

# **National Centres of Competence in Research NCCR**

## **Call document 6+ (SSH) call**

### **Deadlines**

Declaration of intent outline proposal: 1 September 2026

Outline proposals: 20 October 2026

Declaration of intent full proposal: 31 March 2027

Full proposals: 20 May 2027

Start of research: by 1 April 2028

### **Contact**

Swiss National Science Foundation SNSF

NCCR unit

Phone: +41 31 308 22 22

Email: [nccr@snf.ch](mailto:nccr@snf.ch)

[Web page](#)<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.snf.ch/en/FJBj8XGQ1tjG8J8w/funding/programmes/national-centres-of-competence-in-research-nccr>

## Table of contents

|          |   |           |
|----------|---|-----------|
| <b>1</b> | <b>The NCCR funding scheme</b>  | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>2</b> | <b>Key information about the call</b>                                     | <b>3</b>  |
| 2.1      | Disciplinary requirements and eligibility of interdisciplinary proposals. | 3         |
| 2.2      | Scope of the call, budget and duration                                    | 3         |
| 2.3      | Overview of the selection procedure                                       | 4         |
| 2.4      | Timeline and deadlines for the 6+ (SSH) call                              | 5         |
| <b>3</b> | <b>Legal framework and conflicts of interest</b>                          | <b>5</b>  |
| 3.1      | Legal basis   | 5         |
| 3.2      | Conflicts of interest   | 5         |
| <b>4</b> | <b>Requirements for applicants and home institutions</b>                  | <b>6</b>  |
| 4.1      | Diversity   | 6         |
| 4.2      | Team of directors   | 6         |
| 4.2.1    | Eligibility requirements for members of the team of directors             | 6         |
| 4.2.2    | Further restrictions for members of the team of directors                 | 7         |
| 4.3      | Principal investigators (PIs)   | 7         |
| 4.3.1    | Eligibility requirements for PIs  | 7         |
| 4.3.2    | Further restrictions for PIs  | 7         |
| 4.4      | Requirements for home institutions  | 7         |
| <b>5</b> | <b>Stages in the submission process</b>                                   | <b>8</b>  |
| 5.1      | General information about the submission of a proposal                    | 8         |
| 5.1.1    | Creating the documents for upload   | 8         |
| 5.1.2    | Receipt and verification by the SNSF                                      | 9         |
| 5.1.3    | Scientific integrity  | 9         |
| 5.1.4    | Contact between applicants and the SNSF                                   | 9         |
| 5.2      | Submission of declarations of intent                                      | 9         |
| 5.3      | Submission of outline proposals   | 10        |
| 5.4      | Submission of full proposals  | 10        |
| <b>6</b> | <b>NCCR evaluation procedure</b>  | <b>11</b> |
| 6.1      | SNSF evaluation criteria  | 12        |
| 6.2      | Evaluation of the outline proposals                                       | 12        |
| 6.2.1    | External peer review  | 12        |
| 6.2.2    | Evaluation panels   | 13        |
| 6.2.3    | Evaluation procedure  | 13        |
| 6.2.4    | Recommendation to submit a full proposal                                  | 13        |
| 6.2.5    | Outcome of the evaluation and communication                               | 13        |
| 6.3      | Evaluation of the full proposals  | 13        |
| 6.3.1    | External peer review  | 13        |
| 6.3.2    | Rebuttal / comment on the reviews   | 14        |
| 6.3.3    | Evaluation panels   | 14        |
| 6.3.4    | Interview   | 14        |
| 6.3.5    | Evaluation procedure  | 14        |
| 6.3.6    | Shortlist   | 14        |
| 6.3.7    | Outcome of the evaluation and communication                               | 14        |
| 6.4      | Evaluation of the shortlisted proposals by SERI                           | 15        |
| 6.5      | Decision by the EAER  | 15        |
| <b>7</b> | <b>Start of the selected NCCR(s)</b>                                      | <b>15</b> |

# 1 The NCCR funding scheme

National Centres of Competence in Research (NCCRs) are research consortia conducting innovative and outstanding research with a long-term perspective. The NCCR funding scheme aims to sustainably strengthen Swiss research in strategically important fields. NCCRs may run for 8 to 12 years, and their duration is divided into four-year phases, which includes a potential third phase of flexible duration. Based on the Research and Innovation Promotion Ordinance (RIPO),<sup>2</sup> the NCCRs have the following aims:

- The maintenance and sustainable strengthening of Switzerland's position in research fields of strategic importance through the promotion of research of the highest quality.
- The sustainable renewal and optimisation of research structures through the creation of additional research and teaching capacities, promoting the cooperation among the Swiss research institutions and international networking.
- The implementation of a coherent strategy for research and for the five structure-related areas knowledge & technology transfer, education & training, equal opportunities, communication & outreach and open science.

NCCR proposals require the explicit support of recognised Swiss higher education research institutions, which host the NCCRs as home institutions. In line with the aims stipulated above, home institutions support structural developments and supplement the funding provided by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) with their own contributions.

Since 2001, 48 NCCRs have been established. A list of the ongoing and concluded NCCRs is available on the SNSF website.<sup>3</sup>

## 2 Key information about the call

### 2.1 Disciplinary requirements and eligibility of interdisciplinary proposals.

In its funding decision of the 6<sup>th</sup> NCCR call in January 2026, the Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research (EAER) set aside funds for an additional call for proposals from social sciences and humanities (SSH). Accordingly, this NCCR call is thematically restricted to proposals that are situated within the disciplines of the SSH. For the definition of SSH disciplines, the SNSF applies the discipline classification of mySNF.<sup>4</sup> Addressing topics of scientific, societal and economic relevance may require interdisciplinary collaboration beyond the SSH disciplines. For interdisciplinary proposals beyond the SSH domain, the main vision and core scientific contribution must remain within the SSH domain. Besides, the following specific eligibility requirements must be met:

- The NCCR director must have an SSH background and be active in the SSH domain
- The majority of the team of directors must be active in the SSH domain
- The majority of the PIs of the consortium must be active in the SSH domain

### 2.2 Scope of the call, budget and duration

The 6+ (SSH) call will permit the launch of 1 or 2 new NCCRs within the available budget of 20 million Swiss francs. NCCRs of the 6+ (SSH) call may run for between 8 and 12 years and request SNSF funding of between 8 and 20 million Swiss francs for the first four-year phase. Within this range,

<sup>2</sup> See Section 3 RIPO [https://www.fedlex.admin.ch/eli/cc/2013/814/en#chap\\_1/sec\\_3](https://www.fedlex.admin.ch/eli/cc/2013/814/en#chap_1/sec_3)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.snf.ch/en/EcRzGgwFJMZifnNc/page/national-centres-of-competence-in-research-nccrs>

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.snf.ch/SiteCollectionDocuments/allg\\_disziplinenliste.pdf](https://www.snf.ch/SiteCollectionDocuments/allg_disziplinenliste.pdf)

proposals for smaller NCCRs – in terms of consortia size and/or budget – and proposals with a shorter duration are explicitly welcomed. All proposals must comply with the aims of the NCCR funding scheme. The requested funding and overall duration must correspond to the scientific and structural goals described in the NCCR proposal.

An NCCR of the 6+ (SSH) call must be hosted by at least two home institutions. All home institutions involved are expected to make an adequate contribution. The sum of their cash and in-kind contributions is expected to match the requested SNSF funding. The financial contribution of the main home institution, i.e. the employer of the NCCR director, does not need to be larger than that of the other home institution(s).

### **2.3 Overview of the selection procedure**

The selection procedure comprises four steps:

1. The applicants submit a declaration of intent.
2. The subsequently submitted outline proposal presents the goals and potential of the envisaged NCCR. Each outline proposal must be accompanied by support forms from their home institutions. The SNSF evaluates the proposals based on an international peer-review process and discussions in one or more SSH panels.
3. Applicants who receive continued support from their home institutions after the outline proposal evaluation submit a full proposal. Full proposals are peer reviewed and discussed in one or more SSH panels. At this stage, applicants are invited for an interview with the evaluation panel. Based on the evaluation outcome, the SNSF proposes an unranked shortlist to the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) for funding.
4. The SERI evaluates the shortlisted proposals with regards to research and higher education policies and formulates a recommendation for the attention of the EAER, taking into account the available budget. The EAER makes the final selection and launches the new NCCR(s).

## 2.4 Timeline and deadlines for the 6+ (SSH) call

| Date                        | Procedure   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| 1 September 2026            | Submission of declarations of intent to submit an outline proposal via mySNF and confirmation by email to <a href="mailto:nccr@snf.ch">nccr@snf.ch</a>          |
| 20 October 2026             | Submission of outline proposals via mySNF   |
| October 2026 – January 2027 | Outline proposal evaluation   |
| January 2027                | Communication of the evaluation outcome by the SNSF to the responsible applicants and home institutions   |
| 31 March 2027               | Submission of declarations of intent to submit a full proposal via mySNF and confirmation by email to <a href="mailto:nccr@snf.ch">nccr@snf.ch</a>              |
| 20 May 2027                 | Submission of full proposals via mySNF  |
| May – September 2027        | Full proposal evaluation  |
| October 2027                | The SNSF submits a shortlist for the attention of SERI. Communication of the evaluation outcome by the SNSF to the responsible applicants and home institutions |
| December 2027               | Final decision and communication of the outcome by the EAER   |
| By 1 April 2028             | Start of the new NCCR(s)  |

## 3 Legal framework and conflicts of interest

### 3.1 Legal basis

This call document is issued by the Academic Board of the Research Council under a mandate from the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI). The following legal bases apply in particular to the 6+ (SSH) call and the corresponding funding procedures:

- Federal Research and Innovation Promotion Act (RIPA)<sup>5</sup>
- Research and Innovation Promotion Ordinance (RIPO)<sup>6</sup>
- Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research (EAER) Ordinance on the RIPO<sup>7</sup>
- The SNSF Funding Regulations and the General Implementation Regulations for the Funding Regulations<sup>8</sup>
- Project Funding Regulations<sup>9</sup>
- Regulations on scientific misconduct<sup>10</sup>

### 3.2 Conflicts of interest

In order to identify conflicts of interest (Cols) of all persons implicated in the evaluation of NCCR proposals, the SNSF applies large consortia-specific rules. For the exclusionary decision, the role of the applicants is considered in a differentiated manner. Particular relevance is given to members of the team of directors. In addition, the number and type of joint publications as well as the number of authors on the respective article are taken into account. A co-authored publication must reflect a collaboration of significant intensity of the involved researchers to qualify as a Col. Accordingly, a limited number of joint publications with individual PIs on the NCCR proposal may not be considered a Col. The SNSF applies the following constellations for the identification of a collaboration of significant intensity:

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.fedlex.admin.ch/eli/cc/2013/786/en>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.fedlex.admin.ch/eli/cc/2013/814/en>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.fedlex.admin.ch/eli/cc/2013/815/de> (German) or <https://www.fedlex.admin.ch/eli/cc/2013/815/fr> (French)

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.snf.ch/en/lqmbmJEUNlpydenH/page/funding/directaccess/revision-funding-and-implementation-regulations>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.snf.ch/en/nZglcM3pAvSR8Oik/page/funding/documents-downloads/regulations-project-funding>

<sup>10</sup> [https://www.snf.ch/SiteCollectionDocuments/ueb\\_org\\_fehlverh\\_gesuchstellende\\_e.pdf](https://www.snf.ch/SiteCollectionDocuments/ueb_org_fehlverh_gesuchstellende_e.pdf)

- Team of directors: Collaborations or joint publications in the past 10 years
- Principal investigators (PIs): Collaborations or joint publications in the past 5 years
- In justified cases, the SNSF may waive this rule if the collaboration is judged to be of low significance

The SNSF checks for potential CoIs when selecting external reviewers and panel members. In addition, the SNSF requests systematic and extensive self-declarations – disclosing all links with the NCCR directors and PIs – for all parties involved in the evaluation process. The self-declarations will be updated throughout the whole process.

For the members of the Programme Committee Long-term Research and Infrastructures of the SNSF Research Council (ProCo LTRI), the following CoI rules apply:

- Exclusion from the entire evaluation process if they are implicated in one of the proposals as a PI
- Recusal from the discussion of proposals if they are affiliated with one of the proposal's home institutions.

## 4 Requirements for applicants and home institutions

The following sections include important information for the formation of the NCCR consortium. They describe the roles and define the eligibility requirements and restrictions for the team of directors and principal investigators, respectively.

### 4.1 Diversity

The SNSF recognises that diversity can significantly enhance excellence in research. NCCRs should aim for an exemplary gender balance within their consortia, especially for leading positions. As part of the full proposal, applicants are expected to provide an ambitious gender balance plan, whose implementation will be evaluated by the SNSF throughout the NCCR's lifetime.

NCCR applicants are furthermore encouraged to include groups from different types of institutions that can make substantial contributions to the proposed topic (e.g. Federal Institutes of Technology, cantonal universities, universities of applied sciences and universities of teacher education).

### 4.2 Team of directors

The NCCR director, the co-director(s) and the deputy (co-)directors form the team of directors. The NCCR director represents the consortium vis-à-vis the SNSF, submits the requested information and documents as responsible applicant to the SNSF, and signs the NCCR contract in the event of approval. NCCRs can have one or several co-directors. The NCCR director and the co-director(s) are jointly responsible for the scientific and managerial leadership of the NCCR. Each home institution must be represented with at least one director or co-director. Every director and co-director has a deputy. Deputy (co-)directors act as substitutes to the (co-)directors ((co-)directors cannot replace each other). The details of the organisation and governance structure will be regulated in the internal rules of procedure of the NCCR after its approval and are communicated to the SNSF.

#### 4.2.1 Eligibility requirements for members of the team of directors

The eligibility criteria of the SNSF Project Funding apply for all NCCR applicants (see Regulations on Project Funding, article 3).<sup>11</sup> Additionally, members of the team of directors must hold a permanent position at a recognised home institution (see section 4.4). They are internationally renowned researchers with proven experience in research management. To ensure adequate management, the NCCR director

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.snf.ch/en/nZglcM3pAvSR8Oik/page/funding/documents-downloads/regulations-project-funding>

invests at least 30% (0.3 full time equivalent (FTE)) to leadership tasks. Being an NCCR director is a long-term role, and the designated director must commit to this responsibility. Therefore, the NCCR director commits to leading the NCCR for at least the first four years. In cases in which the director will retire shortly after phase I, a successor must already be designated in the initial proposal. Co-directors commit to an extent that is adapted to their organisational role in the NCCR.

#### **4.2.2 Further restrictions for members of the team of directors**

Members of the team of directors cannot be members of a competing proposal of the same NCCR call which includes the funded proposals of the 6<sup>th</sup> NCCR call (neither as a member of the team of directors nor as a principal investigator). Members of the ProCo LTRI are not eligible for the team of directors of an NCCR proposal. There are no restrictions for members of other programme committees and the Policy Committee of the SNSF Research Council. Members of the SNSF Foundation Council and Academic Board are not eligible for the team of directors of an NCCR proposal.

#### **4.3 Principal investigators (PIs)**

The PIs are responsible for one or several of the individual projects running within the NCCR. Some of the PIs will also assume responsibility for one of the structure-related areas (knowledge & technology transfer, education & training, equal opportunities, communication & outreach, open science).<sup>12</sup> The members of the team of directors are usually also PIs, leading their own individual projects in the NCCR. The SNSF expects full commitment of all PIs towards the funded NCCRs.

##### **4.3.1 Eligibility requirements for PIs**

For the role as PI, the eligibility criteria of the SNSF Project Funding apply (see Regulations on Project Funding, article 3).<sup>13</sup> Applicants from institutions outside Switzerland are eligible if scientifically well justified. As general rule, not more than about 10% of the PIs should come from foreign institutions, and their participation should be limited to one funding period (i.e. four years). Exceptions to these two limitations are possible if well justified.

##### **4.3.2 Further restrictions for PIs**

Participation of members of the ProCo LTRI as PI in an NCCR proposal is possible. Due to considerable conflicts of interest, they will remain excluded from the entire evaluation procedure.

#### **4.4 Requirements for home institutions**

The institution employing the NCCR director hosts the NCCR management and assumes the central administration of the funds. All recognised Swiss higher education research centres pursuant to Art. 4c RIPA<sup>14</sup> are eligible as home institutions:

- The Federal Institutes of Technology and the research centres of the ETH domain.
- Universities, universities of applied sciences, universities of teacher education and other institutions in the higher education sector that are accredited under the HEdA.
- Research facilities of national importance which receive funding from the Confederation (Art. 15 RIPA).

Home institutions support NCCR proposals that are compatible with their long-term strategic planning. Each NCCR outline and full proposal must be accompanied by a support form from each home institution, including a detailed declaration of their financial and structural commitments (template provided by the SNSF). Home institutions commit to supporting the NCCR throughout its entire duration in terms of both funding and personnel and to participating in implementing the joint structural measures.

<sup>12</sup> For more details, see [https://www.snf.ch/media/en/ucxwlr5vxyBUTWn3/NCCR\\_structural\\_measures.pdf](https://www.snf.ch/media/en/ucxwlr5vxyBUTWn3/NCCR_structural_measures.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.snf.ch/en/nZglcM3pAvSR8Oik/page/funding/documents-downloads/regulations-project-funding>

<sup>14</sup> [https://www.fedlex.admin.ch/eli/cc/2013/786/en#art\\_4](https://www.fedlex.admin.ch/eli/cc/2013/786/en#art_4)

Structural developments in NCCRs may include (non-exhaustive list)<sup>15</sup>:

- Creating and extending research and service units, such as new research centres, national institutes, interfaculty structures, technical platforms or research networks.
- Re-orienting existing or creating new (assistant) professorships within the NCCR's research domain.
- Defining foci in education and research for the NCCR (e.g. course at undergraduate level or PhD programmes).
- Improving infrastructures, such as research infrastructures, databases, equipment, or work-space.
- Creating and extending cooperations with leading national and international research institutions in the relevant domain.

The SNSF expects the home institutions to develop their structural commitments in close collaboration with all relevant stakeholders in order to ensure their feasibility. This is particularly important for measures that are dependent on the consent of institutional bodies such as faculties or departments. Financial contributions by the home institutions to the NCCR can be cash or in-kind.<sup>16</sup>

To ensure adequate management of the NCCR, the home institutions have to commit to releasing the NCCR director from other duties. An arrangement must be found that fits the director's research goals, career and personal circumstances. Relief of at least 30% (0.3 FTE) must be guaranteed. The co-director is relieved by their institution to an extent that is adequate to their organisational role.

It is expected that the home institutions support the NCCR applicants in their efforts to establish an exemplary gender balance within the consortium (including the NCCR leadership).

## 5 Stages in the submission process

### 5.1 General information about the submission of a proposal

Applicants without a mySNF user account must open one. New user accounts must be registered no later than two working days before the deadline for submitting the declarations of intent. The declarations of intent, outline proposals and full proposals are submitted via mySNF.

In the application procedure on mySNF, the NCCR director is referred to as the "responsible applicant". Co-director(s), deputy (co-)director(s) and all PIs are entered under "other applicants".

#### 5.1.1 Creating the documents for upload

As the proposals are evaluated by international experts, all information relevant for the evaluation of the proposal must be provided in English (including the support forms from the home institutions). To assure readability of the submitted documents, the SNSF recommends using fonts Times New Roman, Arial or similar with a size of at least 10, and line spacing of 1.5. Condensed fonts are not allowed. The documents must be submitted in a PDF format.

**CV** (one PDF per applicant): applicants must compile their CV on the SNSF Portal and then upload a PDF in mySNF in the data container "CV and major achievements". Information is available on the CV website<sup>17</sup> and on the SNSF Portal.<sup>18</sup> In addition, an overview is requested, listing all applicants with

<sup>15</sup> For more details, see [https://www.snf.ch/media/en/ucxwlr5vxyBUTWn3/NCCR\\_structural\\_measures.pdf](https://www.snf.ch/media/en/ucxwlr5vxyBUTWn3/NCCR_structural_measures.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> Cash: Financial resources that the NCCR management has at its own disposal.

In-kind: Resources and funds that the NCCR management does not have at its own disposal. These include payments as well as work and services made available to the NCCR, e.g. the creation and supply of professorships by the home institution, equipment for the NCCR paid by the home institution, etc. See the NCCR Budget Guidelines for more information: [https://www.snf.ch/media/en/6k0dHcUs6CA74HJm/NCCR\\_Budgetrichtlinien\\_Call\\_6+\\_en.pdf](https://www.snf.ch/media/en/6k0dHcUs6CA74HJm/NCCR_Budgetrichtlinien_Call_6+_en.pdf).

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.snf.ch/en/gKcnwW6aEft4bMPF/page/your-curriculum-vitae-all-about-the-cv-format>

<sup>18</sup> <https://portal.snf.ch/core/landing-page>

information on their institutional affiliation, expertise, and role(s) in the consortium. All members of the team of directors upload an additional document describing their motivation to lead the NCCR and their previous research management experiences.

### **5.1.2 Receipt and verification by the SNSF**

After receiving the applicant's email that the declaration of intent is complete, the Administrative Offices of the SNSF will send a confirmation of receipt.

The scientific evaluation of the outline proposals and full proposals is preceded by a formal check. The Administrative Offices of the SNSF check whether the submitted outline and full proposals meet the formal requirements and whether the applicants and the home institutions are eligible.

### **5.1.3 Scientific integrity**

The Administrative Offices of the SNSF may check whether the application respects the rules of scientific integrity (see the Regulations on scientific misconduct).<sup>19</sup>

### **5.1.4 Contact between applicants and the SNSF**

The designated NCCR director (responsible applicant) represents the NCCR vis-à-vis the SNSF. The SNSF communicates with the responsible applicant during the evaluation procedure.

Queries can be addressed to the Administrative Offices of the SNSF by phone (+41 31 308 22 22) or email ([nccr@snf.ch](mailto:nccr@snf.ch)). When checking submitted applications, the office may contact applicants to clarify issues related to the application. The applicants are obliged to provide any information requested by the SNSF and cooperate in clarifying issues before, during and after the evaluation.

The SNSF cannot give applicants any information on the evaluation of their proposals while the evaluation is in progress and until the decision is communicated in writing.

## **5.2 Submission of declarations of intent**

Applicants must submit a declaration of intent via mySNF by **1 September 2026**. For the declaration of intent, an outline proposal is created in mySNF and specific sections defined in Box 1 are completed. These sections can be updated for the later submission of an outline proposal. The submission of a declaration of intent is a mandatory step for the later submission of an outline proposal. The list of submitted declarations of intent will be communicated to the responsible applicants and the home institutions (title, team of directors, home institutions).

The sections to be completed in mySNF are listed in Box 1.

### **Box 1. Mandatory declaration of intent by 1 September 2026**

- Responsible applicant: Designated NCCR director
- Other applicants: Co-director(s), deputy (co-)director(s) and tentative list of leaders of individual projects
- Basic data I: Title of the NCCR; research fields / disciplines
- Basic data II: Executive summary (background and rationale, overall objectives and aims, methods used/concepts/theories, envisaged results and impact on the research field); at least five keywords
- Home institutions: Select main home institution. Further home institution(s) are registered as a remark
- Exclusion of reviewers: Applicants may list up to five persons who should not act as external reviewers in evaluating their proposals. Requested exclusions must be well justified. The SNSF may follow the requests for exclusion if the applicants provide valid reasons for excluding a particular reviewer.

**Important:** Send an email to [nccr@snf.ch](mailto:nccr@snf.ch) to confirm the declaration of intent. The email should contain the composition of the team of directors including their roles.

<sup>19</sup> [https://www.snf.ch/SiteCollectionDocuments/ueb\\_org\\_fehlverh\\_gesuchstellende\\_e.pdf](https://www.snf.ch/SiteCollectionDocuments/ueb_org_fehlverh_gesuchstellende_e.pdf)

Following the completion of the necessary sections in mySNF, applicants must send an email to [nccr@snf.ch](mailto:nccr@snf.ch). The email should contain the composition of the team of directors including their roles. The declarations of intent are not subject to a scientific evaluation. The SNSF uses them to find suitable reviewers and to organise its evaluation process.

### 5.3 Submission of outline proposals

Outline proposals should be structured according to the [outline proposal template](#) and submitted via mySNF by **5 p.m. CEST on 20 October 2026**. The documents for the outline proposal and the structure of the research plan are provided in Box 2.

#### Box 2. Documents included in the outline proposal

##### - Research plan [outline proposal template](#)

*The research plan must not exceed 15 pages and 60,000 characters with spaces (excluding the executive summary and references). The page numbers indicated in brackets for the individual sections are suggestions.*

1. Executive summary (1 page)
2. Overall goals and mid- and long-term vision including (5 pages):
  - main research questions and their significance for science and society
  - analysis of the current research landscape (existing structures, networks, etc.) and description of the critical mass, the strategic fit and the planned structural development within the home institution(s) and within Switzerland
  - mid- and long-term vision for the NCCR (beyond phase I and beyond SNSF funding)
  - planning and justification of the requested duration of the NCCR and the level of SNSF funding (between 8 and 12 years)
  - justification of the need for an NCCR to reach the goals
3. Research programme for the first four years including (8 pages):
  - state of the art, intended contributions to the state of the art, added value created by the NCCR, the innovative and interdisciplinary potential, international embeddedness
  - sketches of the individual projects: research questions, state of the art, intended contributions to the state of the art, contributions to the overall questions of the NCCR
  - If applicable: comment on potential ethical / legal issues
4. Concept for the organisation, management, and leadership of the NCCR (2 pages)
5. Bibliography of the research programme

##### - CVs and major achievements

- CVs, major achievements and experience in leading large research consortia for the members of the team of directors ([template management experience](#))
- Overview of consortium: List of all applicants ([template overview consortium](#))
- CVs and major achievements for the principal investigators

##### - Budget for the first phase of the NCCR [budget template](#)

- Estimate based on current planning
- Budget includes SNSF funds as well as funds from the home institutions

##### - Support from the home institutions:

- [Template Structural measures and support by the home institution](#)
- Optional letter of support with additional information
- Commitments by the home institutions must fit the scope of the proposal and the NCCR scheme

The structure-related areas (knowledge & technology transfer, education & training, equal opportunities, communication & outreach, open science) will not be assessed at the outline proposal stage.

### 5.4 Submission of full proposals

By 31 March 2027 the responsible applicants must inform the SNSF (by email to [nccr@snf.ch](mailto:nccr@snf.ch)) if they intend to submit a full proposal. The full proposal must be submitted by **5 p.m. CEST on 20 May 2027**.

Detailed information on the submission procedure and the template documents will be provided together with the results of the outline proposal evaluation. The list of submitted full proposals will be communicated to the responsible applicants and the home institutions (title, team of directors, home institutions). The documents for the full proposal and the structure of the research plan are explained in Box 3.

### **Box 3. Documents of the full proposal**

#### **- Research plan**

*The research plan must not exceed 60 pages and 240,000 characters (excluding the executive summary and references). The page numbers indicated in brackets for the individual sections are suggestions.*

1. Executive summary (1 page)
2. Overall goals and mid- and long-term vision including (8 pages):
  - main research questions and their significance for science and society
  - analysis of the current research landscape (existing structures, networks, etc.) and description of the critical mass, the strategic fit and the planned structural development within the home institutions and within Switzerland
  - mid- and long-term vision for the NCCR (beyond phase I and beyond SNSF funding)
  - planning and justification of the requested duration of the NCCR and the level of SNSF funding (between 8 and 12 years)
  - justification of the need for an NCCR to reach the goals
3. Research programme for the first four years including (max. 40 pages):
  - state of the art, intended contributions to the state of the art, added value created by the NCCR, the innovative and interdisciplinary potential, international embeddedness
  - research plan for the individual projects: research question, state of the art, intended contributions to the state of the art, contributions to the overall questions of the NCCR
  - If applicable: comment on potential ethical / legal issues
4. Structure-related areas: Goals and planned measures (8 pages):
  - Knowledge & technology transfer
  - Education & training
  - Equal opportunities
  - Communication & outreach
  - Open science
5. Organisation, management, and leadership of the NCCR (4 pages)
6. Bibliography

#### **- CVs and major achievements**

- CVs, major achievements and experience in leading large research consortia for the members of the teams of directors
- Overview of consortium: List of all applicants
- CVs and major achievements for the principal investigators

#### **- Budget for the first phase of the NCCR**

- Detailed budget for the first phase
- Budget includes SNSF funds as well as funds from the home institutions

#### **- Support from the home institutions:**

- Template Structural measures by the home institution
- Optional letter of support with additional information
- Commitments by the home institutions must fit the scope of the proposal and the NCCR scheme

#### **- Other supporting letters (optional)**

- A maximum of five letters of support from third parties can be submitted

## **6 NCCR evaluation procedure**

In a two-stage procedure, the SNSF performs a scientific evaluation of the submitted proposals (chapters 6.1 to 6.3). Based on the outcome of the evaluation, the SNSF submits a selection of proposals

recommended for funding to SERI (shortlist). SERI evaluates the shortlisted proposals from a research and higher education policy perspective (chapter 6.4). The EAER makes the final funding decision in light of the available budget (chapter 6.5).

## 6.1 SNSF evaluation criteria

In both evaluation stages, the SNSF applies the evaluation criteria described in Box 4.<sup>20</sup> The plausibility of the structure-related measures is evaluated at the full proposal stage only.

### Box 4. SNSF evaluation criteria

#### Scientific quality, including topicality, innovation potential and interdisciplinary nature

- Quality of the planned research
- Redefinition of research in the field
- Potential for breakthroughs / new insights
- Potential for synergies and interdisciplinary research
- Strengthening of international position and embeddedness

#### Critical mass and added value of the NCCR

- Value added by the NCCR as compared to the sum of individual projects
- Scientific basis and critical mass of the research in Switzerland

#### Plausibility of the structure-related measures (knowledge & technology transfer, education & training, equal opportunities, communication & outreach, open science) (only evaluated at full proposal stage)

- Suitability and innovation potential of the proposed goals and measures

#### Management and leadership

- Qualifications of the team of directors
- Leadership and management concept / proposed organisation
- Potential to guide long-term development, including incentives and instruments to implement structural and scientific visions

#### Scientific achievements and suitability of applicants

- Qualifications and suitability of the team of principal investigators for the project

#### Plans for structural development

- Planned structural development at the home institutions
- Structuring effects beyond the home institutions

#### Appropriateness of the requested budget and commitment from home institutions

- Adequacy of the budget to reach the formulated aims
- Compatibility of the proposal with the strategic priorities and planning of the home institutions
- Appropriateness of contributions by the home institutions

#### Significance of the topic for research in Switzerland

## 6.2 Evaluation of the outline proposals

### 6.2.1 External peer review

Each outline proposal is evaluated independently by at least three external reviewers. Reviewers are international researchers in the relevant fields of the proposed NCCR who do not participate in the panel meetings and who deliver their structured assessments before the panel meeting. Suitable reviewers

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.fedlex.admin.ch/eli/cc/2013/815/de> (German) or <https://www.fedlex.admin.ch/eli/cc/2013/815/fr> (French)

are identified based on the content of the declaration of intent and the outline proposal. Fewer than three reviews are acceptable, if – despite the efforts of the SNSF – it is not possible to obtain three reviews.

### **6.2.2 Evaluation panels**

The outline proposals will be evaluated by one or two SSH panels depending on the number of submitted outline proposals. The panels are set up by the ProCo LTRI based on the topics, disciplines and keywords provided by the applicants and approved by the SNSF Academic Board. They are chaired by experienced international researchers and by Swiss co-chairs (members of the Research Council), who ensure that the evaluation complies with the SNSF regulations and best practices. One member from the other programme committees or from the Policy Committee of the Research Council will participate in the panel as an observer. The observer may give input related to the NCCR funding scheme or research conditions in Switzerland. Both panel chairs and observers have no voting rights. The panel compositions will be published four weeks prior to the evaluation meeting.

### **6.2.3 Evaluation procedure**

The evaluation procedure follows the principles guiding the SNSF's evaluation practices. Each outline proposal will be assessed independently by two panel members acting as referees. After the discussions at the evaluation meeting, every panel member casts a vote (independent, using the entire rating scale). A ranking list for each panel is compiled based on the individual ratings of panel members.

### **6.2.4 Recommendation to submit a full proposal**

The ProCo LTRI decides based on the ranking list for each panel, which outline proposals receive the recommendation to submit a full proposal.

### **6.2.5 Outcome of the evaluation and communication**

The outcome of the evaluation will be conveyed in a letter to the applicants and their respective home institutions after the SNSF has concluded the evaluation of the outline proposals. These letters will be dispatched in January 2027 and contain:

- A general note on the evaluation and its outcome (number of outline proposals, distribution of ratings, etc.)
- An overall appraisal of the proposal's strengths and weaknesses based on the evaluation criteria
- The classification of the outline proposal (quintile)
- A recommendation on whether to submit a full proposal or not
- The anonymised external reviews
- The anonymised referee recommendations

No formal decision is made at this stage. Every applicant of an outline proposal has the right to submit a full proposal, provided that the home institutions continue to support it and the further requirements for the submission of a full proposal are fulfilled. The applicants are expected to address the points to be improved identified during the outline proposal evaluation.

## **6.3 Evaluation of the full proposals**

### **6.3.1 External peer review**

Each full proposal is evaluated by at least five external reviewers. Fewer than five reviews are acceptable, if – despite the SNSF's efforts – it is not possible to obtain five reviews. Suitable reviewers are identified based on the content of the outline and full proposal. The reviewers of the outline proposal stage may be contacted again, and additional reviewers will be added. The anonymised reviews are made available to the applicants prior to the interview.

### **6.3.2 Rebuttal / comment on the reviews**

Based on the anonymised reviews, the applicants may draw up a rebuttal to resolve any misunderstandings or to propose potential solutions to specific criticisms (maximum two pages). The rebuttal will be available to the full proposal panels and the Research Council. Simply disputing reviewers' comments or competences to defend one's proposal is not acceptable.

### **6.3.3 Evaluation panels**

The full proposals will be evaluated by one or two SSH panels depending on the number of submitted full proposals. The panels are set up by the ProCo LTRI based on the topics, disciplines and keywords provided by the applicants, and are approved by the Academic Board of the Research Council. They are chaired by experienced international researchers and by Swiss co-chairs (members of the Research Council), who ensure that the evaluation complies with the SNSF regulations and best practices. One member from the other programme committees or from the Policy Committee of the Research Council will participate in the panel as an observer. The observer may give input related to the NCCR funding scheme or research conditions in Switzerland. Both panel chairs and observers have no voting rights. The panel compositions will be published four weeks prior to the evaluation meeting.

### **6.3.4 Interview**

The SNSF Administrative Offices invite the NCCR director and co-director(s) for an interview, which is conducted by the full proposal panels. In this interview, the directors present their proposal with respect to the assessment criteria.

### **6.3.5 Evaluation procedure**

The evaluation procedure follows the principles guiding the SNSF's evaluation practices. Each full proposal will be assessed independently by two panel members acting as referees.

After the interviews and discussions at the evaluation meeting, every panel member casts a vote (independent, using the entire scale). A ranking list for each panel is compiled based on the individual ratings of panel members.

### **6.3.6 Shortlist**

Based on the outcome of the scientific evaluation (chapters 6.1 to 6.3.5), the ProCo LTRI decides for each panel which full proposals should be recommended for funding and shortlisted. The unranked shortlist is ratified by the Academic Board of the Research Council and submitted to SERI for further selection and the final funding decision.

### **6.3.7 Outcome of the evaluation and communication**

Responsible applicants whose proposals have not been shortlisted will receive an official ruling. The respective home institutions receive a copy of the letter. The letter comprises:

- A general note on the assessment and the outcome (number of submitted full proposals, distribution of ratings, number of proposals shortlisted for the final assessment by SERI, etc.)
- An overall appraisal of the full proposal's strengths and weaknesses based on the evaluation criteria
- The classification of the full proposal (quintile)
- The anonymised referee recommendations

The applicants whose proposals have been shortlisted and their respective home institutions are informed accordingly by the SNSF.

#### **6.4 Evaluation of the shortlisted proposals by SERI**

In accordance with Article 8 (2) of the EAER Ordinance on the Research Ordinance,<sup>21</sup> SERI is responsible for evaluating the shortlisted proposals in terms of research and higher education policies. There is no scientific assessment at this stage. The evaluation is based on the structural sustainability criteria outlined in Box 5.

##### **Box 5. Evaluation criteria of the research and higher education policies assessment**

- Compatibility of the NCCR with the home institutions' strategic planning
- Division of work and coordination in the higher education sector
- Incorporation into the regional and national overall distribution of competence centres in accordance with the goals of the NCCR funding scheme
- Agreement with the federal government's research policy goals
- Embeddedness in Switzerland's international scientific cooperation agreements and cooperation endeavours at an institutional level

Bilateral meetings will take place between delegates of SERI and each home institution (rector's offices) on the shortlist. The meetings enable clarification of any remaining questions regarding the structural developments and commitments as well as the compatibility of the NCCR with the strategic priorities and long-term planning of the home institutions.

In conclusion, SERI makes a proposal to the EAER based on the overall assessment, which includes its research and higher education policies assessment, and takes into account the SNSF evaluation.

#### **6.5 Decision by the EAER**

The EAER will decide which NCCR(s) are to be established and define the financial framework. The EAER will inform the applicants about its decisions; this is expected to happen by the end of 2027.

## **7 Start of the selected NCCR(s)**

According to current planning, the approved NCCR(s) will start by 1 April 2028. After the EAER's positive decision, the SNSF will sign a contract with each party responsible for an NCCR (home institutions and NCCR director). Requirements set by the EAER / SERI or the SNSF may also be stipulated therein.

---

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.fedlex.admin.ch/eli/cc/2013/815/de> (German) or <https://www.fedlex.admin.ch/eli/cc/2013/815/fr> (French)