

National Data Streams (NDS)

Lifetime management guidelines for NDS projects

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1 Important documents

The following documents apply in addition to the rulings and correspondence from SPHN and PHRT. Documents can be found on <https://sphn.ch/services/funding/nds/> and on <https://www.sfa-phrt.ch/>.

NDS-specific documents:

- NDS call document
- SPHN funds release form
- Financial reporting template (under construction)
- Annual activity report template (under construction).

SPHN regulations and guidelines:

- SPHN Funding Regulations
- Ethical framework for responsible data processing
- Information Security Policy
- Reporting Actionable Genetic Findings to Research Participants
- SPHN financial reporting guidelines (under construction).

PHRT regulations and guidelines:

- Partnership Agreement PHRT (2020)
- PHRT guidelines document (not available online; PHRT Office will provide this document directly to the grantees).

2 Legal basis, responsibilities, official correspondence

2.1 Ruling

SPHN and PHRT communicate the final funding decisions to the main applicants in the form of a ruling (in accordance with the Federal Act on Administrative Procedure). If a proposal was approved, the decision letter will contain the following information:

- Amount of the funds awarded by SPHN and PHRT, split into annual instalments

- Duration of the grant
- If applicable, any conditions that need to be met before the funds are transferred, in particular authorizations according to the Human Research Act
- If applicable, any further comments/conditions
- Information on the right of appeal
- Evaluation report from the review panel

Main applicants from proposals that are selected for funding henceforth are called “**main PIs**”, and co- and associated applicants “**co- and associated PIs**”, respectively.

2.2 Responsibilities

Upon approval of the submitted full proposal, proposals become projects or grants (in financial terms) and applicants become grantees/PIs. Each consortium member (i.e., each PI) accepts personal responsibility for the success of the project.

Main PIs are obliged to submit any deviations from the submitted NDS proposal for approval to the NDS office (nds@sphn.ch).

Only the main PIs represent the consortium before SPHN and PHRT. Such representation is legally binding. The SPHN and PHRT offices communicate exclusively with the main PIs, who are, in turn, responsible to inform the co- and associated PIs.

The main PIs are responsible for the following tasks towards SPHN and PHRT:

- Requesting the release of the allocated funds with SPHN and PHRT
- For SPHN funds: transferring allocated funds to the other consortium members. (PHRT funds are transferred by the PHRT office to main PIs and co-PIs.)
- Consolidating and submitting the progress, annual, and final activity reports
- Consolidating and submitting the annual and final financial reports
- Informing SPHN and PHRT about any changes affecting the PIs (e.g., moves, changes to employment terms, award of additional funds that will be used for the project)
- Coordination between the individual members of the consortium and management of the project

All awarded SPHN funds are transferred to the main PI’s institutions (in most cases, the grant administration office). From these two institutions, funds can be transferred to the institutions of the other PIs. Each PI is responsible towards SPHN and PHRT for using the funds received appropriately.

If a new main PI is chosen, the new and the current main PI must jointly file a corresponding application with SPHN and PHRT.

2.3 Correspondence

All general correspondence is to be addressed to the NDS Office (nds@sphn.ch), i.e., the SPHN Management Office and the PHRT Office. To submit **reporting documents and change requests of any kind**, please include phrt-office@ethz.ch in your email, too.

2.4 Discontinuation of funding

If the prerequisites for the award are no longer met after approval of the proposal or if the project is not rolled out as planned (e.g., milestones are not reached), SPHN and/or PHRT may launch an intermediate review of the project. A project can be stopped and/or funds might be cut.

3 Getting started

3.1 Starting date of the grant

The project must start **between 01.06.2022 and 01.09.2022**, on the first day of a month. The respective main PIs inform SPHN and PHRT about the starting date within 2 weeks after the decision letter has been sent. SPHN and PHRT confirm the start of the grant when the first instalment is transferred. No funds from SPHN and PHRT may be used before the official starting date of the grant.

3.2 Release of funds

3.2.1 SPHN funds

For SPHN funds, the main PIs request the release of funds and the payment of the annual instalments to the NDS Office (nds@sphn.ch). The funds are paid in annual instalments in accordance with the ruling. If the grant is not administered by a grant administration office, it should be administered by the main PIs or by another office that assumes this fiduciary role.

Before the release of the first instalment of SPHN funds, all necessary authorizations (fully signed consortium agreements (SPHN template), fully signed Data Transfer and Use Agreements (SPHN template), and fully approved ethics protocol and consent framework) must have been submitted to the NDS Office. In addition, all conditions stated in the ruling must be met.

For the release of all following instalments of SPHN funds, as a rule, the payment of instalments can be requested after approval of the annual reports.

3.2.2 PHRT funds

For the release of PHRT funds, applicants are requested to contact the PHRT Office once the starting date of the project has been set (Vanessa Deppler; phrt-office@ethz.ch).

3.3 Transferring funds to other PIs and project partners

Main PIs or their respective grants office(s) may transfer SPHN funds only to researchers who are listed as co-applicants or associated applicants in the submitted full proposal. Such PIs may open a project-specific account at their institution if needed (generally with the grant administration office). This requirement does not apply to PHRT funds.

Transfers of funds to all involved PIs are exempt from value-added tax. VAT related to project-related spending needs to be paid for by the main PIs.

4 Monitoring

4.1 Monitoring board

Each NDS will be appointed a monitoring board consisting of scientific and PPI experts, and SPHN and PHRT representatives.

Members of the monitoring board regularly meet with members of the NDS consortium to discuss progress and challenges regarding technical, scientific, governance, and PPI implementation aspects and to provide feedback. The monitoring board reports back to the SPHN and PHRT bodies responsible for funding decisions.

4.2 Progress report meetings

During regular follow-up meetings, members of the monitoring board and the NDS consortium (main PIs, project manager, data manager, and/or other consortium members) will convene to discuss at least the following issues:

1. Progress on the goals and milestones
2. Encountered hurdles and challenges
3. Adjustments to goals, milestones, and other parts of the project plan
4. Possible synergies between NDS projects (if applicable)
5. Any questions or matters of concern to be discussed with the monitoring board

All attendees are invited to foster open communication and a spirit of collaboration.

The motivation for this measure is to increase the chances of success of the NDS. This is in the best interest of the NDS consortium, SPHN, PHRT, and, ultimately, the personalized health landscape of Switzerland in general. NDS applicants may be invited to share solutions that can benefit other NDS with the respective consortia.

Outside of the monitoring meetings, main PIs may contact monitoring board members for advice, if the members have consented to receive such requests. Monitoring board members are invited but not obliged to answer to such requests. Monitoring board members may, in turn, provide advice to the applicants on their own initiative.

Ownership of and responsibility for all project-related problems and challenges always remain with the main PIs.

4.2.1 Meeting frequency

- 3 months after project start: first progress report meeting
- March 2023: second progress report meeting (this meeting should cover the annual activity report, see below)
- Subsequent progress report meetings should be no more than six months apart.
- The meeting form (virtual, hybrid, or in person) will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

4.2.2 Meeting preparation

The NDS project manager is responsible for coordinating and planning the monitoring meeting dates. Main PIs should submit 2 weeks in advance of the meeting a 0.5-1.5-page progress report describing the five points listed in 4.2 to the SPHN and PHRT Office (if the annual report has been recently written, this will substitute this progress report). Main PIs may additionally choose to prepare a short presentation outlining their progress.

4.2.3 Meeting reports

The progress and annual reports and feedback from the monitoring board may be used to inform the responsible SPHN and PHRT boards.

5 Reporting

5.1 Activity report

Main PIs must submit an **annual activity report** to the NDS office (and PHRT Office) **by the last day of February** of the following calendar year. The NDS office will provide the main PIs with the template in due time. Globally, it will be about 2 pages long and contain a project update and description of next steps.

5.2 Financial report

An **annual financial report** must be submitted to the NDS office (and PHRT Office) **by the last day of February** of the following calendar year and must declare, using the NDS reporting templates from SPHN/PHRT:

- Use of SPHN and PHRT funds
- Own contributions in cash and in kind from the involved partners
- Use of third-party (institution from the public or private sector) funds

The main PIs are responsible for electronic submission to the NDS Office (nds@sphn.ch, and to the PHRT office). The financial report is generally compiled by the grant administration office of the host institution and must be reviewed and signed by the main PIs. Co- and associated PIs are responsible for the compilation of a financial report at their institution on the funds allocated to them and for the transmission of this report along with all receipts to the main PIs or to the grant administration office of the latter.

More information and [FAQ](#) on financial reporting will be published on the [SPHN website](#) (at the time of writing, these pages are still under construction).

5.3 Final report

A final activity and financial report must be provided no later than 3 months after the official end date of the grant. After the official end date, no more expenses may be paid from SPHN and PHRT funds. Along with the reports shall be provided:

- Lay summary of the accomplished work as part of the project
- Copy and/of or links and references to project outputs (tools, datasets, policies, frameworks, manuals, SOPs, preprints, journal articles, etc.).

These resources will be published or made accessible to the community via the SPHN and PHRT websites.

5.4 Cost-neutral extension

Providing good, sound arguments, main PIs may apply for an extension of the project by a maximum of 6 months, but until 31.12.2025 at the latest, without provision of additional funding. The extension request must be submitted to the NDS office at least 4 months before expiry of the grant period and requires a written justification.

6 Use of funds

6.1 General provisions

SPHN and PHRT funds may only be used from the official grant starting date until the official grant end date.

The budget categories mentioned in the rulings or in approvals issued during the running time of the grant and the corresponding amounts are regarded as approximations. The total budget, however, must be used in accordance with the approved project plan (i.e., transfers between budget categories should be not more

than 3% of the total grant). Budget changes exceeding this 3% limit of the total grant (SPHN and PHRT funds together) are subject to the approval of SPHN and PHRT.

In exceptional cases, SPHN and PHRT may define binding budget items for which it is not permissible to transfer amounts of money between budget items without prior written approval from SPHN or PHRT, respectively.

As regards the eligible costs for support by SPHN and PHRT, please refer to the NDS call document chapters 8.1 and 8.2. SPHN and PHRT shall retain the right to decide whether or not to accept certain costs. Costs deemed ineligible by SPHN or PHRT shall be reimbursed to the grant account by the host institution.

6.2 Overhead, VAT

No overheads shall be paid for SPHN- and PHRT-funded projects (pursuant to article 3.3 of the SPHN Funding Regulations).

The SPHN and PHRT grants are not subject to VAT or other taxes and charges. However, research expenses are not excluded from VAT. Therefore, all costs budgeted (e.g., equipment and consumables) will be charged to the project, VAT included, unless the research institution is able to recover the VAT.

6.3 Own contributions matching SPHN funds

As per Article 2.1 of the SPHN Funding Regulations and the NDS call document (chapter 8.1), the matching funds principle applies to all financial contributions provided by SPHN. The main PI is responsible for ensuring that, at the end of the project, all funds received from SPHN are matched by own contributions (in cash and/or in kind)¹ from the institutions involved in the project.

The host institution commitment letters that have been submitted with the full proposal and in which resources to be provided by the host institution have been listed are binding. Resources may be allocated in cash and in kind and may fall in the budget categories salaries, equipment, consumables, and miscellaneous.

Only funds that are transferred by the host institution to an account/credit line administered by the applicant are to be considered as **cash contributions**. **“In kind” contributions** are non-monetary resources, goods or services that are provided by the host institution for the project (e.g., salaries, or costs for large or specific equipment). In kind contributions are valued in monetary terms.

6.4 Repayment of remaining amounts or unmatched SPHN funds, additional costs.

Upon expiry of the grant, PIs need to repay to SPHN and PHRT any unused funds no later than 30 days after approval of the final financial report, unless the funds in question amount to less than CHF 50. SPHN funds that are not matched by own contributions must also be repaid to SPHN.

The respective main PI is responsible for any repayments to SPHN and PHRT.

¹ a) Competitive infrastructure grants (e.g., cohort studies) are eligible as own contribution provided that they support the goal of SPHN. A commitment letter from the institution shall be provided to confirm that the infrastructure is sustainable and will be used and maintained after the end of the project.

b) Institutions shall decide alone whether they want to use competitive research grants as own contribution.

7 Communication

7.1 Information at project start for the SPHN & PHRT websites

The lay summary and keywords from the full proposal will be published on the SPHN/PHRT websites. If required based on the funding letter, or if desired, a new version of the lay summary and new keywords must be made to the NDS office (nds@sphn.ch) **before 1 September**.

7.2 Information for the SPHN and PHRT websites during and after project

Links to resources and project output to the benefit of the scientific community (tools, datasets, policies, frameworks, manuals, SOPs, etc.) will be published on the NDS page of the SPHN and PHRT websites. NDS main applicants are expected to provide the NDS Office with this information in the annual report (see annual report template). An embargo period may be applied – this shall be discussed during the progress report meetings and mentioned in the annual report.

7.3 Publications

Any publication containing results partially or fully financed by SPHN and/or PHRT must acknowledge SPHN and/or PHRT as the funding source. The term “publication” includes, but is not limited to, publications in scientific journals and on preprint servers, conference talks, posters, etcetera. The following example shows the minimum requirement for acknowledgment of funding for SPHN:

“This project was supported by the Swiss Personalized Health Network (SPHN) initiative”

For acknowledging PHRT, see the PHRT guidelines.

As SPHN-PHRT projects are funded with public money, the resulting scientific publications must be publicly accessible and made available through Open Access (Gold, Diamond/Platinum or Green Road) according to SNF guidelines².

PIs should inform the SPHN and PHRT Office prior to any press releases related to NDS project activities (nds@sphn.ch).

7.4 Social media

Grantees are invited to follow SPHN on Twitter ([@SPHN_ch](https://twitter.com/SPHN_ch)) and [LinkedIn](#), and PHRT on Twitter ([@PHRT_ch](https://twitter.com/PHRT_ch)). Grantees may also join the SPHN [LinkedIn group](#) for networking purposes.

When communicating activities funded by SPHN and/or PHRT on social media, grantees are requested to tag SPHN and/or PHRT in their posts.

² Please see the SNF guidelines: <https://oa100.snf.ch/en/funding/guidelines/>