

Call document for SNSF Starting Grants 2025

SNSF Starting Grants 2025 is the SNSF's highest level of career funding. It enables researchers to lead and manage their project and a team of researchers in Switzerland. Upon completion of the grant, a successful applicant should be a research leader who can contribute substantially to their research field. An additional budget is earmarked to fund additional excellent female applicants. This document describes the rules and procedures for submitting a proposal to the SNSF Starting Grant Call 2025.

Key features of the SNSF Starting Grants Call 2025

- Objective during the grant: grantees lead their project and a team of researchers in Switzerland.
- The scheme is open to all research disciplines and topics.
- Applicants: 1) are between 2 and 8 years after their PhD defence or equivalent or between 5 and 12 years after their medical degree; 2) have not already achieved the policy objective of this funding instrument and 3) have a Swiss-link (cf. section 1.2).
- Parallel submissions to other SNSF instruments with overlapping funding periods are not permitted. Exceptions are to one-off calls such as National Research Programmes (NRPs) and National Centres of Competence in Research (NCCRs).
- For applicants who need to finance their own salary, the grant will cover the project funds (max. CHF 1 million) in addition to their salary. For applicants with guaranteed salaries, the grant will cover the project funds (max. CHF 1 million).
- Applicants are evaluated according to the criteria in section 5.3.
- The proposal is submitted in one application step. It must include the research plan, the CV, the requested budget and the higher education institution or research institution confirmation letter.
- The evaluation of the proposal will be conducted in two phases. In a first phase, panel members will evaluate the submitted documents and rate applications on this basis. Top-rated applicants will be evaluated in a second phase, which includes international peer reviews and interviews.
- Timeline SNSF Starting Grants Call 2025:
 - Call opens: 15 October 2024
 - Call deadline: 15 January 2025 at 17:00:00 (Swiss local time).
 - Planned communication on the outcome of phase 1: late July 2025
 - Planned communication on the outcome of phase 2: November 2025
 - Earliest - latest project start: 1 January 2026 - 1 January 2027

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1 Applicant

1.1 Objective and targeted career level

The SNSF Starting Grants enable researchers to lead and manage their project and a team of researchers in Switzerland. Upon completion of the grant, a successful applicant should be a research leader who can contribute substantially to their research field.

Applicants have major achievements that are independent of their work as a doctoral student and the associated doctoral project. If applicants hold a medical degree, they have major achievements independent of their initial research work as a junior scientist. The applicant's major achievements will be assessed, taking into account the culture and norms of their disciplines. Applicants will normally have complemented their expertise with appropriate research collaborations, academic or extra-academic. The expected qualifications of the applicants are laid out in the evaluation criteria (cf. section 5.3.2).

For applicants submitting with a higher education institution that offers assistant professorships, at least such a position and title must be conferred for the duration of the grant. For applicants submitting with a research institution that does not offer assistant professor positions and titles, a position involving independent project and management responsibility (e.g., group leader) must be conferred for the duration of the grant.

The SNSF does not consider funding proposals that fail to meet the personal and formal requirements set out in the present call document and in the Funding Regulations (art. 10-22)¹.

1.2 Personal requirements

Applicants have a PhD degree, or a medical degree, or a qualification that is equivalent to a PhD. In addition, they must fulfil three criteria (1) fit within the window of eligibility, (2) not have already achieved the objective of this call, and (3) have a Swiss-link. All three criteria must be fulfilled on the date of February 1st, 2025.

1) fit within the window of eligibility:

After their PhD defence:

- They have at least 2 years of research experience (full-time equivalent, FTE) in an academic or extra-academic environment.
- They submit their application no more than 8 years after the date of their PhD defence.

After their medical degree (state examination or equivalent):

- They have done at least 3 years of clinical work (FTE) and have at least 2 years of research experience (FTE) in an academic or extra-academic environment.
- They submit their application no more than 12 years after obtaining their medical degree.

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

After a qualification equivalent to a PhD, defined as 3 years of research activity (FTE) after obtaining the higher education degree:

- They have at least 2 years of research experience (FTE) in an academic or extra-academic environment.
- They submit their application no more than 8 years after obtaining a qualification equivalent to a PhD.

The relevant period to determine the fit within the window of eligibility is the time elapsed between the (oral) defence of the relevant degree and the date of February 1st, 2025. The window of eligibility may be extended if one or more of the reasons set out in Clause 1.11 of the General Implementation Regulations for the Funding Regulations² apply. The reasons for extending the window of eligibility must be explained in the application.

2) not have already achieved the objective of this call:

Applicants are not eligible to apply if, at the time of application, they already have significant experience in leading research projects and a team of researchers.

Applicants are **not** eligible if **both** of the following criteria are met:

- a. they already hold a position that allows leading their research project and a team of researchers, e.g., group leader or university professor
- and**
- b. they have already received significant third-party funding for a research project, e.g., a SNSF project grant, or a Starting Grant, a Consolidator Grant, an Advanced Grant from the ERC or the SNSF.

An Ambizione grant does not count as significant third-party funding. For Ambizione grantees, please refer to the earliest possible application submission in section 1.3.

3) have a Swiss-link:

Applicants must have carried out research for the equivalent of at least two years with an average work-time percentage of at least 80% (0.8 FTE) at a Swiss research institution in the higher education sector, or have Swiss nationality, or hold a degree from an accredited Swiss higher education institution (Master's, PhD, or equivalent).

1.3 Multiple applications and duplicate funding

- Support for research projects already funded by the SNSF or third parties is excluded.
- Applicants for an SNSF Starting Grant may apply for the call identifier ERC-2025-StG.

² <https://snf.ch/media/en/iu958nGMsEmvTvYN/snsf-general-implementation-regulations-for-the-funding-regulations-e.pdf>

- Applicants must provide information on available and requested funding for their research projects (cf. section 3.1).
- SNSF Starting applicants and grantees must inform the SNSF about the acquisition of third-party funding.
- During the evaluation process, applicants may not have other SNSF grants under evaluation that overlap with the requested SNSF Starting Grant funding period with the exception of NRPs, NCCRs or other one-off funding calls.
- Ambizione grantees may apply for an SNSF Starting Grant 12 months after starting their Ambizione grant at the earliest.

1.4 Repeated submissions

Applicants whose application for an SNSF Starting Grant was rejected may apply once more for an SNSF Starting Grant, regardless of the subject matter of the project and previous ranking. In addition, applicants who reached phase 2 during the SNSF Starting Grants 2024 evaluation may submit a third application to SNSF Starting Grants 2025.

- Each application is evaluated independently of any previous submission.
- Application procedures discontinued due to a violation of scientific integrity rules by the applicant are considered a rejection.

1.5 Employment during the grant

The higher education institution or research institution must be established in Switzerland as legal entity (public or private) under Swiss law and sign the confirmation letter (template provided on mySNF). The applicant does not need to be employed by the higher education institution or research institution at the time of submission of the proposal; however, the higher education institution or research institution must employ the applicant at least for the project's duration.

Higher education institutions that offer assistant professorships must award a position with at least this title for the duration of the grant. Research institutions that do not offer assistant professor positions and titles, must offer a position involving independent project and management responsibility ("group leader position") for the duration of the grant. For the applicant's own salary and project budget see section 3

1.6 Time commitment

The expected time commitment for working on the SNSF Starting Grant project is described here. The rules on when the salary of an applicant can or cannot be covered by the SNF Starting Grant are described in detail in section 3.2.

Before applying, applicants are requested to discuss the conditions and procedure for conducting the project with their employing higher education institution or research institution which must provide a confirmation letter (template provided on mySNF).

If an applicant already has a guaranteed (paid) position at a higher education institution or research

institution in Switzerland for the entire duration of the proposed SNSF Starting Grant, they must be employed at least 0.5 FTE and spend at least 0.5 FTE on the project funded by this grant.

If the salary of the applicant is requested (either in full or for part of the project), the position may include some activities expected for the development of an academic career, such as teaching, in addition to the work directly related to the project funded by this grant. Specifically for the case where the salary of the applicant is requested:

- If the applicant is employed at a university of applied sciences or of teacher education, then the applicant must be employed at least 0.8 FTE and spend at least 70% of their working time on the project funded by this grant and the rest mainly on activities expected for the development of an academic career.
- If the applicant is a researcher who does clinical work, then the applicant must be employed at least 0.5 FTE as a researcher and spend at least 0.5 FTE on the project funded by this grant and the rest mainly on clinical work. The salary related to the clinical work is not covered by the SNSF Starting Grant.
- In all other cases, the applicant must be employed at least 0.8 FTE and spend at least 80% of their working time on the project funded by this grant and the rest mainly on activities expected for the development of an academic career.

If an applicant secures significant third-party funding, such as an ERC grant, they may request a reduction of their time commitment to the project but respecting that the time spent on the SNSF grant is at least 0.5 FTE.

2 Formal requirements, ethical issues and research integrity

2.1 Legal basis

The general provisions of the SNSF (Funding Regulations³ and the General Implementation Regulations for the Funding Regulations⁴) apply to the SNSF Starting Grant Call 2025 and the corresponding funding procedures. This call document is issued by the Presiding Board of the National Research Council.

2.2 User account in mySNF

If applicants do not already have a mySNF user account, they will need to open a new account. They should register their new account at least one month before the deadline. Their mySNF account will remain in place for future submissions or the lifetime management of approved projects.

2.3 Ethics and Integrity

Research activities and methods that have ethical implications or may raise questions requiring sound ethical assessment must be declared on mySNF. Hence, applicants should take note of the Swiss laws and ethical standards⁵. Furthermore, the rules of scientific integrity must be respected⁶.

2.4 Open access

Under the SNSF Starting Grant Call 2025, grantees must ensure open access to all peer-reviewed scientific publications of their results as set out in the SNSF Funding Regulations and the General Implementation Regulations for the Funding Regulations.

2.5 Open research data

For the SNSF Starting Grant Call 2025, grantees must submit a data management plan (DMP) to ask for the release of funds. 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. The SNSF also expects that data generated or collected during the project are made publicly accessible in data repositories provided there are no legal, ethical, copyright or other issues, as set out in the SNSF Funding Regulations and the SNSF Open Research Data (ORD) Policy⁷. The repositories should comply with the FAIR data principles. Please note that costs for ORD must be considered at the time of submission of the application.

³ https://snf.ch/media/en/1HxQ3Oduclgk1Euw/allg_reglement_16_e.pdf

⁴ <https://snf.ch/media/en/iu958nGMsEmvTvYN/snsf-general-implementation-regulations-for-the-funding-regulations-e.pdf>

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

⁶ https://www.snf.ch/media/en/TOYYqzR5b3FV4cqT/ueb_org_fehlverh_gesuchstellende_e.pdf

⁷ <https://www.snf.ch/en/dMILj9t4LNk8NwyR/topic/open-research-data>

3 Requested funding

For applicants who need to finance their own salary, the grant will cover the project funds (max. CHF 1 million) in addition to the applicants' own salaries. For applicants with guaranteed salaries, the grant will cover the project funds only (max. CHF 1 million). SNSF Starting Grants are awarded up to a maximum of 5 years. The maximum budget is reduced pro rata temporis for projects of a shorter duration.

Requested funding must be linked to the aims of the project for its entire duration. The estimation should be as accurate as possible.

Applicants enter the requested funding using whole CHF integers in the mySNF section "Requested funding". They use the "Block" view to separate the budget categories of project funds and applicant's own salary. All costs must be indicated in annual allotments. For the list of eligible costs, see art. 2 of the General Implementation Regulations for the Funding Regulations⁷.

The evaluation panels will assess the requested project funds, the amount of which may be reduced for ineligible, unjustified or disproportionate costs, see art. 2.2 of the General Implementation Regulations for the Funding Regulations⁸.

3.1 Project funds

The maximal budget for project funds is CHF 1 million.

Project staff (cf. art. 7 General Implementation Regulations for the Funding Regulations⁹ and annex 12¹⁰): applicants indicate the salaries (including social security contributions) for applicant's research team (doctoral students, postdocs, other employees). When requesting positions, they should refer to the employing institution's salary rates and social contributions. Size, composition and role of the team members must be indicated.

Further costs must be classified in the correct expense category on mySNF (e.g., equipment, consumables, travel costs, conference and workshops, collaboration costs, use of infrastructure, computing time, subcontracting, etc.). All available resources for the realization of the project must be declared.

For the costs for equipment, applicants include a short technical description together with a justification of its necessity. The costs for equipment may exceed the maximum of CHF 100'000 specified in art. 2.8 of the General Implementation Regulations for the Funding Regulations¹¹, provided that the maximum budget of CHF 1 million for the project funds is not exceeded.

Please note: Any funds received or requested from the SNSF, or other funding institutions must be declared (refer to the mySNF section "Available or requested funds").

⁸ <https://www.snf.ch/SiteCollectionDocuments/snsf-general-implementation-regulations-for-the-funding-regulations-e.pdf>

⁹ <https://snf.ch/media/en/iu958nGMsEmvTvYN/snsf-general-implementation-regulations-for-the-funding-regulations-e.pdf>

¹⁰ https://snf.ch/media/en/yXApuFw4ml0TPYe2/Annex_XII_Ausfuhrungsreglement_Beitragreglement_E.pdf

¹¹ Decision Presiding Board National Research Council July 5, 2023

3.2 The applicants' own salaries

If an applicant already holds a position for the duration of the grant that meets the SNSF Starting Grant requirements for conducting an independent project with management responsibilities (e.g. group leader or university professor; see also section 1.5), the applicant's salary cannot be covered by the grant.

An applicant's salary (either in full or for part of the project) can be covered by the grant in the following situations:

- An applicant holds a permanent position that does not meet the SNSF Starting Grant requirements regarding independence, management responsibility and time commitment. This situation applies, for example, to positions with a strong focus on teaching (e.g. lecturers at universities of applied sciences).
- An applicant holds a position that does not cover the entire duration of the SNSF Starting Grant, e.g. a tenure-track position. In the case of a tenure-track position, they may apply for their own salary for the remaining duration after the end of the tenure-track position and receive this salary only if they do not receive tenure.

If an appointment is changed to a paid position or tenure is received, the remaining salary contribution must be returned to the SNSF and cannot be converted into project funds.

For higher education institutions that offer assistant professorships, the SNSF covers a salary at the level of a local assistant professor for the requested duration of the project. For research institutions that do not offer assistant professor positions and titles, the SNSF will pay a position involving independent project and management responsibility ("group leader position") for the requested duration of the grant.

Applicants indicate whether they request their (either in full or for part of the project) salary (including social security contributions of the employer). To determine the salary level, they contact the HR department of the higher education institution or research institution. If this information is not available on time, they may enter CHF 140'000 per year (excluding social contributions). For applicants selected for phase 2 of the evaluation, the exact salary will be determined by the SNSF together with the employing institution.

4 Creating the documents for upload

All documents must be submitted in English. The font must be Times New Roman, Arial or similar with a font size of at least 10, line spacing 1.5, and margins of 2 cm on all sides. Condensed fonts are not allowed. The documents must be submitted in PDF format.

The following sections complement the additional information available on mySNF.

4.1 Research plan

Upload as a single file in the mySNF section “Research plan”.

The research plan, excluding the mandatory bibliography, must not exceed 15 pages (A4 paper size) and 60,000 characters (including spaces, font size 10, line spacing 1.5; the character counter in mySNF is binding). This includes the cover page/title page and table of contents (both not mandatory), as well as any footnotes, figures, text on figures, captions, formulae, tables, etc. The research plan must be uploaded in its final form as a single file in PDF format (not write-protected), and it may not include attachments of any kind. **No modifications are allowed after submission.**

The SNSF does not consider applications that do not meet the formal requirements for the research plan and/or are clearly inadequate (cf. Funding Regulations¹², art. 22).

The research plan must be structured into the following sections:

Section a: State-of-the-art and objectives	Specify the proposal objectives in the context of the state-of-the-art in the research field and the state of the applicant’s own research. It should be clear how and why the proposed work is important for the field, and what impact it will have if successful, such as how it may open up new horizons or opportunities for science, technology or scholarship. Specify any particularly challenging or unconventional aspects of the proposal, including multi- or interdisciplinary aspects.
Section b: Methodology	Describe the proposed methodology in detail including any key intermediate goals. Explain and justify the methodology in relation to the state-of-the-art, and particularly novel or unconventional aspects. Highlight any intermediate stages where results may require adjustments to the project planning.
Bibliography	Provide references for all sources 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 must be included). The bibliography is not included in the maximum number of pages (15) and characters (60,000 with spaces).

Note that:

- The subdivision / structuring of the two sections a) and b) is up to the applicant.
- The abstract is submitted separately via mySNF in the container “Basic Data II”.

¹² https://snf.ch/media/en/1HxQ3Oduclgk1Euw/allg_reglement_16_e.pdf

4.2 CV

Applicants compile their CV according to a template on the SNSF Portal and subsequently upload a PDF in the data container “CV and major achievements” in mySNF. For more details on the CV format see: [Your curriculum vitae – all about the CV format](#)

The portal can be accessed under portal.snf.ch

This standardized CV is used to evaluate the general research qualification of the applicant, taking into account their research discipline and the net academic age of the applicants (cf. section 5.3.2). The CV document is sent out for peer-review and will also be accessible to your employing institution. Please note that the CV cannot be updated after the submission deadline.

The SNSF has signed the [San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment \(DORA\)](#). The scientific quality, value and impact of the major achievements identified in the CV are taken into consideration (including datasets, software, prototypes) in addition to research publications. In this context, the research content of an output is much more important than publication metrics or the name of the journal in which it was published.

4.3 Uploading the application

On mySNF, select the correct division and funding scheme (Careers > SNSF Starting Grants). Before making any entries or uploading files, make sure to read carefully all information in this document and on mySNF. **The application must be submitted via mySNF no later than 17:00:00 CET (Swiss local time) on the submission date (Wednesday, 15 January 2025).** You will receive confirmation of your submission via email. Please make sure that you have entered and uploaded all necessary documents and information according to the requirements stated in this document by the submission deadline. **Otherwise, your application may not be considered.**

4.4 Receipt and verification at the SNSF

4.4.1 Administrative verification

The Administrative Offices of the SNSF check whether your submitted application meets the formal and personal requirements and whether you and your designated research institution are eligible. If your proposal is eligible, it will be forwarded to the corresponding evaluation panel. The proposal may not be considered on formal grounds even after the evaluation process has started.

4.4.2 Scientific integrity

The Administrative Offices of the SNSF may check whether the application respects scientific integrity rules (cf. ‘Regulations of the National Research Council on the treatment of scientific misconduct by applicants and grantees’¹³).

¹³ https://www.snf.ch/SiteCollectionDocuments/ueb_org_fehlverh_gesuchstellende_e.pdf

4.4.3 Contacts between applicants and the SNSF

Please address queries to the SNSF Administrative Offices by phone +41 (0)31 308 22 22 or by sending an e-mail to stg@snf.ch. The Office may contact applicants to clarify issues related to the application. During and after the submission deadline, applicants are obliged to:

- provide any information requested by the SNSF,
- cooperate in clarifying issues.

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. For the SNSF, the interaction between applicants and members of evaluation committees on applications is not compatible with academic best practice.

5 Evaluation and communication

The evaluation of the submitted proposals is based on the principle of competition. Thematic panels will evaluate the proposals in a two-phase procedure. The applications are assessed and rated based on the submitted documents for phase 1 and then supported by external peer reviews and interviews for phase 2. Applications are ranked comparatively to the other applications.

5.1 External peer reviewers

Applicants are entitled to submit a list with all the names and addresses of persons not to be asked for an external peer review (exclusion list). The SNSF will abide by this list if applicants provide a valid reason for the requested exclusion and other experts are available.

5.2 Evaluation procedure

The evaluation procedure follows the principles that guide the SNSF's evaluation practices¹⁴:

- Individual voting: Every panel member casts an independent rating.
- Clear separation between scientific evaluation and funding decision.
- Random selection: Funding decisions on proposals of similar scientific quality around the funding line may be reached by drawing lots¹⁵.

The selection procedure comprises two phases:

5.2.1 Phase 1: outcome communicated in late July 2025

In phase 1, at least two panel members acting as independent referees evaluate and rate the submitted application based on the evaluation criteria (cf. section 5.3). During the panel meeting phase 1, panel members discuss and rate the proposals. Based on the individual ratings of the panel members, a ranking list will be drawn up and forwarded to the Program Committee Careers, which will decide, within the limits of the available budget, on the proposals to be selected for phase 2. Proposals not selected for phase 2 will be rejected by written ruling (cf. section 5.4).

5.2.2 Phase 2: outcome communicated in November 2025

Applications selected for phase 2 will be peer reviewed. External peer reviewers are researchers who do not participate in the panel meetings and who submit their structured reviews prior to panel meeting phase 2, which includes an interview with the applicants. During the interview, applicants present their research project and answer the questions from the panel members. After each interview, panel members discuss and rate the proposal. Based on the individual ratings of the panel members, a ranking list will be drawn up and forwarded to the Program Committee Careers, which will decide, within the limits of the available budget, on the proposals to be funded. Proposals that are not funded will be rejected by written ruling (cf. section 5.4).

¹⁴ <https://snf.ch/en/6cs2wnfJtcfFDL6o/page/evaluation-procedure>

¹⁵ https://www.snf.ch/media/en/mwFXHmAWfYxeuNZq/Organisationsreglement-Forschungsrat_en.pdf (art. 19, para. 6)

5.3 Evaluation criteria

The following criteria will be considered during the evaluation procedure. They will focus on the scientific quality of the research project and the qualification of the applicant. The criteria will be applied during both evaluation phases:

5.3.1 Scientific quality of the research project

Ground-breaking nature and potential impact of the research project:

- To what extent does the proposed research address important challenges?
- To what extent are the objectives ambitious and beyond the state of the art (e.g., novel concepts and approaches or development between or across disciplines)?

Scientific approach:

- To what extent is the outlined scientific approach feasible bearing in mind the groundbreaking nature and ambition of the proposed research?
- To what extent are the proposed research methodology and working arrangements appropriate to achieve the goals of the project?
- To what extent are the proposed timescales, resources and PI commitment adequate and properly justified?

5.3.2 Qualification of the applicant

Intellectual capacity and creativity:

- To what extent has the applicant demonstrated the ability to conduct ground-breaking research?
- To what extent does the applicant provide evidence of creative and original thinking?
- To what extent does the applicant have the required scientific expertise and capacity to successfully execute the project?

5.4 Outcome and communication of decisions

After phase 1, all applicants will be informed about the outcome. Applicants not selected for phase 2 will receive a ruling with the scientific reasons underlying the evaluation.

Applicants who advance to phase 2 will be informed about the date of the interview. Applicants rejected in phase 2 will receive a ruling with the scientific reasons underlying the evaluation and the anonymized evaluation forms of the peer reviewers.

Proposals will be funded in order of priority based on their rank and the available funding.

The ruling may be appealed against before the Federal Administrative Court.

Bern, 23.08.2024

Update 28.08.2024: Precisions in section 1.2 “All three criteria must be fulfilled on the date of February 1st, 2025” and in section 3 “SNSF Starting Grants are awarded up to a maximum of 5 years.”