

Terms of Reference

Funding period 2025-2028

1 January 2025

Introduction

Innosuisse – the Swiss Innovation Agency – and the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) have jointly established the BRIDGE programme. The basic principles of BRIDGE are defined in the present *Terms of Reference for the programme BRIDGE*, approved by the Board of Directors of Innosuisse on 10. December 2024 and by the Presiding Board of the SNSF Research Council on 27 November 2024.

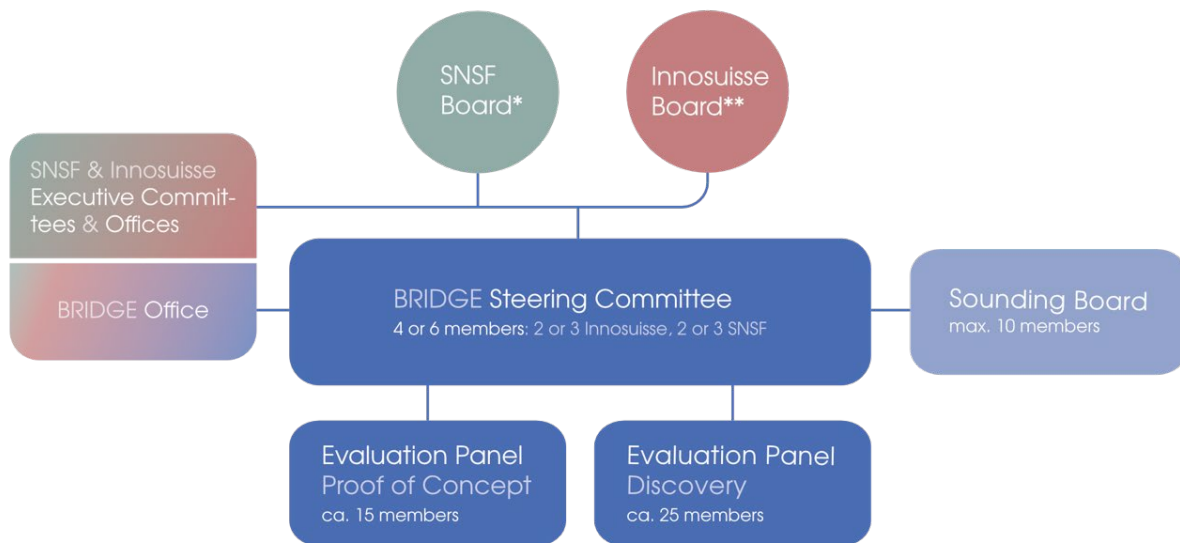
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1. Goals and scope of the programme

The Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) and the Swiss Innovation Agency (Innosuisse) launched their joint funding programme BRIDGE in 2017 based on the task given by the Swiss Confederation. BRIDGE offers funding opportunities at the interface of basic research and science-based innovation. It relies on an integrative and iterative vision of innovation, which assumes that science and innovation interact in many ways. The overall aim of BRIDGE is to make better use of the economic and societal potential of research findings and to facilitate research-based innovation by accelerating the uptake of research findings that may be transformed into products, services, social innovation and further commercial or non-commercial solutions for the benefit of the Swiss society and economy. The BRIDGE programme should also trigger promising research ideas by speeding up the feedback loop between academia and the scope of implementation. It should encourage researchers to explore potential applications of their research in an early phase and allow them to develop the early stages of applications from their research results.

2. Governance structure



*SNSF Academic Board of the Research Council | **Innosuisse Board of Directors

2.1. Roles of the SNSF Academic Board and Board of Directors of Innosuisse

The SNSF Academic Board of the Research Council (hereafter SNSF Academic Board) and the Board of Directors of Innosuisse assume jointly the supervision of the BRIDGE programme and have the following decision power:

- Decide on the overall scope and budget of the programme
- Decide on the governance structures and competences
- Decide on the different funding lines of BRIDGE
- Decide on the Terms of Reference for the programme
- Appoint the members of the BRIDGE Steering Committee

2.2. BRIDGE Steering Committee

The BRIDGE Steering Committee (SteCo) is responsible for the implementation and steering of the BRIDGE programme. It is composed of 4-6 members of the SNSF Research Council (generally of the Committee for Thematic and Solution-oriented research) and of the Innovation Council of Innosuisse; with an equal representation of the SNSF and of Innosuisse. The SteCo has the following tasks and competences:

- Definition of the overall scope of the BRIDGE programme and of its multiannual budget and submission for approval to the SNSF Academic Board and the Board of Directors of Innosuisse
- Monitoring of the alignment of BRIDGE with the strategic vision pursued by the SNSF and Innosuisse
- Appointment of the chairs and vice-chairs of the evaluation panels and election of their members
- Decision on annual funding budgets for each funding line, except for special mandates of the SNSF and/or Innosuisse
- Issuance of the regulations of the BRIDGE funding lines based on the propositions of the evaluation panels
- Supervision of the evaluation panels
- Decisions on calls for proposals (based on the regulations of the BRIDGE funding lines)

- Based on the recommendations of the Evaluation Panels, decision on the funding of projects according to available budgets
- Based on the recommendations of the Evaluation Panels, decision on the discontinuation or the extension of projects
- Monitoring of the programme during the funding period and reporting to the SNSF Academic Board and the Committee for Thematic and Solution-oriented research and the Board of Directors of Innosuisse
- May propose additional funding lines to the SNSF Academic Board and the Board of Directors of Innosuisse
- May elaborate propositions for the further development of the programme and submit them to the SNSF Academic Board and the Board of Directors of Innosuisse
- Decision on events or activities related to BRIDGE and / or communication activities on BRIDGE

The members of the SteCo are elected for a fixed period and for a maximum of 4 years. Re-election is possible up to a total of 8 service years.

The members of the SteCo shall comply with the rules of the SNSF and Innosuisse regarding conflicts of interests and confidentiality.

The SteCo will constitute itself and appoints a chair and a vice-chair, one from the SNSF delegates, the other from the Innosuisse delegates. The position of chair shall rotate between the SNSF and Innosuisse each year.

The SteCo has a quorum if the majority of its members are present. In the case of funding decisions, the chairperson has the casting vote in the event of a tie. In all other cases, decisions are taken with the majority of votes cast. In urgent cases, resolutions may also be made by way of circulation unless a member requests discussion thereof in a meeting within 5 working days after the relevant proposal was sent.

The chairpersons of the Evaluation Panels participate regularly in meetings of the SteCo as guests in an advisory capacity.

The members of the SteCo representing Innosuisse are remunerated according to the remuneration provisions of Innosuisse.¹ Members of the SteCo representing the SNSF are remunerated according to the Compensation Regulations of 28 August 2024.² Furthermore, the SteCo governs its way of working.

A joint meeting between the SteCo, the Presidents, and the directors of SNSF and Innosuisse should take place at least once a year to discuss strategic issues, in particular, alignment with the strategic vision and recommendations put forward by the SteCo for improving BRIDGE. At the SNSF, these strategic issues should be pre-discussed in the Committee for Thematic and solution-oriented research. Based on a mapping of the funding instruments of both organisations, the SteCo would have to show in particular how well BRIDGE is positioned to serve as link between the funding instruments of both partner organisations and, if necessary, propose optimisations to better achieve this goal.

The chairperson and the vice-chairperson of the SteCo shall regularly report to the Programme Committee for Thematic and Solution-Oriented Research of the SNSF and to the Innovation Council of Innosuisse on the development of BRIDGE and discuss synergies, gaps and other issues preventing an optimal fit between BRIDGE and the funding offers of SNSF and Innosuisse.

¹ Entschädigungsverordnung Innosuisse vom 20. September 2017 (SR 420.233)

² [Compensation regulations of the SNSF](#)

2.3. Evaluation Panels

The evaluation and monitoring of the projects of different funding lines are undertaken by separate Evaluation Panels (EPs) if different evaluation competences are required. Each EP will include experts in a sufficiently broad range of research and innovation areas and types.

The EPs have the following competences and tasks:

- Evaluation of the submitted proposals and submission of recommendations to the SteCo
- Monitoring of the project progress
- Submission of recommendations to the SteCo concerning the discontinuation and extension of projects
- Proposition of the regulations of the BRIDGE funding lines to the SteCo

The members of the EPs are elected for a defined period and for a maximum of 4 years. Re-election is possible up to a total of 8 service years.

The members of the EPs shall comply with the rules of the SNSF and Innosuisse regarding conflicts of interests and confidentiality.

Each EP has a quorum when the majority of its members are present. It takes decisions with the majority of votes cast. If the votes are equal, the Chairperson has the casting vote. In urgent cases, resolutions may also be made by way of circulation unless a member requests discussion thereof in a meeting within 5 working days after the relevant proposal was sent.

The members of the EPs are remunerated according to the Compensation Regulations of 28 August 2024.³ Furthermore, the EPs govern their way of working.

2.4. BRIDGE Office

The BRIDGE Office – appointed and financed by Innosuisse and the SNSF – manages all funding activities of the programme. The operational organisational structure ensures that SNSF and Innosuisse are equally involved in the day-to-day running of BRIDGE and can contribute equally to its management.

The BRIDGE Office has the following tasks and competences:

- Manages the programme
- Supports the SteCo and the EPs in their tasks and prepares and executes their decisions
- Assesses the formal funding criteria as set out in the regulations of the BRIDGE funding lines
- Implements and communicates the funding decisions made by the SteCo
- Is responsible for the lifetime management of the supported projects
- May request advisory services of the Offices of SNSF and Innosuisse if needed, specifically in case of legal or financial matters
- Communicates on BRIDGE in close coordination with the communication offices of SNSF and Innosuisse and within the guidelines of the Executive Committees of SNSF and Innosuisse
- Regularly reports its activities to the Executive Committees of SNSF and Innosuisse

³ [Compensation regulations of the SNSF](#)

2.5 Sounding Board

In order to secure a critical outside view, a sounding board, composed of stakeholders from academia, economy and non-profit organisations can be appointed by the SteCo. The Sounding Board is comprised of up to 10 individuals to cover a certain customer diversity. It can vary in composition according to the subject of discussion.

The sounding board may be consulted on the strategic and the operational level. The SteCo regularly exchanges with the sounding board and considers its inputs in the fulfilment of its tasks. For this purpose, the SteCo and the Sounding Board meet for one fixed yearly meeting and can be consulted by the SteCo for specific questions at any time.

2.5 Executive Committees of SNSF and Innosuisse

The Executive Committees of SNSF and Innosuisse have the following tasks and competences:

- Conclusion of a cooperation agreement between SNSF and Innosuisse setting out the details concerning required infrastructure, management and staff, collaboration between the BRIDGE Office and the different services of the Offices of SNSF and Innosuisse, financing and supervision
- Provision of all necessary management capacities and services to guarantee an efficient, effective, and lawful execution of the programme
- Supervision of the activities of the BRIDGE Office
- Allocation of resources and infrastructure needed for the management of the programme, in particular the working place of the BRIDGE Office and the necessary IT infrastructure for the submission of proposals and grant management
- Monitoring and evaluation of the programme, assurance of an appropriate impact analysis
- Adoption of a communication strategy to promote BRIDGE and supervision of its execution
- Any other business not assigned to another body
- Ensure within their operational organisational structure that SNSF and Innosuisse are equally involved in the day-to-day running of BRIDGE and can contribute equally to its management

3. BRIDGE funding lines

3.1. Proof of Concept

BRIDGE Proof of Concept (PoC) projects support young researchers who aim to develop an application or service based on their own research findings. These projects may feature any type of innovation or research field.

The PoC funding line is designed to support researchers on their way to entrepreneurship or their efforts to implement and apply their research results with an economic and/or societal partner.

3.2. Discovery

BRIDGE Discovery supports projects that aim to explore and implement the innovation potential of research results. Submitted projects demonstrate the societal and/or economic impact of the innovation to be developed. The projects may feature any type of innovation or research field.

The Discovery funding line targets researchers such as faculty members or teaching and research staff employed at a higher education research centre or a non-commercial research centre outside the higher education sector according to the Federal Act on the Promotion of Research and Innovation (RIPA).⁴

3.3. Further funding lines

The SNSF Academic Board and Board of Directors of Innosuisse may introduce additional funding lines.

3.4. Conditions and details of the funding lines

The requirements, terms and conditions and further details for the submission of applications are defined in the regulations of the funding lines, issued by the SteCo.

3.5. Project support

The following measures are implemented:

- In coordination with Innosuisse's Start-ups and Next Generation Innovators division, training courses are offered to BRIDGE fellows.
- BRIDGE offers a limited time coaching to funded projects. In addition, it is recommended to all funded projects to apply for and make use of the Innosuisse coaching services.
- BRIDGE events are organized to bring together implementation partners, project investigators, investors, and BRIDGE committees and panels.

⁴ 420.1 Federal Act on the Promotion of Research and Innovation (RIPA) of 14 December 2012