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Programme Open Science II
Swiss Open Research Data Grants: Explore projects
Application guidelines for proposals in ORD Measure A1 and
Measure 2 of Innovative Areas

Contents

1. Context

1.1   The Swiss Open Research Data Grants programme

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 com-

munities 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.

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 (e.g., best practices, guidelines, training activities, data analysis / visualisation tools, etc.) 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 with and are connected to a community.

Project proposals from institutions eligible for federal project contributions (in the following, PgB funding) can be submitted under the programme Open Science II of swissuniversities and must follow the application guidelines below. The proposals are evaluated by the Open Science Reviewers' Pool, while the Delegation Open Science is the body responsible for final decisions.

1.2 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 project-related contributions. 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. Call for proposals

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.

Addendum: Suggested themes for project proposals
Considering the above mission of Track A and previously funded projects in this track, the present call specifically encourages project applications addressing desiderata in one of the following areas:

Exploring ORD practices within disciplines that are not yet active in the field
Project proposals from disciplines that are currently lacking ORD guidelines/practices, and/or disciplines working with qualitative research data, are particularly welcome. Track A

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focuses on projects that aim to explore and experiment with ORD practices for a given research community or field of research. This might include, for instance, assessment of researchers' understanding and perception of ORD practices within a specific discipline, development of training activities and/or incentives, identification of conditions to apply discipline-specific ORD practices, development of guidelines, best practices or standards for data-sharing, or definition of methods to generate ORD. For more examples, please consult the lists of funded projects for CHORD Track A – Explore projects (1st call, 2nd call, 3rd call).

Innovative Areas: exploring ORD practices with international organisations
In the context of the PgB Open Science II programme, an innovative dimension of Open Science was defined as one of three dimensions (open access to scholarly publications, open research data and the innovative dimension). Within this innovative dimension, explorative projects that foster an open science compatible technology and knowledge transfer between higher education institutions and societal actors will be funded. Today's societal challenges, such as climate change or digital governance, require international cooperation between state and non-state actors. Open Science has the potential to contribute to solving such societal challenges.
One of the measures focuses on the collaboration between higher education institutions and international organisations.[1] For this reason, this measure of the innovative areas aims to determine whether and how cooperation between science and international organisations can be promoted by means of Open Science principles and practices. Therefore, applications that specifically investigate how ORD practices can be (further) developed in collaboration with international organisations are particularly welcome.

Please note: The above suggested areas for project proposals are not exclusive, but given preference. Project proposals active in other areas and disciplines are still welcome.

3. Requirements

3.1 Submission and general requirements

Submission	The following documents must be sent to open-science@swissuniversities.ch with the subject line "Explore Project Proposal: *Title of project proposal*": 1) Application form (as PDF **and** Word) 2) Budget form for individual projects **or** budget form for co-operation projects (as Excel) Proposals may be submitted by one applicant (individual projects) or by a consortium of applicants (cooperation projects). **Submission deadline: Sunday, 2 March 2025, 23:59 CET**
Signature	The application must be signed by the president or rector of all participating higher education institutions. The signature can be **either** digital with a Qualified Electronic Signature (QES), **or** handwritten. By signing an application, the institution commits to

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[1] The term 'international organisations' in the present call refers primarily to international governmental organisations drawing membership from states or, in terms of a broader understanding of international organisations, also to international non-governmental organisations. The most prominent example is the United Nations including its bodies and agencies.

	providing the necessary matching fundings if a proposal is accepted.
Project duration	The earliest project start is expected to be 1 July 2025, projects must be concluded by 31 July 2026 at the latest. Please note that given the brief funding period, projects should carefully address the challenges associated with identifying and securing qualified personnel. The likelihood of successfully recruiting the necessary specialised personnel will be a key consideration during the evaluation process.
Budget	Up to CHF 200'000[2] in federal funding per project (for details on federal funding, please consult Point 6 "Regulations for federal project contributions")
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.
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.

3.2 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). A consortium must designate a lead applicant (so-called lead institution) 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 2025–2026 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.

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[2] Due to the maximum project duration of only 13 months, the project must clearly demonstrate in the application how the funds will be used coherently within this time limit. Please note that the maximum funding may be requested only in well-justified cases.

3.3 Budgeting guidelines and eligible costs

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 platforms[3] 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 2025–2026 PgB programmes managed by swissuniversities (German | French | English) for details on budgeting requirements, funding, and regulations for PgB contributions and the corresponding institutional contributions.

4. Evaluation procedure and criteria

Each application will be assessed in a competitive evaluation process by external experts in swissuniversities' Open Science Reviewers' Pool (cf. Implementation Plan) 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?

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[3] 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.

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.

5. Timetable

18 December 2024	The call for proposal opens
22 January 2025	Open Science event for networking and planning cooperative projects
2 March 2025	**Submission deadline**
March – May 2024	Evaluation of applications by the Open Science Reviewers' Pool
June 2025	Decision by the Delegation Open Science with subsequent announcement
1 July 2025	**Earliest possible project start**

6. Regulations for federal project contributions (PgB)

If approved, projects receive up to 50% 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% of the overall funding from their own resources for the duration of the project.

6.1 Matching funds principle

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).

6.2 Reporting

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

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7. Contact

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