



FAQ: Flagship Initiative – Strive for systemic innovation

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1 General questions

Q: What are the general criteria to participate in the Flagship Initiative?

A: Please see the Guide for applicants that has been published on the Innosuisse website, all details concerning the Flagship Initiative are available in that specific document. Additional questions have been answered in the present Q&A.

Q: Is there a thematic focus of the Flagship Initiative?

A: Yes. The Flagship topic of the call 2023 has been published on the Innosuisse [website](#).

Q: Is there a matchmaking event planned?

A: We do not plan such an event. However, the [B2 match platform](#) enables an interesting exchange with potential project partners in different focus areas.

Q: If I currently have an Innosuisse grant can I apply for this programme?

A: Yes. It is possible to apply within the framework of the Flagship topics even if another application has already been granted. However, the same project will not be funded twice and you must have the resources and capacity to carry out two projects at the same time.

Q: What is the main difference of the Flagship Initiative compared to standard innovation projects?

A: The Flagship Initiative supports large transdisciplinary projects, which aim to innovate a system in the long term. Generally, Flagships are larger in terms of budget, duration and scope compared to innovation projects. Also, must a consortium consist of at least three research partners (in justified cases two), of which at least one is an UAS or a university of teacher education, and at least two implementation partners. To summarise, a flagship is more comprehensive, larger in terms of budget and duration, tackle challenges more holistically and involves on average more partners than a regular innovation project.

Regarding the financial contribution of the companies/implementation partners please refer to point 5 of this FAQ.

Q: Is there a maximum budget amount or length for applications submitted within the Flagship Initiative?

A: No.

Q: What is the difference between the Flagship Initiative and the Innovation Booster?

A: The mission of the Innovation Booster is to reunite relevant actors around a topic of national importance, stimulate the formation of innovation teams and the development of novel, verifiable solution, products and service ideas. A Flagship may indeed emerge from an Innovation Booster. Within a Flagship the involved partners already work on a solution for an existing challenge.

Q: How broad can the Flagship topic be interpreted?

A: Innosuisse has defined the topic broadly in order to nevertheless allow a certain bottom-up approach by the applicants. This means that the applicants must of course demonstrate a relation to the chosen topic and focus area(s), but these can be interpreted quite broadly. A flagship does not have to cover all focus areas, but a link to one of the defined areas must be clearly shown.

Q: My proposal was rejected, do I have the option of a resubmission?

A: An application is only possible within a Flagship Call. The Flagship Topics will differ from one call to another. Consequently there is no possibility of a resubmission.

Q: Will the same topics and focus areas of the current call determine the next call, or is this a unique opportunity with regard to these specific topics and focus areas?

A: It is expected that Innosuisse will regularly launch calls within the framework of the Flagship Initiative. The topics of the calls will differ from one call to another. This means that, applications can only be submitted below the set deadline.

Q: How can systemic innovation be defined?

A: Systemic innovation is a type of innovation where value can only be derived if it is synergistically integrated with other complementary innovations, going beyond the boundaries of a single organization. Systemic innovation requires multiple innovations to be coordinated. Consequently, the different contributory innovations and organizations are organized together into a whole system, where the overall success of the emergent innovation cannot be attributed to just one sub-innovation or participating organization.

Q: What are expected systemic impact outcomes? (economic, social technical)

A: The purpose of this new funding instrument is to stimulate innovation in areas relevant to a large part of the economy or society and to promote transdisciplinary project collaborations. It is expected that a flagship contributes to a system change, e.g. concerning structural changes, integrated mobility management, circular economy, etc.

Q: Can the subprojects have a shorter lifetime within the flagship?

A: Yes.

Q: How often will there be calls?

A: It is expected that Innosuisse will regularly launch calls in the frame of the Flagship Initiative.

Q: How many flagships will be financed within the call 2023?

A: For the call 2023 we estimate that approximately 15 proposals will be approved. As mentioned, this is only an estimation.

2 Questions on structure of a consortium executing a Flagship

Q: What does a consortium exactly mean?

A: A consortium consists of at least three research partners, of which at least one is a UAS or a university of teacher education and at least two implementation partners. The consortium needs to be interdisciplinary. In justified exceptional cases, two research partners are also possible.

Q: What is meant by "host institution" and how should they be linked to each subproject, and up to what amount (%) can they be funded?

A: The host institution is a university or a non-commercial research institution outside the university sector that acts as applicant vis-à-vis Innosuisse and on behalf of the consortium. The host institution assumes responsibility vis-à-vis Innosuisse for the processing of the flagship and is responsible, among other things, for the coordination of a flagship. There are no specifications as to how the host institution must be linked within each subproject or to what level they can be funded.

Q: What are the criteria for approving a consortium with only two research partners?

A: These applications with only two partners must be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. One of the most important aspects is that an extensive transdisciplinary collaboration can be ensured. An example: You are collaborating with several different departments of a research institution and it is obvious that the consortium strives for transdisciplinary project collaboration across different disciplines.

Q: Is there a minimum of employees for the implementation partner (e.g. start-ups with a small number of employees)?

A: No.

Q: Can a public institution or NGO be an implementation partner?

A: Yes, the same rules apply as for the innovation projects.

Q: Can an association be eligible as part of the consortium?

A: Associations can be part of the consortium as implementation partners, the same rules apply as for "regular" companies.

Q: Can a Flagship consortium include foreign research institutions? And can the foreign research institution be funded by Innosuisse as well?

A: A foreign research institution can be part of a flagship. However, they are not considered as an official research partner, but rather as a third-party service provider. The costs of the foreign research institution can be listed as material costs under third party services in the financial plan of the proposal. It is important that it can be clearly demonstrated that the corresponding research service is not available in Switzerland.

Q: Can a Flagship consortium include foreign implementation partners?

A: Implementation partners must have a registered office in Switzerland. In individual cases, foreign implementation partners may be admitted, provided that a substantial part of the expected value creation of the implementation occurs in Switzerland.

Q: Do different departments of one university count as separate research institutions?

A: No. At least three different research institutions (Higher Education Institutions (HEI) or other eligible research institutions) must be part of a consortium.

Q: Can the implementation partners participate in 2 Flagship pre-proposals?

A: Yes in principle this is possible, however, the implementation partner must have the resources and capacities to carry out two projects at the same time.

Q: What is meant by the independence of research and implementation partners?

A: Research and implementation partners need to be independent from one another in terms of finances and personnel. According to the implementing provisions, independence is ensured if the natural persons involved in the project on the part of a research partner:

- do not simultaneously work for an implementation partner.
- have no financial interests in the commercial activity of an implementation partner and do not financially support an implementation partner for other reasons.

Legal entities that collaborate as research and implementation partners are considered independent from each other, if neither party holds 20% or more of equity securities of the other partner. A fact sheet is available on our website [Factsheet on independence of project partners](#).

Q: Does the condition of the number of project partners in consortia apply to the entire flagship or to each subproject?

A: This condition applies to the entire flagship.

Q: Must each subproject have an implementation partner and a research partner?

A: It is possible that some subprojects do not have an implementation/research partner.

Q: Should the subprojects be interdependent? Or rather mostly independent within a topic and focus area?

A: A flagship should consist of subprojects that are interdependent and interconnected, where the combination of the results of these subprojects contribute to a system change. This means that the individual subprojects of a flagship may have an economic or societal benefit, but the sum of the individual innovations contributes to a system change. Consequently, the overall systemic result must be more than the sum of the individual subprojects.

Q: Can the consortium change after submission of the pre-proposal, and do all implementation/research partners be indicated when submitting the pre-proposal / proposal?

A: It is expected that the consortium is specified at the time of submission of the Pre-proposal and Proposal. However, a change may be possible and remains under the responsibility of the project partners and must be specified at the time of proposal submission, as this will result in a substantive change of the proposal. It is important to note that a letter of recommendation for the submission of a Proposal, will be given to the project partners submitted in the Pre-Proposal phase, changes in the consortium may accordingly lead to a differentiated evaluation in the Proposal phase.

3 Questions on the submission regulations

Q: How and when can the pre-proposal be submitted?

A: The pre-proposal must be submitted via the PrivaSphere transfer platform. This transfer platform and the corresponding contact form is available on our webpage as of 02 January 2023. The submission deadline is 31 January 2023, 1200, noon (CET).

Q: Why is there a strict deadline for the submission of pre-proposals and can it be extended?

A: The procedure from the submission of a pre-proposal up to the approval or rejection of the proposal for funding in this 2-phase concept is a complex procedure. Innosuisse strives to ensure the best possible timeframe for applicants. Therefore, the timeframe of approximately 4 months for the submission of the pre-proposal within the call for proposals 2023 is the best possible option that can be provided. An extension to the deadline of January 31, 2023 will not be granted. Innosuisse will announce any changes to the deadline necessary due to extraordinary circumstances.

Q: How does the submission process occur?

A: The application process is competitive and will be a 2-step procedure: pre-proposal and proposal. The submission of a pre-proposal is mandatory to be eligible to submit a proposal. Please refer to the Guide for applicants.

Q: Are there defined deadlines for the submission of the pre-proposal and proposal?

A: Yes, the deadline for submitting the pre-proposal is 31 January 2023 1200, noon (CET). The deadline for submitting the proposal is 04 July 2023 1200 noon (CEST).

Q: What does a pre-proposal contain?

A: Please refer to the Guide for applicants section 4.2.

Q: What does a proposal contain?

A: Please refer to the Guide for applicants section 4.3.

Q: Can I directly submit a proposal?

A: No. The submission of a pre-proposal is a mandatory requirement for submission of a proposal.

Q: Can I submit a proposal even though I have received a Letter of "Non-Recommendation"?

A: Yes, applicants are not bound by the recommendation and can still submit a proposal despite a "Non-Recommendation".

Q: Are letters of support/recommendation etc. required when submitting a pre-proposal / proposal?

A: No letters of support/recommendation are required in the framework of the Flagship Initiative.

4 Questions on budget and costs

Q: Where can I find the hourly rates of the research partners?

A: Please contact the responsible department of your research institution (usually Grants Office) or the program team programme@innosuisse.ch.

Q: How should a research institution that is entitled to contributions proceed if it does not yet have any notional hourly rates with which to calculate salary costs?

A: Innosuisse has sent all research partners who have previously taken part in projects an Excel template for the calculation of the notional hourly rates as well as a guide and a test certificate. If your institution has not received these documents, they can be requested by sending an e-mail to supervision@innosuisse.ch.

Q: How does the participation of the implementation partners in the project costs apply?

A: The implementation partners shall contribute to the overall project costs. The contribution of the implementation partners comprises an in-kind contribution and a financial contribution to the research partners. The same funding conditions apply as for the funding of innovation projects.

Q: What is meant by an in-kind contribution on behalf of the implementation partners?

A: In-kind contribution are the actual personnel and material costs incurred by the implementation partners that are directly connected to the Flagship.

Q: What is meant by a financial contribution to the research partners?

A: The financial contribution is the amount paid by implementation partners to research partners and must in total amount to at least 5 per cent of the total project costs.

Q: Is a reduction or complete omission of the implementation partner's financial contribution possible?

A: Innosuisse may, in individual cases, allow a share of less than 5 per cent, or waive the financial contribution to the research partner completely if the economic capacity of the implementation partners is insufficient. In this regard, it shall take account of the innovation potential of the Flagship, the risks associated with the flagship and the viability of the financial burden

associated with implementation of the flagship. Please refer to the Art. 7 Contribution of implementation partners to project costs, Innosuisse funding ordinance.

Q: Is a reduction or complete omission of the implementation partner's in-kind contribution possible?

A: A reduced participation from implementation partners in accordance with Article 30 paragraph 1 RIPO remains reserved Art. 30 Research and Innovation Promotion Ordinance RIPO.

Q: Can the own contribution of the implementation partner be based on 3rd party funds?

A: The own contribution from the implementation partner should be provided as men-hours, material costs and cash contributions in the project. How the implementation partner is financed is not relevant.

Q: Is the Flagship Initiative supporting large global enterprises as well?

A: The same rules apply as for the innovation projects.

Q: Will the overhead of 15% still be applicable?

A: Yes. The overhead contribution is calculated as a percentage of the total project costs.

Q: How does it work in terms of the financial participation of an implementation partner from a cantonal department?

A: Implementation partners are private or public institutions or businesses that are responsible for implementation; a cantonal department is considered as a public institution, therefore the same legal basis of Art. 7 of the Innosuisse Funding Ordinance applies¹.

Q: Are the implementation partners also financially funded?

A: No. Innosuisse does not cover the costs of the implementation partners within the framework of the flagship initiative and cannot directly fund implementation partners.

Q: As companies are not receiving direct funding, can they sign collaboration contracts with universities to fund their part of the flagship?

A: The same funding conditions apply as for the funding of innovation projects.

The legal basis allows an Innosuisse contribution of 40-60 %. The implementation partners contribute to the total costs of the flagship as well, which must at least correspond to 40-60 % of the total project costs. The implementation partners' contribution consists of own work and services as well as a financial (cash) contribution (at least 5 per cent of the total project costs) to the research partner.

Subsidies which are financed by Innosuisse to the research partners in a flagship project may not be "transferred" by any means to the implementation partners.

Q: can research partners decide themselves how to split the funding and give some to the implementation partners?

A: Subsidies which are financed by Innosuisse to the research partners in a flagship project may not be "transferred" by any means to the implementation partners.

Q: What costs for using research infrastructure are eligible?

A: The claimed costs for research infrastructure must be necessary for the implementation of the project and may not be part of the research institution's basic infrastructure. The rates of depreciation during the lifetime of the project, calculated according to the institution's internal accounting rules, are eligible.

If the infrastructure (including infrastructure that already exists) is not exclusively used for an Innosuisse project, the actual share of use in the project can be booked to the project. The share of use must be duly verifiable (e.g. through laboratory notebooks) and auditable.

¹ Innosuisse funding ordinance (as of 01.01.2023)

Q: How do eligible material costs differ from non-eligible costs relating to the research institution's basic infrastructure?

A: The equipment and facilities that are part of the research centre's basic infrastructure and usual operations and are standard cannot be procured at Innosuisse's expense. Nor can their use be charged to Innosuisse.

Basic infrastructure includes equipment, materials and other items of infrastructure that are part of the standard equipment of a research institution with a comparable research purpose. This includes, for example, standard IT equipment including hardware and software or, in a clinical setting, disposable gloves and syringes. However, if a piece of software is directly related to the project and is essential to the project's realisation, its costs can be claimed.

Q: Which expenses can be covered by management and coordination costs?

A: Certain coordination costs can be covered within this category which necessarily arise due to a coordination effort between the project partners, which are not covered by personnel or material costs according to the implementing provisions for funding innovation projects.

Q: Is there a defined budget in terms of funding for the management of the flagship?

A: No.

5 Questions on contracts and project reporting

Q: How will the intellectual property be solved between the different partners?

A: According to [Article 41 para. 3 of the Research and Innovation Promotion Ordinance RIPO](#), all partners have non-exclusive rights. If the situation imposes an exclusive right of use and exploitation on the part of an implementation partner, this may be possible taking into account [Art. 41 Para. 4](#). However, the implementation or achievement of the objectives of the flagship must be maintained ([Art. 41 para. 5 let. a](#)). In addition, it must be clearly stipulated which party receives which rights and under what conditions ([Art. 41 para. 2](#)). Furthermore, a Flagship is considered as a whole and not as a structure of individual subprojects. The subsidy contract specifies whether a copy of the agreement and / or only a copy of the declaration must be submitted to Innosuisse.

Q: How does the Midterm Review take place?

A: The midterm review will take place no later than after half of the duration of the flagship. The midterm review consists of an interim scientific and financial report and a review meeting. Depending on the length and volume of the flagship, additional evaluations can be defined. The templates for the scientific report and intermediate financial report will be published on the homepage of Innosuisse.

Q: Which project changes must be applied for/notified?

A: You must report all important changes of your Flagship to Innosuisse. In particular changes to project partners, the project plan, the aims of the project and project team members who cannot be replaced at short notice due to their knowledge (key people).

Q: Can the project duration be extended?

A: It is possible to apply for a cost-neutral project extension.