding or rejection recommendations to the Steering Committee for all evaluated proposals.

Article 10 Decision

¹ Based on the recommendations of the Evaluation Panel, the Steering Committee decides to either fund or reject each project in line with the budget.

² All decisions taken by the Steering Committee are communicated to the applicant in the form of an appealable ruling signed by the Bridge Office.

³ The ruling states, in particular, the reasons for the decision, the amount of funds allocated to the project and the conditions or requirements to be fulfilled before the project starts or once it is underway.

⁴ The evaluation and decision-making process is generally completed within 3 months.

Article 11 Right of appeal

The applicant may appeal against the ruling before the Swiss Federal Administrative Court pursuant to Article 7 paragraph 2, Article 10 paragraph 2 and Article 20 paragraph 4.

4. Eligible costs

Article 12 Eligible costs

¹ Bridge Proof of Concept grants cover salary costs (incl. social security contributions by the employer) and overhead paid to the institution (Article 18). The Bridge Office determines the salary rates in agreement with the host institution. In general, the maximum salary depends on the usual rates for comparable positions at the host institution.

² Apart from the salary costs of the applicant, salary costs of employees may be eligible. The applicant's contribution to the project must be in accordance with Article 3 paragraph 5 and Article 4 paragraph 2.

³ In addition, the grant may cover costs directly related to the realisation of the project (e.g. for infrastructure, prototypes, consumables, travel and conferences).

⁴ The maximum amount of eligible costs must not exceed CHF 130,000 for 12 months,⁴ including social benefits.⁵

5. Grants and grant management

Article 13 Legal consequences of the award

¹ On the full or partial approval of a grant application (award), the applicant becomes a grantee of Bridge Proof of Concept.

² The grantee must:

- a. use the grant in accordance with the conditions set out in the ruling;
- b. comply with the provisions stipulated in this call and all other rules that apply to the grant;
- c. carry out the project work with due care, while respecting the rules of good scientific practice and upholding the relevant principles of the discipline in question, in particular its ethical guidelines.

Article 14 Grant start and administration

¹ The earliest possible starting date of Bridge Proof of Concept grants is 1 December 2017.

² Grantee of Bridge Proof of Concept projects shall have the latter administered by a grant administration office of the host institution that is recognised by the SNSF or the CTI.

³ The grantee must request the transfer of funds and start their project within 6 months of the date on which the ruling was issued.

⁴ The maximum amount of eligible costs already takes into account the max. 15% overhead paid to the host institution (Article 18): subtracting from a total contribution of CHF 150,000 the overhead leads to CHF 130,000 of eligible costs.

⁵ Rates for social security contributions: http://www.snf.ch/SiteCollectionDocuments/allg_doktorierende_e.pdf (chapter 4)

⁴ The Bridge Office approves the release of funds if the conditions for release as defined in the ruling are met.

⁵ The grantee must provide the Bridge Office with a written summary of the planned project that is understandable to non-experts (lay summary). They must also provide thematic keywords for the Bridge, CTI and SNSF websites.

⁶ The lay summary and keywords must be submitted upon receipt of the funding decision, but no later than upon submission of the release of funds request.

⁷ Once the grant has been released, the lay summary and keywords will be made available to the public.

⁸ Once the funded project has been completed, the grantee will be required to update the lay summary by including the results of the project. Such updates are a mandatory requirement for approval of the project activity report (Articles 21 to 23).

Article 15 Changes to research plan

Substantial changes to the work, tasks and milestones described in the project proposal and/or set by the Steering Committee as conditions for financing may only be made if requested in writing and approved by the Bridge Office.

Article 16 Project withdrawal or termination

¹ Applicants who withdraw their Bridge Proof of Concept project or are forced to terminate it prematurely must inform the Bridge Office in written form stating reasons.

² Any unused funds must be reimbursed.

Article 17 Project support

¹ Bridge Proof of Concept grantees may be accompanied by an expert recommended by the Evaluation Panel.

² Bridge Proof of Concept grantees may receive additional support during the project, such as the possibility to participate in CTI entrepreneurship courses and/or access to patent searches by the Federal Institute of Intellectual Property.

Article 18 Overhead

Bridge grants are eligible for an overhead of max. 15%. The overhead is paid to the host institution.

Article 19 Sanctions

In general, the Steering Committee is responsible for deciding on potential sanctions and demanding reimbursements. In the event of suspected breaches of the terms of this call, of terms applicable to Bridge or

of research integrity or good research practice in connection with the application or the use of the grant, the regulations in force at the SNSF apply.^{6,7,8}

6. Project continuation, reporting and monitoring

Article 20 Project continuation

¹ Bridge Proof of Concept grantees who wish a continuation of their project for a maximum of 6 months must submit a progress report to the Bridge Office via the Bridge grant online platform⁹ 8 months after the start of the project. The following information must be included in the report:

- a. results achieved so far;
- b. reasons why a continuation is needed;
- c. activities planned during the continuation;
- d. expected additional achievements.

² Bridge grantees requesting a continuation of their grant may be invited to an interview with members of the Evaluation Panel.

³ Based on the progress made in the project and the outcome of the interview, the Evaluation Panel will submit a recommendation to the Steering Committee.

⁴ The final decision on continuing a project is taken by the Steering Committee and communicated by the Bridge Office in form of an appealable ruling.

Article 21 Reporting duties, principles

¹ At the end of their project, Bridge Proof of Concept grantees must submit a final report providing information on finances and project activity.

² Grantees must also submit output data upon conclusion of the project. The duty to provide output data remains in place after completion of the final report and ends three years after its submission date.

³ If the requirements are met, the Bridge Office will approve the reports and send the grantee a confirmation. If this is not the case, the Bridge Office will return the reports to the grantee for revision.

Article 22 Financial report

¹ Final financial reports provide an account of how the funding was used.

² Financial reports are compiled by the grant administration office of the host institution. They must be reviewed, signed and sent to the Bridge Office via the Bridge grant online platform in good time.

⁶ Funding Regulations of the SNSF, chapter 7

⁷ General implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations, chapter 10

⁸ Regulations on scientific misconduct (Research Integrity Regulations) of 12 July 2016.

⁹ <https://bridge.mysnf.ch>

³ Financial reports must be submitted no later than 3 months after the end of the funding period.

Article 23 Project activity report

¹ Bridge Proof of Concept grantees must submit a final project activity report via the Bridge grant online platform no later than 3 months after the end of the funding period.

² The following information must be included in the project activity report:

- a. summary;
- b. main achievements and results;
- c. main challenges for the implementation phase;
- d. possibilities for creating a start-up or for collaborating with an economic partner;
- e. next steps.

7. Research results and intellectual property

Article 24 Research results and intellectual property

¹ The rights to the research results gained in the course of research work funded by Bridge are owned by the grantees or their employer. The confirmation of an agreement between the grantee and the host institution must be submitted before the start of the project.

² The SNSF and the CTI waive any reimbursement of grants or shares in the profits.

³ The protection and commercialisation of results generated within a Bridge project (including intellectual property rights such as inventions and software) shall be governed by the respective regulations of the host institution of the applicant.

Annex 1: Members of the Bridge Steering Committee

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