

Spark funding instrument: Guidelines for the project description

Introduction

The project description provides the basis for the evaluation of the Spark applications. It is the only document that is transmitted to the members of the international pool of researchers designated to evaluate a particular proposal.¹

It will serve as a basis for assessing the project based on the Spark evaluation criteria, i.e.:

- a. Originality/novelty of the idea
- b. Unconventionality of the research project
- c. Scientific quality of the project
- d. Potential for significant impact

The project description must consist of one document of original text written by the applicant themselves and must be written in **English**. The project description must be written in accordance with the [rules on good scientific practices](#) and all sources must be cited correctly. The SNSF does not consider applications that do not meet the requirements for the project description as defined in the Spark regulations and the present guidelines.

Anonymity

The project description including metadata of the corresponding document must be **fully anonymized**, i.e. the document should be written in such a way that the evaluators can identify neither the identity of the applicant, nor their previous, current or future position(s) or institution(s). This guarantees that the evaluators are not be able to draw any conclusions about the applicant's level of research experience. In particular, obvious references to own publications must be omitted, as this can easily compromise the anonymity.

If you have unpublished data, which you wish to share in your project description, you can mention them directly and cite them as [unpublished data].

If you have preliminary results that have already been published, you can mention the relevant results and cite them as [published data]. The link to and information about the relevant publication should then be provided in the qualification statement, which will be evaluated separately from the project description by the administrative offices of the SNSF only.

¹ Spark applications are evaluated in a double-blind process. Qualification statement or identity of the applicant will not be revealed to the evaluators.

Structure

The project description must be structured as follows and may not contain any annexes:

Title of the project;

1. Project summary (max. 1 page);
2. Project plan (max. 5 pages and max. 20,000 characters including spaces, footnotes, figures, tables, formulas and references, but excluding the bibliography; minimal font size of 10 pt. and 1.5 line spacing:
 - 2.1 Current state of research in the field (including a short description of the originality and unconventionality of the research project, reference to previous insights which provided the starting point and basis for the planned study, and how the described approach differs from existing initiatives in Switzerland and abroad);
 - 2.2 A detailed description of goals, methodology, approach, expected results and possible risks;
 - 2.3 Description of the potential impact of the project;
3. Bibliography (no limitations regarding maximum number of pages or characters).