



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 2026 has been published on the Innosuisse [website](#).

Q: Is there matchmaking support available to find partners and/or projects?

A: During the Call the [b2match](#) partner search platform enables an interesting exchange with potential project partners in different focus areas. Participants will not be publicly visible: participant and organisation details, as well eventually marketplace items, will remain hidden from the general public.

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, 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 4 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 to 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 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.

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: Can a startup applying for an Innosuisse SIP, participate in the flagship as well?

A: Yes. Participation in a Flagship is in principle compatible with applying for or participating in another Innosuisse funding instrument. However, the same project activities and costs cannot be funded twice, and the organisation must have sufficient capacity to carry out the respective projects.

Q: What is the expected technology readiness level (TRL) at the end of the flagship project?

A: The Flagship Initiative does not prescribe a specific TRL. It supports ambitious, transdisciplinary collaborations that develop innovative solutions to major economic and societal challenges of strategic importance for Switzerland. Depending on the individual technology components, the achieved TRL may range from TRL 6 to 8. The overall objective is to move the key innovations beyond laboratory validation towards a validated and demonstrated system that is ready for further implementation and market uptake.

Q: What are the roles and responsibilities of Innosuisse and armasuisse regarding evaluation and decision of the applications?

A: In the context of this joint call, armasuisse has contributed to the definition of the topics and co-finances the call. The entire call, submission and evaluation process, however, is carried out according to the established procedures of Innosuisse. All evaluation steps are conducted under the responsibility of Innosuisse, and the funding decisions are taken exclusively by Innosuisse. However, as part of the evaluation process, armasuisse will review the abstracts and executive summaries of the application and make the reviews available to Innosuisse as a further basis for the decision. For the purpose of this call, armasuisse will not be available as an implementation partner.

Q: Does the non-leakage / research-security requirement mean that sovereign platforms are mandatory? Should US platforms be avoided?

A: No. The call does not impose a general requirement to use Swiss or sovereign communication and collaboration platforms, nor does it prohibit specific commercial providers. However, applicants must assess information-security, data-protection, foreign-interference and dependency risks in relation to their project and implement appropriate safeguards. The measures should be proportionate to the sensitivity and risk profile of the project.

Q: How many proposals are expected to be funded – one per topic or more?

A: There is no predefined allocation of one flagship project per focus area and no fixed number of projects per topic. Funding decisions will be based on the quality of the applications and the available funding. Multiple projects may therefore be funded within the same focus area, provided they meet the evaluation criteria and can be supported within the available funds.

Q: Can a company use project results outside Switzerland after the project, provided it complies with Arms Export Law?

A: The Flagship call does not establish a general prohibition on the international use or commercialisation of project results. However, any use, transfer or export of results remains subject to the applicable legal and contractual framework, including Swiss export-control legislation and any project-specific restrictions. At the same time, generating significant added value for Switzerland is a key element of the Flagship initiative. A flagship must therefore aim to ensure that the results contribute substantially to strengthening innovation, competitiveness and value creation in Switzerland, while allowing international use and commercialisation where appropriate and legally permissible.

Q: Should a flagship focus on one topic or cover all three?

A: A Flagship must address one or several of the three focus areas. The selected scope should be driven by the systemic challenge and demonstrate clear interdependencies between the different subprojects and technologies.

Q: What are the expectations regarding the scope and level of detail of the pre-proposal and the proposal? Are there any page limits or recommended lengths for either proposal?

A: The pre-proposal and proposal should be sufficiently detailed to allow Innosuisse a proper assessment according to its evaluation criteria. No fixed page limits are specified; applicants should follow the official application form and instructions. Please refer to the document [Guidelines call for projects Flagship Initiative 2026](#).

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.

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. It submits the application to Innosuisse on behalf of the consortium and is responsible for the overall management and coordination of the flagship. There are no requirements regarding its involvement in individual subprojects or the level at which it can receive funding.

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, 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.

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: Is there a minimum number of subprojects needed?

A: There is no strict minimum for the number of subprojects. Typically, 3 to 8 subprojects are considered appropriate, but the exact number should be tailored to each flagship's specific needs.

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: The consortium should ideally be finalized when submitting the pre-proposal. Changes are possible but must be declared in the proposal submission, as they are considered substantial changes. Since the recommendation to submit a proposal is based on the original pre-proposal consortium, any changes may affect the evaluation in the proposal phase.

Q: Are there special nationality requirements for PIs, co-PIs or employees?

A: No general nationality requirement is prescribed for PIs, co-PIs or project staff. Eligibility is primarily linked to the status and location of the participating organisations. However, where projects involve sensitive information, know-how or technologies, knowledge and research security requirements apply and additional risk assessments or background checks may be carried out where necessary. Applicants are expected to identify potential risks at an early stage and to develop and present appropriate mitigation measures to address any identified risks.

Q: Can a start-up still be in the incorporation process at pre-proposal submission?

A: An organisation that has not yet been legally incorporated cannot be considered an eligible implementation partner at the time of submitting the proposal. The company must fulfil the applicable eligibility requirements when the proposal is submitted. Consequently, the start-up must have been established by the time the proposal is submitted at the latest.

Q: Is a Swiss company that belongs to an international group eligible? Are there restrictions on the countries in the group?

A: Yes. A Swiss company that belongs to an international group may be eligible, provided that it fulfils the applicable eligibility requirements.

3 Questions on the submission regulations

Q: How can the pre-proposal be submitted?

A: The pre-proposal must be submitted via the Innosuisse platform [Innolink](#).

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

A: The two-phase process, from pre-proposal submission to the final funding decision, is complex. Innosuisse aims to provide applicants with the shortest possible timeline. Therefore, the approximately 4-month submission period for the 2026 call is final, and deadline extensions will not be granted. Any changes due to exceptional circumstances will be announced by Innosuisse.

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 27 October 2026 (12 o'clock / noon). The deadline for submitting the proposal is 4 May 2027 (12 o'clock / noon).

Q: What does a pre-proposal contain?

A: Please refer to the Guidelines call 2026 section 4.2.

Q: What does a proposal contain?

A: Please refer to the Guidelines call 2026 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.

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

A: No. Letters of support/recommendation are not 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: The hourly rates are set in Innolink. Please contact the responsible department of your research institution (usually Grants Office) or the programme team programme@innosuisse.ch If you notice any issues or incorrect information.

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: If your institution does not yet have approved notional hourly rates, the documents can be requested at supervision@innosuisse.ch. The submitted documents will be reviewed and approved by Grant Surveillance and subsequently stored in the application tool.

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. It's important to note that not every implementation partner is required to contribute 5% individually. Instead, the 5% is a collective contribution from all implementation partners involved in the flagship.

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. Please refer to [Art. 11 Contribution of the implementation partners to the 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 19 Federal Act on the Promotion of Research and Innovation \(RIPA\)](#) remains reserved.

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 financial (cash) contributions in the project.

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 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. 11 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

¹ Innosuisse funding ordinance (as of 01.01.2023)

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.

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. To enter the material costs, please note the document [eligible material](#) costs on the Innosuisse website.

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. Note: The management budget should be carefully and accurately calculated, as the number of subprojects and project partners significantly impacts overall management expenses.

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

A: No.

Q: How should the contribution of non-Swiss partners be handled?

A: Foreign partners may participate in a Flagship, provided that they comply with the same applicable legal requirements as Swiss companies. Their involvement must be clearly justified in the proposal. In particular, the consortium must explain and demonstrate why the respective activities cannot be carried out by Swiss companies or research institutions and why the involvement of the foreign partner is necessary for the successful implementation of the flagship.

5 Questions on contracts and project reporting

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

A: According to [Art. 41 Regulation of intellectual property rights and rights of use in innovation projects](#), 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 report, financial report and a review meeting. Depending on the length and volume of the flagship, additional evaluations can be defined.

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.