
Guidelines for the lifetime management of research projects (grants)

Project funding

March 2018

Preamble

The Swiss National Science Foundation

The Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) is Switzerland's foremost institution in the promotion of scientific research. Established as a foundation under private law, it has funded research work in all scientific fields on behalf of the Swiss Confederation since 1952. The focus is on basic research, part of which may be geared to practical application.

In fulfilling its mandate to promote scientific research, the SNSF has devised a variety of funding schemes under which researchers can submit applications and request financial support. The funding schemes are organised as follows:

- Projects
- Careers
- Programmes
- Infrastructures
- Science communication

Project funding

The SNSF's main funding scheme is project funding. Researchers based in Switzerland can apply for support from the SNSF for a research project of their choice by submitting the relevant applications on one of the annual submission dates, namely 1 April and 1 October. The applications are evaluated by the National Research Council of the SNSF based on the assessments provided by external reviewers who are generally based abroad. Project grants are awarded through a competitive process. Conducting the evaluation procedure systematically, from the submission of applications via the individual assessment stages through to the decision and its communication, is one of the core tasks of the SNSF.

Project funding documentation

The project funding documentation consists of:

- a [description of the evaluation procedure](#) (assessment and decision-making)
- [guidelines for applicants](#) that provide assistance in preparing and submitting applications
- [guidelines for the lifetime management of research projects \(grants\)](#), providing assistance in managing projects.

This documentation is available on the SNSF's website (www.snsf.ch). The guidelines are based primarily on the [Funding Regulations](#), the [General Implementation Regulations](#) for the Funding Regulations, the [Project Funding Regulations](#) and the [Organisational Regulations of the National Research Council](#) and are not legally binding. Their sole purpose is explanatory and they do not in any circumstances substitute the mentioned formal legal documents or any other provisions applicable to procedures and grants. Depending on the funding scheme, there may be slight deviations from the evaluation procedure as described in the guidelines.

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1. The ruling

The SNSF forwards the final decisions on applications to the corresponding applicants in the form of a ruling (in accordance with the Federal Act on Administrative Procedure). If your project has been approved, the letter you receive will contain the following information:

- Amount of the funds awarded, split into annual instalments
- Duration of the grant
- If applicable, any conditions that need to be met before the funds are transferred
- Due date of the first scientific report if different from the usual date (acc. to chapter 5).
- If applicable, any further comments/conditions
- Information on the right of appeal

2. Responsibilities

When approval is given, applications become projects or grants (in financial terms) and applicants become grantees. One person is responsible vis-à-vis the SNSF for each application or grant. In the case of applications with only one applicant, he or she is responsible for the subsequent management of the grant.

In the case of applications with more than one applicant (research group), each applicant accepts personal responsibility for the success of the project. However, only the person designated as the corresponding applicant represents the research group before the SNSF. Such representation is legally binding. He or she becomes the responsible corresponding grantee for the SNSF. The SNSF addresses all communications concerning the grant to this person and all the awarded funds are transferred to this person's institution (in most cases, the grant administration office). The entire grant is administered at this institution, from where funds can be transferred to the institutions of the other grantees. Each grantee is responsible vis-à-vis the SNSF for using the funds received appropriately.

Alongside applicants, project partners may also be involved in the project. Project partners are researchers who make a contribution to the project through collaboration but are not responsible for the project. They can benefit from the research funds allocated under the SNSF grant, but may not apply for a salary.

The research group defines the cooperations and legal relationships between its members, particularly with regard to authorship rights, access to data and research results. If a new corresponding grantee is chosen within a research group, the new and the current responsible person must jointly file a corresponding application with the SNSF.

A corresponding grantee is responsible for the following tasks vis-à-vis the SNSF:

- Requesting the release of the allocated funds
- Requesting personnel, changes of personnel and salary adjustments
- Updating the data management plan (DMP)
- Submitting scientific reports and entering output data

- Submitting financial reports
- Informing the SNSF about any changes affecting the grantees (e.g. moves, changes to employment terms)
- For research groups: coordination between the individual members and management of the project
- For research groups: if applicable, transferring funds to the other grantees

Corresponding grantees can delegate some of these tasks to the other applicants or secretariats in mySNF in order to reduce their administration workload (see chapter 10).

3. Getting started

3.1 Start of funding

The project must start no later than 12 months after the date of the approval letter. The start of the grant can be postponed for a further 12 months in response to a written request giving reasons. The starting date must fall on the first day of a month and must not be earlier than the date stated in the ruling. The corresponding grantee informs the SNSF about the starting date when requesting the release of funds via [mySNF](#). The SNSF confirms the release of the grant when the first instalment is transferred.

3.2 Release of funds

The corresponding grantee requests the release of the approved funds and the payment of every annual instalment via [mySNF](#). The funds are paid in annual instalments in accordance with the ruling. Prior to the release of funds, you must submit a lay summary in one of the national languages of Switzerland. The lay summary will be published in the SNSF's [research database](#). Your data management plan (DMP) also has to be approved by the administrative offices in order to proceed with the request for the release of funds. If the SNSF requires modifications of your DMP, they are to be integrated and accepted before the request of release of funds. Furthermore, all necessary authorisations (for animal testing, tests on humans, etc.) and additional documents must have been submitted via [mySNF](#). These documents can be uploaded under "Request for release of funds" under "Other annexes". In addition, any conditions stated in the ruling must be met. If your grant is not administered by an official grant administration office (see Annex 9 of the General implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations), it should be administered by the grantee or by another office that assumes this fiduciary role. In such cases the SNSF defines the administration, monitoring and due diligence duties with you in a written agreement.

For the following years, you must request the payment of instalments via [mySNF](#). As a rule, the payment can be requested no earlier than 1 month before the start of the next funding year.

3.3 Transferring funds to other grantees / project partners

Funds may only be transferred to researchers who are listed as grantees or project partners in the ruling. Such grantees may open a project-specific account with their institution, if needed (generally with the grant administration office).

Funds transfers to all involved grantees or project partners are exempt from value-added tax. With regard to value-added tax legislation, it is important that the funds are not requested via an invoice, but exclusively via a payment request. The corresponding grantee needs to make the payment.

3.4 Employment of staff

Any new appointments, staff turnover, salary adjustments or extensions of the funding period are subject to approval by the SNSF. A corresponding request must be placed with the SNSF in advance via "Messages/Requests" in mySNF. You will find the web-based forms on mySNF if you select the project in question and click on the relevant section. Messages/Requests are the responsibility of the corresponding applicant. However, in order to reduce his/her administration workload, they may be delegated to third parties (see chapter 10). For approved projects, employees can be registered online prior to the release of funds. This process can be simplified by copying data directly from the application or from any previous projects.

Employment relationships must be regulated by the grantees' institution by means of a written contract. The institutions are responsible for compliance with the statutory labour and social insurance provisions. The SNSF specifies binding salary brackets and norms for different staff categories (see Annex 12 of the [General implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations](#)). In particular, the provisions concerning the engagement of staff pursuant to Clause 7.1 – 7.6 of the [General implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations](#) must be complied with.

4. Overhead

Pursuant to Article 3 of the [Overhead Regulations](#), the overhead contribution is transferred to the corresponding grantee's institution. Similarly, for research groups, the overhead is allocated solely to the corresponding grantee's institution. This is based on the assumption that the different institutions in project funding act as corresponding grantees or as other grantees almost in equal measure, such that the overhead contributions are balanced out between the institutions in keeping with their participation. However, the institutions are free to transfer overhead contributions between each other. Furthermore, the individual institutions may use the overhead contributions at their discretion.

5. Reports

5.1 Scientific reports and entering output data

A final scientific report needs to be submitted at the end of the approved running time of the project. It covers its entire duration (final report). However, the duty to inform the SNSF at any time during the project about any changes affecting the grant remains

in place. Research groups have to submit a scientific report which covers all sub-projects.

For individual projects, the SNSF may ask for interim reports. This is communicated in the rulings (see chapter 1); in due time, you will receive the corresponding requests automatically in the form of e-mails sent via mySNF.

Grantees must start entering output data on SNSF projects (scientific publications, scientific events, knowledge transfer events, collaborations, etc.) no later than 18 months after starting the project. You have to keep these data updated and complete using mySNF even after the conclusion of the project. Only data that are directly linked to the funded project should be entered.

The SNSF uses these output data for the following purposes:

1. The data are entered in the web-based research database p³ (p3.snf.ch), where researchers and the general public can gain information on the research work funded by the SNSF.
2. The data serve as a basis for aggregated and anonymised quantitative analyses, e.g. with regard to the number of publications and patents produced in connection with SNSF projects in the course of a year.

5.2 Financial reports

All grantees / project partners who have received funds in instalments must annually submit a financial report. For minor expenses (travel), particularly in the case of project partners, the actual expenses can also be included in the corresponding grantee's report.

If possible, the financial report and the corresponding receipts should be submitted exclusively in electronic form via [mySNF](#). The grantee is responsible for the submission. The report is generally compiled by the grant administration office (financial department, fund administration or similar entity) of the grantee's institution and transmitted to the grantee for examination via mySNF. The specific processes, e.g. for the transmission of receipts, are defined by the grant administration offices of the individual institutions.

In the case of research groups, the other grantees / project partners are responsible for the compilation of a financial report at their institution on the funds allocated to them and for the transmission of this report along with all receipts to the corresponding grantee or to the latter's grant administration office. Hence, the responsible grantee solely enters his/her project costs in his/her financial report along with the instalments transferred to the project partners. The corresponding grantee or the grant administration office compiles a [financial overview](#) of all sub-projects, reviews it and submits it along with all reports and receipts to the SNSF. This financial overview also serves as the basis for the figures to be entered in mySNF. If possible, the financial reports and receipts should be submitted exclusively in electronic form via mySNF. For this reason, the other grantees / project partners should make their reports available to the responsible grantee in electronic form.

Grantees abroad (Money Follows Researcher, foreign partners of Sinergia projects, etc) also have to compile an annual financial report. They have to complete the appropriate [excel list](#) and submit it with the relevant receipts. With regard to exchange rates: the actual conversion rates (rates of the day) of the transfers/payments are to be applied, in accordance with the transfer/payment receipts of the bank etc. The conversion from local currency to CHF in the financial report (in the table "Summary calculation pivot in local currency" in excel sheet for partners abroad) as of the end of the reporting period must be done using the rate of the day on the final day of the reporting period.

6. Data Management Plan (DMP)

The approval of the data management plan (DMP) is a condition in order to be able to proceed with the request for the release of funds. Where necessary, the release cannot be requested until the required amendments to the DMP have been accepted by the administrative office.

The DMP remains editable during the entire lifetime of the grant. Its contents can be adapted as the project evolves.

In any case, researchers will be prompted to update their DMP at the end of the grant. This updated version will be assessed together with the final scientific re-port. The administrative office retains the right to request additional information and/or amendments to the contents of the final DMP.

The final version of the DMP will be made available on the SNSF's P3 database. This will increase the visibility and impact of the research outcomes by making it easier for other researchers to access and reuse the datasets.

7. Budget items / total budget / eligible costs

The budget items mentioned in rulings or in approvals issued during the running time of the grant and the corresponding amounts are regarded as approximations. Transfers between budget items are permissible without obtaining prior approval from the SNSF, provided the total awarded amount is not exceeded (total budget). The total budget must be used in accordance with the approved research plan.

In exceptional cases the SNSF may define binding budget items. In such cases, the amounts allocated to the individual items are binding, and it is not permissible to transfer amounts of money between budget items without prior written approval from the SNSF.

Significant deviations in the implementation of the research project and in the use of the awarded grant must be approved by the SNSF.

As regards the costs covered by the grant (eligible costs), please refer to Clauses 2.5 - 2.23 of the [General implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations](#). In principle, the SNSF grant only covers project-specific costs.

In no circumstances does the SNSF cover the following costs:

Standard IT equipment incl. hardware and software, scientific literature, tools and aids, and objects comprising the usual basic equipment of an operational scientific facility. Expenses for postage, phone calls, photocopies, translations, etc., are also not eligible. In addition, outlays for rent, electricity, water, insurances, maintenance and service, service centres and repairs are not regarded as eligible costs.

8. Project completion grants, cost-neutral extensions

8.1 Project completion grants

It is possible that, for unforeseeable reasons, the approved funds may not be sufficient to complete the planned research work by the end-date of the grant. Such an application may be submitted electronically via mySNF after payment of the last instalment at the earliest.

Applications for supplementary grants pursuant to Article 36 of the [Funding Regulations](#) may be approved only if the following requirements are met in full:

- The purpose for which the supplementary grant is to be used is explained in detail in the application.
- It is explained in the application why the supplementary grant is necessary for the successful completion of the ongoing research work funded by the SNSF. Supplementary grants may not be used to finance new research projects.
- It is convincingly shown in the application that the need for supplementary funding was unforeseeable and could not be averted by taking appropriate measures.
- It is convincingly shown in the application that the necessary supplementary funding could not be covered via other sources of financing.

Extensions of the funding period requested in parallel with a supplementary grant are generally granted for a period of less than one year. Payment of the supplementary grant can be requested via "Request for payment of instalment" in mySNF.

8.2 Cost-neutral extensions

You can place a request with the SNSF for the cost-neutral extension of a grant or project. This may be necessary if the project has been delayed for unforeseeable reasons and money could therefore not be spent. Such a cost-neutral extension must be applied for in electronic form via [mySNF](#) (Messages/Requests). For research groups, such extensions are only approved for the entire grant. In order to ensure that the extension will indeed be cost-neutral, we need the actual envisaged balance on the original end-date of the grant (incl. any additional personnel costs) as well as a budget for the extension period.

Please note that no further additional personnel costs may be requested in the event of a cost-neutral extension of the grant. This is because, at the regular expiry date of

the grant, there were still sufficient funds to absorb all additional costs incurred due to higher rates for doctoral students or higher social security contributions. For this reason, any debit balance at the end of the cost-neutral extension period shall be borne by the grantee.

9. Repayment of remaining amounts

Upon expiry of the grant, you need to repay any unused funds no later than 30 days after compiling the final financial report, unless the funds in question amount to less than CHF 50. The amount is to be repaid to the following account of the SNSF: PC 30-3767-5 Schweizerischer Nationalfonds, 3012 Bern; the corresponding grant number must be mentioned. As concerns research groups, unused funds have to be paid back to the corresponding grantee. Once an [overview](#) of all project contributions is available, he or she is responsible for any repayments to the SNSF.

10. Additional costs and personnel expenses

Subject to the reasons set out below, the costs of approved research work that exceed the SNSF grant shall be borne by the grantees.

In response to a written request stating reasons, the SNSF may reimburse additional expenses as additional personnel costs if they are the result of mandatory increases in the employer's social security contributions or an increase in the minimum of the salary range defined by the SNSF.

Additional personnel costs are only reimbursed if they cannot be covered from other sources or by reducing expenditure. The relevant amount is credited after receipt and examination of the final financial report. Deficits of less than CHF 50 are not covered.

If the SNSF has approved a cost-neutral extension, no additional personnel costs will be reimbursed (see chapter 8.2).

11. Working with mySNF (in particular other grantees and secretariats)

Almost all of the mentioned processes can be carried out electronically in mySNF without physical signature. The responsibility for this lies with the corresponding grantees. You may, however, authorise third parties (e.g. other grantees, secretariats) to assist you in managing the projects. This is only possible if these persons are registered mySNF users and have their own access to mySNF. The authorised persons may complete the online forms for the following processes, and the corresponding grantees must, in a final step, transmit the data to the SNSF from their own user account:

- Requesting the release of the allocated funds
- Submitting scientific reports
- Submitting financial reports (only relevant if main grant is not administered by a grant administration office)

The corresponding grantees can delegate the following processes entirely to third parties, who can fill in the online forms and transmit them to the SNSF - the corresponding grantee always receives an e-mail confirmation of the transmission:

- Requesting personnel, changes of personnel, salary adjustments and cost-neutral extensions (Messages/Requests)
- Entering output data
- Entering the lay summary
- Request for payment of an instalment

Furthermore, the corresponding grantees can specify in mySNF that copies of all automated correspondence (e.g. the request to compile a scientific report) be sent to the authorised persons by e-mail.

You will find all settings with regard to the authorisation of third parties in your mySNF account in the main navigation bar on the left under "Manage authorisations".