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Swiss Open Research Data Grants Track A: Explore projects Application guidelines for proposals

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Introduction

On behalf of the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI), swissuniversities, the ETH Domain, the SNSF, and the Swiss Academies of Arts and Sciences developed the [Swiss National Strategy for Open Research Data \(ORD\)](#) and the associated [ORD Action Plan](#).

The ORD Action Plan comprises several action areas, the first of which – Action Area A – is designed to create and promote new discipline-specific and interdisciplinary open data communities while also fostering the leadership skills of Swiss researchers in these communities. Action Line A1.2 of Action Area A concerns grants for researchers and research communities that are awarded to advance the development of ORD practices; swissuniversities and the ETH Domain share primary ownership for this action line.

To implement Action Line A1.2, swissuniversities and the ETH Domain collaborated to develop the funding programme “[Swiss Open Research Data Grants](#)”, which invites researchers from all disciplines and from all types of higher education and research institutions to submit their project proposals. The objective is to fund projects that make tools available and therefore enabling, facilitating, and fostering the sharing of research data based on ORD principles and to assist researchers in becoming Open Science leaders in their field.

The programme is also designed to support researchers in engaging in or developing ORD practices with and for their communities. It is therefore a declared goal to fund projects that promote community building – including communities arising from interdisciplinary collaborations with shared ORD needs – and that look into ways to integrate a new ORD practice into existing infrastructures and international networks. Preference will be given to projects that engage in and are connected to a community.

The programme consists of three tracks, A, B, and C. The purpose of Track A and the relevant application guidelines are described in the following.

Please note that applications are processed either by swissuniversities or by the ETH Domain, depending on eligibility (for more information, please visit [our website](#)). Project proposals from [institutions eligible for federal project contributions](#) (in the following, PgB funding) taking the swissuniversities path are evaluated by the Open Science Reviewers’ Pool. The Delegation Open Science is the body responsible for final decisions on proposals. Applicants for project funding via swissuniversities must follow the application guidelines below.

Track A mission

Track A “explore projects” aims at exploring, conceptualizing, prototyping, and/or building up ORD practices to improve research capabilities and support research communities. These projects should pave the way for long-term ORD practices that encompass the entire Swiss research landscape and that have the potential for widespread application in diverse communities in research and society.

General terms and conditions

Applicants and consortium

Proposals may be submitted by one applicant or by a consortium of applicants. The applicants’ institution [must be eligible for funding through the federal project contributions programme](#) (PgB programme). Please read the Guidelines for the 2021–2024 PgB programmes managed by swissuniversities ([German](#) | [French](#)).

There are no restrictions on what constitutes a consortium. They may be composed of applicants from one or several institutions, with no restrictions on the number of applicants from the same institution. A consortium must designate a lead applicant (so-called leading house) to represent all other co-applicants. For information about collaborations with non-eligible partner institutions, please see section 3.1 of the Guidelines for the 2021–2024 PgB programmes managed by swissuniversities ([German](#) | [French](#) | [English](#)).

The funding scheme is not geared towards infrastructure or service providers unless they are linked to a research community. Infrastructure or service providers may be part of the consortium but are ruled out as lead applicants.

Please note that applicants must have received explicit approval from their higher education institution before they submit their project proposal. This is because the grant agreement is concluded between swissuniversities and the eligible higher education institution: by approving an application, the institution commits to providing the necessary matching fundings if a proposal is accepted.

Budget and project duration

The overall budget must not exceed CHF 150,000. This is the total cost of the project (including matching funds). The project duration may be up to 18 months, but the project must be completed by 31 December 2024.

Funding

If approved, projects receive up to 50 percent co-funding from swissuniversities according to PgB rules. In particular, the matching funds principle must be upheld: eligible higher education institutions are required to provide at least 50 percent of the overall funding from their own resources for the duration of the project. Please refer to the Guidelines for the 2021–2024 PgB programmes managed by swissuniversities for more details on funding ([German](#) | [French](#) | [English](#)).

Budgeting guidelines and eligible costs

Budgets must include all project costs: federal contributions, institutional contributions (cash and in kind), and other contributions. In the case of a consortium spanning multiple institutions, the budget must detail which funds are allocated to which institution. Please refer to the corresponding budget forms listed below under “Required documents”.

Only costs specific to exploring an ORD practice may be listed in the budget. Adjacent research costs – including data production/collection and analysis, research software/hardware development – are not covered by the grant. Operational costs of ORD platforms¹ may be included only if a platform is newly developed in the scope of the project and only for the duration of the project.

Please consult the Guidelines for the 2021–2024 PgB programmes managed by swissuniversities ([German](#) | [French](#) | [English](#)) for details on budgeting requirements, funding, and regulations for PgB contributions and the corresponding institutional contributions.

How to apply

Applicants must submit their proposals (as a **PDF and Word** document) to: open-science@swissuniversities.ch. The subject line of the email is as follows: “CHORD – Track A Proposal:” and the proposal’s short title. All required documents (below) should be written in English due to the international composition of the expert pool.

The submission **deadline is 31 December 2022 (12:00 CEST)**.

¹ Due to the expected diversity of proposals, a “platform” is defined in a broad sense: any ORD software, database, collection, open lab, or infrastructure that serves an existing or intended ORD community.

Required documents

Two forms must be completed and submitted:

1. [Proposal form](#)
2. Project budget form
 - a. [Budget form PgB Individual Institution](#) *or*
 - b. [Budget form PgB Multiple Institutions](#)

Only applications that comply with all the guidelines will be considered. If applicable, a DMP must be submitted once the project has been accepted.

Evaluation procedure and criteria

Each application will be evaluated and scored by two external reviewers on the basis of the project's excellence, impact potential, and implementation. The following are the guiding questions for the evaluation:

Excellence of ORD practice – weight = 0.3

- To what extent will the planned project substantially advance an ORD practice in the respective community, solve or take a crucial step towards solving a critical problem (thus facilitating progress) in the targeted field?
- To what extent are the objectives ambitious and beyond the state of the art (e.g. based on novel concepts/innovative approaches)?
- How well are already existing ORD best practices (e.g. FAIR principles) considered in the proposal?
- How well does or could the project integrate with existing ORD services and infrastructures or how well could it contribute to build up missing ones?
- What is the applicants' track record (not limited to ORD) in the targeted field(s) and with regard to project management?
- To what extent does the proposal support a collaborative approach and involve significant synergies, complementarities, and/or scientific added value on its pathway to achieving its objectives?

Impact on community – weight = 0.4

- To what extent will an existing or a newly formed community (be able to) engage with the ORD practice(s) built-up during the project?
- What will be the field-specific extent of the built-up ORD practice(s) in the intended community/communities?
- In what ways and to what degree will the new ORD practice(s) contribute to the targeted research goals and visions within the research community/communities?

Implementation – weight = 0.3

- To what extent is the project feasible, bearing in mind that designing or building up ORD practices in specific research fields is a high risk/high gain endeavour?
- Are potentially associated risks adequately addressed?
- To what extent are the proposed measures and working arrangements appropriate for achieving the goals of the project?
- To what extent has the proposal justified the time frame and necessary resources?
- In what ways does the governance of the project adequately involve all partners, e.g. in decision-making?

- To what extent is the project collaborative, going beyond what an individual institution could achieve alone?
- How sustainable is the proposed project? For example, do the applicants lay out how they could collaborate with existing ORD service and infrastructure providers to ensure the long-term success of the ORD practice(s) if adopted?

Please note that all reviewers are vetted; in the case of a conflict of interest, they will be excluded from the reviewing process.

Decision and project start

The final decision is taken by the Delegation Open Science, upon consultation of the reviewers' recommendations. The decision is scheduled for June 2023 and approved projects may begin in July 2023.

Reporting

The grantee must comply with the following reporting duties:

1. Annual content report form (per calendar year)
2. Annual financial report form (per calendar year)
3. Final content report form
4. Final financial report form

The Delegation Open Science reserves the right to redefine financial contributions on the basis of the reports. A final review will be conducted with the external reviewers.

Please refer to the Guidelines for the 2021–2024 PgB programmes managed by swissuniversities ([German](#) | [French](#) | [English](#)) for further information about the reporting duties.

Open science

Grantees must ensure open access to scientific publications (self-archiving or open access publishing) and to all the project's deliveries.

Ethical and legal compliance

Applicants bear the main responsibility for the project. In particular, they must consider all ethical, legal, and societal aspects surrounding the proposed project. If awarded a grant, they must comply with all applicable laws and regulations pertaining to these matters.