

SPI Exploratory Grants Call for Proposals

Deadline for applications: 7 October 2024, 12:00 (Swiss time)

About the SPI Exploratory Grants

The SPI Exploratory Grants support Swiss based scientists active in polar regions (including remote high-altitude regions such as the Andes and the Himalayas) by allowing them to launch short-term new ideas (for example pilot projects), fund additional fieldwork or launch new collaborations with financial support for logistics.

To maximise the scientific output of a project whilst minimising its environmental footprint, grants can also be used for the acquisition of polar data and samples through innovative methods. These methods can for instance involve reinforced collaboration between research groups or with other projects, enhanced cooperation with local partners, or the acquisition of remotely sensed data.

Collaboration with new teams or across disciplines are particularly encouraged, as well as participation in larger/international activities. The grants can be used to complement the funding of initiatives supported by larger funding schemes (e.g. SNSF, EU, etc.).

Eligible costs and financial support

The grants are destined to cover costs for up to CHF 75,000.- per successfully evaluated project. A detailed budget will be requested from each applicant. For this year (2024), the total budget allocated to SPI Exploratory Grants will be capped at CHF 275,000.-.

Eligible costs:

- travel costs to scientific stations/infrastructure in polar regions (including for the performance of technical/maintenance work);
- shipment of scientific equipment or material, and samples;
- purchase of small equipment (in duly justified cases) and consumables;
- rental of scientific equipment or sensing systems;
- acquisition of remotely sensed data;
- funding towards fieldwork carried out by local partners;
- costs for preliminary analysis/early processing of data/samples directly after fieldwork (max. CHF 15,000.-);
- offset of carbon emissions, if not an option already offered by the institution (see below for more details on the eligibility conditions of carbon compensation).

Non-eligible costs:

- overhead;
- costs relating to salaries of permanent positions;
- costs relating to scientific exchange (stay in another lab/research facility) and the organisation of workshops;
- initiatives which are not directly inserted into a research activity (sports, arts, adventure, outreach, ...).

Target public

The SPI Exploratory Grants are complementary to the Polar Access Fund (specifically focused on early-career scientists) and to the SPI Technogrants (focused on technology developments). Consequently, eligibility will be limited to established researchers or post-docs (at least 3 years after PhD graduation). The grants are open to all researchers employed by a Swiss public research institution.

Researchers from all fields, also fields considered as “non-typical” for polar sciences (e.g. engineering, materials, medicine, humanities and social sciences, etc.), are encouraged to apply if they have a project to be conducted in a polar context.

For fieldwork funding for early-career scientists, please consider the [Polar Access Fund](#).

Geographical focus

The SPI Exploratory Grants fund Swiss scientists active in polar regions, the Arctic and Antarctic, according to the SPI’s focus on high latitude.

High-altitude research is an essential part of SPI and an important complementary area of interest to high-latitude poles. However, funding of fieldwork and logistics for high-altitude research will concentrate on projects contributing to comparative high-altitude studies in support of polar issues and on complex and expensive logistics for fieldwork in remote high-altitude areas such as the Andes and the Himalayas.

Acquisitions of datasets and samples must relate to the high-latitude and high-altitude regions as defined above.

Environmental impact

In view of promoting innovative and sustainable research methods, applicants are asked to take a thoughtful approach weighing the merits of the proposed project against its environmental impact. The proposal should reflect efforts made towards the inclusion of innovative methods for data and sample acquisition, optimised coordination and planning, enhanced collaborations with partners, and the maximisation / pooling of sampling opportunities. While some projects have a greater environmental footprint than others, efforts made by applicants to reduce it must be made explicit in submitted proposals. The offset of carbon emissions should only be applied once all options to avoid and reduce emissions have been exhausted.

Eligibility

Applicants are reminded to study the eligibility rules for this call closely. Ineligible applications will not be submitted for evaluation. To be eligible, proposals must notably respect the call’s general aims, the definition of the call’s target public, eligible costs as well as its geographic focus.

Submission

A complete application file consists of:

SWISS POLAR INSTITUTE

- A) Completed [online application form](#) (contact, main information and proposal)

- B) Attachments to be uploaded into online application form as PDF:
 - 1) Letters of support
 - 2) CVs of the applicant and main partners, incl. publication lists as PDF (compulsory – free format, max 4 pages per person)

All application documents must be uploaded through the [online application form](#). Applications sent by email will not be accepted. Incomplete proposals will be considered ineligible.

The deadline for submission will be 3 October 2024 (12:00 noon Swiss time). The online application form will be closed on the deadline date. No late applications will be accepted – no exceptions!

Should you encounter any problem in the submission process, contact: grants@swisspolar.ch. Please note however that troubleshooting in the last minutes before the deadline cannot be guaranteed.

Evaluation

Eligible proposals submitted before the deadline will be evaluated by an external scientific evaluation panel appointed by the SPI.

The proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

1. Scientific merit of the proposed project;
2. Originality of the project;
3. Feasibility (scientific and logistical);
4. Experience and expertise of the PI and partners for the proposed project;
5. Added value of the requested funding.

NB Whilst scientific merit remains the main evaluation criterion, sound efforts to maximise scientific outputs while minimising the environmental footprint of proposed projects will also be considered during the evaluation process. This is not intended to discriminate projects and disciplines that have fewer options to minimise their environmental footprint but solely to stimulate reflection on the environmental impact of a proposed project and to promote sustainability in polar research.

Evaluation results will be transmitted to applicants approximately four months after the application deadline. Successful applicants will receive a grant agreement (contract) from SPI specifying the grant's conditions (reporting, payments, etc.).

For any additional information or clarification, please contact: grants@swisspolar.ch.