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# Guidelines for the lifetime management of research projects (grants)

Bilateral Programmes

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SCHWEIZERISCHER NATIONALFONDS  
ZUR FÖRDERUNG DER WISSENSCHAFTLICHEN FORSCHUNG

# 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 towards practical application.

## Bilateral Programmes

The Swiss bilateral programmes with priority countries were launched by the Swiss Government in 2008, after a pilot phase 2004-2007, to promote and reinforce research cooperations with non-European countries showing promising research potential. The State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) is in charge of the Swiss bilateral programmes. In the 2013-2016 Swiss Education, Research and Innovation (ERI) Dispatch, SERI mandates the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) to implement one of the funding schemes available within these programmes, the Joint Research Projects (JRPs).

JRPs allow researchers from Switzerland and the given priority country to jointly investigate a specific question. These projects typically last three or four years and in Switzerland the corresponding grants cover similar costs as SNSF national projects (equipment, research funds and salaries). The SNSF organises the calls with one or several counterparts in the concerned countries. Both countries must come to an agreement on which submitted proposals are to be funded and communicate the results to the researchers independently. For the successful projects, each country funds its own researchers.

## Project funding documentation

The Joint Research Project funding documentation consists of:

- Call document
- Guidelines for the lifetime management of research projects (grants), providing assistance in managing projects.

These documents are available on the SNSF website ([www.snsf.ch](http://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](#). They are not legally binding.

The purpose of the guidelines is only explanatory and they do not under any circumstances replace the mentioned formal legal documents or any other provisions applicable to procedures and grants.

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## 1. The ruling or decision letter

The SNSF forwards the final decisions on applications to the Swiss main applicant in the form of a ruling (in accordance with the Federal Act on Administrative Procedure) or a decision letter. 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 (see section 4)
- If applicable, any further comments/conditions
- Information on right of appeal (only if it is a ruling)

In case the decision is forwarded in form of a decision letter, the Swiss main applicant needs to sign a declaration regarding the SNSF Funding Regulations.

## 2. Responsibilities

When approval is given, applications become projects or grants (in financial terms) and applicants become grantees. The Swiss main applicant is responsible vis-à-vis the SNSF for each project or grant.

All applicants accept personal responsibility for the success of the project. However, only the Swiss main applicant represents the research group before the SNSF. Such representation is legally binding. He or she becomes the responsible 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, i.e. the financial department, fund administration or similar entity). The entire grant is managed at this institution, from where funds can be transferred to the institutions of other grantees. Each grantee is responsible vis-à-vis the SNSF for using the funds received appropriately.

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 responsible grantee is chosen within a research group, the new and the current responsible person must jointly file a corresponding application with the SNSF.

The 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
- 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)
- Coordination between the research teams and management of the project
- For research groups: transferring funds to the other Swiss grantees (if applicable)

Responsible grantees can delegate some of these tasks to other applicants or secretariats in [mySNF](#) in order to reduce their administration workload (see section 9).

## 3. Getting started

### 3.1 Start of funding

Unless stated differently in the call document, the project must start no later than 12 months after the date of the approval letter. The starting date must fall on the first day of a month and must not be earlier than the date stated in the ruling / decision letter. The corresponding grantee informs the SNSF of 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 or decision letter. 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 P3](#). Furthermore, all necessary authorisations (for animal testing, tests on humans, etc.) and additional documents (e.g. a signed declaration to follow the the SNSF funding regulations in case of funding) 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 or decision letter must be met. If your grant is not managed 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 Swiss grantees

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

Transfers of funds to the other applicants are exempt from value-added tax. With regard to the 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 changes or salary adjustments in Switzerland 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 online forms on [mySNF](#) if you select the relevant project and click on the relevant section. Messages and requests are the responsibility of the corresponding applicant. However, in order to reduce their administration workload, these may be delegated to third parties (see section 9). For approved projects, employees can be registered online prior to the release of funds. This process can be simplified by adopting 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 Article 7.1–7.6 of the [General implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations](#) must be complied with.

It is not necessary to inform the SNSF about personnel changes in the partner countries.

## 4. Reports

### 4.1 Scientific reports and entering output data

The Swiss main applicant must annually submit a scientific report, which may be compiled in collaboration with the other grantees; in due time, they will receive the corresponding requests automatically in the form of e-mails sent via mySNF.

The partners from partner countries have to report separately to their funding institution.

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. They have to keep this data updated and complete using [mySNF](#) even after the conclusion of the project. Only data that is directly linked to the funded project should be entered.

The SNSF uses this data for the following purposes:

1. The data appears in the online research database p<sup>3</sup> (<http://p3.snf.ch/>), where researchers and the general public can find information on the research funded by the SNSF.
2. The data serves 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.

## 4.2 Financial reports

All Swiss grantees who have received funds must submit financial reports annually. If possible, the financial report and the corresponding receipts should be submitted exclusively in electronic form, via [mySNF](#). The Swiss main applicant is responsible for their submission. The report is generally compiled by the grant administration office 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 Swiss grantees are responsible for compiling financial reports at their institutions on the funds allocated to them and for submitting these reports along with all receipts to the responsible grantee or to the latter's grant administration office. Hence, the responsible grantee solely enters their project costs in their financial report, along with the instalments transferred to the other grantees. The responsible 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 should make their reports available to the responsible grantee in electronic form.

The partners from partner countries have to report separately to their funding institution.

## 5. Budget

The budget items mentioned in rulings or decision letters, 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 awarded amount (i.e. the total budget) is not exceeded. 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 grantees are not permitted 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 Article 2.5–2.23 of the [General implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations](#). In principle, the SNSF grant only covers project-specific costs.

Under no circumstances does the SNSF cover the following costs:

- Standard IT equipment incl. hardware and software
- Scientific literature

- Items comprising the usual basic equipment of an operational scientific facility
- Expenses for postage, phone calls, photocopies, translations, etc.
- Outlays for rent, electricity, water, insurances, maintenance and service, service centres and repairs

## 6. Project completion grants, cost-neutral extensions

### 6.1 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.

### 6.2 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. The payment of a supplementary grant can be requested via “Request for payment of instalment” in *mySNF*.

## 7. 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: 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 responsible applicant. Once an overview of all project contributions is available, he or she is responsible for any repayments to the SNSF.

## 8. Additional costs and personnel expenses

Barring the exceptions set out below, the costs of approved research that exceed the SNSF grant shall be borne by the grantees.

In response to a written request giving reasons, the SNSF may cover additional personnel costs in the following cases:

1. Additional costs due to the increased salaries of doctoral students as a result of the higher rates for doctoral students defined by the SNSF;
2. Additional costs due to compulsory increases in the employer's social security contributions.

Additional personnel costs are only reimbursed if they cannot be covered by reducing expenditure or through third-party funds. The relevant amount is transferred after receipt and examination of the final financial report. Deficits of less than CHF 50 are not covered.

## 9. Working with *mySNF* – for 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 grantees. They may, however, authorise third parties (e.g. other grantees, secretariats) to assist in managing the projects. This is only possible if these persons are registered *mySNF* users and hence have their own access to *mySNF*. The authorised persons may fill in the online forms for the processes listed below; however, the corresponding grantees must, in a final step, submit 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 on 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".