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Regulations on BRIDGE Proof of Concept grants

of 9 December 2020 (version of: 28 September 2023)

The BRIDGE Steering Committee

based on Article 2.2 of the Terms of Reference for the BRIDGE programme of 18 November 2020 (Innosuisse) and 9 December 2020 (SNSF)¹

issues the following regulations:

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¹ https://www.snf.ch/media/de/Ydgbtd9566ktVV5f/2022_BRIDGE_Terms_of_Reference.pdf

1 Principles for BRIDGE Proof of Concept grants

Article 1 Objectives and general framework

¹ The “BRIDGE Proof of Concept” funding scheme fosters the further development of scientific results to evaluate their market and/or societal potential. It supports researchers on their way to entrepreneurship or their efforts to implement and apply their research results with an economic and/or societal partner..

² The evaluation criteria include a commitment to sustainable development (including economic, societal and environmental consequences) in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) defined by the United Nations.²

³ BRIDGE Proof of Concept projects may cover any type of innovation or research field.

⁴ Calls for BRIDGE Proof of Concept proposals are announced periodically. The BRIDGE Office publishes the relevant submission deadlines on its website.³

⁵ Applicants may only submit one BRIDGE Proof of Concept application per submission date.

⁶ Under the BRIDGE Proof of Concept funding scheme, there is no obligation to award a grant to any person or entity.

Article 2 Duration of grants and maximum grant

¹ BRIDGE Proof of Concept grants are awarded for a duration of 12 months.

² A maximum amount of CHF 130,000 for 12 months may be requested in a BRIDGE Proof of Concept application.

Article 3 Project extensions

¹ In response to a request stating valid reasons only, BRIDGE Proof of Concept grants may be exceptionally extended by a maximum of six months with additional funding (see Article 27). A maximum amount of CHF 65,000 may be requested for a BRIDGE Proof of Concept extension.

² A cost-neutral extension may be granted on request without additional funding. In justified exceptional cases, cost-neutral extensions that exceed one year may be approved.

Article 4 Overhead

BRIDGE grants are eligible for an overhead of max. 15% of the total awarded amount. The overhead is paid directly to the host institution and is not a part of the requested amount. The processing is governed by the modalities defined in the Overhead Regulations of the SNSF.⁴

² <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

³ <https://www.bridge.ch/en/proof-of-concept>

⁴ https://www.snf.ch/media/en/sCtI3YhybRNO0kDV/ueb_overhead_reglement_e.pdf

2 Requirements for applicants and for submitting an application

Article 5 Applications

Applications for BRIDGE Proof of Concept grants must be submitted in accordance with the requirements set out in these Regulations and the specifications applicable to the calls issued by the BRIDGE Office and must contain all the necessary data and documents.

Article 6 Requirements for applicants

¹ BRIDGE Proof of Concept projects must be submitted by a single applicant.

² The BRIDGE Proof of Concept funding scheme is open to applicants from all disciplines who aim to independently conduct and manage a project at a higher education research centre such as a Swiss university, a federal institute of technology, a university of applied sciences, a university of teacher education or at any other research centre as defined in Article 4 of the RIPA⁵ or at a research institution outside the higher education sector as defined in Article 5 of the RIPA.

³ In the application, the applicants must provide proof that they will be employed and have the support of a host institution according to paragraph 2 for the entire duration of the proposed project.

⁴ Furthermore, applicants must fit into one of the following two categories:

- a) Applicants have obtained a Bachelor's or a Master's degree that is recognised in Switzerland, whereby the degree of the last title acquired was received no more than 4 years before the last day of the submission deadline of the BRIDGE Proof of Concept;
- b) Applicants have obtained a doctoral degree that is recognised in Switzerland, whereby the degree was received no more than 4 years before the last day of the submission deadline of the BRIDGE Proof of Concept call, or applicants are preparing a doctoral degree recognised in Switzerland and the date of the thesis defence is no later than 6 months after the last day of the submission deadline of the BRIDGE Proof of Concept call.

⁵ The Steering Committee may restrict the requirements for applicants for specific calls. Such restrictions will be communicated in an appropriate manner in the call documents.

Article 7 Requirements for the project

¹ Applicants must show that:

- a) the submitted project is based on their own research results or on research results they have substantially contributed to;
- b) the underlying research has been peer-reviewed or documented by a record of achievement.

² Applicants must make a substantial contribution to the proposed project and must be able to work independently without relying on instructions from third parties.

³ For the duration of the grant, BRIDGE Proof of Concept grant holders must in general devote their entire work-time, corresponding to a work-time percentage of 100% or 1 FTE, to the approved project. In special cases, e.g. for applicants with care duties, a lower work-time percentage of no less than 80% may be accepted.

⁵ 420.1 Federal Act on the Promotion of Research and Innovation (RIPA) of 14 December 2012

Article 8 Formal requirements for the application

¹ BRIDGE Proof of Concept proposals must be submitted via the electronic platform provided by the BRIDGE Office⁶ and must be written in English.

² The proposal must contain in particular the following information and documents as per the requirements set out on the electronic platform:

- a) administrative information;
- b) a project description (maximum 6 pages, maximum 24,000 characters (with spaces), excluding bibliography, plus maximum 1 page summary) according to the template and the specifications available on the electronic platform;
- c) a detailed budget setting out the costs incurred;
- d) a declaration of funding obtained or requested from other sources related to the project;
- e) the applicant's CV, focusing on personal research- and innovation-based achievements;
- f) a reference letter detailing the applicant's experience from the person responsible for the applicant during the period in which he/she obtained the research results relevant to the submitted project;
- g) a commitment letter from the future host research group detailing the support to be provided to the project and to the applicant;
- h) the CV of the head of the host research group;
- i) records of achievement (e.g. an overview of peer-reviewed records such as scientific publications, bachelor's, master's or doctoral thesis or thesis presentation, patent / patent applications);
- j) an overview of the ownership of existing intellectual property rights to research results.

³ The project description (paragraph 2 letter b) is structured as follows:

- a) summary (maximum 1 page);
- b) research background of the project, including clear proof that the submitted project is based on research results obtained by the applicant or to which the applicant has made a substantial contribution;
- c) innovative potential and market review;
- d) description of the project including an implementation plan or a scenario with targeted measures;
- e) statement concerning the motivation to take the project into practice and how the project is supported by the host institute;
- f) project plan, milestones and deliverables;
- g) statement how the project contributes to sustainable development (i.e. societal, economic, environmental impact).

Article 9 Resubmission

¹ An application that has been rejected may be revised and resubmitted once.

² BRIDGE only considers a resubmitted application if it is a significantly modified version of the rejected application.

⁶ <https://bridge.mysnf.ch>

Article 10 BRIDGE Proof of Concept grants in relation to other funding

¹ As long as a BRIDGE Proof of Concept grant is ongoing, grantees cannot obtain any grants in SNSF funding schemes or any grants from Innosuisse for innovation projects.

² It is not permissible to be involved as a grantee in any other BRIDGE Proof of Concept project while the BRIDGE Proof of Concept grant is ongoing.

³ Parallel submissions of the same project proposal at the SNSF or at Innosuisse are not permissible.

⁴ If the same project proposal has been submitted and accepted elsewhere, the applicants must decide on a single source of funding.

3 Eligible costs

Article 11 Eligible costs

¹ BRIDGE Proof of Concept grants generally come with a global budget. Transfers between the individual cost categories during the funding period are permissible.

² The grant may cover costs directly related to the realisation of the project up to the maximum amount defined in Article 2, paragraph 2:

- a) salary costs of the applicant, including social security contributions based on Annex XII of the SNSF General Implementation Regulations for the Funding Regulations.⁷ The BRIDGE Office determines the salary rates in agreement with the host institution. In general, the maximum salary depends on the usual rates for comparable positions at the host institution;
- b) salary costs of the project team, including social security contributions based on Annex XII of the SNSF General implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations;⁷
- c) costs of materials that are directly related to the project, namely prototypes, expendable items, field expenses, travel costs or third-party charges;
- d) direct costs incurred through use of the infrastructure needed to conduct the project;
- e) travel and organisation costs for conferences and workshops in connection with the funded project.

³ Ineligible costs are deleted, unjustified or inappropriate costs or cost items reduced.

⁴ Costs are regarded as unjustified or inappropriate if they are unnecessary or comprise a disproportionately large share of the budget in view of reaching the proposed project targets and maintaining the quality of the project.

⁵ Equipment and facilities that generally form part of the basic infrastructure, operation and standards of the host institution are not eligible. These include, in particular:

- a) standard IT equipment including hardware and software;
- b) laboratory facilities and equipment;
- c) any other facilities and equipment routinely made available for the relevant research field in a research institution or environment.

⁷ Rates for social security contributions:

https://media.snf.ch/Wg9oQo2WuldqSIA/Annex_XII_Ausfuehrungsreglement_Beitragreglement_E.pdf

Article 12 Costs for gender equality measures: Gender Equality Grant

¹ BRIDGE supports the career development and networking activities of young female grantees by covering the costs of measures to promote equal opportunities (Gender Equality Grant).

² The Gender Equality Grant is debited to the project funds and need not be applied for. If the Gender Equality Grant cannot be covered via the awarded BRIDGE funding, the costs can be claimed in retrospect, provided that reference is made to the corresponding receipts in the final financial report (deficit guarantee).

³ A maximum of CHF 1,000 is paid per eligible female researcher per 12 months' project duration.

⁴ The Gender Equality Grant may be used for mentoring, coaching, career development courses, networking meetings and similar measures. The Gender Equality Grant is not meant to be used to cover family support measures (e.g. childcare costs).

4 Proposal evaluation procedure

Article 13 Procedural law

The provisions of this chapter govern the evaluation procedure. The provisions of the Federal Act of 20 December 1968⁸ on Administrative Procedure (APA), and in particular Articles 10 and 26-38 APA, apply to any matters not regulated in this chapter.

Article 14 Non-consideration

¹ Applications that do not meet the requirements set out in Chapter 2 will not be considered for evaluation unless the shortcomings can be resolved by minimal corrective measures.

² Applicants whose applications were not considered are informed accordingly by a written appealable ruling signed by the BRIDGE Office.

Article 15 Evaluation procedure

¹ Applications that meet the requirements set out in Chapter 2 are evaluated.

² BRIDGE Proof of Concept grants are awarded following a two-level selection procedure:

- a) Level 1 – Pre-selection: The evaluation panel assesses the submitted written application documents according to the criteria outlined in Article 16. It may take into account the opinions of external experts consulted during the evaluation. Based on this evaluation, the evaluation panel selects the best project proposals for the second assessment level.
- b) Level 2 – Final selection: The evaluation panel invites the applicants admitted to the second level for an interview in English, in which they present their project and innovation plans and answer questions. The interviews form a central part of the overall evaluation of the project proposal.

³ The evaluation panel ranks the projects according to their quality, based on the assessment of the written documents and the personal interview.

⁴ The evaluation panel takes into account the different background of applicants from the different categories as described in Article 6 paragraph 4.

⁵ The evaluation panel submits its funding or rejection recommendations to the Steering Committee, which takes the final decisions.

⁸ SR 172.021

Article 16 Evaluation criteria

BRIDGE Proof of Concept applications that meet the requirements set out in Chapter 2 are evaluated based on the following criteria:

- a) Quality of the project:
 - i. *Innovative potential*: The project provides a credible vision with a clear value chain for a new product, service or process which offers the Swiss economy a significant competitive advantage or has an important societal impact;
 - ii. *Feasibility*: The project is feasible and goal-oriented according to its work plan and defined milestones (including valorisation of a process where applicable) and includes a realistic budget;
 - iii. *Implementation*: The project includes a plausible implementation plan or a scenario with a convincing set of measures for achieving its goals and the applicant provides a convincing plan for cooperation with implementation partners or for founding a company;
- b) Applicant's qualifications, in relation to the background of the applicant described in Article 6 paragraph 4:
 - i. *Quality of research background*: The project must be based to a large extent on the research results produced by the applicant or towards which the applicant has made a substantial contribution;
 - ii. *Degree of innovation-based competences*: The applicant exhibits an appropriate level of innovation-based, entrepreneurial and managerial competences;
 - iii. *Motivation to implement*: The applicant shows a clear motivation and willingness to further develop the proof of concept in collaboration with an implementation partner or by following an entrepreneurial path;
- c) Additional criterion, used for prioritisation in case two or more projects are rated equally:

Proposals that contribute to a sustainable economic, societal or environmental impact will be given priority.

Article 17 Decision

¹ The decision to either fund or reject each project is taken based on the evaluation according to Article 15 and in line with the budget.

² All decisions are communicated to the applicant in the form of an appealable ruling signed by the BRIDGE Office.

³ The ruling states, in particular, the reasons for the decision, the amount of funds allocated to the project and the conditions or requirements to be fulfilled before the project starts or once it is underway. The ruling also states the amount and the applicable conditions for project support according to Article 25, paragraph 1.

⁴ Generally, it is intended to complete the evaluation and decision-making process within 3 months.

Article 18 Right of appeal

The applicant may appeal against the ruling before the Swiss Federal Administrative Court.

5 Grants and grant management

Article 19 Status and general duties of the applicant

¹ On the full or partial approval of a grant application, the applicant becomes a BRIDGE Proof of Concept fellow.

² The BRIDGE Proof of Concept fellow must:

- a) use the grant in accordance with the conditions set out in the ruling; and
- b) comply with the provisions stipulated in these Regulations and all other rules that apply to the grant; and
- c) carry out the project work with due care, while respecting the rules of good scientific practice and upholding the relevant principles of the discipline in question, in particular its ethical guidelines.

Article 20 Lay summary and branding

¹ The BRIDGE Proof of Concept fellows must provide the BRIDGE Office with a written summary of the planned project that is understandable to non-experts (lay summary). They must also provide thematic keywords for the BRIDGE, Innosuisse and SNSF websites.

² The lay summary and keywords must be submitted upon submission of the request for the release of funds at the latest.

³ Once the grant has been released, the lay summary and keywords are made available to the public.

⁴ Once the funded project has been completed, the BRIDGE Proof of Concept fellow must update the lay summary by including the results of the project. Such updates are a mandatory requirement for approval of the project report (Article 30).

⁵ BRIDGE Proof of Concept fellows must acknowledge BRIDGE as a source of funding in any publication or exchange with the public in accordance with the BRIDGE guidelines.

Article 21 Open access

¹ For BRIDGE Proof of Concept fellows who publish research results while the project is ongoing and after its completion, the rules for open access according to the Funding Regulations of the SNSF of 27 February 2015⁹ and its Implementation Regulations¹⁰ and the Regulations of the SNSF on scientific misconduct of 12 July 2016¹¹ apply mutatis mutandis.

² The costs and fees for scientific open access publications may be covered according to the Regulations on the funding of Open Access publications of the SNSF.¹²

³ BRIDGE Proof of Concept fellows may be released from these obligations should publication not be advisable for confidentiality reasons, particularly in relation to the acquisition of patents or due to a contractual commitment to observe confidentiality.

⁹ Article 47 of the Funding Regulations of the SNSF, https://www.snf.ch/media/en/1HxQ3Oduclgk1Euw/allg_reglement_16_e.pdf

¹⁰ General implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations, chapters 11.9-11.16

https://www.snf.ch/media/en/iu958nGMsEmvTvYN/snsf-general_implementation_regulations_for_the_funding_regulations_e.pdf

¹¹ https://www.snf.ch/media/en/9sMiosyg9ApFS6E2/organisationsreglement_kommission_wiss_integritaet_e.pdf

¹² <https://www.snf.ch/media/en/zCTZ7soHJnYpMdrp/Reglement-ueber-OA-Publikationsfoerderung-E.pdf>

Article 22 Grant start and administration

¹ The earliest possible starting date of BRIDGE Proof of Concept grants is the first day of the month following the ruling.

² BRIDGE Proof of Concept fellows shall have the grant administered by a grant administration office of the host institution that is recognised by the SNSF.¹³

³ The BRIDGE Proof of Concept fellows must request the release of funds and start their project within 6 months of the date on which the ruling was issued. If the request for release of funds is not submitted in time or if the relevant deadline is not extended, the grant will expire. BRIDGE will issue the relevant confirmation on request.

⁴ The BRIDGE Office approves the release of funds if the conditions for release as defined in the ruling are met.

Article 23 Changes to the project and obligation to provide and take note of information

¹ BRIDGE Proof of Concept fellows are obliged to inform the BRIDGE Office without delay in writing of any circumstances that could change or influence the prerequisites for the grant. These include, in particular, substantial changes to the work, tasks and milestones described in the project proposal or set out in the ruling as conditions, or changes to the available research infrastructure. The requested changes must be approved before the project is continued.

² BRIDGE Proof of Concept fellows must regularly take note of legally binding information issued by the BRIDGE Office.

³ The BRIDGE Office may send information to BRIDGE Proof of Concept fellows in electronic form.

Article 24 Project withdrawal or termination

¹ Applicants who withdraw their BRIDGE Proof of Concept project or have to terminate it prematurely must inform the BRIDGE Office in written form stating reasons.

² Any unused funds must be reimbursed.

Article 25 Project support

¹ Each BRIDGE Proof of Concept fellow receives a voucher for support for a limited time of maximum 10 hours by a qualified coach selected by the BRIDGE fellow, but subject to approval by the BRIDGE Office. The BRIDGE Office will compensate the qualified coach for the support provided to the BRIDGE fellow up to a maximum hourly rate of CHF 200 by direct payment. These costs are not part of the eligible costs according to Article 11.

² BRIDGE Proof of Concept fellows are expected to apply for all of the suitable start-up support measures, depending on the stage of the project, for example starting with the Innosuisse Start-Up Training and the patent searches offered at the Federal Institute of Intellectual Property, up to the Innosuisse Initial Coaching, as appropriate.

¹³ Recognised grant administration offices:
https://www.snf.ch/media/en/atkgGfyiV8gpbe58/Annex_IX_Ausfuehrungsreglement_Beitragreglement_E.pdf

Article 26 Sanctions, research integrity

¹ In the event of suspected breaches of the terms of these regulations, of other terms applicable to BRIDGE or of research integrity or good research practice in connection with the application or the use of the grant, the sanctions and reimbursement rules according to the Funding Regulations of the SNSF of 27 February 2015¹⁴, its Implementation Regulations¹⁵ and the Regulations of the SNSF on scientific misconduct of 12 July 2016¹⁶ apply *mutatis mutandis*.

² In general, the Steering Committee is responsible for deciding on potential sanctions and demanding reimbursements.

Article 27 Project extension with additional funding

¹ BRIDGE Proof of Concept fellows who wish to extend their project by a maximum of 6 months with additional funding must submit an extension request to the BRIDGE Office via the electronic platform¹⁷ 8 months after the start of the project at the earliest but no later than one month before the end of the project. The following information must be included in the request:

- a) results achieved so far;
- b) reasons why an extension is needed;
- c) activities planned during the extension;
- d) expected results.

² BRIDGE Proof of Concept extension requests must be submitted as per the requirements set out on the electronic platform.

³ Project extension requests are evaluated based on the following criteria:

- a) progress made in the original project with respect to the originally set milestones;
- b) plausibility of the reasons why the project milestones could not be achieved within the given time;
- c) feasibility of the activities planned during the extension;
- d) added value of the expected results;

⁴ BRIDGE Proof of Concept fellows requesting an extension of their grant may be invited to an interview with members of the evaluation panel.

⁵ Based on the progress made in the project and, if applicable, the outcome of the interview, the evaluation panel will submit a recommendation to the Steering Committee.

⁶ The final decision on project extension request is taken by the Steering Committee and communicated by the BRIDGE Office in the form of an appealable ruling.

Article 28 Reporting duties, principles

¹ At the end of their project, BRIDGE Proof of Concept fellows must submit a final report providing information on finances and project activity pursuant to Articles 29 and 30.

¹⁴ Articles 15 and 43 of the Funding Regulations of the SNSF,

https://www.snf.ch/media/en/1HxQ3Oduclgk1Euw/allg_reglement_16_e.pdf

¹⁵ General implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations, chapter 10,

https://www.snf.ch/media/en/iu958nGMsEmvTvYN/snsf-general_implementation_regulations_for_the_funding_regulations_e.pdf

¹⁶ https://www.snf.ch/media/en/9sMiosvg9ApFS6E2/organisationsreglement_kommission_wiss_integritaet_e.pdf

¹⁷ <https://bridge.mysnf.ch>

² BRIDGE Proof of Concept fellows must also submit output data upon conclusion of the project. The duty to keep the output data provided up to date remains in place after completion of the final report and ends three years after its submission date.

³ If the requirements set out in Articles 29 and 30 are met, the BRIDGE Office will approve the reports and send the BRIDGE Proof of Concept fellows the relevant confirmation. If this is not the case, the BRIDGE Office will return the reports to the BRIDGE Proof of Concept fellow for revision.

Article 29 Financial report

¹ Final financial reports provide an account of how the funding was used.

² A final financial report summarising the use of the funding must be submitted no later than 3 months after the end of the funding period.

³ Financial reports are compiled by the grant administration office of the host institution and submitted to the BRIDGE Office via the electronic platform in good time. They must be reviewed and approved by the BRIDGE Proof of Concept fellows prior to submission.

Article 30 Project report

¹ BRIDGE Proof of Concept fellows must submit a final project report via the electronic platform no later than 3 months after the end of the funding period.

² The following information must be included in the project report:

- a) summary;
- b) main achievements and results;
- c) main challenges expected in the implementation phase;
- d) possibilities for creating a company or for collaborating with an implementation partner;
- e) next steps.

6 Rights to research results and intellectual property

Article 31 Research results and intellectual property

¹ Before the grant is released, it must be confirmed that the BRIDGE Proof of Concept fellow and the host institution agree on the rights to research results and intellectual property.

² Subject to the provisions set out in Article 26, the SNSF and Innosuisse waive any reimbursements of grants or shares in the profits.

7 Final provisions

Article 32 Entry into force

These Regulations enter into force on 28 September 2023.