

Ambizione

Guidelines for submitting a proposal via mySNF

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1. Aim of Ambizione

In this career stage, you will carry out an independent research project in Switzerland. An Ambizione grant comes after a postdoctoral period, during which you have acquired sufficient experience so that you are ready to conduct independent research yourself. **Ideally:**

- You should have at least one major research output independent from your work as a PhD student and the associated PhD supervision framework. This research output will be judged against the norms of your discipline. If you hold a medical degree, you should have at least one major research output independent from your first work period as a researcher. This research output will be judged against the norms of your discipline.
- Where necessary, you have complemented your expertise with appropriate collaborations.
- You may request the salaries of employees (e.g. technicians, scientific assistants, one PhD student, or exceptionally one postdoc) who will support you in your research project. If you plan to hire a PhD student (or exceptionally a postdoc), you must demonstrate that you have acquired significant experience in supporting or supervising less experienced researchers including advanced-level master students. You must have the required expertise to guide the project of the employees.

After Ambizione, you will be ready for a scientific or academic career, such as a tenure track professorship position or a permanent post in industry or the public sector.

2. Submission of proposal and evaluation

2.1 Regulations and relevant documents

The Ambizione Regulations and relevant documents are available on the SNSF website in [German](#), [French](#) and [English](#) (see section "Documents"). Alternatively, the documents are also accessible in your Ambizione application on mySNF under "Information/Documents". For any questions contact: ambizione@snf.ch

2.2 Personal requirements and extension of the eligibility window

The personal requirements for applicants, including **eligibility windows and a proven record of research activities of at least 12 months**, are governed by article 5 of the Ambizione Regulations. For applicants with PhD, the date of the examination or viva voce/defence of the thesis is the decisive date. For applicants who have completed their medical studies and plan to have clinical activity during the grant, the date of the medical exam (Staatsexamen or equivalent exam) is relevant (regardless of whether they also have a PhD). An extension of the eligibility windows is governed by the [General Implementation Regulations for the Funding Regulations](#) (see Clause 1.11). Professors in permanent or temporary employment are not eligible for Ambizione.

2.3 Next deadlines

There is only one call per year. Proposals have to be submitted electronically via the web platform mySNF (www.mysnf.ch). The application must be submitted **before 17:00:00 Swiss local time (i.e. UTC + 1)** on the day of the submission deadline:

Submission deadline call 2023: **1 November 2023**

If the submission deadline falls on a Saturday, a Sunday or a holiday recognised under Swiss federal law, the submission deadline will be moved forward to 17:00:00 Swiss local time on the next working day.

2.4 Parallel submissions

Note that an Ambizione application may only be submitted for a duration of support for which no other project grants (as applicant or co-applicant), Sinergia grants, SPIRIT grants or programmes of the SNSF have been requested, approved or are ongoing. For career funding schemes, parallel applications may only be submitted for Postdoc.Mobility return grant (see article 13 of the Ambizione Regulations).

A parallel application for a SNSF Swiss Postdoctoral Fellowship may only be submitted for a different duration of support. The restriction applies to the entire application procedure (see call document for SNSF Swiss Postdoctoral Fellowships).

2.5 Create a new application on mySNF

All new users have to register first on mySNF (www.mysnf.ch). In the corresponding step during the registration, make sure to select the correct division and funding instrument (**Careers/Ambizione**). Note that it may take several days to process your request for a mySNF account. If you already have a mySNF account, check that the role "grant applicant" is present. Before making any entries or uploading files, make sure to read all information in this document as well as in the header of every container carefully.

2.6 Duration of the grant

Ambizione grants are awarded for a maximum of four years. The minimum duration of funding is two years. If the maximum duration of the grant is not requested, the applicant must give an explanation for the shorter duration in the cover letter.

2.7 Earliest and latest possible starting date for the grant

For a submission on 1 November 2023, the earliest and latest possible starting dates are 1 September 2024 and 1 September 2025, respectively. Note that the starting date can still be changed after an Ambizione grant has been awarded.

2.8 Revised application/resubmission

Pursuant to article 14 of the Ambizione Regulations, applicants whose application was rejected **may apply at the most a second time** for an Ambizione grant regardless of the subject matter of the project, as long as the applicant still fulfils all personal requirements. In case of a resubmission, upload in the container "Research plan" **a separate document** providing a point-for-point response to the critique raised in the rejection letter and a comment on significant changes or additions in the research plan, if applicable. This statement must **not be longer than 2 pages** (point 10 font size and 1.5 line spacing).

2.9 Gross salary of the applicant

The SNSF awards **Ambizione grants** and **Ambizione project grants**. Pursuant to article 1 paragraph 4 of the Ambizione Regulations, grantees must devote their entire work time (100%) to the planned research. A lower work time percentage of at least 80% is permissible (see article 6 paragraph 1 of the Ambizione Regulations).

Ambizione grant: The grant covers project funds and the full salary of the grantee. An Ambizione grant is not intended to cover just a share of the salary of the applicant. **Make sure to add a corresponding**

entry/expense in the budget on mySNF. The average gross salary will be around CHF 105'000 per annum for a work time percentage of 100% (e.g. research associate level, junior group leader, scientific collaborator, etc.). The social security contributions of the employer will be covered as well. If you would like to insert more accurate figures for the salary, contact in advance the HR department or the personnel office of the research institution. If your proposal is considered for the second phase of the evaluation, the exact salary will be determined by the SNSF in agreement with the research institution.

The fields labelled "Social security contributions (%)" are automatically calculated according to the selected research institution in the container "University or research institution".

Family/child allowance ("Further social security contributions") differ in every canton. Therefore, contact in advance the HR department or the personnel office of the research institution.

For researchers doing clinical work: The salary share dedicated to research (at least 80%) is covered by the Ambizione grant. The salary share for the work-time percentage dedicated to clinical work (up to 20%) must be covered by your employer.

Ambizione project grant: The grant comprises project funds only. The salary of the grantee is fully covered by the research institution.

2.10 Budget limit for project funds and what may be requested

The budget limit for project funds is **CHF 400'000 for 4 years**, i.e. an average of CHF 100'000 per annum. For an Ambizione grant, the salary of the applicant is not included in this maximum amount. The budget should be as detailed as possible (e.g. separate entries are required for equipment, access costs to infrastructure, consumables, travel, personnel, etc.). Costs for **open access publications** are not eligible costs under Ambizione grants and must be applied for separately via mySNF (for details see: [Open Access to Publications](#)). Changes in the budget after the submission of the application are not possible. For more details see articles 10 and 11 of the Ambizione Regulations.

Pursuant to article 9 of the Ambizione Regulations, a **research stay of no more than 12 months** at a Swiss or foreign academic host institution or at an institution of the practical realm (industry, administration, etc.; intersectoral mobility) can be envisaged as part of the Ambizione grant. The mandatory documents for such a stay include a letter of invitation and a detailed budget of the costs.

Research funds may be used to employ personnel (e.g. technician, laboratory assistant, supporting assistant, one PhD student, exceptionally postdoctoral researcher, etc.). Candidates requesting a PhD position should note that the salary scales for doctoral students is fixed by the SNSF. In such cases, the research institution must confirm the supervisor of the doctoral thesis in writing. Furthermore, the supervisor of the doctoral thesis and the research institution must guarantee the due completion of the doctoral thesis on expiry of the grant or in the event of the project being abandoned prematurely (see paragraph 2.16 below and article 12 of the Ambizione Regulations).

If, exceptionally, engagement of a **postdoctoral researcher** is envisaged for the project, the confirmation of the research institution must include a commitment **to contribute to at least half** of the said researcher's salary (see paragraph 2.16 below and article 12 of the Ambizione Regulations).

Personnel salaries may be different for every institution. The applicant should therefore contact in advance the HR department or the personnel office of the research institution for the corresponding salary standards. For more details on salary scales for doctoral candidates and salary ranges in general see:

[Annex 12 of the General implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations](#)

2.11 Data Management Plan

A Data Management Plan (DMP) is requested for approved grants according to the requirements issued by the SNSF. Funds can only be released once the DMP has been submitted. Missing or inaccurate statements in the DMP need to be added/revised at the latest before the release of the payment of the second instalment. A definitive and updated version of the DMP must be provided by the end of the funding period. For more details on the DMP format requirements and procedure see:

[Data Management Plan \(DMP\) - Guidelines for researchers](#)

Please note that costs for Open Research Data (ORD) must be taken into account at the time of submission of the application. They cannot be covered by a supplementary grant.

2.12 Exclusion of external reviewers

The applicant is entitled to submit together with the funding proposal a list with the names and addresses of **persons who are not to be asked** for an external review (exclusion list). The SNSF may abide by this list if the applicant provides a valid reason for the requested exclusion and if a sufficient number of other experts is available.

2.13 Career plan

No form or template is provided by the SNSF. The career plan must **not exceed one page (a minimum of point 10 font size and 1.5 line spacing)**. The career plan should be written in the same language as the research plan.

The past career achievements should be described briefly, while more emphasis should be put on the medium and long-term career goals while also considering teaching priorities. Describe in detail which scientific priorities you would like to focus on after the planned funding period and which specific career steps you are aiming for. Outline specifically, which past and future activities will help you to achieve your career goals and specify how the specific topic of the proposed project will impact your scientific career development.

2.14 Eligible research institutions

All publicly funded research institutions in Switzerland are eligible, i.e. universities, university hospitals, universities of applied sciences, universities of teacher education, research centres (e.g. PSI, EMPA, EAWAG) or institutes of postgraduate education (e.g. IDIAP, IHEID).

2.15 Choice of research institution

The suitability of the chosen research institution and the mobility are assessment criteria (see articles 9 and 15 of the Ambizione Regulations). Justify the choice of the research institution in the document "Statement of Mobility" (see paragraph 3.3) as well as briefly in the cover letter. In particular for the following cases, the choice must be carefully motivated:

- At the time of the submission deadline the applicant has already spent more than one year at his/her present Swiss research institution.
- The applicant has already spent more than one year as postdoctoral researcher in the past at the selected research institution.
- The applicant would like to return to the research institution where he/she received his/her PhD or completed his/her medical exam.
- The applicant would like to join the research institution of his/her PhD advisor.

2.16 Written confirmation of the research institution

Applicants must contact as soon as possible the research institution to ask for the written confirmation of the research institution. The written confirmation of the research institution consists of two separate letters:

1. Detailed confirmation of the research institution signed by the contact person (leader of the research group) mentioned in the application and the head of the institute/department. This letter refers to the obligations which are stated in the Ambizione Regulations, in particular article 8 and article 12.
2. General confirmation of the vice rectorate for research (or equivalent).

The directorate of the institute/department must forward the detailed confirmation of the research institution (point 1) to the vice-rectorate for research in order to receive the general confirmation (point 2). Then, the contact person at the research institution must send both confirmations to the applicant for a timely submission of the application.

Both confirmations must follow the text template provided by the SNSF and include the official letterhead of the research institution. They must be added to the application and will only be regarded as complete if all the points relevant to the application are addressed. The text template is available in [German](#), [French](#) and [English](#).

2.17 Letters of collaboration

According to the [San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment \(DORA\)](#) signed by the SNSF, applications are evaluated based on the quality of past and ongoing research activities. Following this principle, the SNSF does not rely on third party opinions. However, to allow to evaluate the feasibility of the project, each collaborator may write a letter of collaboration which limits itself to a statement about the collaboration and refrains from highlighting the qualifications of the applicant or the merits of the project. Letters of collaboration are uploaded under "Other annexes".

Support/Reference letters highlighting the qualifications of the applicant or the merits of the project, which are uploaded in the application or forwarded to the SNSF by mail/email, will be discarded.

2.18 Evaluation procedure

The evaluation procedure takes place in two phases. In phase 1, the National Research Council of the SNSF makes an initial selection based on the documents submitted. Applicants rejected in phase 1 as well as applicants selected for phase 2 will receive the decision around mid-May.

Applications selected for phase 2 are peer-reviewed. All candidates selected for phase 2 are invited to an interview to present their research project and career plan. The presentation is followed by Q&A

session with the panel. The interviews are held in June. Candidates will be officially informed about the final decision of phase 2 around the end of August. For more details on the evaluation procedure see:

[Evaluation procedure – this is how we select](#)

The SNSF subjects all applications for an Ambizione grant to a stringent scientific evaluation procedure and rates them based on pre-defined criteria at its due discretion. Based on assessments by referees and co-referees and the comparison and discussion of applications by the evaluation body, a small share of applications may emerge that are of equal quality and equally worthy of funding. As no further differentiation is possible, decisions for this group of applications will be reached by drawing lots according to Article 23 paragraph 6 of the [Organisational Regulations of the National Research Council](#). Applicants affected by this procedure are informed accordingly in the decision letter. The letter includes a justification for applicants who are excluded as a result of the procedure.

2.19 Evaluation panels

Lists of active members for the different Ambizione evaluation commissions are available on the SNSF website (see paragraph 2.1).. It is possible that for certain applications members from different panels are assigned to cover the disciplinary diversity as far as possible.

3. Instructions for CV, major achievements and statement of mobility

3.1 General remarks

The SNSF has signed the [San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment \(DORA\)](#), which recommends funders to be explicit about the criteria used in evaluating the scientific productivity of applicants. The scientific quality, value and impact of the **entire research output** is taken into consideration (including datasets, software, and prototypes) in addition to research publications. In this context, the scientific content of a paper is much more important than publication metrics or the name of the journal in which it was published. Within the scope of the evaluation, the scientific discipline and the academic age (incl. career breaks, care duties, etc.) of the applicant will be considered.

3.2 CV and major achievements

The SNSF defined a new structure for the CV and requests a standardised set of information from all applicants. **Specifically, applicants will have to compile their CV and major achievements according to a new template on the SNSF Portal and subsequently upload a PDF in the data container "CV and major achievements".**

For more details on the new CV format see: [Your curriculum vitae – all about the CV format](#)

The portal can be accessed under: portal.snf.ch

The major achievements do not need to be linked to your current application or directly relevant to it. The idea is for you to give a general description of your most important research to date. Your scientific qualifications will be evaluated mainly on the basis of these brief descriptions and the associated works. Competences that are relevant for the project should be stated primarily in the research plan.

An ORCID will be required and communicated to those conducting the evaluation (panel members and reviewers). **Therefore, make sure that the publicly accessible content of your ORCID profile is up-to-date.**

This information is intended for evaluators to specifically assess the scientific quality and relevance of the research output. The CV and major achievements must be written in the language of the research plan. The document is sent out for peer-reviewing and will be accessible for your research institution. **Please note that the CV cannot be updated after the submission of your application.**

3.3 Statement of mobility

Mobility is recognised as a necessary factor for a successful scientific or academic career. In order to assess the applicant's past and planned mobility concept, a **statement of mobility** is required.

Academic mobility is defined in five dimensions including physical mobility but also more qualitative aspects of academic mobility such as collaborations or interdisciplinarity. You may enter your past mobility as well as the planned mobility during the funding period. Focus mainly on the experience after your PhD or medical exam. Structure your statement of mobility according to the dimensions listed in the form (not all dimensions are expected to be filled in).

1. Institutional academic mobility is the summary of institutional collaborations being beneficial to your career goals. These may be on a national level or even within the same research institution providing, for instance, complementary expertise, or additional infrastructure.

■ Show the added value to your career trajectory so far and to the proposal. The choice of the higher education institution where the grant will be hosted should be carefully motivated, if:

- you have spent more than one year as postdoctoral researcher at this institution;
- you return to the institution where you received your PhD degree or medical degree;
- you join the institution of your PhD advisor.

2. Transnational academic mobility refers to academic travel and exchange across borders of states. It is understood in terms of the roles of researchers in teaching-learning experiences as well as knowledge production and transfer.

■ Describe the benefits and lasting effects of a stay abroad (incl. several short-term stays over a certain time period), of collaborations or of your involvement in academic networks. The latter may include also involvement in border-crossing networks without active travel.

3. Intersectoral mobility: The scientific and technological challenges facing today's researchers are extremely complex and, in many cases, require new approaches to research and training.

■ Enter experience in the public, private and not-for-profit sectors relevant for the proposed research and according to the career goal, and explain its contribution.

4. Interdisciplinary mobility is the move across research fields different from your core discipline.

■ Explain where, when and how you did involve different disciplines in your research or plan to do so.

5. Intellectual mobility is the capacity to communicate research to a broader public (e.g. science communicator, contributions to the standing of science in society, translation into practice).

- State how you are committed to sharing your knowledge beyond academia.

Please use the [form provided](#), comment on each of these dimensions where applicable, and consider the following points:

- Comment on the choice of your research institution in Switzerland with regard to its suitability to provide scientific support for your project as well as the possibilities to develop your intellectual background and your scientific independence.
- Address all dimensions prospectively and retrospectively. The ultimate goal is to present your past mobility and your planned mobility during the funding period.
- Your statement can, but does not have to contain information for all dimensions.
- If it was not possible to perform physical mobility before the submission deadline, please comment in the cover letter on the reasons why and elaborate in the form on the measures you will take in order to close the gap.
- Explain how your mobility will contribute to meet your career goals.

The applicant's mobility will be assessed based on the statement provided. The mobility performed by the end of the grant will be assessed regarding the aim of the respective funding scheme and regarding the applicant's personal career goal. The statement will be rated on the background of the research plan, the CV, the choice of the research institution and the career plan.

The form can be filled either in the language of the research plan or in English. Only use Adobe Acrobat Reader/Adobe Acrobat to open, edit and save the form, or to print the document and save your input in a new pdf file.

4. Instructions for the research plan

4.1 General remarks

The research plan provides the basis for scientific evaluation, particularly of the quality of the proposed research project, i.e. its scientific relevance, topicality, originality, feasibility and the suitability of its methods. Together with the CV and the major achievements, the research plan also serves as a basis for assessing the researcher's scientific qualifications, particularly their expertise with regard to the project. The SNSF's requirements with regard to the form and content of the research plan help to ensure the comparability of applications. This is an important prerequisite for a comparative evaluation based on the principle of competition and for the equal treatment of all applicants.

The research plan must consist of original text that has been written by the applicant. A limited amount of text (or other material, graphs, etc.) by third parties or text published by the applicant is permissible in the sections concerning the state of research (2.1) and the state of personal research (2.2) as well as when describing standard methods. The quoted texts must be clearly designated as such (quotation marks or appropriate wording) and a verifiable source must be mentioned nearby and in the bibliography. The SNSF uses a special software to compare texts and analyse suspected cases of plagiarism. A number of universities have made such programs available to their students and employees. We recommend that you contact your institution for further information. For more details see the [SNSF policy on scientific integrity](#).

In **mathematics, natural and engineering sciences, biology, medicine, psychology, economics and political sciences**, applications have to be submitted in **English**. In all other research areas, applications can be submitted in one of the official Swiss languages (preferably in German or French; for Italian please contact the Administrative Offices of SNSF first). An English translation must be enclosed if requested by the SNSF.

Special rules apply for political sciences. Researchers will still be able to submit proposals in an official Swiss language should this be justified for scientific reasons, particularly if working in a specific language is appropriate to the nature of the research topic.

The SNSF does not consider applications that **do not meet the requirements for the research plan, the formal requirements for applications** (article 14 of the [Funding Regulations](#)) and the **requirements for research integrity and good scientific practice** (article 15 of the [Funding Regulations](#)).

4.2 Travel advice and safety risk

The SNSF does not consider applications that involve the moving of a Swiss-based researcher to a zone with a significant and unacceptable safety risk.

In areas for which the safety risk is not considered to be very high or regionally limited, a condition will be attached to the decision and the responsibility for the safety of all project participants will be transferred to the grantee.

The feasibility and the responsibility/accountability of the research project is examined within the framework of the evaluation. If applicable, risk assessment considerations must be documented in the research plan (e.g. how the research will be carried out without travelling to countries with significant safety risk).

Travel advice from the [Federal Department of Foreign Affairs \(FDFA\)](#) contains assessments of possible risks and recommendations and is a useful and important source of information.

4.3 Structure and content of the research plan

The research plan must **not exceed 15 pages A4 paper size and 60'000 characters (with spaces)**. This includes the **title or title/cover page**, possible **table of contents**, **summary**, **footnotes** (explanatory notes or comments at the bottom of a page), **illustrations**, **formulae**, **tables**, but not the bibliography (list of sources/references at the end of the document). Note that a cover/title page or a table of contents is not required. A minimum of **point 10 font size** (e.g. Times New Roman; condensed fonts not allowed) and **1.5 line spacing** must be used. The research plan may not contain any annexed documents and must be uploaded as a single file.

Applicants have the option to request a PhD position (or exceptionally a postdoc), however, it is not mandatory; applicants have also the option to simply request personnel. If you request a PhD position (or exceptionally a postdoc), you should describe in detail their project and explain why the topics will be a good theme for the PhD thesis/postdoc project. In case you are not awarded a PhD position (or exceptionally a postdoc), you should explain how the project will be carried out and the overall goals of the project remain feasible. **The research plan needs to be structured as follows:**

Research Plan	
1. Summary	In the summary (maximum 1 page), present the background and rationale of the project, list its overall objectives and specific aims, mention the methods to be used, and briefly discuss the expected results and their impact for the field.
2. Proposed Research	
2.1 Current state of research in the field and required competences for the project	<p>Describe your project in the context of the current state of knowledge in your field. Make reference to the most important publications, particularly by other authors. Describe:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - which previous insights provided the starting point and basis for the planned studies; - in which areas research is needed, and why; - which important, relevant research projects are currently underway in Switzerland and abroad.
2.2 Current state of personal research	<p>Present the research work you have already undertaken in the relevant field or in related fields, describe the results obtained so far as well as the relevance of these preliminary undertakings for your project.</p> <p>Also describe your competences that are relevant for the implementation of the project (e.g. methodology, languages and IT skills, etc.).</p> <p>Together with the CV, this information serves as a basis for assessing your scientific qualifications, particularly your expertise with regard to the project.</p>
2.3 Detailed research plan	<p>Based on the information provided under 2.1 and 2.2, specify the approach you are taking and the concrete objectives that you aim to achieve in the period of funding. The following points should be addressed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - describe the studies or experiments needed and/or envisaged to reach the set goals. Assess the risks involved and propose alternatives if necessary; - characterise existing sources and datasets and describe the data collection strategy and possible alternative strategies; - methods by which the research goals are to be reached (applicant and collaborations) and methods that first have to be developed; - explain the role and the planned work of each member of the research team (incl. applicant, personnel and collaborations). <p>Your description should be as detailed as necessary to enable an expert to assess whether your methodology is appropriate and your project feasible. Refer to the work described here in the budget you submit via mySNF.</p> <p>All requested personnel must be justified, in particular if a PhD position is requested.</p>
2.4 Schedule and milestones	Compile a schedule that includes the most important milestones (e.g. table, Gantt chart, etc.). This plan should also indicate the main tasks with which the persons funded by the SNSF/involved in the project are to be entrusted.
2.5 Relevance and impact	Describe the scientific relevance and expected impacts of your project for the discipline and for science as a whole (research and education/teaching). Mention the form in which you wish to publish your research results (articles in scientific journals, monographs, conference proceedings, etc.) Indicate whether and to what extent the proposed project will have a broader impact and what this impact will be.

3. Bibliography	List the sources of all concluded and/or ongoing work referred to in the research plan. Give the full reference, especially the title, source and full author list. Do not use "et al." to shorten the author list. (Exception: the author list can be shortened if a publication involves large international consortia with over 50 authors. In this case, a link to the complete reference has to be included). The bibliography is not included in the maximum number of pages (15) and characters (60'000) count.
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