

Funding LARge international REsearch projects (FLARE)

Call for proposals 2024

In order to optimise the use of international research infrastructures and organisations by Swiss researchers, the SERI has mandated the SNSF to allocate CHF 46.3 million¹ as an accompanying measure for the 2025-2028 funding period within the framework of the FLARE (Funding LARge international REsearch projects) programme, which complements the funding of scientific research projects. Two calls are planned for the FLARE programme in the 2025-2028 period. The first one is being organised in 2024 and will lead to the award of grants for a duration up to four years.

1. Purpose and scope

¹ The FLARE programme aims at facilitating the development, construction, maintenance and operation of instrumentation for major international experiments in particle physics, ground-based astrophysics and astroparticle physics.

² FLARE grants are awarded to allow researchers from Swiss institutions to participate in these experiments.

³ For the 2025-2028 funding period, as a general principle the priority of FLARE funding is Switzerland's participation in CERN and ESO. A further priority is the Swiss participation in neutrino research infrastructure projects in the USA and Japan. Additionally, the participation of Swiss researchers at other ground-based infrastructure projects in the field of particle physics, astrophysics and astroparticle physics may also be funded. However, as specific financial resources are requested in the ERI dispatch 2025-2028 for funding projects of Swiss researchers in the frame of the preparation of CTA and SKA, the FLARE programme 2025-2028 is in principle not intended for proposals directly pertaining to these contexts.

2. Application procedure

2.1 Eligibility criteria for applicants

¹ Subject to approval by the Swiss Parliament

¹ Natural persons are eligible to submit applications if they meet the general eligibility requirements for the submission of applications in accordance with SNSF Regulations, in particular those set out in Art. 10 ff of the Funding Regulations² and in the General implementation Regulations for the Funding Regulations³. The requirements set out in Art. 13 of the Funding Regulations with regard to the proposed project must also be met.

² Two or more applicants are eligible per application if needed to achieve the targets set for the proposed activities. In cases of more than one applicant, the requirements set out in Art. 12 of the Funding Regulations must be met.

³ Only one submission for each experiment will be accepted. If an application is submitted by two or more applicants, each of them represents one or more subparts of the experiment.

2.2 Eligible costs

¹ Researchers can submit FLARE proposals to request funding for the development, construction, maintenance and operation of internationally recognised experiments.

² Costs in the following categories are eligible:

- a) Hardware costs.
- b) Salaries for technicians and/or engineers hired specifically for the project, or part of their salary for their contribution to the FLARE project; part of the salaries for scientific personnel dedicated to the FLARE project if the corresponding tasks are of a technical nature and essential to the FLARE endeavour. The requested salaries must comply with the salary ranges of the local institutions.
- c) Travel costs for the personnel hired on a FLARE grant if these travels are necessary for their activities; shipping and commissioning costs.
- d) Mandatory contribution to common funds. A justification has to be provided (Memorandum of Understanding or similar document). These costs must be of minor significance compared to the total requested budget.

³ The requested costs must be applied for and quantified in the proposal.

⁴ Other costs (such as local computing resources) can be requested if they are considered necessary for the planned activities. They should be justifiable and must comply with the SNSF Funding Regulations. The necessity of these costs is carefully evaluated and, as a general rule, will only be funded if the necessary funds are available.

2.3 Submission of applications

¹ The deadline for the submission of FLARE proposals is 15 November 2024 at 17:00 Swiss local time.

² FLARE proposals must be submitted using the mySNF online proposal submission system.

³ The requested duration of FLARE grants must be between one and four years.

⁴ The research plan is limited to a ten-page general description of the experiment, plus a maximum of five pages per individual subpart, each structured as follows:

- a) current status of the subpart of the experiment
- b) planned activities (including a detailed explanation of the requested costs)
- c) scientific relevance and impact relative to the overall experiment
- d) schedule and milestones

² http://www.snf.ch/SiteCollectionDocuments/allg_reglement_16_e.pdf

³ [snsf-general-implementation-regulations-for-the-funding-regulations-e.pdf \(snf.ch\)](https://www.snf.ch/SiteCollectionDocuments/allg_reglement_16_e.pdf)

⁵ The research plan is supplemented with a “business plan” consisting of a financial overview of the whole experiment and the planned deliverables and financial commitments of the Swiss participants over the duration of the experiment. If possible, the financial commitments of the Swiss participants have to be justified with copies of official documents attached to the business plan.

⁶ All other funds, including scientific personnel, that are available to the applicants for the experiment, or that were requested by the applicants from other funding sources, must be declared in the proposal.

3. Evaluation process, assessment criteria and grants

3.1 Consideration of proposals

¹ Only proposals that meet the formal requirements according to sections 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3 above are considered by the SNSF and evaluated by the FLARE evaluation panel.

² Proposals are not considered if their objectives manifestly do not match the purpose and scope of the FLARE programme as explained in section 1 of this document, if the proposals manifestly do not fulfil one of the evaluation criteria listed in section 3.2, or if they only request ineligible costs.

3.2 Evaluation

¹ The FLARE proposals are evaluated by a panel of experts (FLARE evaluation panel).

² The FLARE proposals are internationally peer-reviewed except for the specific funding for the LHC (see section 6).

³ The following evaluation criteria are applied:

- a) The peer review of the proposals is based on the following evaluation criteria:
 - i. the international visibility of the Swiss participation in the experiment;
 - ii. the quality and feasibility of the research to be carried out, and its significance for Swiss science;
 - iii. the scientific track record of the applicants and their experience in the field of the proposal.

- b) The FLARE panel will additionally consider the following two evaluation criteria:
 - iv. the relative long term funding priority of the overall experiment as indicated by the representatives of the Swiss community to which the experiment belongs;
 - v. the long-term commitment to the overall experiment of the institutions employing the applicants.

3.3 Evaluation process

The evaluation is carried out during a meeting of the FLARE evaluation panel after the proposals have passed the formal requirements check (see paragraph 3.1.), each proposal being assigned to at least two referees amongst the FLARE panel members.

3.4 Decisions

¹ Division II of the SNSF Research Council decides on the financing or rejection of the FLARE proposals. These decisions are based on the evaluation results of the FLARE evaluation panel meeting.

² The Presiding Board of the SNSF approves the decisions of Division II of the SNSF Research Council.

³ The SNSF communicates the decision to the applicants in the form of an appealable ruling, which mentions, in case the project is funded, the amount of funds to be allocated to the project as well as any conditions or requirements. Such rulings may be appealed against before the Federal Administrative Court.

4. Conduct of the approved projects

- ¹ Successful FLARE grants can start at the earliest on 1 April 2025.
- ² For ongoing FLARE grants, annual financial reports have to be submitted to the SNSF. A scientific final report has to be submitted for all FLARE grants except for the specific funding for the LHC (see section 6).

5. Organisational provisions

5.1 FLARE evaluation panel

- ¹ The FLARE evaluation panel consists of members of Division II of the SNSF Research Council, as well as additional national or international experts from the three different scientific communities concerned by the FLARE programme, namely: experimental particle physics, astrophysics and experimental astroparticle physics. The number of members of the FLARE evaluation panel is between 5 and 10.
- ² The additional experts are selected by Division II of the SNSF Research Council.
- ³ All panel members are elected for the duration of the ERI funding period 2025-2028.
- ⁴ The final panel composition is approved by Division II of the SNSF Research Council. Members of the FLARE evaluation panel are not eligible to submit applications.
- ⁵ The members of the FLARE evaluation panel are remunerated in accordance with the usual SNSF rates.
- ⁶ The panel is chaired by a member of the SNSF Research Council.
- ⁷ Division II of the SNSF Research Council can nominate ad-hoc replacements if panel members are unable to attend the evaluation meeting.
- ⁸ The FLARE panel takes its decisions in consensus. A majority of the members of the panel constitutes a quorum.
- ⁹ If a consensus is not possible, a decision is taken by a majority vote. In the case of an equality of votes, the chair of the FLARE evaluation panel has the deciding vote.
- ¹⁰ The meeting of the FLARE evaluation panel is organised as follows:
 - a) The responsible applicants of each proposal present their proposal to the FLARE evaluation panel. If the responsible applicants cannot attend the meeting, they may appoint a representative.
 - b) After the presentation, the panel can ask questions or request clarifications.
 - c) Based on the written assessments of the external peer reviewers and two referees, the interview with the applicants, and the discussions at the panel meeting, the evaluation panel recommends either rejection or funding of the proposal. Decisions on recommendations are made by consensus or, if necessary, by majority vote. In case of a recommendation for funding, the panel also recommends the amount to be granted.

5.2 Role of the representatives of the Swiss research communities

The representatives of the three Swiss research communities involved (astrophysics, experimental particle physics and experimental astroparticle physics) communicate their long-term funding priorities before the meeting of the FLARE evaluation panel. They are mandated by these communities and must convey the opinion of their community as a whole.

6. Specific funding arrangements for the LHC

¹ The yearly Swiss contribution for the period 2025-2028 to the LHC maintenance and operation (M&O) costs for the LHC experiments with Swiss participation (ATLAS, CMS, LHCb) is funded through the regular FLARE budget. Once the costs for 2025 are approved by the CERN Resources Review Board (RRB), the CHIPP chairperson submits, for the same deadline of 15 November 2024, an application with a short research plan (maximum five pages) summarising the Swiss commitment. The Administrative Offices evaluate the application, if necessary in consultation with the FLARE evaluation panel, and make a funding proposal to the Presiding Board. The requested amounts must precisely reflect the costs approved by the CERN RRB.

² The yearly Swiss contribution to the Worldwide LHC Computing Grid (WLCG) for the physics exploitation of the LHC data is funded through the regular FLARE budget. Once the pledges for 2025 are known, the Swiss coordinator of the WLCG activities submits, within the same deadline of 15 November 2024, an application with a short research plan (maximum ten pages) summarising the Swiss commitment. The Administrative Offices evaluate the application, if necessary in consultation with the FLARE evaluation panel, and make a funding proposal to the Presiding Board. The requested amounts must reflect what is reasonably necessary to honour the Swiss pledges toward the WLCG. If costs going manifestly beyond the Swiss pledges are envisaged, then either a full FLARE proposal needs to be submitted, or these costs have to be requested in the FLARE proposals of the corresponding LHC experiments.

7. Final provisions

¹ In the absence of any relevant provisions in these Regulations, the provisions of the Funding Regulations and the General implementation regulations for the Funding Regulations apply.

² These Call provisions are issued by the Presiding Board of the National Research Council on 4 June 2024 and enter into force on 1 August 2024.

³ They apply until the end of the ERI funding period 2025-2028 subject to any changes to federal requirements and provisions. The transitional provision of Art. 33 para. 3 of the Organisational Regulations for the Research Council applies to the responsibilities and procedures of the Research Council.