



LEADING HOUSE FOR THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

RESEARCH PARTNERSHIP GRANTS CALL FOR PROJECTS 2026

1. PURPOSE

The Research Partnership Grants (RPGs) aim to support the development of new joint project proposals or to connect existing, independently funded projects in Switzerland and in the MENA partner countries into long-lasting collaborations.

Open to all scientific fields, the RPGs support a wide range of research approaches and methodologies, including desk-based research, fieldwork, feasibility studies, archival research, qualitative interviews, surveys, artistic practices, design thinking, or other forms of collaborative work, depending on the needs and methods of the discipline.

The Swiss Leading House for the Middle East and North Africa (LHMENA) launches one RPG call per year during the 2025-2028 mandate. The current call will fund approximately a dozen projects.

Through the RPG, LHMENA specifically seeks to:

- **Facilitate meaningful collaboration** between Swiss and MENA researchers, combining complementary skills and expertise.
- **Enable testing and piloting of ideas**, prototyping, preliminary data collection, or the validation of innovative solutions in real-world contexts.
- **Support partnerships with long-term potential**, including knowledge exchange, joint outputs, and continued engagement beyond the 12-month grant.

2. ELIGIBILITY

2.1. DISCIPLINES

The call is **open to all disciplines**, except proposals intended for military applications.





2.2. APPLICANTS

Each application must be submitted jointly by a **main applicant based in Switzerland** and a **co-applicant based in an eligible country of the MENA region**. Additional academic (including MA, PhD, and postdoctoral students) or non-academic partners relevant to the project may be included.

Eligible countries: Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Occupied Palestinian territory, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Yemen.

The main applicant in Switzerland must:

- be affiliated with an accredited higher education institution (according to the list published on the [website of swissuniversities](#)), or with a research institution (as defined in art. 4 and 5 of the [Federal Act on the Promotion of Research and Innovation](#));
- hold a permanent position or a position lasting at least until the end of the project (in the case of temporary position, please provide a support letter to clarify the affiliation of the applicant);
- have a minimum of three years of research or relevant professional experience.

The co-applicant in the MENA region must:

- be affiliated with an accredited university or with a public research institution;
- hold a permanent position or a position lasting at until the end of the project in the case of temporary position, please provide a support letter to clarify the affiliation of the applicant);
- have a minimum of three years of research or relevant professional experience.

Applicants should clarify any doubt on eligibility by contacting the LHMENA before submission.

2.3. LIMITATIONS ON APPLICATIONS

Applicants with previously funded RPGs:

- Cannot submit a new proposal with the same partner institution.
- Can submit a new proposal with a different partner institution, 12 months after their previous project ended

Additional restrictions:

- Applicants with more than one ongoing LHMENA grant (of any type) are not eligible to apply.
- Applicants are allowed to submit only one application per call.

3. APPLICATION & SUBMISSION

Applications must be submitted on the LHMENA platform and include:

- Answers to all the questions of the application form;
- CVs of the main applicant and of the co-applicant(s);
- Budget presented in the LHMENA template;





The following documents can be included if relevant:

- References;
- Gantt chart or similar to describe project organization and partners' responsibilities;
- Support letters (only if the status or affiliation of the applicants needs to be clarified).

Other documents are not required and will not be taken into consideration.

Only applications **in English, complete, and submitted jointly by the Swiss and MENA partners** (i.e., including one eligible main applicant based in Switzerland and at least one co-applicant in the MENA region) will be considered eligible. Incomplete or non-compliant applications will be rejected without evaluation.

4. EVALUATION PROCESS

4.1. ELIGIBILITY CHECK

The LHMENA team will verify compliance with formal requirements. The following criteria will be assessed on a binary basis (eligible / not eligible):

- Compliance with the application format and language;
- Submission of all mandatory documents (application form, CVs, budget);
- Eligibility of the applicants and of the involved institutions (see 2.2 above);
- Budget compliance (costs eligibility as listed in Annex 1, contributions by both partners);
- Absence of any potential military application (see 2.1 above);
- Compliance with applications limits (see 2.3 above).

Applications that do not meet **all** eligibility criteria will be rejected without further evaluation.

4.2. INTERNAL ASSESSMENT

All eligible applications undergo an internal assessment to ensure sufficient clarity, coherence and alignment with the call objectives. The internal assessment considers:

- the clarity of the proposed activities and timeline;
- the consideration of potential risks and the ability to address them;
- the relevance and balance of the partnership;
- the potential for sustained collaboration beyond the 12 month grant.





4.3. SCIENTIFIC REVIEW

Applications passing the internal screening will be evaluated by external reviewers. The scientific potential of the project will be assessed based on:

- the relevance and clarity of the research objectives, with respect to existing knowledge;
- the quality and appropriateness of the proposed approach;
- the feasibility of the project within the given timeframe and resources;
- the expected outputs and their potential contribution to knowledge and/or practice and collaboration;
- the complementarity and capacity of the partners.

4.4. SELECTION

The projects with the highest combined internal and external evaluations will be considered for funding. If multiple projects receive similarly strong scores and the number of fundable projects exceeds the number of available grants, the final selection will also consider:

- Gender equity, equal opportunities and inclusivity;
- Discipline and country representation, with particular attention to collaborations involving domains or MENA countries that have been under-represented in previous calls.

5. FUNDING AND BUDGETING

The maximum amount for a RPG is **CHF 25,000**. The grant will be disbursed in two instalments: 80% after signing the grant contract and 20% after approval of the final report. At the end of the project all funds received and unspent must be reimbursed to the LHMENA.

A **detailed budget** must be provided using the LHMENA **template**. **Eligible cost categories and applicable conditions are detailed in Annex 1**. All budgeted expenses must be justified, directly related to the proposed activities, and described in the *Details* column of the budget table. The total costs of the project must be indicated, including financial and in-kind contributions from all partners, as well as the amount requested from the RPG. Shifts between individual budget items after the project approval are allowed. They must be approved by the LHMENA if they exceed 10% of the grant.

A meaningful co-funding or in-kind contribution from the applicants is expected, demonstrating active engagement in the collaboration. It includes financial co-funding and/or in-kind contributions by all partners, and possibly third-party contributions. The contribution must be clearly related to the proposed activities or to their immediate collaboration context. **Proposals that do not indicate any contribution will not be considered eligible.**

Funded activities must be led and coordinated by the Swiss and MENA partners. External service providers may be engaged for specific, clearly defined tasks (e.g. design, catering, technical services), but may not replace the active involvement of the applicants in the conception, implementation, and follow-up of the activity.





6. MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING

The Swiss main applicant is responsible for managing the funds and reporting. He or she must submit a final activity and financial report one month after the termination of the innovation project. The latest deadline for reporting is end of February 2028.

Agreements between the Swiss main applicant and project partner(s) are the responsibility of the Swiss main applicant, who remains solely responsible for project implementation.

The Swiss main applicant is not allowed to transfer the responsibility for the management of the grant to any foreign partner or institution. He or she remains responsible for answering for and reporting on the use of funds transferred abroad for the local execution of joint projects.

7. TIMELINE

Launch of the call	12 May 2026
Deadline for submission	23 June 2026
Result notification	November 2026
Latest project start date	February 2027
Project duration	Maximum 12 months
Reporting due	28 February 2028

IMPORTANT NOTE

The Leading House MENA reserves the right to adapt the terms and conditions of this call, where necessary, in light of changing circumstances or decisions by the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI).

CONTACT

Mr. Michael Krieger

LHMENA Programme coordinator

Email : lhmena@hes-so.ch

Phone : +41 58 900 00 32

Website: <https://www.hes-so.ch/en/hes-so/about-us/international/leading-house-mena>





ANNEX 1 : ELIGIBLE COSTS

The table below indicates which costs can be covered for the different types of partners:

Category	Swiss partner(s)	Partner(s) in the MENA region	Comments
Material	Yes	Yes	Costs are eligible for funding if they are directly related to the research work (equipment, consumables, field expenses, cost of computing time, use of research infrastructure). Equipment and facilities that generally form part of the basic infrastructure, operation and standards of a scientific institution (e.g., standard IT equipment incl. hardware and software, laboratory facilities and equipment) can be funded <i>only</i> if they are not already available at the institution and are essential for carrying out the project.
Work-related institutional costs	Yes with restrictions (see Comments)	No	Staff time may be charged only for Universities of Applied Sciences and Universities of Teacher Education in Switzerland. The work of the main applicant is excluded. No new positions may be created. Maximum 20% of the total grant.
Travel	Yes	Yes	Travel directly linked to the funded activity (e.g. flights, train, local transport). Economy class only. Visa and travel insurance costs are eligible where required.
Subsistence costs	Yes	Yes	A living allowance can be paid as lump sum to cover room and board costs. The rates applicable at mid-price hotels and restaurants constitute the maximum reference price. Please note that this instrument is not designed to support the mobility of researchers in itself; thus, applications consisting only of research stays will be considered as ineligible.
Childcare costs	Yes with restrictions (see Comments)	Yes with restrictions (see Comments)	In the case of children with care needs who accompany their parents, travel and subsistence costs can be included in the application. Maximum CHF 1,000 of the grant can be used for these costs.





Category	Swiss partner(s)	Partner(s) in the MENA region	Comments
Publications	No	No	The publication and dissemination of results are supported by the “Communication, Dissemination & Engagement Grants” of the LHMENA. A separate application to this instrument should be submitted in due time.
Subcontracting	No	Yes with restrictions (see Comments)	Research activities that cannot be conducted by the Swiss partner, in particular those that must be conducted in the partner country (field work, data acquisition, interviews, surveys, translation), can be outsourced to the partner(s) in the MENA region or to third parties. Maximum 20% of the overall grant can be used for this budget line.
Conferences and workshops (attendance)	Yes	Yes	Registration fees, travels, accommodations and daily expenses related to the attendance of an event, in Switzerland, in the partner country or, in exceptional cases in another country, are eligible.
Conferences and workshops (organisation)	Yes with restrictions (see Comments)	Yes with restrictions (see Comments)	Events integral to the project may be eligible for funding. However, they must be justified within the project’s scope and objectives. For events beyond the project’s core activities, an additional application for funding via the “Communication, Dissemination & Engagement Grants” should be submitted separately in due time.
Overhead	No	No	

