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## Programme Open Science II

### Application guidelines for the further development of ORD Strategy Council activities and facilitation of coordination between higher education institutions

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#### 1. Preamble and Context

##### 1.1 Open Research Data Strategy and Action Plan

In January 2020, the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) commissioned swissuniversities to develop a [Swiss National Strategy for Open Research Data](#) and an associated action plan together with the ETH Domain, the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) and the Swiss Academies of Arts and Sciences. The [Action Plan for Open Research Data \(ORD\)](#) published in January 2022 concretises the measures of the ORD Strategy published in 2021 and was developed jointly by the above-mentioned four partners. The ORD Strategy and the Action Plan state that the various partners, namely swissuniversities, the ETH Domain, the SNSF, and the Swiss Academies, as well as the ORD Strategy Council assume primary ownership for specific action lines.

swissuniversities has been implementing the action lines of the ORD Action Plan that are under its responsibility and has been financing them through federal project contributions (PgB) ([Programme Open Science I and II](#)) since 2022. The [Delegation Open Science](#) (DeIOS) leads the implementation of the programme on behalf of the Board of swissuniversities.

## 1.2 Action Area B of the ORD Action Plan

The aim of Action Area B of the ORD Action Plan is the “development, promotion, and maintenance of financially sustainable basic infrastructures and services for all researchers” (p. 19). The existing ORD landscape should be consolidated, strategically developed, and duplication avoided. Access to reliable and relevant ORD services and infrastructures should be ensured for researchers.

Action Lines of Action Area B pertaining to the development and consolidation of the ORD landscape are under the primary ownership of the ORD Strategy Council (see 2.1). The Strategy Council has decided to use a cluster approach (see 2.2) to assess the ORD research support through discipline-specific landscape analyses (e.g. the [landscape analysis report](#) for the Health and Life Sciences cluster) that should form the bases for strategic ORD blueprints (for HLS: [the Blueprint Level A](#)).

The DeIOS has decided to issue a call to support the ongoing work of the ORD Strategy Council in Action Area B.<sup>1</sup>

## 1.3 Federal Spending Cuts: Limitation to 2025

On 20 September 2024, the Federal Council [announced](#) which cost-cutting measures suggested in the [report](#) of the ‘Spending and Subsidy Review’ expert group are to be pursued further. These measures include the discontinuation of federal project contributions (PgB). swissuniversities has been informed that for now, financial resources for the 2025–2028 programmes can only be committed for the year 2025. Projects may use funding received for 2025 until the end of July 2026.

## 2. The ORD Blueprints

### 2.1 The ORD Strategy Council

A key characteristic of the ORD Action Plan is the participants’ common will for coordination, and thus for a collaborative approach. For this reason, a broad-based Strategy Council has

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<sup>1</sup> Action Area B of the ORD Action Plan lists the tasks for the Strategy Council for the period 2022—2024 as follows:

- Measure B1: Evaluate the Swiss ORD landscape with regard to the consolidation of a strategic development of services and infrastructures: report on a regular basis on the ORD landscape, prepare decisions related to consolidating existing basic infrastructures and services; identify gaps in the ORD landscape, decide where a strategic development is necessary; commission a preliminary study that describes how services can contribute to a supporting ORD landscape, with all services being assessed for their potential to become a service of foremost national relevance.
- Measure B2: Provide researchers with long-term ORD services and infrastructures: secure long-term funding; ensure that ORD infrastructures and service providers can obtain operational funding; ensure that relevant actors support all five pathways through appropriate funding mechanisms.
- Measure B3: Ensure long-term funding of ORD infrastructures and services of foremost national relevance: ensure the strategic development of new infrastructures and basic services and therefore regular monitoring of the national and international ORD landscape; ensure that infrastructures made available to researchers are interoperable and cover all phases of the data cycle.
- Measure B4: Provide access to ORD services and infrastructures and improve interoperability: Support and incentivise service providers, infrastructure operators and research communities in developing and implementing standards and best practices for interoperability; include criteria for interoperability and accessibility of research data in the evaluation of research projects that develop new ORD practices and/or operate ORD services and infrastructures.

been set up to provide strategic leadership for the ORD Action Plan. The [ORD Strategy Council](#) was created to develop a common vision for the future ORD landscape in Switzerland and to ensure both coherence and interoperability of all infrastructures and services, as well as to support the interfaces with other research areas. The Strategy Council also assumes responsibility for initiating and promoting the development and communication of positions and policies across Switzerland in international debates, while guaranteeing that the institutions remain autonomous. In addition, the Strategy Council is responsible for specific measures of the ORD Action Plan as primary owner. The inaugural meeting of the Strategy Council was held in January 2022.

The ORD Strategy Council is composed in such a way that the most important players for steering the development of the ORD landscape in Switzerland – the ETH Domain, the universities, the universities of applied sciences, the universities of teacher education, the SNSF and the Swiss Academies of Arts and Sciences – are represented. A Coordination Group and a small secretariat provide decentralized support to the ORD Strategy Council, which has the legal form of a simple partnership.

## 2.2 The Cluster Approach

The Strategy Council's overarching objective is to provide researchers in Switzerland with the best possible ORD infrastructures and services, enabling seamless collaboration with both domestic and global research networks. To implement the measures in Action Area B of the ORD Action Plan, landscape analyses are deemed essential for assessing the current state of researcher support and identifying areas for enhancement and process optimization. The complex and multi-layered ecosystem of research infrastructures and services cannot be directly used as a starting point for action. Instead, the Strategy Council focuses on specific clusters within this ecosystem for detailed analyses:

- Health and Life Sciences (HLS)
- Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH)
- Data Science (transversal)

Cluster Specific Blueprints are composed of two documents: Level A documents that describe the Strategy Council's main objectives and strategic orientation for the specific cluster, and Level B documents that concretize these objectives and detail the operational processes, timelines, milestones, roles, governance and funding.

Task Forces conduct the landscape analyses, while Working Groups work on the Blueprint Level A documents, all in close collaboration with the Strategy Council's Coordination Group. Stakeholders are then engaged to develop the Blueprint Level B documents.

## 2.3 Current status of implementation

In September 2022, a task force began its work on the landscape analysis of the HLS cluster. Its [final report](#) was published in February 2024 and updated in July 2024 following stakeholder feedback. The HLS Working Group then developed the Level A document for the cluster. A stakeholder event took place in March 2025 to start developing the Level B document.

Furthermore, in 2024 the SSH Task Force has begun its landscape analysis. The final report is expected to be published in spring 2025 and will serve as the basis for a working group to develop a Level A document.

Work on the third cluster, Data Science, is scheduled to begin in 2025 with a comprehensive landscape analysis.

### 3. Call for proposals

The present call welcomes project proposals from [eligible higher education institutions](#) that aim at supporting the work on the ORD Blueprints. swissuniversities coordinates the submission process as part of the programme Open Science II.

The work of the ORD Strategy Council can be supported by mandating qualified personnel

- to participate in the Task Force Data Science to conduct the cluster’s landscape analysis;
- to actively participate in the Working Group Blueprint for Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH);
- to contribute to the Blueprint Health and Life Sciences (HLS) Level B Blueprint document;
- to revise the existing Blueprint documents from a communication and public relations perspective.

The list is not exhaustive. Further project ideas to advance the work on the ORD Blueprints are welcome.

#### 3.1 Submission and general requirements

<b>Submission</b>	<p>One submission per <a href="#">eligible higher education institution</a> per cluster (HLS, SSH or Data Science) is possible. The following documents must be sent to <a href="mailto:open-science@swissuniversities.ch">open-science@swissuniversities.ch</a> with the subject line "Blueprint support: <i>Title of project proposal</i>":</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) <a href="#">Application form</a> (as PDF <b>and</b> Word)</li> <li>2) If applicable: (Partial) job description of the person appointed to contributing to a task force or working group<sup>2</sup></li> <li>3) A letter of support from the ORD Strategy Council which certifies the relevance of the planned project (please contact Selina Camille Kaufmann for further information: <a href="mailto:contact@openresearchdata.swiss">contact@openresearchdata.swiss</a>)</li> <li>4) <a href="#">Budget form for individual projects</a> <b>or</b> <a href="#">budget form for co-operation projects</a> (as Excel)</li> </ol> <p><b>Submissions are accepted on a rolling basis.</b></p>
<b>Signature</b>	<p>The application must be signed by the president or rector of the higher education institution. The signature can be <b>either</b> digital with a Qualified Electronic Signature (QES), <b>or</b> handwritten. By signing an application, the institution commits to providing the necessary matching fundings if a proposal is accepted.</p>
<b>Project duration</b>	<p>Projects must be concluded by 31 July 2026 at the latest.</p>
<b>Budget</b>	<p>Up to CHF 250'000 in federal funding is available for this call (for details on federal funding, specifically the matching funds principle, please consult Point 4.1 "Regulations for federal project contributions"). If a total of more than CHF 250'000 federal funds are requested by the time of a DeIOS meeting, the DeIOS reserves</p>

<sup>2</sup> If personnel is mandated to contribute to a task force or working group, their work percentage and job description would have to be adapted accordingly. The description of these new tasks will have to be provided in the annex of the application.

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the right to award only a portion of the requested funds per project.

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**General alignment** Project proposals must be in line with the principles of the [National ORD Strategy](#) and [ORD Action Plan](#), in particular the FAIR principles, the revised [National OA Strategy](#), and the swissuniversities [Checklist Diversity Mainstreaming](#).

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### 3.2 Selection procedure

Proposals are evaluated on a rolling basis. They will be assessed in terms of their formal requirements and general feasibility by the General Secretariat of swissuniversities.

The proposals are then submitted to the Delegation Open Science, the decision-making body of the Programme Open Science II, for approval at its quarterly meetings (March, June, September, December). The Delegation can decide to fund a project without conditions, stipulate conditions which must be fulfilled before the project start or during the project, give advice on the implementation of the project, or decline to fund a project. Decisions are then communicated to the project applicants.

Once the available funds are exhausted, a notice will appear on the [calls website of swissuniversities](#). If funds become available again at a later date, the call will be reactivated.

## 4. Financing modalities

### 4.1 Regulations for federal project contributions (PgB) and matching funds principle

If approved, projects receive up to 50% co-funding from swissuniversities according to PgB rules.

Subject to the budgetary decision of the Federal Assembly, federal funds are allocated by the State Secretariat for Education, Research, and Innovation (SERI) and awarded to the higher education institutions via swissuniversities; the regulations for federal project contributions (PgB) therefore apply. In particular, this includes the matching funds principle: the higher education institutions are required to cover at least 50 percent of the total project costs from their own resources. More information is available in the Guidelines for the PgB-funded programmes managed by swissuniversities ([German](#) | [French](#) | [English](#)).

### 4.2 Reporting

The project leaders must submit content and financial reports to swissuniversities. Detailed information on reporting can be found in the Guidelines for the PgB-funded programmes managed by swissuniversities ([German](#) | [French](#) | [English](#)).

## 5. Contact

For questions regarding the PgB regulations please see the [website of the Programme Open Science II](#) or send an email to: [open-science@swissuniversities.ch](mailto:open-science@swissuniversities.ch).

For more information about the ORD Blueprints and possible project ideas to support their development, please contact Selina Camille Kaufmann: [contact@openresearchdata.swiss](mailto:contact@openresearchdata.swiss).