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Leading House Asia Pacific

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Leading House Asia Pacific funding call 2025

Innovation Partnership Grant call guidelines

About the Leading House Asia Pacific

The Leading House Asia Pacific is a bilateral science and technology cooperation program of Switzerland with the Asia-Pacific region. Funded by the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI), the Leading House is hosted by the University of Zurich (UZH) with the mandate to coordinate activities on behalf of the entire Swiss higher educator sector for the 2025-2028 funding period. Through seed funding instruments and outreach events, the program fosters partnerships with academic, policy and innovation stakeholders across the ASEAN member states, East Asia, Australia and New Zealand.

The Funding Call 2025 provides seed-funding support for joint research projects, policy engagement and PhD mobility between Switzerland and the Asia-Pacific. We welcome applications from Swiss-based researchers to collaborate with research, policy or innovation partners in any of the Asia-Pacific countries that form part of the Leading House mandate. The 2025 call offers two funding lines, a Scientific Collaboration Fund and a Mobility Fund.

Mobility Fund

The Mobility Fund facilitates flexible, short-term mobility for PhD researchers between Switzerland and universities in the Asia-Pacific. We support projects that enhance research training, support PhD scholars in building their global networks, and foster sustainable links between supervisors and institutions.

We welcome proposals for two funding strands, including lab-to-lab exchanges and reciprocal mobility (Future Leaders Exchange), and PhD placements in collaboration with academic start-ups (Innovation Partnership Grant).

Innovation Partnership Grant

Aim and scope

The Innovation Partnership Grant supports academic start-ups in the Asia-Pacific to connect with the innovation ecosystem in Switzerland and enable early-career researchers to gain exposure in a global start-up environment. The grant is intended for early-stage, deep-tech start-ups to collaborate with a Swiss researcher or research team for PhD mobility of 2 weeks to 6 months. Activities may include lab placements for PhD scholars from the Asia-Pacific in Switzerland (incoming) or lab projects for Swiss PhD scholars in the start-up overseas (outgoing). We look for projects that enhance research training, support PhD scholars in building

their global networks, and foster sustainable partnerships and knowledge exchange for innovation-led research and entrepreneurship.

Collaborating institutions in the Asia-Pacific are eligible if they are based in:

Australia, New Zealand, China, Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan (Chinese Taipei), Japan, South Korea, and ASEAN member states (Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Vietnam).

Funding support

— Up to **CHF20,000** may be awarded per project.

Co-funding requirement

— **All proposals need to demonstrate co-funding from the international Project Co-Lead(s) in the Asia-Pacific.** Co-funding may include an external grant, fellowship or scholarship funds, institutional support, or an in-kind contribution. A mutual commitment of the Swiss and international partner serves an indicator for the strength of the partnership and the financial sustainability of the project.

Key dates

Call opens	1 December 2025
Deadline for submissions	8 March 2026 (17:00 CET)
Results announced by	May 2026
Projects must start	between 1 July and 31 December 2026

Who can apply

Eligibility requirements for applicants (Project Lead)

— **You can apply for this grant if you are a Swiss-based researcher (Project Lead).**
— Applicants need to be employed at one of the Swiss federal and cantonal universities, universities of applied sciences, universities of teacher education and public research institutes (see list below).
— Applications are only possible by established researchers (professorial staff, non-professorial academic staff or senior scientists, postdoctoral researchers) holding a position at a recognised Swiss Higher Education Institution for the entire duration of the project, with a minimum employment level of 0.5 FTE (50%).
— Applicants from universities of applied sciences and universities of teacher education who do not have a PhD degree are also required to have at least 3 years of research experience.

Please note that if the project involves outgoing PhD mobility, the Project Lead must be the academic supervisor of the Swiss-based PhD scholar.

Eligible Swiss institutions are defined in the Federal Act on the Promotion of Research and Innovation (RIPA):

— ETH Domain: the two federal institutes of technology (ETH Zurich and EPFL Lausanne) and research institutes (Eawag, Empa, PSI, WSL)
— Higher education institutions and other institutions within the higher education sector that are accredited under the Federal Act on the Funding and Coordination of the Higher Education Sector (HEdA)

- Research facilities of national importance
- Non-commercial research centres outside the higher education sector
- Policy research institutions which are not federal research institutes, but which must conduct their own research projects for the appropriate fulfilment of their remit

Project Co-Lead

- All proposals need to have a substantive international component and need to include a Project Co-Lead from a partner institution in the Asia Pacific.
- Project Co-Leads must be research or academic staff at postdoctoral level or above at universities, institutes of higher education or research institutes in at least one of the eligible countries in the Asia Pacific. They must also hold a leadership/(co-)founder role at an early-stage start-up affiliated with their institution.

Please note that if the project involves incoming PhD mobility, the Project Co-Lead must be the academic supervisor of the incoming PhD scholar.

Eligibility requirements for PhD scholars

- PhD scholars do not submit their own proposals.
- PhD scholars must be enrolled in a PhD degree programme and are expected to have completed at least 1 year of their candidature. They must have completed their probation / confirmation requirements and must be on track to complete their progress milestones.

Additional Project Partners

- Projects may include additional Project Partners from other institutions in Switzerland, the Asia Pacific or globally.
- Please note that global partners need to bring in their own funding to participate in the project.

Activities we support

- Swiss lab placements of 2 weeks to 6 months for PhD scholars under the supervision of an academic start-up founder in the Asia Pacific (incoming)
- Short-term projects, lab placements or blended mobility options for Swiss PhD scholars in the Asia-Pacific start-up (outgoing)
- Supervisor meetings and research visits, including for:
  - joint research projects to validate or refine start-up technology or to undertake a proof-of concept study in a Swiss research context
  - development of future joint PhD projects
  - preparation of joint external funding bids
  - attendance at start-up training and mentoring events in Switzerland

Evaluation criteria

Proposals that meet the eligibility requirements will be reviewed on the basis of relevance for the aims of this call, potential for impact, and the availability of funds. We also aim to support a diversity of Swiss institutions and of partner countries in the Asia-Pacific region.

Proposals will be assessed with reference to the following criteria:

1. Relevance of PhD mobility for start-up development and international research training.
2. Clearly defined pathway to academic/societal impact (focus on achievable results that can lead to high-impact outputs and the potential to leverage future funding).

3. Potential to build sustainable research and innovation networks between Switzerland and the Asia-Pacific.
4. Feasibility (including clearly articulated objectives, work plan, timeline, and a reasonable and justified budget).
5. Diversity of the research team (with diversity to include disciplinary approaches and gender, skills, and career profile).
6. Level of co-funding commitment.

Project duration

— The duration of this award is 1 year. Projects must start between 1 June and 31 December 2026.

Proposal submission

— All applications must be submitted online, via the **Good Grants platform**.
— After registration, applicants can preview the blank application form and complete the application directly in the platform. Applications in-progress can be saved in the system and submission is possible until the deadline.

Supporting documents
— In addition to completing the online application, applicants are asked to upload the following supporting documents in the Good Grants platform:

CVs
— CV of Project Lead (Applicant)
— CV of Co-Lead
— CVs of PhD scholars undertaking mobilities
Each CV should be max. 2 pages. The CV should include education, professional appointments, expertise and activities relevant to the application, and (if applicable) up to 5 publications related to the proposed project. Please upload in one PDF document.

Budget
— Please upload your completed budget template. The budget template can be downloaded from the Innovation Partnership Grant webpage. Please upload in excel format.

Evidence of co-funding
— Please upload evidence of (cash or in-kind) co-funding commitment from the Project Co-Lead in the Asia-Pacific. If you also have other co-funding sources, please include evidence as well. Please upload in one PDF document.

Please note that applications by email will not be accepted.

Eligible costs

What we fund

The grant may cover expenses for both Swiss and partner-country participants, unless stated otherwise. Overall costs cannot exceed the maximum project budget. Childcare costs are costed separately and do not count towards the project budget.

International & local travel

— Return flight costs of up to CHF2,200 (Economy or Business)
— Airport transfer
— Train or bus
— Car rental only with justification
— Visa fees

Accommodation & subsistence

For mobilities to Switzerland

— For research stays of 1 month or longer: max. CHF3,000 per month
(For visitors coming from Least Developed Countries, Other Low Income Countries and Lower Middle Income Countries and Territories (as defined by the OECD DAC List of ODA Recipients), this maximum can be increased to CHF3,500 per month)
— For short-term research stays: up to CHF200 per night (up to the sum of CHF3,000 per person).
— For visits exceeding 2 weeks, we recommend booking alternative, more cost-efficient accommodation, e.g. serviced apartments, long-term rentals, Airbnb.
— Daily rate of CHF70 for meals and small expenses (e.g. short trips via public transport).

For mobilities to the Asia-Pacific

— For research stays of 1 month or longer: max. CHF2,500 per month.
— For short-term research stays: up to CHF200 per night (up to the sum of CHF2,500 per person).
— For visits exceeding 2 weeks, please apply pro-rate we recommend booking alternative, more cost-efficient accommodation, e.g. serviced apartments, long-term rentals, Airbnb.
— Daily rate of CHF70 for meals and small expenses (e.g. short trips via public transport).

Event expenditure

— Venue rental
— Catering
— Marketing and communication materials
— Speaker fees (excluding the Swiss project lead and collaborating partners)
— Technical staff support (CHF 25/hour, max. CHF 200/day)

Equipment & consumables

— Equipment and consumables directly related to the research work, including:
  — Lab consumables
  — Field expenses
  — Costs of testing equipment
  — Cost of computing time
  — Development of databases (including licencing)
  — Use of research infrastructure
  — Rental of event or IT equipment (e.g. audio-visual)
— The total cost of equipment and consumables should not exceed 20% of the overall grant amount requested from the Leading House.

Dissemination costs

Dissemination costs may be requested for items including:

— Media resources, websites and research collaboration sites
— Public engagement or launch activities
— Databases and data repositories

— Development of teaching and curriculum materials
— Conference fees and attendance may be costed if the conference is a venue for disseminating the project results and/or serves as a meeting venue for the project team.

Please note that we are not able to fund publication or open access costs.

Salary costs ("Work-related institutional costs")

— Staff time / salary costs may only be requested for Swiss-based project members at Universities of Applied Sciences (UAS, including "Fachhochschulinstitute") and Universities of Teacher Education (UTE) in Switzerland, excluding the project leads/lead applicant. This may include academic staff, postdoctoral researchers and PhD scholars. These costs may account for max. 20% of the overall grant and should not be used to create new positions.

Please note that we are not able to fund salary costs in other circumstances (please refer to the section on "what we do not fund" below).

Research assistants

— Lab, research or technical staff support
— Teaching staff costs cannot be funded.

Childcare costs

— For participants with childcare responsibilities, the application may include:
  — For workshop/event attendance: Travel costs for each accompanying child as per the travel cost guidelines above and childcare allowance of CHF200 per accompanying child per overnight stay.
  — For research stays: Travel costs for each accompanying child as per the travel cost guidelines and allowance of max. CHF 1,000 per month (independent of the number of accompanying children).

Subcontracting (to third-parties not included in the project team)

— Assistance with fieldwork, data collection, interviews, surveys or translation work where appropriate for the context of the project, cost considerations or sustainability (please explain clearly in your application).
— Costs may not exceed 20% of the total grant requested from the Leading House.

What we do not fund

Participation of global project partners

Projects may include global project partners outside of Switzerland and the Asia-Pacific region. **Global partners cannot receive funds** from the Leading House Asia Pacific and must bring their own funding to participate in the project.

Other costs we do not cover

— Overheads and coordination costs.
— Salary costs for the Swiss-based project lead.
— Salary costs for any Swiss-based project member (except for project members at Universities of Applied Sciences and Universities of Teaching Education in Switzerland).
— Salary costs of project co-leads or partners based at collaborating institutions outside of Switzerland.
— Publications or open access costs (funding can be requested from the SNF).
— Equipment and consumables not specifically related to the project or part of basic infrastructure at the participating institution, in particular: standard IT equipment incl. hardware and software, laboratory facilities and equipment, and any other facilities and equipment routinely made available for the relevant research field in a research institution or environment.

Review & selection

Review panel

— The review will be coordinated the Leading House Asia Pacific, with the review panel including representatives from professional services departments (e.g. International, Research Development, Innovation) and the academic community at the eligible Swiss higher education institutions. Reviewers may also be drawn from experts overseas.

Review decision

— The review panel decision is final and cannot be appealed. There is no legal entitlement to the grant.
— Due to the volume of applications, the Leading House Asia Pacific is not able to provide feedback on individual applications. There is no legal entitlement to a disclosure of reviewers' names or the information provided by reviewers.

Grant administration & reporting

Grant agreement

— Prior to the disbursement of grants, grant recipients (Project Leads) will be required to sign a grant agreement provided to by the Leading House Asia Pacific. Grant agreements are signed directly in the Good Grants platform.

Grant disbursement

— Grants will be disbursed to the Project Lead via invoice in a single instalment after signing the grant agreement.
— The Project Lead is responsible for all fund management and reporting.
— Expenditures of the grant must agree with the approved budget in the grant agreement. The allocated funds may only be spent within the approved duration of the project.
— Any unspent grant will have to be returned to the Leading House.

Transfer of funds or responsibilities

— The Project Lead is not allowed to transfer the responsibility for the management of the grant to any foreign partner or institutions. The Project Lead remains responsible for answering for, and reporting on, the use of funds transfer abroad for the local execution of joint projects.
— Should the Project Lead terminate their employment during the agreed project period, they are responsible to find a substitute at the same institution to complete the project in line with the project plan. If a substitute cannot be defined, all or part of the unspent funds must be returned to the Leading House.

Variations to cost plan

— During the project, shifts between individual budget categories are allowed of up to 20% as long as the outputs in the project plan can still be achieved. Budget variations above 20% may only be permitted upon prior written agreement with the Leading House.

Reporting & monitoring

— The Project Lead shall ensure continuous monitoring of the activities executed in the framework of the project and inform the Leading House in due time about events or changes that may affect the successful implementation of the project.
— A final project report and a financial report must be submitted within 6 weeks after the closure of the project. Final reports need to be handed in via the platform Good Grants. Templates will be provided.
— The Leading House reserves the right to reclaim part or all of the payment of the financial contribution in the case the Project lead fails to submit the reports, or if reports of low quality are submitted.

Audit

— All financial records, including the original receipts, must be kept by the Project Lead for a minimum of 5 years, unless they are submitted to the Leading House together with the final financial report.

General provisions

Compliance and export control

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

— Project Leads are also advised that they are required to comply with SECO regulations on sanctions against individuals, organisations and countries. We are not able to fund projects with sanctioned entities. The updated sanctions list is available SECO website: https://www.seco.admin.ch/seco/de/home/Aussenwirtschaftspolitik_Wirtschaftliche_Zusammenarbeit/Wirtschaftsbeziehungen/exportkontrollen-und-sanktionen/sanktionen-embargos/sanktionsmassnahmen.html

— All Swiss-based researchers in a grant-funded project are further required to comply with their home institution's regulations on international cooperation, travel safety, and research integrity.

— The Leading House reserves the right to not fund proposals upon consideration of the reputational risk of the project or partnership to the Swiss universities involved.

Communications and acknowledgment

— Project Leads are expected to acknowledge the Leading House Asia Pacific funding in published material and presentations related to the project. Logos and visuals will be provided.

— The Leading House may use the proposal summary of successful projects for the Leading House website, digital media and reports. Project leads shall also make project information (relevant photos, links to outputs, impact case studies etc) available to the Leading House upon request and/or in the report for communication and reporting purposes.

Terms of the call

— The Leading House Asia Pacific reserves the right to modify the terms of this call, for example, according to any decision made by the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) or according to circumstances beyond its reasonable control ("force majeure event"). These may include but not be limited to travel restrictions or safety risks brought by pandemic conditions, natural disasters, diplomatic incidents, or war or terrorism. The Leading House will communicate any changes to the terms of call promptly and will use all reasonable efforts to mitigate the impact on applicants.