
National Centres of Competence in Research (NCCR), 6th series

Internal selection process at USI

In November 2023 the SNSF is going to launch the **call for the 6th series of National Centres of Competence in Research (NCCR)**, see link <https://www.snf.ch/en/FJBJ8XGQ1tjG8J8w/funding/programmes/national-centres-of-competence-in-research-nccr>.

This program aims at supporting the development of long-term research structures of strategic relevance and priority for Switzerland. The SNSF communication mentions that the call will be thematically open. Projects of smaller size and short duration will also be considered.

The expected time line is announced as follows:

- November 2023 (second half): the call is published
- February 2024: deadline for submitting Letters of intent
- April 2024: deadline for Outline proposals
- First quarter 2025: submission of full proposals
- 2026: Potential start of funded projects

An internal information session will be organized for USI researchers on 5 of October, from 12:30-14:00.

USI researchers can participate to NCCR proposals either as leading or co-leading house, or as project partners. Different procedures apply for these roles.

Participation as leading or co-leading house

Participation as leading or co-leading house requires a formal institutional support by USI since NCCR are long-term projects, which have to be aligned with institutional strategy, and participation requires substantial support from USI in form of matching funds and infrastructure. Hence, USI aims at supporting only a small number of highly strategic projects.

Institutional support for project applications and any required matching funds and infrastructure is decided by the USI Rectorate beginning of 2024. In order to guide the pre-selection and ensure the coordination with the strategic planning of the university, the following internal process will be followed:

- **Project pre-proposals** are submitted by the **project leaders** to the Prorektorat Research via the SRIT (benedetto.lepori@usi.ch) before **December 1st, 2023**. Project pre-proposals indicate, among others, the research contents and aims, tentative project title, the strategic

relevance for USI, the project leadership (Director, team of project leaders) and the scientific partnerships (members of consortium), the approximate project budget and the financial and/or infrastructural support requested from USI. Project leaders are tenured professors of USI. Pre-proposals are presented according to a USI template.

- Researchers intending to submit a pre-proposal are strongly recommended to contact pro-rector research Patrick Gagliardini (Patrick.gagliardini@usi.ch) to clarify in advance any open issues.
- The involved faculties' leaderships (Deans) as well as a small panel of internal experts appointed by the Prorector Research (including Research Committee members), are requested for feedback on the received project pre-proposals.
- The USI Rectorate make a pre-selection and invites a limited number of projects for a short presentation in January 2024.
- The USI Rectorate communicates the final decision on which projects are institutionally supported by end of January 2024.

The evaluation criteria for the project pre-proposals are based on the selection criteria of the SNSF according to the ordinance of the Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research (EAER) regarding the promotion of research and innovation (Art.8). The criteria are as follows:

- Quality of consortium
- Relevance of research topic
- Unique selling point and benchmarking with other initiatives
- Added value of interdisciplinary collaboration and innovation potential
- Potential in the field of knowledge and technology transfer
- Suitability of USI as home institution (if it applies)
- Consistency with the strategic planning of USI
- Support of Co-Leading Houses (if any) and partner institutions

Participation as a partner

For participation as a partner, the usual rules on the management of funded R&D projects (<https://www.usi.ch/sites/default/files/storage/attachments/segretario-direttiva-progetti-finanziati-en.pdf>) apply. Specifically, applicants should comply with usual SNSF rules for eligibility, the USI Research and Transfer Service (SRIT) has to be involved in advance and will check the budget. Finally, any institutional support (beyond the resources already available) has to be requested in advance.

Potential participants to NCCRs are required to inform the Prorectorate Research via the SRIT (Benedetto.lepori@usi.ch) at latest one month before the deadline for communication of partnership to the Leading House institution.