Swiss National Science Foundation

SPIRIT: Evaluation form for external reviewers

October 2023

You are requested to provide a criteria-based assessment, according to the seven evaluation criteria specified by the SPIRIT funding instrument. Funding is awarded to research projects with clearly defined goals that are submitted by excellent research consortia from two to four countries. Researchers from all disciplines can apply for a SPIRIT grant; the topics are chosen by the researchers themselves. The grants contribute to the education of researchers in all participating countries. Special focus will be given to equal opportunities and the promotion of women scientists, as well as to raising awareness of gender-specific questions. Projects must contribute to promoting gender awareness and equal opportunities. Overly positive or critical reviews with no justification cannot be taken into account. In addition, please note that the **review must be written in English**.

Please note that:

- your anonymized comments will be made available to the applicant at the end of the evaluation;
- your anonymity as a reviewer will be strictly preserved at all time;
- you have the responsibility to treat the proposal and any communications on the proposal as confidential;
- the research proposal (or its existence) should not be shown to, disclosed to, or discussed with others, except in special cases, where specific scientific advice may be sought. In this event, please contact us with the names of those you have consulted;
- you should contact us immediately to report any conflict of interest, or suspicion of scientific misconduct.

Please treat your review and all documents at your disposal as confidential. They are available under "Show all documents" in the menu on the right-hand side of your screen. You are allowed to discuss the grant proposal with your trainees, who may also contribute ideas or text to the review. In case of such contributions, all participants' names and contributions have to be disclosed in the "Comments/personal declaration" section of the review. It is your responsibility to exclude conflicts of interests and to inform your trainees on the confidentiality of the information. Furthermore, the final review must reflect your appraisal of the proposal. You are the responsible author of the submitted review.

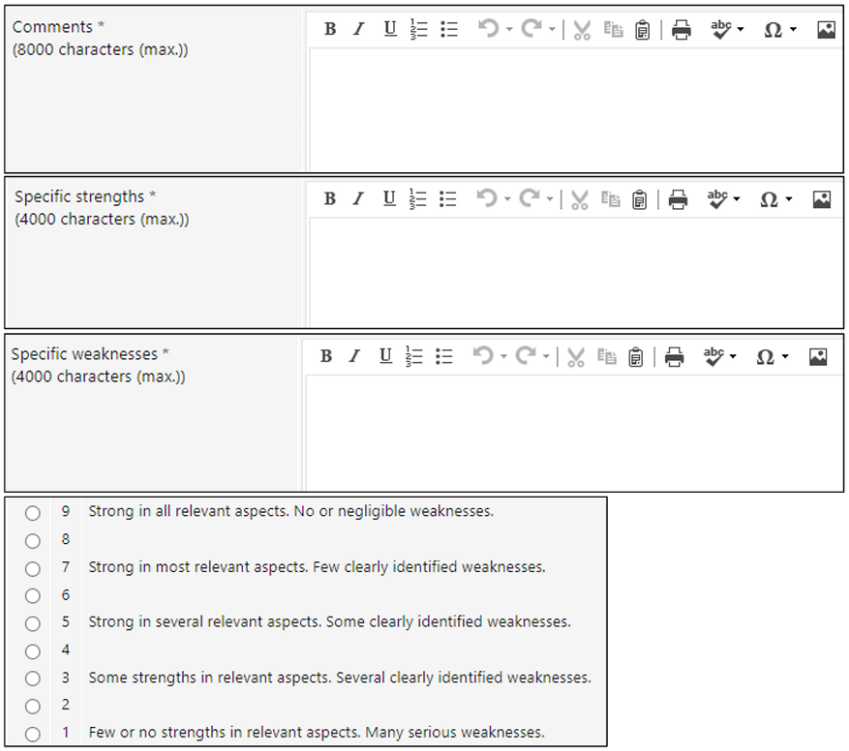
1. Scientific relevance

Mention here whether and to what extent

- the topic and the research problems or hypotheses of the planned project are relevant to the discipline and beyond;
- the proposed project increases knowledge and coherence within the discipline and beyond;
- the proposed project has the potential to develop new approaches and methods within the discipline and beyond.

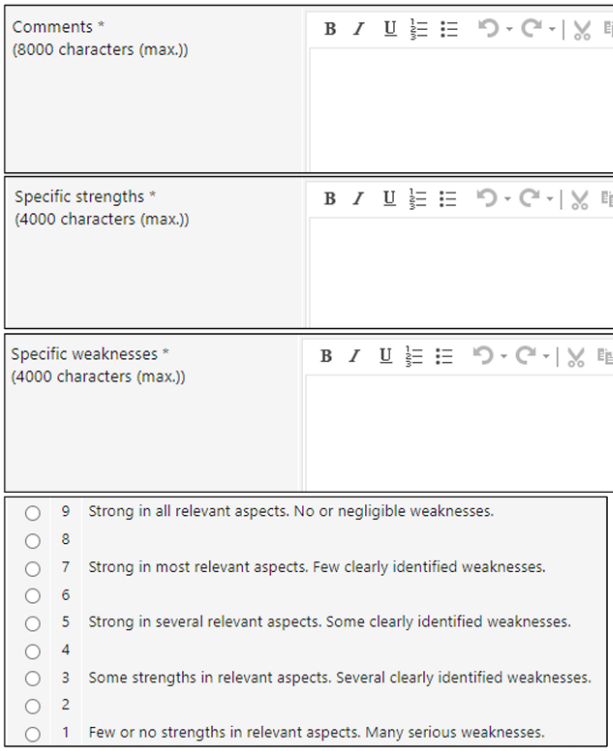
The project's relevance is generally assessed on the basis of the research plan. The following questions may be of further help for the assessment:

- Do the applicants have an accurate and full understanding of the state-of-the-art in the relevant discipline (and beyond)?
- Are the work of third parties and the applicants' own work described accurately?



2. Originality of the aims and objectives

Indicate whether and to what extent the proposed project's starting point, theoretical/methodological approaches and objectives are original. Originality can take the form of a question that has so far been neglected by researchers or an approach that offers unexpected or novel combinations of familiar aspects.

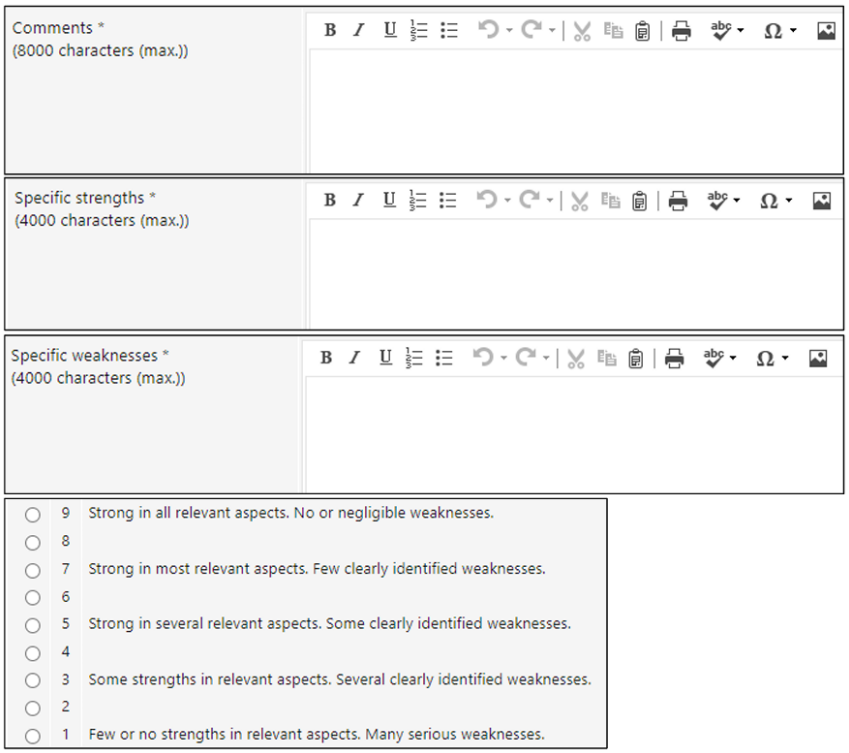


3. Suitability of the methodology and feasibility

Specify whether and to what extent the methods are suited to answering the questions set out in the application. This includes the methods chosen, their combination and the research plan (timing and logical sequence of steps).

Indicate whether and to what extent the proposed project is feasible. The following questions may be of further help for the assessment:

- Can the targets/milestones set out in the application be reached in the given time and with the available resources in terms of personnel and funds?
- Is the scope of the project (workload) proportionate to the planned duration of the project?

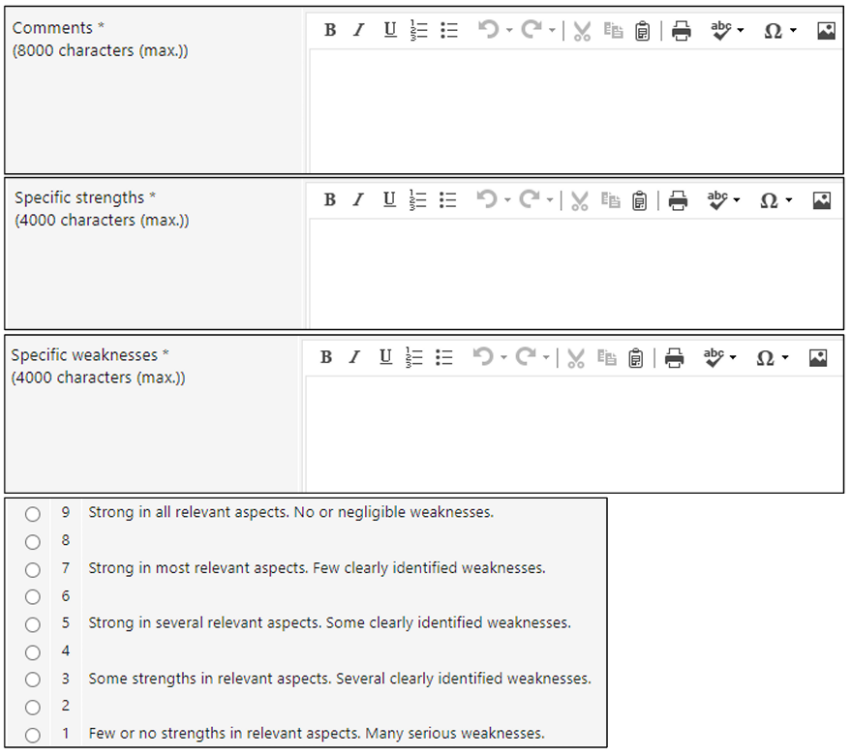


4. Applicants' scientific track record and expertise

The **scientific qualifications of each applicant**, in particular the **track record** and the **expertise to carry out the research project**, have to be assessed on the basis of the following documents: CV(s) as well as "current state of own research" of the research plan (if available). The SNSF has introduced a standardized CV format in October 2022. Consult the fact sheet to learn more about the format and its use in the evaluation.

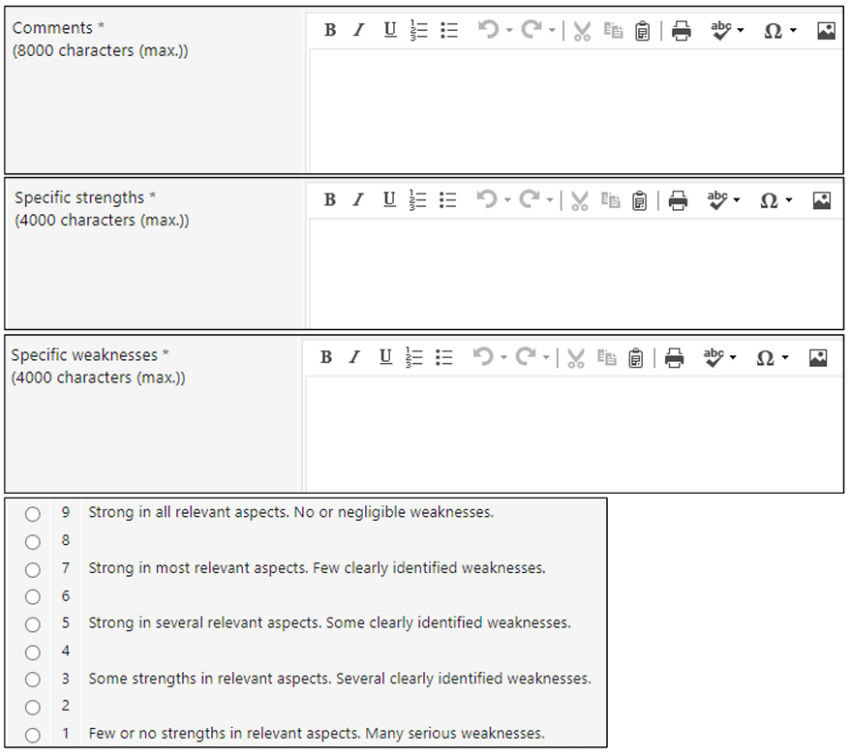
Reviewers are kindly asked to consider the scientific qualifications of applicants based on their entire research output (including, when applicable, datasets, software, prototypes, etc.), in addition to research publications. **In this context, the scientific quality and relevance of a paper is deemed much more important than publication metrics or the reputation of the journal in which it was published**. The scientific quality and relevance of selected research outputs may be assessed directly by the sources provided by each applicant in the section "Major achievements" of the CV.

In the case of several applicants, each applicant should be evaluated individually. The assessment of the “expertise to carry out the research project” refers however to the team as a whole. The composition of the team and the roles of its individual members should be commented.
In general, **the evaluation has to be done against the background of the scientific disciplines and the academic age of each applicant.**



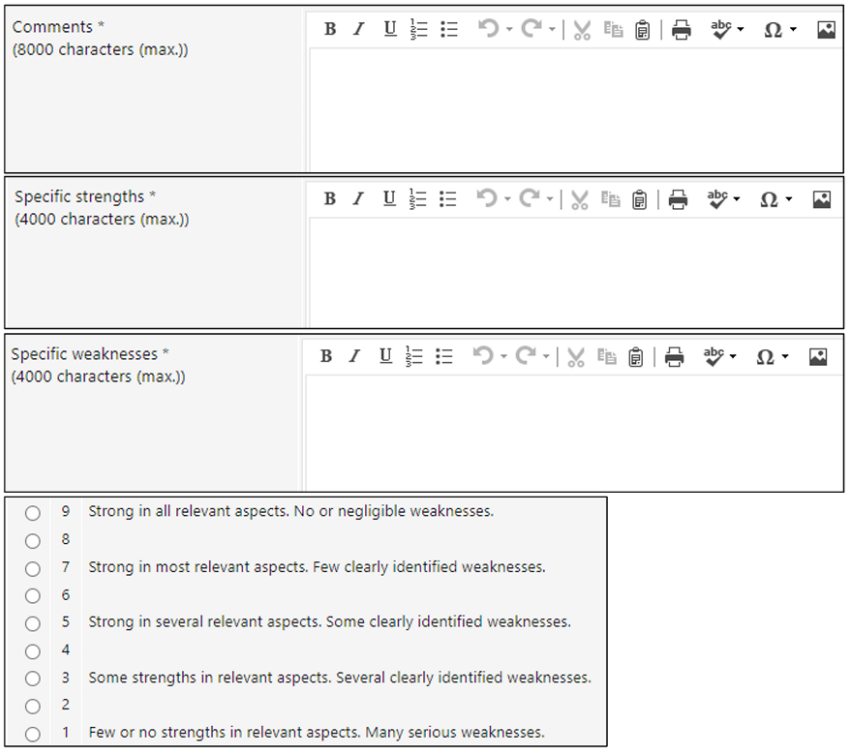
5. Complementarity of the research partners

Assess whether and to what extent the research partners and their specific expertise and skill sets complement each other, in particular for the proposed project. Indicate whether the combination of researchers and the way the project will be structured and managed is likely to generate a synergistic effect that will benefit the project.



6. Contribution to increasing scientific capacities in the relevant research field

Assess the potential to increase scientific capacities. Such scientific capacity raising can take various forms: These include not only the support and the fostering of scientific capacity of persons in partner countries, but also the support and the fostering of scientific capacity of researchers in Switzerland, of young researchers in general and of women. Furthermore, the encouragement of gender awareness and equal opportunities is also understood as a form of capacity development.



7. Contribution towards raising gender awareness and promoting equal opportunities

Assess the potential to raise gender awareness and promote equal opportunities. This question must be reflected on the level of **research content** and on the level of the **project team**.

Questions to ask regarding gender awareness on **research content**:

- How will the quality and impact of the project suffer, if sex/gender dimensions are not adequately considered and addressed? Is a sex/gender dimension necessary for the planned project to achieve high scientific quality? Which are the sex/gender aspects that could be considered?
- If the proposal includes a sex/gender dimension: How does the proposal address issues of sex/gender with regard to research content (questions, study design and methodology)? Is this done convincingly and in sufficient detail?
- If the proposal does not include a sex/gender dimension: How do the applicants explain why questions of sex/gender are not considered on the research content level? Is this done in a plausible and sufficiently detailed way? Which are the convincing reasons for the exclusion of a sex/gender perspective?

Questions to ask regarding gender awareness in the **project team**:

- How is the core team of applicants set up? How is the further team including project partners and planned project employees set up?
- Inhowfar does the team composition reflect the gender distribution in the field? Which measures did the applicants take to create a gender-balanced team?
- If the team is not gender-balanced: Which explanations do the applicants provide for not having been able to create a gender-balanced team?
- Is the project team well-positioned to increase gender equality in this specific research field? Which specific knowledge and experience is there among the team?
- What does the (gender-sensitive) hiring strategy for project employees look like? What does the mentoring plan for female team members look like?

Comments *
(8000 characters (max.))

Specific strengths *
(4000 characters (max.))

Specific weaknesses *
(4000 characters (max.))

○	9	Strong in all relevant aspects. No or negligible weaknesses.
○	8	
○	7	Strong in most relevant aspects. Few clearly identified weaknesses.
○	6	
○	5	Strong in several relevant aspects. Some clearly identified weaknesses.
○	4	
○	3	Some strengths in relevant aspects. Several clearly identified weaknesses.
○	2	
○	1	Few or no strengths in relevant aspects. Many serious weaknesses.

Overall assessment

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Scientific relevance									
Originality of the aims and objectives									
Suitability of the methodology and feasibility									
Applicants' scientific track record and expertise									
Complementarity of the research partners									
Contribution to increasing scientific capacities in the relevant research field									
Contribution towards raising gender awareness and promoting equal opportunities									

Please summarise the main reasons for your overall rating by pointing out the strengths and weaknesses of the proposal.

Please note that your review, except the part « comments and personal declaration », will be forwarded to the applicants, anonymously and possibly in abridged form.

Please provide a rating on the following scale for your overall assessment of the proposal, considering the strengths and weaknesses in the criteria-based assessment. Use 5 (Strong in several relevant aspects. Some clearly identified weaknesses.) as a starting point and develop arguments to justify grading the application as 5, higher, or lower respectively.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Rating									
Main reasons for your overall assessment *									

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