



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION  
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ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA 22314

NSF 23-049

## Dear Colleague Letter: NSF-Swiss NSF Lead Agency Opportunity

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January 27, 2023

Dear Colleagues:

Example content.

The U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF) and the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Research Cooperation. The MOU provides a framework to encourage collaboration between U.S. and Swiss research communities and sets out the principles by which jointly supported activities might be developed. The MOU provides for an international collaboration arrangement whereby U.S. researchers may receive funding from NSF and Swiss researchers may receive funding from SNSF. Through a "Lead Agency Opportunity", NSF and SNSF will allow proposers from both countries to submit a collaborative proposal that will undergo a single review process at the Lead Agency. The Lead Agency will alternate between NSF and SNSF on an annual basis, and the review process will follow the usual evaluation process for the Lead Agency. SNSF will be the Lead Agency in the first year and will accept proposals on their deadlines of **April 3rd and October 2nd, 2023**.

Proposals will be accepted for collaborative research in areas at the intersection of SNSF's three research divisions and participating NSF programs. Specific participating NSF programs are listed on the NSF Office of International Science and Engineering (OISE) website at <https://www.nsf.gov/od/oise/NSF-SWISS/nsf-swiss.jsp>. Proposals are expected to adhere to the research areas, funding limits, and grant durations for these participating NSF programs and for the SNSF programs from which funding is sought. As details vary by NSF program, U.S. Principal Investigators (PI) are encouraged to contact program directors of pertinent NSF programs for specific guidance.

Proposals must represent an integrated collaborative effort between the U.S. and Swiss researchers and be submitted to NSF by an eligible U.S. organization. Limits for U.S. researchers on the number of proposal submissions can be found on the website for each participating program.

Proposers are advised that all documents submitted to NSF or SNSF may be shared with the other agency to implement the Lead Agency Opportunity.

The collaborative opportunity described in this Dear Colleague Letter (DCL) remains in effect until archived. This collaboration is intended to cover a 4-year pilot phase.

## PROPOSAL PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION

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Regardless of Lead Agency, U.S. proposers must submit an Expression of Interest (EOI) following the instructions at, <https://www.nsf.gov/od/oise/NSF-SWISS/nsf-swiss.jsp>. The first EOI deadline will be **February 17th, 2023**; all subsequent EOI deadlines will be at least 60 calendar days in advance of the submission of the full proposal to the Lead Agency (e.g., **August 3rd, 2023**, for the **October 2023** SNSF full proposal deadline). EOIs will be used to determine eligibility for the Lead Agency Opportunity.

When NSF is the Lead Agency, the U.S. PI will submit the proposal to NSF. NSF will review proposals in competition with other proposals received for the same funding round of the program to which the proposal is submitted, using NSF's merit review process. The Swiss applicants will submit a copy of the proposal via the SNSF platform, complying with the SNSF 'Project funding' regulations and guidelines. SNSF will confirm the Swiss applicant's eligibility at the onset of the process but will not conduct a parallel review and will not rank proposals. If a proposal is recommended for funding, the U.S. project part will be supported by NSF and the Swiss project part by the SNSF.

There are no separate NSF funds available for this effort; proposals will compete with all other proposals submitted to participating programs and will be evaluated on the strengths of the proposed intellectual merit, broader impacts, and any solicitation-specific review criteria that may apply.

When SNSF is the Lead Agency, the U.S. PI will submit a proposal to NSF only if the proposal is recommended for funding. Only the EOI is submitted to NSF before those decisions are made.

## DEADLINES

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SNSF is expected to serve as the Lead Agency:

- From April 1st, 2023, through March 31st, 2024
- From April 1st, 2025, through March 31st, 2026

NSF is expected to serve as the Lead Agency:

- From April 1st, 2024, through March 31st, 2025
- From April 1st, 2026, through March 31st, 2027,

When NSF is the Lead Agency, proposals must be submitted in accordance with the deadlines of the participating NSF programs (see OISE link above).

When SNSF is the Lead Agency, proposals must be submitted in accordance with the deadlines of the SNSF: **April 3rd and October 2nd in 2023** and **April 1st and October 1st in 2025**.

## GUIDELINES

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### Expression of Interest

For full proposals to be considered, the project team should submit an Expression of Interest following the instructions at <https://www.nsf.gov/od/oise/NSF-SWISS/nsf-swiss.jsp>. Furthermore, it is expected that full proposals will be submitted within 12 months of EOI acceptance. If more time is needed for proposal preparation, an additional EOI may be required.

**Use the Expression of Interest form found here:**

<https://www.nsf.gov/od/oise/NSF-SWISS/nsf-swiss.jsp>.

The EOI submission includes the following information:

- Proposed Project Title.
- Names, email addresses, and departmental and institutional affiliations of the U.S. and Swiss researchers.
- Bottom-line estimates of total funding (including indirect costs) to be requested from NSF and SNSF in appropriate monetary units (USD for U.S. budget and Swiss Francs for Swiss budget).
- Estimated number of postdocs (U.S.), estimated number of students supported (U.S.), and estimated number of salary months requested (U.S.).
- Clear indication of the NSF target program. This may not be the only NSF program that will consider the Expression of Interest, but identification of the target program allows for faster consideration.
- Summary of the proposed research outlining specific objectives and main research challenges. The U.S. portion of the work should fall within the scope of one or more participating programs as noted above. The Swiss portion of the work should fall within the scope of the SNSF research divisions.

NSF intends to communicate its decision about the eligibility of the EOI to the U.S. PIs no later than 30 calendar days before proposals are due. If the EOI has not been approved by NSF prior to submission of a full proposal, the proposal may not be considered for evaluation

(i.e., may be returned without review).

## Full Proposals

Eligibility of PIs to submit proposals is subject to each agency's respective eligibility rules and policies, as spelled out in the [NSF Proposal and Award Policies and Procedures Guide \(PAPPG\)](#) and/or the NSF solicitation to which a proposal will be submitted, and SNSF's regulations and guidelines.

Proposers from both countries will collaborate to write a single proposal. When NSF is the Lead Agency, it is the responsibility of the U.S. PI to submit the proposal to the appropriate NSF program for review by the program deadline. Proposers should comply with the proposal preparation requirements outlined in NSF's PAPPG and submit the proposal through Research.gov (<https://www.research.gov/research-web/>) or Grants.gov (<https://www.grants.gov/>). Proposers should follow all requirements outlined in this DCL as well as the specific funding opportunity to which the proposal is submitted. When SNSF is the Lead Agency, U.S. PIs will submit a proposal to NSF only if the project is recommended for funding. Additionally, when SNSF is the Lead Agency, the maximum funding request on the NSF side is limited to \$400,000 for proposals involving the Directorate for Geosciences.

Regardless of Lead Agency the Swiss applicants will submit a proposal via the SNSF platform, complying with the SNSF 'Project funding' regulations and guidelines.

For proposals submitted to NSF:

1. The proposal should describe the full proposed research program, including the total U.S. and Swiss resources that will be part of the project. The Project Summary and Project Description must include a description of the collaboration, including an explanation of the role(s) of the Swiss collaborator(s) and an explanation of how the team will work together.
2. The proposal must describe the intellectual merits of the proposed research, including the value of the international collaboration, and the anticipated broader impacts of the effort.
3. The proposal should only indicate the U.S. expenses on the NSF Budget Form. A detailed breakdown of funding requested from SNSF should be added to the proposal as a Supplementary Document. The Budget Justification section of the proposal should address the full project budget (that is, both the NSF and SNSF funding items). Proposals that request duplicative funding may be returned without review. The U.S. budget should not vary from that specified in the EOI by more than 10% and any changes should be fully justified.
4. The title of the proposal should be prefixed with "NSF-SNSF:" to indicate that this proposal is to be considered as part of the NSF-SNSF Lead Agency Opportunity.

5. If the proposal is arranged as separate submissions from multiple U.S. organizations, the title of the proposal should begin with "Collaborative Research:" followed by "NSF-SNSF". Do not check "collaborative" proposal unless more than one U.S.-based organization will be submitting the same proposal for separate funding (i.e., the "collaborative" check box should only be checked if there is more than one collaborating organization on the U.S. side, each submitting the same proposal).
6. For proposals submitted to NSF, Swiss personnel should be listed as "non-NSF funded collaborators." This listing is for administrative purposes and is not intended to characterize the level or value of the contribution of Swiss personnel to the project. Guidance on information to provide for "non-NSF funded collaborators" is below.
  - Biographical Sketch - Required. The biographical information must be clearly identified as "non-NSF funded collaborators" biographical information and uploaded as a single PDF file in the Other Supplementary Documents section of the proposal. Use of a specific format is not required except in specific cases when the individual announcement to the community for the participating programs will indicate a required NSF format.
  - Current and Pending Support - Not required for Swiss PIs.
  - Results from Prior NSF Support - Not required for Swiss personnel.
  - COA information should be provided through the use of the COA template, identified as "non-NSF funded collaborators" information, and uploaded as a PDF file in the Single Copy Documents section of the proposal. In some specific cases, the individual announcement to the community for the participating programs will indicate that the COA information will be required for Swiss personnel, rather than just optional.
7. A post-doctoral mentoring plan is not needed if funding for postdocs is requested only from SNSF. Including one, however, is allowed.
8. For projects involving human subjects/participants or animals, proposers should follow both NSF and SNSF policies, submitting documentation to each as appropriate. Proposers must have requisite institutional approvals or exemptions in place prior to any potential award.

## **ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTS**

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Proposers should provide all the documentation outlined in this DCL as well as the documents required by the specific funding opportunity to which the proposal is submitted. Unless stated otherwise in the funding opportunity, letters of collaboration may be included.

## **MERIT REVIEW**

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Proposals will be reviewed alongside all other unsolicited or standard research proposals received in the same funding round and will not undergo a special or separate review

process. Proposals will be evaluated in accordance with the Lead Agency's review criteria. A description of the NSF merit review process is provided on the NSF merit review website at: [https://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/merit\\_review/](https://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/merit_review/). SNSF assessment criteria are based on art. 15 of the regulation on project funding. By submitting, PIs and their organizations agree that NSF may share via secure electronic means, unattributed reviews and summaries and information pertaining to the review process with SNSF.

## **FUNDING DECISIONS**

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Funding decisions may be subject to budget limits.

When NSF is the Lead Agency, the U.S. PI will be advised whether the proposal has been recommended for funding or will be declined. U.S. PIs will receive copies of the reviewers' unattributed comments and, where applicable, a panel summary.

When SNSF is the Lead Agency, NSF will notify the U.S. PI that the proposal submitted to SNSF is being recommended for award, the U.S. PI will then submit a proposal to NSF so the award can be processed on the U.S. side.

NSF and SNSF will coordinate the U.S. and Swiss award timing as much as possible. Because of potential differences in funding cycles, it is possible that some projects will have delayed start dates to allow time for funds to become available and/or all pre-award requirements to be met. Wherever possible, NSF and SNSF will endeavor to hold to standard turnaround times for each participating agency, but in exceptional circumstances outcomes could be delayed.

The number of U.S.-Swiss projects selected for funding and the total amount to be allocated will depend on the number and quality of the submitted projects and the available funding for each funding agency.

## **POST-AWARD CONSIDERATIONS**

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Awardees will be expected to comply with the award conditions and reporting requirements of the agencies from which they receive funding.

Awardees are expected to acknowledge both NSF and SNSF in any reports or publications resulting from the award.

NSF and SNSF will discuss requests for changes in awards (for example, changes in objectives or scope) before a joint decision is made.

NSF will consider requests for no-cost extensions for U.S. PIs using standard procedures.

Resubmission of EOIs that do not align with this opportunity or declined full proposals should

follow guidance from the program that reviewed the original EOI or full proposal.

In accordance with NSF and SNSF standard procedures, awards will be publicly announced.

Questions about this DCL may be directed to [SwissNSF-Collaboration@nsf.gov](mailto:SwissNSF-Collaboration@nsf.gov). Additionally, OISE helps to coordinate the overall engagement between NSF and SNSF. The current OISE program manager for the Switzerland is listed at <https://www.nsf.gov/od/oise/country-list.jsp>.

## **DATA PROTECTION CONSIDERATIONS**

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NSF and SNSF will share relevant information and data—whether in connection with the proposal and award process, or thereafter during the post award process. Data are expected to be shared between NSF and SNSF to enable the secure and efficient processing of full proposals for the NSF-SNSF Lead Agency Opportunity. Data shared include proposal attachments, anonymized peer reviews, and panel comments. NSF and SNSF are committed to maintaining data confidentiality, protection, and privacy and intend to fully abide by their own applicable laws and policies concerning the sharing of data in our collaborative activities.

Sincerely,

Simon Malcomber  
Assistant Director (Acting)  
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