

**Impact Collaboration Programme 2023**  
GRANT DESCRIPTION



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## OVERVIEW

Establishing fruitful relationships between science, policy and practice is a complex endeavour riddled with challenges at the individual, institutional and systemic level. Yet, more and more scholars and policy-makers are developing creative ways to span science-policy boundaries and engage in collaborations in an attempt to design impactful solutions to some of the most complex challenges of the 21st century.

International Geneva is home to many such initiatives. With an ecosystem gathering a rich variety of International Organisations, NGOs, academic institutions, knowledge networks, foundations, and private sector actors, International Geneva has a great potential for nurturing further impactful practices at the interface of science and policy.

The Geneva Science-Policy Interface supports this work by facilitating opportunities for collaboration and partnership between Geneva-based international policy actors and scientific institutions, in Switzerland and beyond. Through the Impact Collaboration Programme (ICP), it provides a unique funding instrument to spot, support and scale collaborations that contribute to strengthening science-informed policy-making and build policy-relevant research and tools.

### What does the ICP offer?

- Maximum 60,000 CHF per project
- Tailored support and advice to help maximise impact
- A learning framework to elicit knowledge and build capacity in science-policy boundary-spanning

### Who is eligible?

The call supports projects that stem from collaborations that involve at least one actor from an academic institution (no geographical limitation), and one actor from the International Geneva ecosystem carrying policy work (e.g. international organisations, programmes, funds, NGOs; see list of eligible actors [here](#)). The ICP provides support to collaborative projects and initiatives that explicitly address a science-policy gap around a global issue of relevance to the work of International Geneva actors. Individuals (with affiliations), institutions and consortia can apply to the programme. See 'eligibility criteria' for more information.

### Dates of the ICP 2023

- **Project submission:** opens on 7 November 2022 and closes on 12 February 2023 (23:59 CET)
- **Project selection:** Selected projects are announced by mid-March 2023
- **Start of the project:** An inception meeting with project partners is organised by Mid-May 2023 [at the latest](#). Funds are released within a month after the signature of the agreement letter, following the inception meeting.

### How to apply?

Submit your 1,700-word application through this [platform](#).

See below for more information. Contact: [icp@gspi.ch](mailto:icp@gspi.ch)

## BACKGROUND

The potential of science to enrich policy-making is widely recognised as crucial within international policy institutions<sup>1</sup>. Confronted with wicked and pressing global challenges, policy actors need to access relevant and reliable information in a timely manner and develop robust tools to handle uncertainty and complexity. Science can and should be a primary partner in this regard, yet its contribution remains under-exploited.

Establishing fruitful relationships between science, policy and practice is in itself a complex endeavour riddled with challenges at the individual, institutional and systemic level. Mismatch of skills and work culture, divergent priorities, lost momentums, overwhelming costs and barriers and a somewhat limited understanding of what makes science-policy interfaces successful, all account for many missed opportunities<sup>2</sup>.

Yet, more and more scholars and policymakers are developing creative ways to span boundaries and engage in impactful collaborations. International Geneva is home to many such initiatives. With an ecosystem gathering a rich variety of International Organisations, NGOs, foundations, networks, academic institutions and private sector actors, International Geneva has a great potential for nurturing further impactful practices at the interface of science and policy. Regrettably, incentives and resources available to support and scale these efforts are very limited.

The Geneva Science-Policy Interface (GSPI) is a neutral and independent platform that aims to strengthen engagement between the research community and Geneva-based international policy actors around specific policy issues. The GSPI has created the Impact Collaboration Programme (ICP) in 2019, a specific instrument to support boundary-spanners looking for means to address barriers to the uptake of science in international policy organisations.

## WHAT IS THE ICP?

The Impact Collaboration Programme (ICP) is a funding and support instrument that aims to encourage and improve boundary-spanning activities at the interface of science and international policy. The ICP is supported by funds from the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs.

## Goal of the ICP

The overall goal of the ICP is to strengthen science-policy ecosystems around specific policy issues that are relevant to the International Geneva ecosystem, with the view to encourage science-informed policy-making and policy-relevant research.

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<sup>1</sup> For example, the 2019 Global Sustainable Development Report emphasises the indispensable role of science for achieving the United Nations 2030 Agenda. (Messerli et al., 2019). In his report "Our Global Agenda", UN Secretary-General Antonio-Guterres explicitly calls for "*all policy and budget*

*decisions (to) be backed by science and expertise*" and for "*ensuring a prominent voice for science and expertise, for example through representation of science commissions in decision-making*".

<sup>2</sup> Oliver, K., Innvar, S., Lorenc, T., Woodman, J., & Thomas, J. (2014). A systematic review of barriers to and facilitators of the use of evidence by policymakers. *BMC health services research*, 14(1), 1-12.

The specific objectives of the ICP are the following:

1. Generate opportunities for science-policy collaborations;
2. Strengthen the strategic approach of science-policy initiatives;
3. Build capacity and resources in the field of science-policy boundary-spanning.

## Dates of the ICP 2023

- **Project submission:** opens on 7 November 2022 and closes on 12 February 2023 (23:59 CET)
- **Project selection:** Selected projects are announced by mid-March 2023.
- **Start of the project:** A kick-off meeting with project partners is organised by Mid-May 2023 at the latest. Funds are released within a month after the signature of the agreement letter, following the inception meeting.

## HOW DOES THE ICP WORK?

The ICP programme entails three components that are interlinked.

### Grant

The ICP provides small grants amounting to a maximum of 60,000 CHF per project. These grants are seed money that can cover costs related to personnel or activity (see ICP rules and regulations to find out what types of costs are eligible). We expect the bulk of the grant to support science-policy **engagement activities** or outputs.

Applying institutions (and/or their partners) are expected to contribute financial and/or in-kind resources to the realisation of the project (financial/in-kind inputs do not have to proportionally match the ICP amount).

85% of the grant amount is transferred upon signature of the ICP Agreement Letter and 15% after validation of the final reporting.

### Interactive support

The ICP entails a collaboration between the project partners and the GSPI. The GSPI engages partners in an interactive process throughout the project implementation that is aimed at strengthening reflectivity over the project's strategic and methodological approach.

The modality of this process is defined during an initial strategic meeting. The process consists of regular check-in to discuss key challenges, opportunities and practical support from GSPI. To the extent possible, the GSPI participates in project activities. In addition to advisory services, the GSPI might extend more specific practical support such as:

- Stakeholder analysis
- Facilitation of introductions and networking
- Organisation and convening of dialogue activities
- Support to communication and dissemination activities
- Capacity-building activities.

The services provided are tailored to the need of each project. They fit within the limit of

the GSPI's available resources. The GSPI is willing to remain engaged with project partners beyond the project timeframe to support the scaling and long-term sustainability of the initiative.

## Learning

The GSPI is committed to generating learning from the project it supports to understand best practices, develop effective communication material and develop capacity-building resources for the broader community of boundary-spanners. The GSPI oversees a learning process throughout the project implementation which consists of the following steps:

- **Inception meeting:** before the project starts, the GSPI facilitates a discussion with the project team with a view to reviewing the project's strategic approach. During this meeting, participants also agree on the modalities of interaction during project implementation.
- **Regular check-in:** the GSPI and the project team engage in regular exchanges to collect insights during the implementation process.
- **Written piece:** at the end of the project, the GSPI curates the drafting of a reflexive piece that is featured on the GSPI website, with potential visuals and videos. More elaborated articles can also be produced if project partners are interested.
- **Final learning workshop:** every two years, the GSPI organises a learning workshop gathering all ICP recipients to encourage experience-sharing and offer capacity-building opportunities.

This process is fully undertaken by the GSPI, with specific attention being paid to not creating operational or administrative burden on the project team and respecting the project team's constraints. No additional reporting is requested.

## WHAT PROJECTS?

The ICP provides support to collaborative projects and initiatives that explicitly address a science-policy gap around a specific global policy issue.

## Collaboration

The ICP supports projects that establish collaborations<sup>3</sup> between scientists and stakeholders in policy processes as part of their impact strategy. The collaboration must include the following parties:

1. **Academic partner:** an individual (or a group of individuals) formally affiliated with an academic institution from any location in the world. The main applicant on the Academic side must hold a PhD and work as researcher or equivalent. Applicants can come from any scientific discipline.
2. **Policy and/or implementation partner:** an individual (or group of individuals) formally representing a policy (or implementation) institution from the Geneva ecosystem. Policy institutions are international organisations, programmes, funds, NGOs, diplomatic missions and delegations, or Member-States, based in or around the

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<sup>3</sup> We define collaborations as formal or informal relationships that are formed around a common goal, and are based on a strategic management of tasks and responsibilities.

international Geneva ecosystem. They may carry out activities related to policy making (advice, formulation, adoption and implementation) or be active in a field of practice of relevance to international policymaking. To be considered part of the international Geneva ecosystem, **organisations must be [in this list](#)**. If your organisation is not on this list, please reach out to us so that we can assess whether you are eligible or not.

Collaboration can involve more than two parties. In that case, additional policy partners can be located outside Geneva.

Collaborations can be at the “beginning”, in a “chicken and egg” situation or in the “last stretch”.

1. The beginning	2. Chicken & egg	3. The last stretch
Initial contacts have been established but the collaboration needs resources to be formally launched and deliver on its envisaged objectives.	A collaboration already is in place but needs resources to produce impactful outputs that will allow the collaboration to prove its value, sustain and scale.	A collaboration already delivered important outputs and needs resources to enhance the impact of such outputs.

## Policy relevance

The projects selected must address a global policy issue of relevance to Geneva-based policy and implementation actors, with clear evidence of policy need or demand.

Global policy issues are any major trend, shock, or development that has the potential for serious global impacts and that requires action being taken at the global level. Global governance includes governmentally steered processes of international public policy as well as newer forms of transnational policy communities that coalesce around specific policy issues and involve non-state actors (such as academia, NGOs, private actors)<sup>4</sup>. This entails a broad notion of decision-making that includes problem definition and agenda setting as well as the operationalisation and review of policy. Relevant challenges in the context of the ICP are issues that can be addressed by global governance actors based in Geneva (see list of thematic hubs in Geneva).

## Science-Policy initiative

To be considered eligible, the project must address a global policy issue through a clear science-policy initiative. Such initiatives are based on the following elements.

### Science-policy gap

The project is addressing a clearly identified science-policy gap that needs to be addressed to help progress towards the policy challenge. The science-policy gap refers to any improper access to and/or use of scientific information by policy actors, which constrains the

<sup>4</sup> Stone, D. (2019). *Making global policy*. Cambridge University Press, Stone, D. (2019). *Making global policy*. Cambridge University Press, <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108661690>

possibility of making informed decisions. Frequently observed gaps are

- gaps in available evidence (access, availability and quality of evidence),
- gaps in the production of evidence;
- gaps in effective exchange of expertise (problems with timing, brokers' legitimacy, outputs' content and formats)
- gaps in capacities, motivation and resources of scientists, policy actors and managers of science-policy interface
- gaps in the operational side of the science-policy interface.

### Science-policy initiative

The project is a science-policy initiative, i.e. a “bridging” intervention that aims to address the identified science-policy gap. Initiatives usually do this by promoting greater engagement between researchers and policymakers. ‘Engagement’ implies greater interaction at the interpersonal or inter-institutional level and can involve many different types of activities (see below).

### Science-policy activities

The design of relevant science-policy activities to address a science-policy gap depends on the institution/actor involved in the delivery, the context in which they are taking place, and the specific outcomes the activity intends to yield. They usually fall within one of these categories, although specific context and policy issues might require other approaches:

- Facilitating access to research
- Identifying and communicating needs for evidence
- Joint knowledge generation
- Skills-building
- Building collaborations, partnerships and networks
- Strategic leadership and advocacy for evidence use
- Providing rewards and incentives
- Creating mechanisms and infrastructure

### Outcomes and Impact pathway

While the ultimate goal of a science-policy initiative is to have an impact on a specific policy issue, the direct project's outcome(s) practically resides in addressing specific aspects of a science-policy gap. The main types of science-policy outcomes somewhat fall under the following categories:

- **Improve knowledge exchange** between science and policy organisations;
- **Empower policy and science actors** to engage with one another;
- **Build** more diverse and stronger **networks and relationships**;
- **Create or leverage policy windows** to link knowledge production with use in policy-making.

This list might be not exhaustive and other types of outcomes might prove relevant to solve a specific science-policy challenge.

Project activities might have interim concrete outcome objectives (eg. greater awareness of existing research, interest on the part of decision-makers, willingness to converse, or initiation of relationships). The link between interim activity-specific outcomes, science-policy outcomes and final policy impact are the constituent parts of the initiative's theory of change/pathway to impact.

To be effective, activities should be based on a clear gap analysis, a good understanding of the global policy context, a clearly defined overall goal that has been discussed with key stakeholders, activity-specific goals and pre-specified outcomes.

## Project duration

The work plan of the projects supported by the Impact Collaboration Program must be completed within 12 months. We value projects that articulate scaling, dissemination and follow-up activities taking place outside the project framework as part of their impact strategy. To the extent possible, we continue to support, these activities as part of our collaboration with the ICP project partners.

## APPLICATION PROCESS

The collaboration partners are invited to apply through an [online platform](#). They designate the **main applicant** which will be the applying institution, responsible for the grant administration in case of selection. The ICP 2023 application process consists of a single, lightweight stage on our online platform (see below).

Projects are assessed against eligibility by the GSPI and for selection by an evaluation committee composed of the GSPI and independent reviewers with specific expertise on science-policy-implementation engagement mechanisms. Expertise in the specific subject covered by the project might be sought on a case-by-case basis. Experts formally agree to disclose conflicts of interest and to evaluate the projects based on the formal evaluation criteria provided by the GSPI as impartially and objectively as possible.

The assessment process is non-archival (i.e. the GSPI does not keep a public database of the submissions) and based on the selection criteria specified below. Reviewers are anonymous during the process.

If not eligible, a project is notified about two weeks after the end of the submission period. Selected and rejected projects are notified at the end of the evaluation (6-7 weeks after the end of the submission deadline). They are provided with their overall score and a summary of their qualitative evaluation.

## Eligibility criteria

The eligibility evaluation is performed against four criteria.

Criteria	Questions
Objective fit	Does the project address a global policy issue through a clear science-policy impact pathway?
Collaboration fit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the project a collaboration? And</li> <li>• Is there an <a href="#">academic party</a> and does it satisfy our definition? And</li> <li>• Is there a <a href="#">policy/implementation party</a> and does it satisfy our definition?</li> </ul>
Geneva relevance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the project address a global policy issue?</li> <li>• Is the policy issue or the collaboration relevant to International Geneva?</li> </ul>
Budget fit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there co-financing (cash and or in-kind)? And</li> <li>• Is the budget mostly focused on science-policy engagement activities?</li> </ul>

## Selection criteria

Once eligible, a project will be evaluated along the following criteria:

Criteria	Questions
Background to the policy challenge	How urgent and important is this policy challenge?
Clarity and importance of the science-policy challenge	Have the applicants clearly identified a <a href="#">science-policy gap</a> , and explained why addressing this gap will help progress towards the policy challenge?
Relevance of the initiative's science-policy intended outcomes	To what extent are the project's <a href="#">intended outcomes</a> relevant to address the problem at stake?
Clarity and appropriateness of the science-policy initiative and related activities	To what extent do the applicants clearly describe a <a href="#">science-policy initiative</a> ? Are the <a href="#">engagement activities</a> clearly described and feasible? How appropriate is this initiative for addressing the science-policy challenge identified? o generate the outcomes listed in
Relevance and quality of the collaboration	To what extent is the collaboration relevant and able to achieve the intended outcomes ? Are partners' skills appropriate?
GSPI added-value	Does the GSPI have a clear added value in this project?
Feasibility and sustainability of project	<p>Is the budget and the proposed contributions from partners sufficient to deliver the outcomes?</p> <p>Is the sustainability plan appropriate?</p>

For more information, contact: [icp@gspi.ch](mailto:icp@gspi.ch)