Guidelines for applicants
Agora funding scheme

The present document describes in detail the expected content and structure of the Agora project plan for projects with a budget of up to CHF 200'000 (yearly call).

Berne, April 2025

1   Purpose and scope

The Agora scheme fosters dialogue between scientists and society, encouraging researchers to share their work with non-specialists. It aims for interactions where both parties engage actively, promoting beyond knowledge dissemination to involve non-academic individuals in outreach activities.

The project plan provides the basis for evaluation (see assessment criteria below). Together with the CVs of the applicants, the project plan also serves as a basis for assessing the team's qualifications, particularly their expertise regarding the project.

The SNSF's requirements regarding the form and content of the project plan help to ensure the comparability of applications. This is an essential prerequisite for a comparative evaluation based on the principle of competition and for the equal treatment of all applicants.

The SNSF does not consider applications that do not meet the formal requirements and/or are manifestly inadequate.

2   Assessment criteria

Bear in mind that the proposal will be evaluated according to the criteria set out in the regulations for awarding Agora grants. To be successful, your project plan must address these criteria clearly. The following questions form the basis of the evaluation:

- To what extent is the content to be communicated relevant, clearly defined and of high quality?
- To what extent are the methods and communication design suited to reach the target group? To what extent does the project promote dialogue, interactivity and public participation? How close will the researchers of the project team and the target group be during the dialogue phase?
- To what extent does the project team have the necessary expertise to carry out the project?
- To what extent are the chosen communication concepts and methods suited to fulfilling the goals set out in the proposal? Can the targets/milestones be reached in the given time and with the available resources in terms of personnel and funds?
- To what extent will the project create or increase awareness, stimulate interest, and promote critical thinking about the communicated research topic and its challenges? How will the project be evaluated? Does the proposed evaluation plan make sense?
- To what extent have researchers and communicators critically examined their work for possible bias and taken steps to conduct their activities impartially and accurately? To what extent has the project team integrated the promotion of an inclusive environment to provide a diverse representation of research? To what extent have special efforts been made to reach an audience less likely to feel targeted/addressed by scientific communication? Does the project meet the EDI vision of the SNSF?

The precise form used by external reviewers during the evaluation process is available on the Agora page of the SNSF (link).

3 Project plan

3.1 Format

The project plan needs to be uploaded to the mySNF as a PDF. Please name the document **Project-Plan_Name.pdf**

The project plan must not exceed **10 pages and 40,000 characters with spaces**. The first limit reached applies. This includes the footnotes, illustrations, formulae, and tables, but not the summary on the first page and the bibliography. At least **font size 10 and line spacing 1.5** must be used. **The project plan cannot contain any annexed documents**.

The project plan needs to be written in English. The use of English as a submission language bolsters the external peer review process, a key step in the evaluation procedure. It assists in broadening the scope of potential reviewers, thereby benefiting applicants by increasing the pool of appropriate reviewers.

3.2 Structure

The project plan must be structured as follows:

1. **Summary (maximum 1 page)**: Characterise the project application and place the project in a wider context. It is not included in the maximum number of pages (10) and character count (40'000).
2. **Context**: Explain the background and motivation for the project. Describe how the content to be communicated is related to your current research. Provide evidence that this research has gone through a competitive evaluation procedure (e.g., in a peer-reviewed article and/or in a grant proposal).
3. **Methods**
   - **Objectives:** Clearly state the specific goals you aim to achieve with the project. Ensure these objectives are measurable and achievable within the project timeline.
   - **Target Audience**: Define the project's target groups, including their characteristics and why they are relevant to the communication efforts.
   - **Expected Impact**: Explain the anticipated outcomes of the project and how they will benefit the target audience. If applicable, describe and explain how and to what extent the communication project could continue beyond the funding period.
   - **Communication Plan**: Detail the methods and channels you will use to reach your target audience. Include specific activities, timelines, and responsible parties. Provide examples where applicable. Highlight the elements of the project that will enable a dialogue between researchers and the target group(s) by specifying how the interaction is intended to take place and how the audience will participate.
   - **Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI):** Provide a plan on how you will ensure diverse participation and representation in the project. Address aspects such as the content to be communicated, the profile of the team members, and the target audience.
4. **Implementation**
   - **Schedule:** Compile a schedule that includes the most important milestones.
   - **Roles and responsibilities**: Describe the roles and responsibilities of each member of the project team. In the case of third-party funding, describe the role and contribution of each funding partner.

- **Risk Assessment**: Identify potential risks and challenges and provide strategies for mitigating them.
5. **Evaluation:** Outline how you will measure the success of the project in quantitative and qualitative terms, related to the expected impact. Include clear targets, metrics, and methods for data collection and analysis (see also the provided resources below in Section 4).
6. **Bibliography** List the sources of all concluded and/or forthcoming works referred to in the project plan. Give the full reference, especially the title, source and full author list. The bibliography is not included in the maximum number of pages (10) and character count (40'000).

4   Resources

The following links lead to useful platforms that can support you in the planning, implementation and evaluation of your project.

In German:
- **Die zentralen fünf Dimensionen der Wissenschaftskommunikation**: A summary of the five central dimensions - topic, target group, goal, medium, style and format - in a tool that is intended to help with orientation in science communication.
- **Wissenschaft im Dialog**: Materials and information on science communication topics and tools that support your involvement in science communication.
- **Impact Unit**: Tools that look at evaluation steps in detail and provide initial food for thought or clear instructions for their practical implementation.

In French:
- **Moulinette:** Tool to take your project or idea for an activity apart, examine all its dimensions and analyse all its facets.
- **RaccourSci:** A range of articles and guides on the design of science outreach projects and related issues.

In English:
- **National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement**: Resources to support high-quality public engagement practice and policy.
- **American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS)**: Guidance for scientists to build skills to more effectively communicate and engage with public audiences.
- **Institute for Public Relations**: Guide to help understand how to apply data, research, and analytics to uncover insights that inform strategic decision making, improve communication performance, and deliver meaningful business contributions.
- **Impact Toolkit**: Resources and tools to plan, capture, communicate and monitor the impact of research.
- **QUEST project:** A series of toolkits for those working in science communication, with advice for academics and journalists alike.
- **EU Competence Centre for Science Communication:** A consolidation of science communication knowledge, resources and tools from a variety of sources.