



Support for National Research Activities in the Space Sector – Guidelines

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1. Introduction

The Ordinance of 17 December 2021 on the Promotion of National Activities in the Space Sector ([NASO, SR 420.125](#)) aims to strengthen Swiss space actors at universities and non-commercial research institutions outside the higher education sector, to further advance the implementation of [Swiss Space Policy](#) (promotion of scientific excellence, section 2.1 of the Swiss Space Policy 2023) and to prepare these actors optimally for participation in ESA or other international programs (see [Art. 1 NASO](#)). According to [Art. 2 NASO](#), this is done by means of contributions to which there is no entitlement.

This guide highlights what applicants should be particularly aware of to comply with the national legal framework. Moreover, starting from chapter 5, this document serves as financial guideline.

The legal framework for funding by SERI is defined by the Federal Act of 14 December 2012 on the Promotion of Research and Innovation ([RIPA, SR 420.1](#)) and the Subsidies Act of 5 October 1990 ([SubA, SR 616.1](#)). The Ordinance of 17 December 2021 on the Promotion of National Activities in the Space Sector (Art. 2 let c, [NASO, SR 420.125](#)) elaborates on the provisions set out in the RIPA. SERI funding for national activities in space is implemented by a decision from SERI to the Swiss beneficiary (Art. 49, [RIPO, SR 420.11](#)).

2. Eligibility criteria

The eligibility criteria are laid down in [Art. 18 and 19 NASO](#). SERI may provide funding for projects that carry out practical or technical development activities in support of a broader scientific objective. In doing so, the project addresses the technological and space research needs as expressed in the [Swiss Space Policy](#).

2.1 Participation

Proposals can be submitted by institutions that fall under [Art. 4, Art. 5 and Art. 29 para. 1 let. B point 3 RIPA](#).

Applicants must demonstrate that their projects are of national interest and would not be possible without federal funding. They must also provide adequate own contributions for the proposed activities (see chapter 7).

2.2 Activities deemed eligible for support

The following activities are eligible for federal funding, if they enable or facilitate Swiss participation in European Space Agency (ESA) programmes and projects:

1. Preparation for or participation in international space programmes and projects;
2. Implementation of space programmes and projects;
3. Follow-up on participation in space programmes and projects;

4. Information, consultancy and networking activities of institutions and organisations involved in the space sector.

2.3 Activities that are not eligible for support (non-exhaustive)

The NASO is not concerned with providing financial support for business cases, the development of commercial products, or the establishment of start-ups. The NASO does not aim to support research activities per se, whether in the natural sciences, technology or social sciences. Funding opportunities for this purpose are available from the SNF.

3. Application requirements

Deadlines for submitting applications will soon be introduced. Until 31 May 2026, you can still submit projects freely under the current system. Any applications received after this date will be assessed after the first deadline, which is set for 27 November 2026.

Applications can be submitted at any time through the Webform available on SERI's website. Using the template provided by SERI, the applicants must comply with the following rules:

- The project must fall into one of the above-mentioned categories;
- Project duration must not exceed the maximum of five years (an extension might be requested to SERI, [Art. 46 para. 2, RIPO](#));
- Project funding is awarded if the project is of interest to Switzerland as a whole and if Swiss participation would not be possible without federal funding;
- A clear link to the future use of the results of the project in an ESA programme must be demonstrated;
- Applicants must also demonstrate that they can provide their own adequate funding to the project in question.

The budgeted total costs of the project are submitted to SERI, using the provided template, and are allocated to the appropriate cost categories:

- A. Personnel costs;
- B. Travel;
- C. Subcontracting;
- D. Equipment;
- E. Other goods and services.

In addition, the share of in-kind contributions by the applicant's institution needs to be indicated as well.

4. Evaluation

The evaluation process takes between two and nine months depending on the projects scope and complexity.

SERI evaluates eligible applications based on:

- The conformity of the project with the goals and the expected added value in line with the Swiss space policy and the federal strategies derived therefrom.
- Importance of the project, its innovation potential, for the space sector in general and for Switzerland in particular.
- Extent to which the planned project is geared towards preparing, implementing or following up on participation in international space programmes and projects.
- Scientific and technical quality of the project,
- General criteria for federal funding (subsidies): cost-effective, efficient and appropriate use of federal funds, an adequate funding commitment from the applicant, relevance of the project for Switzerland as a whole, determination of whether the project cannot be adequately funded by any other means, and whether Switzerland's participation would not be possible without federal funding.

5. Chargeable costs

Eligible costs are those that are directly related to the project, necessary for the implementation of the project, reasonable, identifiable and verifiable. Costs are considered to be project-related if they are incurred during the project period as defined in the decision signed by SERI. However, costs related to the preparation of final documentation, final reports and audits may be claimed up to 60 days after the end of the project. All costs claimed must be supported by documentary evidence. Credit card statements are not considered valid receipts.

The budget must comply with national tax, labour and social security legislation. The use of funds must be reasonable, justified and in accordance with the principles of sound financial management. The budget must be used in accordance with the approved research plan. Any significant change in the implementation of the project must be requested and approved by SERI.

The maximum federal contribution is defined in the decision signed by SERI and is divided into instalments. A minimum of 20% of the total budget is paid upon completion of the project and acceptance of all reports.

The SERI subsidy can only reimburse chargeable costs, other costs will be rejected.

5.1 Personnel costs

In principle, the salary and expense regulations of the subsidized institutions apply.

Only costs directly related to the research project are eligible. Overheads and costs related to teaching or training of doctoral students cannot be covered.

If SERI finances all or part of the salary, subsidy recipients are required to conclude written employment contracts with their employees, and to comply with national social insurance, social security regulations and labour laws.

Working hours should be documented using timesheets showing the actual number of hours each person has worked on the project. The timesheets must be signed monthly by the employee and, if applicable, by her/his supervisor or employer. If the time recording system is computer-based, the signatures may be electronic with a documented and secure process for managing user rights and an auditable log of all electronic transactions.

Personnel employed to work exclusively on the project at a fixed work-time percentage may, instead of submitting timesheets, submit a confirmation signed by their supervisor saying that they were employed to work exclusively on the project. The document must specify the percentage, and the period worked on the project.

5.2 Travel

SERI reimburses travel costs that fulfil the general cost eligibility conditions and that are proportionate (number of persons, number of journeys). The costs must comply with the expense regulations of the institution and should respect, if feasible, the following limits:

- Accommodation: mid-range hotels;
- Transport: In principle, the most economic and ecologic option should be chosen. As a guide: flights only if necessary and, if so, in economy class; costs for car/taxi journeys only if a journey cannot reasonably be made by public transport, etc.;
- Additional expenses: (e.g. meals) according to the regulations of the employing institution.

5.3 Subcontracting

Subcontracting occurs when contracts for project tasks described in the proposal are not carried out by the beneficiary itself, but by a subcontractor.

Costs for the purchase of specific services from subcontractors required for the project are only eligible if they are justified in the proposal and were approved by SERI. As a general rule, the total cost of services provided by subcontractors should not exceed 33% of the total subsidy. If the 33% rule cannot be respected, a clear explanation needs to be provided in the proposal.

5.4 Equipment

This cost category covers items that need to be depreciated according to national tax legislation. The beneficiary should depreciate the purchase price for equipment in accordance with their usual depreciation practice and national accounting laws. Only direct use for the project can be charged (usage time, observation time, days, month, years, etc.).

Equipment and installations that form part of the basic equipment and belong to the normal operation and standards of a scientific institution may not be charged (i.e. standard IT equipment, hardware and software, other common equipment for the corresponding research field).

5.5 Other goods and services

This category covers all goods and services that were necessary for executing the project, such as consumables and supplies (e.g. raw materials), communication and dissemination (e.g. translation and printing, graphic design for flyers, posters etc.), conference fees, IPR-related costs.

6. Ineligible costs

This chapter gives non-exhaustive examples of costs that are not chargeable on the SERI grant.

6.1 Costs that are not considered direct costs

- Rental, lease or depreciation of buildings, facilities;
- Office supplies and petty equipment;
- Basic office infrastructure (personal computer, desk, etc.)
- General services (communication, cleaning, clothing, catering, transport, postage, telephone);
- Management tasks and horizontal services (HR, training, accounting and controlling, quality management);
- Non-specific costs such as energy and water, consumables, subscriptions, internet, insurance costs.

6.2 Excessive costs

Costs that are deemed excessive mean that they are significantly over the market cost of other equivalent services, products or personnel costs or over the usual rates of the beneficiary.

6.3 Other ineligible costs

- Bank fees
- Interest owed
- Currency exchange rate losses
- Deductible VAT
- Costs declared on another grant (doubling funding)

7. Own contributions

Own contributions are an important part of good applications and should be clearly shown in the application as well as in the financial report. Accordingly, the templates for applications and reports contain corresponding instructions.

Higher education research centres, but also federal institutions, may expect their own contributions to be 30% or higher.

Own contributions mean resources in cash or in kind that are not earmarked for any purpose other than the project. Eligible own contributions are:

- first party funding from the applicants' institutions,
- other contributions in cash or in kind from the applicants' institutions, participating organisations or external partners specifically and exclusively for the project.
- In-kind contributions from external partners may take the form of materials, equipment or services provided to and used by the applicants' organisations.

8. Exchange rate

The financial reporting must be submitted in Swiss francs. Project costs that incurred in another currency should be converted into Swiss francs. SERI will accept any of the following exchange rates – one of these needs to be applied homogeneously throughout the project – for conversion:

- daily exchange rate of the Swiss National Bank at the time of the accounting entry,
- monthly average exchange rate of the Swiss National Bank at the time of the accounting entry,
- exchange rate charged by the bank or credit card provider,

9. Value Added Tax

As it is a subsidy, SERI funding is not subject to value added tax (VAT), in accordance with Art. 18 para. 2 let. a and Art. 18 para. 3 of the Federal Act of 12 June 2009 on Value Added Tax ([VATA, SR 641.20](#)). It does not qualify as a consideration. The requests for (interim) payments submitted to SERI shall be made without adding VAT to the claimed amounts. For further questions about VAT please contact the [Federal Tax Administration](#) directly.