

4th Call for BRIDGE Discovery proposals

17 December 2019 (updated 24 March 2020)

Description of the BRIDGE Programme

Based on Article 7 paragraph 3 of the Federal Act on the Promotion of Research and Innovation (RIPA)¹, Innosuisse (the Swiss Innovation Agency) 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 Reference² for the programme BRIDGE. A revised version was approved by the Innosuisse Board and by the Presiding Board of the SNSF Research Council in May 2018.

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 Innosuisse appointed the **BRIDGE Steering Committee** (Annex), 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.

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

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

² http://www.snf.ch/SiteCollectionDocuments/Bridge_Terms_of_Reference_2018.pdf

the industrial or societal implementation of scientific results. They evaluate the submitted proposals, interview applicants, rank proposals according to their quality and draft recommendations to the attention of the Steering Committee concerning the funding, rejection or continuation of projects.

The SNSF and Innosuisse have also established a common **BRIDGE Office** that provides administrative support to the programme and carries out lifetime management for projects.

Based on the Terms of Reference for the BRIDGE programme, the Steering Committee issues the following fourth call for Discovery proposals.

1. General

Article 1 Goal and basic principles

¹ Under the funding opportunity "BRIDGE Discovery", grants are awarded to qualified researchers who intend to conduct a research and innovation project with the clear goal of developing a future technological application or service.

² BRIDGE Discovery supports interactions between basic and applied research to realise the innovation potential of scientific results. Cooperation between universities, the Swiss federal institutes of technology, research institutes, and universities of applied sciences (UAS) will be considered a positive feature in the evaluation process (Article 11b).

³ BRIDGE Discovery projects must focus on technological innovation that has a positive impact on society or the economy.

⁴ Calls for BRIDGE Discovery proposals are announced annually.

Article 2 Duration of grants

¹ BRIDGE Discovery grants are awarded for a maximum of 4 years.³

² It is possible to apply for a shorter funding period.

2. Formal requirements

Article 3 Personal requirements

¹ Applications may be submitted by faculty members or teaching and research staff employed at an occupancy rate of at least 50% at a research institution such as a Swiss university, a Federal institute of technology, a university of applied sciences or any other research institution as defined in Articles 4 and 5 of the RIPA.

² Applicants must be in a position to carry out research projects under their own responsibility and to lead scientific and non-scientific project staff.

³ In general, BRIDGE Discovery grants are not extended beyond the maximum duration of 4 years. Exceptionally, extensions for a maximum of one year may be granted without additional funding.

³ Applicants must make a substantial contribution to the proposed project and must be able to work independently.

⁴ Applicants must be able to show that

- a. they are conducting their research activities together with any scientific teaching activities to an extent equivalent to at least 50% of a full time equivalent (FTE);
- b. they are employed at a research institution that is eligible for research funding (see Article 3, paragraph 1) at least for the duration of the project and at least to the required occupancy rate, or they can demonstrate that they have been given assurance of such employment in writing;
- c. the necessary research infrastructure is at their disposal.

⁵ Members of the BRIDGE Steering Committee are excluded from participating in the BRIDGE Discovery calls. Members of the Discovery Evaluation Panel must withdraw from the entire evaluation procedure if one of the applications under evaluation is their own. The withdrawal obligation also applies to any decisions taken prior to the launching of a call.

⁶ Applicants may only submit one BRIDGE Discovery application per submission date.

Article 4 Requirements for the planned research

¹ BRIDGE Discovery projects must focus on technological innovation but should also demonstrate the societal or economic impact of the technical innovation to be developed.

² Clinical studies are not supported under the BRIDGE Discovery scheme.

Article 5 Applicants and implementation partners

¹ BRIDGE Discovery proposals are submitted by a single applicant or a small consortium consisting of a maximum of 3 applicants.

² In the case of more than one applicant

- a. each applicant must meet the eligibility requirements for the submission of applications;
- b. each applicant must be a member of a different independent research group;
- c. each applicant takes personal responsibility for the project;
- d. the applicants must designate one person (principal investigator) to coordinate and represent all applicants vis-à-vis the BRIDGE Office, which representation shall be legally binding.

³ Applicants may choose to involve implementation partners (e.g. industrial collaboration) in their Discovery project to provide specific expertise or infrastructure. However, implementation partners are not eligible to receive financial support within the scope of BRIDGE.

Article 6 Letter of intent

All applicants who intend to submit a BRIDGE Discovery proposal must announce their participation in the form of a letter of intent to be submitted via the electronic application platform⁴ until 24 February

⁴ <https://bridge.mysnf.ch>

2020, 17:00 Swiss local time. In the letter of intent, the applicants outline their planned Discovery project. They are expected to provide the following information:

- a. title, applicants and institutions involved, duration and foreseeable budget
- b. short description of the planned project (1-2 pages)

The letter of intent is not evaluated but is a prerequisite for the submission of a Discovery project proposal. It enables the BRIDGE Office to prepare for the forthcoming evaluation and plan the call. Upon submission of their letter of intent, applicants receive an acknowledgment that their letter has been received.

Article 7 Formal requirements for the application

¹ BRIDGE Discovery proposals must be submitted via the electronic application platform⁵ by 11 May 2020, 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 (20 pages, plus maximum 1 page summary), provided in the template on the online submission platform;
- c. the CV of the applicant(s) (maximum 2 pages);

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

- a. summary (maximum 1 page);
- b. current state of research and innovation in the field;
- c. innovation potential of the technology, with an indication of potential applications, planned steps towards commercialisation, and the corresponding societal or economic impact;
- d. detailed project plan with goals, methodology, approach and outcomes;
- e. project organisation with a timeline, milestones and deliverables as well as the responsibilities of the project participants (including complementarity and expected synergies between collaborating groups).

Article 8 Re-submissions

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

Article 9 Other forms of funding

¹ At the time of submission or during an ongoing BRIDGE Discovery project, applicants may also receive grants under all SNSF or Innosuisse funding schemes as long as the funded projects are thematically different.

² However, it is not permissible to have more than one ongoing BRIDGE Discovery project.

⁵ <https://bridge.mysnf.ch>

³ Parallel submissions of the same project proposal are not permissible.

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

3. Proposal evaluation procedure

Article 10 Non-consideration

¹ Proposals that do not meet the formal requirements laid out in Chapter 2 will not be considered for evaluation unless the shortcomings can be resolved by making minor corrections.

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

Article 11 Evaluation criteria

¹ The following criteria are applied during the evaluation of BRIDGE Discovery projects:

- a. Scientific content and innovative potential
 - The project's scientific objectives must be of high quality and realistic, providing a clear added value with respect to the current state of the art. They should be related to the intended innovation and should not represent a continuation of the basic research. The proposed methods must be suitable, sound and relevant to the objectives.
 - The project must present a credible vision of the potential technological, economic or societal impact and benefits of the innovation as well as of its possible implementation.
 - The project must be feasible and goal-oriented according to its work plan and defined milestones, and must include a realistic budget.
 - The project must contain a convincing roadmap and strategy outlining the envisaged steps towards implementation.
- b. Qualification of applicants:
 - The applicants demonstrate an appropriate level of scientific and innovation-based competence as well as entrepreneurial and management competence.
 - In projects with more than one applicant, their competences must be complementary and their collaboration must deliver a clear added value. Moreover, the applicants must be able to show that they are capable of organising the consortium and establishing appropriate project-internal communication and decision processes. Cooperation between universities, the Swiss federal institutes of technology and research institutes on the one hand, and universities of applied sciences (UAS) on the other are considered a positive feature in the evaluation process.
- c. If proposals are equivalently rated, proposals by female applicants or proposals that show better gender awareness or increase the variety of institutions or disciplines, or include institutions from various language regions, are given priority.

Article 12 Evaluation procedure

- ¹ The Discovery Evaluation Panel members evaluate all proposals that meet the formal requirements.
- ² BRIDGE Discovery 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 11. 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.
- ⁵ Based on the assessment of the written documents and the oral presentation, the Evaluation Panel ranks the projects according to their quality.
- ⁶ The Evaluation Panel submits its funding or rejection recommendations to the Steering Committee for all evaluated proposals.

Article 13 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 principal investigators 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 As of the submission deadline of the proposals, the evaluation and decision-making process is generally completed within 7 months.

Article 14 Right of appeal

The applicant may appeal against the ruling before the Swiss Federal Administrative Court pursuant to Article 10 paragraph 2 and Article 13 paragraph 2 of this call for proposals.

4. Eligible costs

Article 15 Eligible costs

- ¹ BRIDGE Discovery grants may be used to cover the following costs:
 - a. The salaries of scientific and technical staff designated for the research project within the salary scales prescribed by BRIDGE (Article 17);
 - b. Research costs that are directly related to the research work, namely material of enduring value, expendable items, field expenses, travel costs or third-party charges;
 - c. Direct costs incurred through the use of research infrastructure linked to the research work;

- d. Costs and fees of scientific open access e-publications produced within the scope of the funded research;
- e. Additional costs may be covered if required for the success of the project.

² The maximum amount of eligible costs must not exceed CHF 850,000 for 4 years per applicant. For projects shorter than 4 years, the maximum amount is reduced proportionally. The efficient use of a realistic budget is an essential criterion in the evaluation of the project.

³ The costs must be applied for and quantified in the proposal.

⁴ The grant is awarded as a lump sum. Reallocations within cost categories are possible.

⁵ The funding of larger infrastructure (> CHF 100,000) is possible under the condition that the host institution covers at least 50% of the costs. For smaller infrastructures (< CHF 100,000), the institution must cover at least 50% of any amount exceeding CHF 50,000.

⁶ Preclinical studies may be funded up to a maximum amount of CHF 100,000.

⁷ Market research or Intellectual Property (IP) strategy by independent advisors cannot be funded.

⁸ The salaries of the applicants cannot be charged to the BRIDGE Discovery grant. Applicants fulfilling special conditions may however obtain support from Innosuisse (Article 16).

Article 16 Salary complement for applicants fulfilling special conditions

¹ Applicants who fulfill the two following conditions may apply for a complement of their own salary granted by Innosuisse:

- a) They are employed on a part-time or full-time basis at a university of applied sciences or the Centre Suisse d'Electronique et de Microtechnique (CSEM);
- b) The employing research institution is largely dependent on third party funding to support research activities of its staff.

² The amount of the salary complement must be applied for in a separate form and quantified on the basis of the actual contribution to the project. Instructions and forms are available on the BRIDGE website.⁶ Regulations in force at Innosuisse apply for the calculation of the Innosuisse contribution.

Article 17 Salary scales

¹ Institutions may apply their normal salary scales to the envisaged project staff, such as scientific staff or technicians. The maximum salary for postdoctoral students (incl. social security contributions by the employer)⁷ is set at CHF 130,000.

² Doctoral students are remunerated according to the salary scales of the SNSF.⁸ They must devote at least 60% of an FTE to their doctoral thesis.

³ The requested work-time percentage for project staff must correspond to the actual planned time requirement for the project.

⁶ <https://bridge.mysnf.ch>

⁷ Rates for social security contributions:
http://www.snf.ch/SiteCollectionDocuments/Annex_XII_Ausfuhrungsreglement_Beitragreglement_E.pdf (12.5)

⁸ Salary scales for doctoral students of the SNSF:
http://www.snf.ch/SiteCollectionDocuments/Annex_XII_Ausfuhrungsreglement_Beitragreglement_E.pdf (12.1)

5. Grants and grant management

Article 18 Legal consequences of the award

¹ On the full or partial approval of a Discovery proposal (award), the applicants become grantees of BRIDGE Discovery.

² Grantees 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.

³ In case of a single applicant, the grantee becomes the principal investigator. In a consortium with more than one applicant, one grantee becomes the principal investigator (according to Article 5, paragraph 2d) of the project and assumes its coordination, including scientific, administrative and financial aspects.

Article 19 Grant start and administration

¹ The earliest possible starting date of BRIDGE Discovery grants is 1 January 2021.

² The grants are transferred in annual instalments.

³ Principal investigators of BRIDGE Discovery projects shall have the latter administered by a grant administration office of the host institution that is recognised by the SNSF or Innosuisse.

⁴ The principal investigators must request the transfer of funds and start their project within one year of the date on which the ruling was issued.

⁵ The BRIDGE Office approves the release of funds if the conditions for release as defined in the ruling are met.

⁶ The principal investigators 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, Innosuisse and SNSF websites.

⁷ The lay summary and keywords must be submitted on receipt of the funding decision, but no later than on submission of the release of funds request.

⁸ Once the grant has been released, the lay summary and keywords will be made available to the public.

⁹ Once the funded project has been completed, principal investigators will be required to update the lay summary by including the results of the project. Such updates are a mandatory requirement for the approval of the project activity report (Articles 25 to 28).

Article 20 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 21 Project withdrawal or termination

¹ Applicants who withdraw their BRIDGE Discovery 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 22 Other project support

¹ Additional support during the project such as access to patent search support by the Swiss Federal Institute of Intellectual Property (IPI) may be offered to BRIDGE Discovery grant beneficiaries upon recommendation by the Evaluation Panel.

² Other types of project support may be offered to grantees in the course of the project.

Article 23 Overhead

BRIDGE grants are eligible for an overhead of a maximum of 15%. The overhead is paid to the host institution of the principal investigator.

Article 24 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.^{9,10,11}

6. Reporting and project conclusion

Article 25 Reporting duties, principles

¹ BRIDGE Discovery grantees must report their activities and achievements. In particular, they must submit:

- a. a progress report generally 18 months after the start of the project;
- b. output data generally 18 months after the start of the project;
- c. annual financial reports and a final financial report at the end of the funding period (Article 26);
- d. a final project activity report upon conclusion of the project (Article 28).

² The Evaluation Panel may define different reporting periods if necessary.

³ The duty to regularly provide output data remains in place after completion of the final report and ends three years after its submission date.

⁹ Funding Regulations of the SNSF, chapter 7

¹⁰ General implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations, chapter 10

¹¹ Regulations on scientific misconduct (Research Integrity Regulations) of 12 July 2016.

⁴ In consortia, the principal investigator coordinates the reporting duties of all grantees and submits the reports to the BRIDGE Office.

⁵ If the requirements are met, the BRIDGE Office will approve the reports and send the principal investigator a confirmation. If this is not the case, the BRIDGE Office will return the reports to the principal investigator for revision.

⁶ Grantees are required to provide information to evaluate the impact of the BRIDGE programme.

⁷ Grantees must acknowledge BRIDGE as a source of funding in any publication or exchange with the public.

Article 26 Financial reports

¹ Financial reports provide a detailed account of how the funding was used and must be submitted annually no later than 3 months after each instalment.

² A final financial report summarising the use of the funding must be submitted no later than 3 months after the end of the funding period.

³ Financial reports are compiled by the grant administration office of the principal investigator. They must be reviewed, signed and sent to the BRIDGE Office via the BRIDGE grant online platform in good time.

Article 27 Mid-term evaluation

¹ BRIDGE Discovery projects will be subject to a mid-term evaluation carried out by the Evaluation Panel on the basis of the written progress report (Article 25, paragraph 1a) generally no earlier than 18 months after the start of the project.

² Based on the progress made in the project, the Evaluation Panel may recommend its continuation, termination or reorientation.

³ Projects can be terminated by the Steering Committee if milestones are not reached and convincing alternative plans are not presented.

Article 28 Project activity report

¹ BRIDGE Discovery principal investigators must submit a final report consisting of a financial and 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 scientific achievements and results;
- c. main achievements towards the planned innovation;
- d. future challenges for the implementation phase;
- e. possibilities for creating a start-up or for collaborating with an economic partner;
- f. next steps.

7. Research results and intellectual property

Article 29 Research results and intellectual property

¹ The rights to the research results obtained in the course of research work funded by BRIDGE are owned by the grantees or their employers. Grantees are obliged to define such rights together with their employers in the form of an agreement before the start of the project.

² In BRIDGE Discovery projects that involve grantees from more than one institution who contributed to the research results, the institutions involved shall agree among themselves on ownership, rights and commercialisation strategies.

³ A written confirmation of the existence of an agreement between the grantees and their employers (Article 29, paragraph 1) and – if applicable – between the grantees of the involved institutions (Article 29, paragraph 2) must be submitted to the BRIDGE office before the first instalment of the grant can be paid.

⁴ The SNSF and Innosuisse waive any reimbursement of grants or shares in the profits.

Article 30 Open access

¹ Grantees have a duty to publish research results in digital form (open access publication). Grantees may be released from these obligations should publication not be advisable for confidentiality reasons, particularly in relation to the acquisition of patents or due to a contractual commitment to observe confidentiality.

² Should any implementation partner wish to participate in the project, their commitment to the general rules of open access to research results of the SNSF¹² will be required.

¹² see Funding Regulations of the SNSF, Article 47

Annex: Members of the BRIDGE Steering Committee (as of March 2020)

Chris Boesch (SNSF, University Bern)

Dave Brown (Innosuisse, Angel Investor and mentor)

Nicoletta Casanova (Innosuisse, FEMTOprint), **chair**

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