SwissCHI Funding Stories

Purpose

This is a live shared doc for SwissCHI HCI researchers to share their experiences and questions with applying for funding. The idea is to create a helpful resource for anyone navigating the funding process—sharing tips, lessons, and stories about what worked, what didn't, and everything in between. We are looking for experience in all types of funding applications (not limited to SNSF).

How to Contribute

Please suggest edits directly in this document. You're welcome to share anonymously or add your name—whatever you're most comfortable with!

If you are not comfortable with sharing it here, feel free to email either April Wang <april.wang@inf.ethz.ch>, Verena Zimmermann <verena.zimmermann@gess.ethz.ch>, or Chat Wacharamanotham <chat@ifi.uzh.ch> (whoever you are comfortable sharing with. We will extract key points, anonymize them, and add to this doc

Community Resources

- SwissCHI: The SIGCHI Chapter Switzerland Website
- SwissCHI Discord channel "funding"
    - If you have news about funding opportunities (that are non-recurring), please post them on the Discord channel.
- Google Doc list of recurring funding opportunities relevant to HCI in Switzerland
    - If you have links, templates, or tools that were helpful during the process (e.g., grant-writing guides, proposal examples, funding databases), please post them to this document.

Prompting Questions

General Information

1. What type of funding did you apply for?
2. What was your success rate?

Feedback and Revisions

1. Did you receive feedback during the process?
2. How many iterations did your proposal go through before submission?

Submission Process

1. Were there any logistical or administrative challenges?
2. Did you submit to a more technical track or social science track? How do you balance this in writing?

Post-Submission

1. If your application was successful, what do you think contributed to the success?
2. If it was unsuccessful, what lessons did you learn from the experience?
3. Did you receive feedback from reviewers? If so, was it helpful for future applications?
4. Did you resubmit your proposal? Did it work the second time?
5. Have you ever reviewed any grant proposals? What advice would you give to someone applying for funding in HCI?
6. Are there any specific tips for HCI researchers navigating interdisciplinary funding opportunities?

Chat Wacharamanotham

Experience:
I submitted a proposal for the SNSF Project scheme in 2018. The proposal was about an investigation of interactive systems to support researchers in designing experiments. At that point, I already published some papers at CHI in this direction. Accompanying the proposal were also several letters of support from collaborators whose background are in psychology. The proposal was rejected with the reason “external reviewers questioned statistical competences of the applicant”. It seems to me that the reviewers did not recognize the interdisciplinary nature of this proposal and evaluated it only from the statistics perspective. I did not resubmit this proposal.

Questions:

- How do SNF select reviewers for proposals that are interdisciplinary?

Notes from SwissCHI summer meeting 2025

Compiled by Chatchavan Wacharamanotham

For funding applicants:

- Feedback is noisy: Sometimes grant reviewers simply don't like your proposal, so they look for any weaknesses that could be used as an excuse for rejection. Those excuses may not be the key problem, so addressing them in the next revision may miss the point.
- The feedback "lack expertise in X" could be addressed by including external experts in your proposal (even without needing to allocate any

budget for them). For example, frame them as a "scientific advisory board". You don't need to have published anything together with these experts before. (Reviewers are too busy to check this for all proposals anyway.) Make this point visible in your executive summary.

- Design your proposal with busy reviewers in mind. Make it as simple to navigate and understand as possible. Polish the executive summary well. Reviewers have little time and have a lot to read.
- SNSF committees are methodologically conservative. In your proposal, choose a well-established research method, frame the contributions well within your discipline. Frame the interdisciplinary as a bonus aspect. Once you got the money, you can pivot to a more suitable research approach that might be more interdisciplinary and adventurous

For reviewers:

- Find out what rating is considered "positive" in your review track. This information may not be explicitly communicated. For example, for SNSF, anything less than "outstanding" (A) leads to definite-reject. So, don't inadvertently kill a proposal with minor flaws with your rating.
- Strategically, consider the behaviour of "the community of reviewers". Give positive ratings to HCI proposals to improve the representativeness of our field in the funding environment.