

Research Partnership Grants 2021 – Call

Bilateral research cooperation with the Latin American Region 2021-2024

The State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) has mandated the University of St.Gallen as Leading House for the Latin American Region (LH) for the bilateral collaboration with partner institutions in Switzerland and Latin America for the period 2021-2024 and to explore new research in the region.

The current call for Research Partnership Grants 2021 aims to promote mono- or interdisciplinary projects and involve bilateral or multilateral partnerships with Latin American countries. Researchers of all disciplines are invited to apply.

The current COVID-19 pandemic demonstrates that international challenges such as global health, climate change, the preservation of flora and fauna, the end of poverty, and other deprivations can best be tackled by solutions that extend beyond national borders. Consequently, to strengthen initiatives to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Development, the LH this year's call focuses on the following four specific Sustainable Development Goals and two thematic areas:

- **Sustainable Development Goal 3 – Good health and well-being**
Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
- **Sustainable Development Goal 10 – Reduced inequalities**
Reduce inequalities within and among countries
- **Sustainable Development Goal 11 – Sustainable cities and communities**
Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable
- **Sustainable Development Goal 13 – Climate action**
Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts
- **COVID-19 pandemic**
Coronavirus and its related consequences
- **Digitalisation**
Technical, management, societal, and ethical aspects

Project proposals should be connected to at least one of these four SDGs or two thematic areas and ensure a direct transfer to society, benefiting local communities and building capacity. Researchers also must present socially, culturally, or technically innovative projects fostering resilience. Travelling should be limited to the essential.

Aims and objectives

The aim of the Research Partnership Grants (RPGs) is to strengthen or initiate a scientific exchange between Swiss and Latin American researchers and institutions by enabling them to jointly undertake preliminary research and organize meetings, conferences, or workshops.

RPGs are particularly useful for developing new joint project proposals or connecting already existing and independently funded projects in Switzerland and the Latin American partner countries for long-lasting cooperation.

Funding and budgeting

RPGs fund projects with a minimum of CHF 10,000 and a maximum of CHF 25,000. The grant will be disbursed in two instalments: 80% upon signing the grant contract and 20% after approval of the final report.

All expenses must be justified and related to the proposed research activities. Financial contributions from each side of the partnership and in-kind contributions are expected – likewise third-party contributions, if applicable – and should be detailed in the Budget Form.

The total costs of the project should be made explicit, including the contribution of all partners and the remaining amount requested via the Research Partnership Grant. The mutual commitment of the partners in both countries will serve as an indicator for the strength of the partnership and the project's financial sustainability. It includes financial co-funding and in-kind contributions by all partners and possibly third-party contributions. The Commission for Research Partnerships with Developing Countries (KFPE) [Guide for Transboundary Research Partnerships](#) shall be used as a guideline for the project process.

The budget will be checked and might be cut if expenses are not calculated or justified correctly.

Administration of funds and reporting

The Principal Investigator of a Swiss institution is responsible for administrating the funds and for reporting. They must submit a final scientific and financial report one month after the termination of the RPGs project. The latest deadline for reporting will be on February 29, 2024.

Application

Applications shall be submitted in electronic format only. Please submit the complete application on the [website](#) of the University of St.Gallen Leading House for the Latin American Region (LH) according to the instructions given there. The Principal Investigator in Switzerland (Swiss PI) has to complete the application. It is their responsibility to ensure that the formal requirements are fulfilled, and the content is accurate and complete. Otherwise, the Leading House for the Latin American Region cannot consider the application.

To apply, please fill in the **Application Form** and upload the following documents:

- **Budget;**
- **CVs** Curriculum Vitae and publications (max. 2 pages) of the Swiss and Latin American Principal Investigators (PIs), including a list of the five most important publications related to the proposal;
- **Co-Investigator(s) form** from Switzerland or Latin America, Personal Data;
- **Proposal**
In a separate document (max 5 pages plus bibliography), please provide all information listed below. In order to ensure a blind peer-review process, do not make explicit references to members of the research team; the project proposal needs to be anonymous.
 - 1) **Project title and abstract:** The abstract should be a maximum of half a page and include objectives, research plan, and methodology, expected results, and purpose of the partnership.
 - 2) **Relevance and justification:** The proposal should explicitly respond to at least one of the SDGs mentioned above (3, 10, 11, 13) or one thematic area (COVID-19 pandemic and digitalisation) and ensure a direct transfer to society. Projects also must be socially, culturally, or technically innovative, fostering resilience.
 - 3) **State of the art and research gap:** Briefly describe the current state of the art in research and identify a research gap: include main research question(s) and hypothesis.
 - 4) **Research plan, methods, and timeframe:** Include approach and methodology, milestones and timeframe of feasible proposed activities. Travel should be limited to the essential; wherever possible, remote contact is preferable. The research project must be conducted in twelve months within a two-year time window (2022-2024).

- 5) **Expected results and follow-up:** Explain the expected impact, output, scientific production, follow-up activities, and long-term collaboration of the research project. This grant should be used to prepare and submit proposals to larger funding agencies and instruments in Latin America, Switzerland, and Europe (e.g., to SNF, ERC). Applicants ought to explicitly indicate to which call and funding agency the research team plans to submit its proposal in the next step.
- 6) **Research cooperation:** Specify past or existing collaboration, projects, and publications between the Swiss and the Latin American partner institution(s). Identify the relevance of the planned project for further research collaboration between the applicants, indicating the need for bilateral or multilateral cooperation between Switzerland and Latin America.
- 7) **Experience of the applicants:** Outline the applicants' previous areas of work and performance of the applicants relevant for the proposed research. Describe the strengths and complementarities between the research teams.
- 8) **Promotion of female and emerging researchers:** Briefly describe the gender and career-stage balance of researchers involved in the project.
- 9) **Intended Intellectual Property Rights (IPR):** Include IPR agreements (if applicable).
- 10) **Ethical, safety, and regulatory issues:** Does the proposed work raise ethical, safety, or regulatory issues? If so, how will the team deal with them?

Evaluation and selection of projects

Applications will be evaluated by invited experts and decided upon in a committee meeting. The LH distinguishes between formal eligibility criteria and evaluation criteria. Projects only qualify for funding if the eligibility criteria are fulfilled and will be finally selected based on the evaluation criteria.

The following formal eligibility criteria will apply in this call:

- A Swiss PI holding a PhD and a permanent position (minimum 40%) in an eligible Swiss Research Institution (federal and cantonal universities, universities of applied sciences and universities of teachers' education, as well as public research institutions) must act as the main applicant and is qualified to submit the proposal. For the project's duration, this call mandates that the Swiss PI is employed by a Swiss institution with a contract unrelated to the proposal.
- The Principal Investigator in Latin America (Latin American PI) must be affiliated to an accredited university or a public research institute and must hold a faculty or scientist position or a doctoral degree besides bringing along several years of research experience. Concomitantly, the Latin American PI must also be employed as a faculty member by a local institution (minimum 40%) with a contract unrelated to the proposal.
- The Principal Investigators (PIs) of a project shall not be working on another ongoing Leading House funded project at the time of submission. Priority is given to researchers/projects without previous funding, e.g., SNF or Leading House Grants.
- Applications can include Master and PhD students.
- Financial co-funding and in-kind contributions from both the Swiss and Latin American partners are expected; mutual commitment is an essential indicator for the project's sustainability. Third-party sources (if applicable) should also be mentioned (Budget, page 5).
- The grant received from the Leading House must be spent in both Switzerland and one or several Latin American countries. Expenses outside of Latin America and Switzerland can only be covered in exceptional cases and upon the prior consultation with the Leading House. A major percentage of the grant received from the Leading House is to be spent for the Swiss partner(s).
- Inclusion: Promotion of female researchers is mandatory.

Evaluation criteria can be decisive when comparing similarly-ranked projects. The following criteria will apply in this call:

Relevance

- The project must pursue one or more of the SDGs mentioned above (3, 10, 11, 13) or thematic area (COVID-19, digitalisation) as well as a direct transfer to society. Researchers also must present socially, culturally, or technically innovative projects that foster resilience.
- Researchers must demonstrate that the studied topics are relevant to the global agenda, especially for Switzerland and Latin America.
- The proposal must demonstrate the need for international cooperation for the success of the inputs and outputs. Simply listing collaboration between institutions and researchers in different countries does not suffice.

Academic originality and consistency

- An adequate state-of-the-art literature review and identification as well as justification of a research gap.
- Novel and clearly defined research question(s) and hypothesis.
- Comprehensive and detailed research method along with original and feasible proposed activities.
- The accuracy of the research plan and application.
- Quality and experience of the team members involved in the project. Expertise and complementary proficiency of the partner laboratories/institutes and the applicants.

Expected results and follow-up

- The feasibility and relevance of the expected impact, outputs, and scientific production (e.g., publications, workshops).
- The projected dissemination strategy.
- The sustainability of the project and long-term collaboration through follow-up grants or the establishment of permanent collaborations.

Timeline

Call launched:	April 30, 2021
Deadline for submission:	June 25, 2021
Evaluation and funding decision:	July – September, 2021
Notification:	October 15, 2021
Contract:	November 2021
Earliest project start:	January 1, 2022
Project duration:	12 months
Latest project end:	January 30, 2024
Project report due:	February 29, 2024

Please note that the research project must be conducted **within twelve months in a two-year time window (2022-2024)**.

Important note

The LH has the right to modify the terms of this call according to the circumstances related to COVID-19 and any decision made by the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI).

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