

LEADING HOUSE FOR THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

CONNECT & COLLABORATE GRANTS CALL FOR PROJECTS 2025

1. BACKGROUND

Effective communication is a cornerstone of impactful scientific collaboration. Whether through events, publications, exhibitions, or digital media, communication activities help shape partnerships, disseminate results, and engage diverse audiences, from academic peers to professionals, stakeholders, and the general public. These activities are essential at every stage of a project: to define shared goals, to exchange ideas during implementation, and to amplify outcomes and foster future collaborations.

To support these efforts, the Leading House MENA is launching **Connect & Collaborate Grants (CCG)**, a flexible funding instrument dedicated to communication and dissemination initiatives. The CCG aims to enhance the visibility, societal relevance, and long-term impact of research collaborations between Switzerland and the MENA region. This call is particularly well-suited for projects that seek to engage in dialogue with non-academic audiences - a dimension especially relevant for fields such as the arts, design, architecture, and the humanities, but also increasingly important across all disciplines.

By offering targeted support for communication outputs, such as open access publications, public events, or multimedia content, the CCG complements existing funding schemes. The instrument responds both to the specific needs of LHMENA-funded projects and encourages former grantees and new applicants to strengthen their outreach and build lasting bridges between research and society.

Each application should include activities taking place in or in collaboration with at least one of the eligible countries of the MENA region: Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Occupied Palestinian territory, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Yemen.

The call will remain open until the end of 2025 or until the allocated budget is fully used. Following this pilot phase, the instrument will be evaluated and will be launched again in subsequent years.



2. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The Connect & Collaborate Grants (CCG) aim to strengthen the visibility, accessibility, and societal relevance of research collaborations between Switzerland and the MENA region. By supporting communication-focused initiatives, the CCG encourages researchers to engage with diverse audiences, share knowledge beyond academic circles, and foster dialogue across disciplines, sectors, and cultures.

This funding instrument is open both to researchers who are involved or have recently finished a project funded by the LHMENA, and to any other collaborative initiatives with an eligible country of the MENA region. Eligible activities include, but are not limited to, scientific publications, creation of communication materials towards a non-academic audience, organization of events (scientific conferences, workshops, meetings).

3. ELIGIBILITY

The call is open to all disciplines and fields of research. However, proposals planning developments for military application will be rejected.

All researchers of Swiss federal and cantonal universities, universities of applied sciences and universities of teachers' education, as well as public research institutions (as defined in art. 5 of the Federal Act on the Promotion of Research and Innovation), are eligible to apply. The main applicant must hold a position, either permanent or lasting until the end of the project, and have a research or practical experience of three years or more.

The proposal must identify a main academic partner in the MENA region. This person must be affiliated to an accredited university or a public research institute and must hold a faculty or scientist position in addition to several years of research or practical experience. The collaboration can also include a non-academic partner relevant to the project (museum, association, NGO, publisher).

Activities that can be funded by other existing funding instruments will be considered as ineligible. This includes:

- Open access article publication from an SNSF project should be funded by to the corresponding instrument at SNSF.
- Open access publication of scientific books is covered by the corresponding instrument at SNSF. The CCGs cover publication of non-scientific books.
- Academic events in Switzerland can be funded by the SNSF instrument “scientific exchanges”. THE CCGs can cover academic and non-academic events in an eligible country of the MENA region, or non-academic events in Switzerland.





4. FUNDING AND BUDGETING

The maximum amount depends on the type of activities. For an **open access publication**, the CCGs cover the article processing charges (APC). These charges are capped at CHF 2,500, including any third-party funding. For **any other activity**, the maximum amount is CHF 5,000. The grant will be disbursed in one instalment after approval of the final report. The grant will be reduced accordingly if the actual costs are lower than the initial budget.

A detailed budget must be provided in the project proposal. Budgeted expenses must be justified and related to the proposed activities, according to the expense categories listed in the table below. The total costs of the project should be made explicit, including the financial and in-kind contribution of partner universities and the remaining amount requested via the CCG. A meaningful co-funding contribution from the MENA partner is expected, which may apply either directly to the proposed activities or to the broader collaboration framework in which the event or publication is embedded. 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
Work-related institutional costs	Yes with restrictions (see Comments)	No	The CCG can cover the time dedicated to the project by staff in Universities of applied sciences and Universities of teacher education. The work of the main applicant is not included. The funds available should not be used to create new positions. Maximum 20% of the overall grant can be used for this budget line.
Travel	Yes	Yes	The travel costs (return trip, including economy class flights, airport transfers, and local transportation if applicable) of researchers directly involved in the project and of invited speakers may be charged to the grant.
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.
Scientific publications	Yes with restrictions (see Comments)	No	APC for an open access article publication: maximum CHF 2,500, including any third-party funding. Costs for the publication of an open access book are eligible for a non-scientific publication. Publication of an open access book must be submitted to the corresponding SNSF instrument.





Category	Swiss partner(s)	Partner(s) in the MENA region	Comments
General publications	Yes	Yes	The CCG can cover the costs for the design and production of physical (brochures, posters) or digital (videos, podcasts, websites, social media campaigns) materials.
Direct costs of the event	Yes	Yes	These costs can include: venue and equipment rental, catering, marketing and promotion, additional costs for hybrid and online events/activities (technical support, software/license costs).
Overhead	No	No	

5. APPLICATION AND SELECTION

Applications shall be submitted on the platform accessible on the LHMENA website. The call is open until 31st December 2025 and applications are accepted and evaluated on a rolling basis. The call could be closed at an earlier date if the allocated funds are fully used.

Each application will be checked internally by the Leading House, to ensure that it meets the eligibility requirements and that it is in line with the objectives of the call. The following criteria will be taken into consideration:

- The project establishes a clear link between the main applicant in Switzerland and potential partners, stakeholders or end-users in an eligible country of the MENA region.
- All involved partners contribute to the project, with direct funding and/or in-kind contributions.
- The proposal is linked to an academic collaboration, either disseminating results of an ongoing partnership, or aiming at connecting future partners.
- The target audience is clearly identified.
- The proposal outlines the impact of the planned activities.
- The project is feasible according to the proposed timeline and budget.

6. MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING

Funded applicants will be required to submit a post-activity report summarizing the outcomes of their communication initiative and its impact on the visibility of their project. They must also submit a detailed financial report mentioning all the costs incurred during the project.





7. TIMELINE

Launch of the call	22.07.2025
Deadline for submission	At least 4 months before the planned activity
Result notification	Within 1 month after the application
Latest project start date	30.04.2026
Reporting due	One month after the end of the project

8. CONTACT

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