

Connecting
Switzerland and
South Asia

Leading House South Asia

Call document

Research Partnership Grant 2025

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Background & Purpose

The State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) has entrusted the Zurich University of Applied Sciences (ZHAW) with the mandate of serving as the Swiss Leading House for South Asia for a third consecutive period, covering the years 2025 to 2028.

Within this mandate, the Leading House South Asia fosters international research- and research-based innovation collaboration between Switzerland and nine partner countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Iran. Its funding instruments are designed to strengthen scientific and innovation ties, facilitate knowledge exchange, and lay the foundation for long-term cooperation.

One of the core instruments is the Research Partnership Grant (RPG). This grant supports joint research projects between Swiss-based scientists and their counterparts in South Asia, enabling partnerships that bridge disciplines, institutions, and geographic regions.

Through the RPG, the Leading House South Asia pursues the following objectives:

- **Facilitating international scientific collaboration** that crosses disciplinary and national boundaries.
- **Strengthening research partnerships** between Switzerland and South Asia with a view to long-term cooperation.
- **Enabling researchers to test innovative ideas**, gather preliminary data, and prepare follow-up proposals for larger national and international funding schemes.
- **Promoting interdisciplinarity** by encouraging collaboration between distinct scientific fields and approaches.
- In doing so, the RPG not only supports the development of individual projects but also contributes to building sustainable research networks that address pressing societal, environmental, and scientific challenges.

Eligibility & requirements for the main applicant

This grant is open to Swiss-based researchers, including PhD students, professors, and postdocs (referred to as "applicant") from Swiss universities, universities of applied sciences, universities of teacher education, and research institutes, including federal laboratories and centers of technological excellence (referred to as "research institution"). For eligible institutions, see [here](#).

The project submitted must be based on a collaboration between Switzerland and at least one eligible partner from one of the above listed partner countries.

The Swiss-based scientist is the main applicant, who:

- has to be a Swiss-based scientist (meeting the criteria above) holding at least a 40% position, either permanent or lasting until 6 months after the project ends; and
- must have research or practical experience of at least three years in a relevant field of the proposal

Requirements for partner/partner institution

The principal researcher in the partner country must be affiliated to an accredited university or a public research institute and must hold a faculty or scientist position in addition to at least one year of research or practical experience.

Goal of this funding instrument

The Research Partnership Grant allows researchers across all scientific disciplines to conduct desk-based research, fieldwork, feasibility studies, archival research, qualitative interviews, surveys, artistic practices, design thinking, or other forms of collaborative work, to develop long-term partnerships between two institutions or research groups across borders. It further aims to support laying the ground to deepen existing research relationships, create new ones and create a strong base for bigger joint proposals to follow.

Grant amount and allocation

Total grant

You can apply for CHF 20'000.00, CHF 25'000.00, CHF 30'000.00 or CHF 35'000.00.

Disbursement of grants

Grants will be disbursed in two instalments: 80% after signing the grant agreement and 20% after approval of the final report and financial statement. Prior to the disbursement of grants, the main applicant will be required to sign a grant agreement provided by the LH.

Any grant money that is not spent by the end of the project will have to be returned to the LH.

A detailed budget must be provided in the project proposal. Budgeted expenses must be justified and related to the proposed research activities.

Eligible costs

Category	Swiss partner	South Asian partner	Comments
Material	Yes	Yes	Costs of material are eligible for funding if they are directly related to the research work (equipment, consumables, field expenses, use of research infrastructure). Equipment and facilities that generally form part of the basic infrastructure, operation and standards of a scientific institution may not be funded. These include, in particular: standard IT equipment incl. hardware and software, laboratory facilities and equipment, any other facilities and equipment routinely made available for the relevant research field in a research institution or environment.
Work-related institutional costs	Yes, with restrictions (See comments)	No	A maximum of 20% of the total granted amount can be allocated to this budget line, except the work of the main applicant. This only applies to all Swiss universities of applied sciences and universities of teacher education . All other institutions are not eligible. For work outsourced to partners in partner countries see "Subcontracting".
Travel	Yes	Yes	Only travel costs directly linked to the research project may be charged to the grant. If air travel is needed, only Economy class flights may be charged to the grant.
Subsistence cost	Yes	Yes	A living allowance can be paid as a lump sum to cover room and board costs. This is CHF 200.00 per day/night in Switzerland and CHF 100.00 in the

			partner country. Please note that this instrument is not designed to support the mobility of researchers in itself; thus, applications consisting only of research stays will be considered ineligible.
Subcontracting	No	Yes – see comments	Research activities that cannot be conducted by the Swiss partner, in particular those that must be conducted in the partner country (field work, data acquisition, interviews, surveys, translation), can be outsourced to third parties in the partner country. Subcontracting-contracts can be entered into with companies only. No direct salaries can be paid. A maximum of 20% of the overall grant can be used for this budget line.
Conferences & Workshops (attendance)	Yes	Yes	Registration fees, related to the attendance of an event, in Switzerland, in the partner country or, in exceptional cases in another country, are eligible.
Conferences & Workshops (organization)	Yes, with restrictions – see comments	Yes, with restrictions – see comments	Events integral to the project may be eligible for funding. However, they must be justified within the scope and objectives of the project.
Overhead	No	No	The home institution of the Swiss main applicant is not allowed to charge any overhead to the funds provided by the Leading House South Asia.

Financial and/or in-kind contributions by partner(s)

A financial or in-kind contribution by the partner(s) is mandatory. If no financial contribution is provided, an in-kind contribution is required. Examples include:

Venue

- Providing a venue free of charge or at a significantly reduced cost.

Equipment and technology

- Use of audio-visual tools, projectors, computers, or hybrid event platforms without rental fees.

Staffing support

- Administrative support (event planning, coordination, registration) without additional fees.
- Technical support staff for managing online components or technical equipment.

Logistical support

- Covering local transportation or coordinating travel logistics.
- **Catering**
- Offering meals, snacks, or coffee breaks.

Local expertise

- Providing experts, researchers, or speakers without charging fees.

Transportation within partner country

- Covering or subsidizing local travel costs.

Publicity and promotion

- Covering or assisting with marketing and promotion costs.

Accommodation

- Providing accommodation for participants or speakers through institutional housing free of charge or at significantly reduced cost.

Evaluation & Selection

Each project passing the eligibility criteria will be evaluated by two reviewers. The final decision will be taken by the LH. The evaluation is based on the following criteria:

1. Relevance, Rationale & Context of the project (25%)

- What is the project about
- What are the main goal(s)?
- What specific research question(s) is/are addressed?
- What societal, scientific, or environmental challenge does it address?
- Why is this research topic relevant for Swiss–South Asian collaboration?
- Why are researchers from this specific partner country essential to the project?
- What makes this collaboration particularly valuable or timely?

Reviewers will assess:

- Clarity and significance of the research question;
- Relevance of the topic in the broader societal, environmental or scientific context;
- Valid justification for the specific international collaboration;
- Originality and timeliness of the project idea.

2. Expertise & Complementarity of partners (25%)

- What is the expertise and disciplinary background of each partner?
- How do the partners' approaches, methods, or perspectives complement one another?
- Why is/are these specific partner(s) well suited for this project?
- What role will each partner play?

Reviewers will assess:

- Complementarity of scientific and/or methodological expertise;
- Clarity and balance of roles and responsibilities;
- Evidence of genuine, thoughtful collaboration;
- Appropriateness of the partnership structure for the project goals.

3. Project design, Feasibility & Engagement (25%)

- What are the main project activities and timelines?
- What are the key milestones and deliverables?
- How will collaboration take place (e.g., visits, joint work, hybrid meetings)?
- What are the in-kind or financial contributions from each partner?
- Is the budget realistic and well-justified?
- What risks do you foresee, and how are they mitigated?

Reviewers will assess:

- Clarity and feasibility of the project structure;
- Appropriateness of the budget and resource planning;
- Strength of reciprocal engagement;
- Quality of risk assessment and mitigation plans.

4. Outputs, Dissemination & Continuity (25%)

- What concrete outputs will the project produce (e.g., publications, data, policy briefs, research tools)?
- Who are the intended audiences or beneficiaries of these outputs?
- How will findings be disseminated (e.g., publication, workshops, stakeholder engagement)?
- What is the anticipated academic, environmental or societal impact of the research?
- Does the project have potential to lead to a follow-up proposal, larger grant, or long-term collaboration?

Reviewers will assess:

- Clarity and relevance of planned outputs;
- Quality of dissemination and communication strategy;
- Potential for lasting collaboration and continuation;
- Broader impact of the project.

Application and proposal content

→ Please note that all applications must be submitted via the [Good Grants](#) platform.

Start and duration of the project

- The project must be completed within 12 months after approval of the grant application.

Timeline

- Launch of this call: October 28, 2025
- Applications will be accepted until: November 21, 2025
- Notification of applicants: By end of January/mid. February, 2026
- Earliest project start date: March 15, 2026
- Latest project start: June 30, 2026
- Project duration: 12 months as of project start

Reporting

- The Swiss-based applicant is responsible for fund management and reporting.
- A **final financial and qualitative report**, including a summary, reflections, and financial documentation, must be submitted within one month after the completion of the project. The final reports need to be handed in via the Good Grants platform. Templates will be provided.
- The final 20% of the grant will only be released after submission and approval of the final reports.

Export control

Activities under this grant may be subject to **export control regulations** (State Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO). The Swiss-based applicant and their home institution are responsible for compliance.

Important note

The LH reserves the right to modify the terms of this call according to the circumstances related to e.g. pandemics, environmental issues, or any decision made by the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI).

Additional documents

→ All relevant documents can be found on the LH [webpage](#).