Swiss National Science Foundation

SNSF Leadership Programme

The SNSF is proud to offer a comprehensive leadership programme to all SNSF Starting Grant, Eccellenza and PRIMA grantees. The programme offers Early Career Researchers (ECRs) who lead a research team funded by the SNSF a unique opportunity to acquire advanced leadership skills.

The programme entails workshops, keynotes and role model events in a variety of formats. These events build on participatory methods and self-engagement to foster long-term understanding and adoption of best practices. Overall, the programme aims to strengthen the participants' understanding of key leadership concepts, as well as to offer insights into how academic institutions work, how team leaders can create inclusive work environments, and how to navigate academic and scientific careers.

The acquired skills contribute to the quality of the scientific projects, foster creative teamwork and facilitate the supervision of ECRs working in the team.

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Getting to know the SNSF Leadership Programme

Every year, the SNSF publishes a programme including multiple events that seek to enhance the participants' advanced leadership skills. All potential participants receive the programme and can register for any events that they consider meaningful for them. Investing in leadership saves time and energy, as participants learn to face challenges in a constructive and proactive approach.

The programme supports **personal development towards five main goals** correlated with career success:

- **Knowing Yourself**: Self-awareness, dealing with one's biases and building emotional competence
- **Understanding Counterparts**: Ability to listen, be mindful and change perspective with ease
- **Realizing Context**: In depth understanding of the context of one's career in time and space
- **Identifying Group-Dynamics**: Capacity to identify predictable interaction patterns and (organizational) culture, understanding and dealing with (in)balance of power
- **Developing Leadership Competencies**: Building "learning organization" competencies, fostering an environment of open communication and collaboration, promoting a diverse, inclusive, equitable environment, and developing the capacity to drive innovative changes

These five goals are pursued in different types of events that are presented below. In addition to the opportunities offered to all SNSF Starting Grant, Eccellenza and PRIMA grantees, the programme aims to empower leaders from groups that are underrepresented in science (e.g., women, racial and ethnic minorities, LGBTQI+, First Generation, individuals with disabilities). Therefore, some events specifically target underrepresented groups in science to build safe spaces where researchers are offered a unique opportunity to establish peer networks and can exchange on their lived experiences to identify individual and collective strategies in dealing with specific challenges they face.

These peer networks offer opportunities for:

- Realizing that others have similar issues and getting peer advice
- Reflecting openly on specific disadvantages that underrepresented groups face
- Informally discerning which institutions may pose challenges or offer support to underrepresented groups
- Allying for change together

Formats of the events

The five goals are pursued in different types of events in a variety of formats presented in table 1. The proposed diverse academic leaders events specifically target groups that are underrepresented in science. The events either take place in Berne or online. The duration of the events varies between 1.5 hours and 2 days. All events provide opportunities to engage in constructive dialogues with the other participants and the speakers. Many also include practical exercises to establish long-lasting learning processes.

Table 1. Advanced leadership and diverse academic leaders event formats

Advanced leadership		
Type of event	**Key focus**	**Format**
Academic landscape and academic careers	Understanding how recruitment procedures work, setting own career expectations, identifying opportunities, and other career-related topics.	*Online or in person*
Foundations of leadership	Understanding the central role of the five goals for career success presented above and how they resonate with different aspects of leadership and grantees' settings.	*In person two-day retreat*
Advanced leadership workshops	Advanced aspects presented by high-level international academic experts.	*Online or in person*
Diverse academic leaders		
Type of event	**Key focus**	**Format**
Case clinic	Participants can present their own cases, discuss them, and gain new perspectives in a solution-oriented, supportive group-coaching.	*Online or in person*
Role models	Personal career and leadership reflections by established researchers. Grantees discuss own corresponding or contrasting experiences with them.	*Online*
Living library	Established researchers from underrepresented groups share their stories and answer questions in small dialogue groups with 2-3 grantees. The groups rotate.	*Online or in person*
Reflection workshops	Peers discuss achievements, successes, and aspirations to enable transfer of learnings. They also discuss challenges, difficulties, and problems to collectively identify solutions and ally to realize them.	*Online or in person*

The programme specifies which events are offered to which groups, the number of events for underrepresented groups will grow as we identify the needs of the participants. Please, get in touch with us if you have suggestions for specific topics or speakers that you would like to recommend.

Individual coaching for researchers from groups underrepresented in science

For researchers who belong to groups underrepresented in science (e.g., women, racial and ethnic minorities, LGBTQI+, First Generation, individuals with disabilities) and face specific challenges that they would like to discuss with a professional coach, the programme includes the possibility to benefit from up to 5 individual coaching sessions with one of our partner coaches

Registration and participation

All invited participants can decide how many events they attend each year and plan their participation over the entire duration of their grant. Some courses are useful at the beginning of the grant to establish best practices within the team. Nevertheless, they might also offer tools to release tensions and conflicts within teams that are already established. All the invited speakers are equipped to address diverse audiences, in terms of project advancement, group size, researcher profiles, and disciplines.

Recognition and valorization of participation

Certificates of attendance are issued for single workshops. At the end of their participation in the programme, the grantees receive a certificate stating the total number of hours dedicated to the leadership programme.