

Impact Collaboration Programme **2024** **Grant description**



Geneva
Science-Policy
Interface

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Overview

Establishing fruitful relationships between science, policy and practice can be a complex endeavour riddled with challenges at the individual, institutional and systemic level. Yet, more and more scholars and policymakers are developing creative ways to engage in collaborations in an attempt to design impactful solutions to some of the most complex challenges of the 21st century.

International Geneva is home to many such initiatives. With an ecosystem gathering a rich variety of International Organizations, NGOs, academic institutions, knowledge networks, foundations, and private sector actors, International Geneva has a great potential for nurturing further impactful practices at the interface of science and policy.

The Geneva Science-Policy Interface supports this work by facilitating opportunities for collaboration between Geneva-based international policy institutions and scientific institutions, in Switzerland and beyond. Its Impact Collaboration Programme (ICP) provides a unique funding instrument to spot, support and scale collaborations that contribute to strengthening science-informed policymaking and producing policy-relevant research and tools.

What does the ICP offer?

- Maximum 60,000 CHF per project
- Tailored support and advice to help maximise impact
- A learning framework to elicit knowledge and build capacity in science-policy collaboration

Who is eligible?

The call supports collaboration projects that involve at least one academic institution (no geographical limitation) and one Intergovernmental organisation (IO) from International Geneva. Other institutions such as international NGOs, global networks, think tanks, platforms, funds, boundary organisations, diplomatic missions, etc, can also apply to the ICP provided their project directly involves an Intergovernmental Organisation.

The ICP provides support to initiatives that explicitly address a science-policy gap around a global issue of relevance to the work of International Geneva actors (see list of competence areas [here](#)). Individuals (with affiliations), institutions and consortia can apply to the programme. See 'eligibility criteria' for more information.

Dates of the ICP 2024

- **Project submission:** opens on 8 November 2023 and closes on 2 February 2024 (23:59 CET)
- **Project selection:** Selected projects are announced at the start of April 2024
- **Start of the project:** An inception meeting with project partners is organised by Mid-May 2024 at the latest. The project activities should start within 6 months of the selection announcement.

How to apply?

Submit your 1,700-word application through this [platform](#).

See below for more information.

Contact: icp@gspi.ch

Background

The potential of science to enrich policymaking is recognised as crucial within international policy institutions¹. Confronted with wicked and pressing global challenges, policy actors need to access relevant and reliable information in a timely manner and develop robust tools to handle uncertainty and complexity. Science can and should be a primary partner in this regard, yet its contribution remains under-exploited.

Establishing fruitful relationships between science, policy and practice is in itself a complex endeavour riddled with challenges at the individual, institutional and systemic level. Mismatch of skills and work culture, divergent priorities, lost momentums, overwhelming costs and barriers and a somewhat limited understanding of what makes science-policy interfaces successful, all account for many missed opportunities².

Yet, more and more scholars and policymakers are developing creative ways to span boundaries and engage in impactful collaborations. The so-called 'International Geneva ecosystem' is home to many such initiatives. With an ecosystem gathering a rich variety of International Organizations, NGOs, foundations, networks, academic institutions and private sector actors, International Geneva has a great potential for nurturing further impactful practices at the interface of science and policy. Regrettably, incentives and resources available to support and scale these efforts are very limited.

The Geneva Science-Policy Interface (GSPI) is a neutral and independent platform that aims to strengthen engagement between the research community and Geneva-based international policy actors around specific policy issues. The GSPI has created the Impact

Collaboration Programme (ICP) in 2019, a specific instrument to support researchers and policy professionals looking for means to address barriers to the uptake of science in international policy organisations.

What is the ICP?

The Impact Collaboration Programme (ICP) is a funding and support instrument that aims to encourage and improve collaboration activities at the interface of science and international policymaking. The ICP is supported by funds from the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs.

Goal of the ICP

The overall goal of the ICP is to strengthen science-policy ecosystems around specific policy issues that are relevant to the International Geneva ecosystem, with the view to encourage science-informed policymaking and policy-relevant research.

The specific objectives of the ICP are the following:

1. Generate opportunities for science-policy collaborations;
2. Strengthen the strategic approach of science-policy initiatives;
3. Build capacity and resources in the field of science-policy boundary-spanning.

Dates of the ICP 2024

- **Project submission:** opens on 8 November 2023 and closes on 2 February 2024 (23:59 CET)

- **Project selection:** Selected projects are announced at the start of April 2024.

- **Start of the project:** A kick-off meeting with all selected projects followed by project-specific inception meetings are organised by Mid-May 2024 at the latest. Funds are released within a month after the signature of the agreement letter, following the inception meeting. The project activities should start within 6 months of the selection announcement.

¹ For example, the 2019 Global Sustainable Development Report emphasises the indispensable role of science for achieving the United Nations 2030 Agenda. (Messerli et al., 2019). In his report "Our Global Agenda", UN Secretary-General Antonio-Guterres explicitly calls for "all policy and budget decisions (to) be backed by science and expertise" and for "ensuring a prominent voice for science and expertise, for example through representation of science commissions in decision-making" (United Nations, 2021).

² Oliver, K., Innvar, S., Lorenc, T., Woodman, J., & Thomas, J. (2014). A systematic review of barriers to and facilitators of the use of evidence by policymakers. BMC health services research, 14(1), 1-12.

How does the ICP work?

The ICP is a programme that entails three components.

Grant

The ICP provides small grants amounting to a maximum of 60,000 CHF per project. Projects cannot exceed 18 months. These grants are seed money that can cover costs related to personnel or activity (see ICP rules and regulations to find out what types of costs are eligible). We expect the bulk of the grant to support science-policy engagement activities or outputs.

Applying institutions (and/or their partners) are expected to contribute financial and/or in-kind resources to the realisation of the project (financial/in-kind inputs do not have to proportionally match the ICP amount).

85% of the grant amount is transferred upon signature of the ICP Agreement Letter and 15% after validation of the final reporting.

Interactive support

The ICP entails a collaboration between the project partners and the GSPI. The GSPI engages partners in an interactive process throughout the project implementation that is aimed at strengthening reflexivity over the project's strategic and methodological approach.

The modality of this process is defined during an initial strategic meeting. The process consists of regular check-in to discuss key challenges, opportunities and practical support from GSPI. To the extent possible, and when relevant, the GSPI participates in project activities.

In addition to advisory services, the GSPI might extend – on a case-by-case basis – more specific practical support such as:

- Stakeholder analysis exercise
- Facilitation of introductions and networking
- Preparation and convening of dialogue activities
- Support to knowledge translation, communication and dissemination activities.

The services provided are tailored to the needs of each project. They fit within the limit of the GSPI's available staff resources. On a case-by-case basis, the GSPI is willing to remain engaged with project partners beyond the project timeframe to support the scaling and long-term sustainability of the initiative.

Learning

The GSPI is committed to generating learning from the project it supports to understand best practices, develop effective communication material and develop capacity-building resources for the broader community of actors engaged at the interface of science and policy.

The GSPI does so throughout the project implementation as follows:

- **Inception meeting:** before the project starts, the GSPI facilitates a discussion with the project team to review the project's strategic approach and impact objectives. During this meeting, participants also agree on the modalities of interaction during project implementation.
 - **Regular check-in:** the GSPI and the project team engage in regular exchanges to collect insights during the implementation process.
 - **Final report and reflective piece:** at the end of the project, the GSPI provides a final reporting template and curates the drafting of a reflexive piece that is featured on the GSPI website, with potential visuals and videos. More elaborated articles can also be produced if project partners are interested.
- This process is fully undertaken by the GSPI, with specific attention being paid to not creating operational or administrative burden on the project team and respecting the project team's constraints. No additional reporting is requested.

What projects?

The ICP provides support to collaborative projects that explicitly address a science-policy gap around a specific global policy issue. More specifically, the following criteria apply.

Selection criteria

Eligibility	Questions
Key criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the project a “Collaboration”? • Is there an “Academic party” and does it satisfy our definition? • Is there a “Policy party” and does it satisfy our definition? • Is the policy issue and the collaboration “relevant” to International Geneva? • Is the budget <u>mostly</u> focused on science-policy engagement activities?
Qualitative criteria	Questions
Importance of the policy issue (Q1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How clear, urgent and important is this policy challenge?
Clarity of the science-policy challenge (Q2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have the applicants clearly identified a “Science-policy gap” in relation to the policy challenge?
Relevance of the initiative’s objective and intended outcomes (Q3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent is the project’s objective relevant to address the problem at stake? • Are the intended outcomes clearly articulated and impacting relevant actors?
Clarity and appropriateness of the science-policy initiative (Q4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent do the applicants clearly describe a “Science-policy initiative”? • Are the “engagement activities” clearly described and feasible? • How appropriate is this initiative to generate the intended outputs?
Sustainability of results (Q5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the sustainability plan appropriate to ensure a long-term impact of the results of the project?
Relevance and quality of the collaboration (Q6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent is the collaboration relevant and able to achieve the intended outcomes? • Are partners’ skills appropriate?
GSPI added value (Q7)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a clear contribution that the GSPI could provide for the success of this project?
Feasibility of project (Q8)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the budget and the proposed contributions from partners sufficient to deliver the outcomes? • Is there co-financing (cash and / or in-kind)?

Definitions

Collaboration

The ICP supports projects that establish collaborations between scientists and stakeholders in policy processes as part of their impact strategy. We define collaborations as formal relationships that are formed around a common goal, and are based on a strategic management of tasks and responsibilities. The collaboration does not have to be formalised by a MoU (although it is encouraged) but it has to be recognised institutionally by the main institutions involved.

Collaborations can be at the “**beginning**”, in a “**chicken and egg**” situation or in the “**last stretch**”.

1. The beginning	2. Chicken & egg	3. The last stretch
Initial contacts have been established but the collaboration needs resources to be formally launched and deliver on its envisaged objectives.	A collaboration already is in place but needs resources to produce impactful outputs that will allow the collaboration to prove its value, sustain and scale.	A collaboration already delivered important outputs and needs resources to enhance the impact of such outputs.

The collaboration must include the following parties:

Academic party

The **Academic party** is a scientific institution or network from any location in the world. Individuals formally affiliated with a scientific institution can also apply. The main applicant on the Academic side must hold a PhD and have a contract as a researcher or equivalent during the time of the project. Applicants can come from any scientific discipline.

Policy party

The Policy party must be an Intergovernmental organisation based in Geneva, including programmes, funds, convention secretariats (please refer to [this list](#)). Regional or liaison offices might be considered provided the project activities and/or results are dealt with in Geneva.

Other Geneva-based institutions, such as international NGOs, diplomatic missions, governmental agencies, other international institutions, global networks, think tanks, platforms, partnerships, boundary organisations, etc. can also apply as a policy partner. To be considered as a policy partner, these institutions need to carry out activities related to a policy issue that is dealt with in a multilateral setting. They also need to explain clearly in the application that an intergovernmental process or organisation will be involved concretely in the project.

Collaboration can involve more than two parties. In that case, additional policy partners can be located outside Geneva.

Policy relevance

The projects selected must address a global policy issue of relevance to Geneva-based policy and implementation actors, with clear evidence of policy need or demand. Relevant policy challenges in the context of the ICP are issues related to any of the thematic areas that constitute the field of expertise of global actors based in Geneva (see [list](#) of thematic hubs in Geneva).

Policy relevance can apply to various dimensions of global governance dynamics:

- **Issue framing and agenda-setting:** contribution of evidence, data, information, knowledge, ideas to the development of policy agendas, narratives, strategic framework and priorities, understanding and advocacy of specific policy issues and solutions, identification of gaps in action and knowledge
- **Normative work:** substantial, methodological and technical contribution to deliberative policy discussions and technical work that support the formulation and adoption of conventions, regulations, recommendations, norms, standards, guidance, etc.
- **Policy implementation:** substantial, methodological and technical contribution to

the work done to implement normative tools at the regional and national level, and to the monitor and review progress at the global level, national and regional levels

- **Service delivery and operational work:**

contribution to specific tools and services offered by intergovernmental organizations or other actors to support evidence-informed policymaking and solution design (eg. data platforms, capacity-building...); support to improve organisation's internal policies: support to improve their capacity to deliver specific operational work (eg. in crisis settings)

- **Leadership for collaborative action:**

scientific contribution to support partnerships, multistakeholder initiatives that aim to spur collective action and create environments conducive to change at various levels of governance and societies.

Science-policy initiative

To be considered eligible, the project must address a global policy issue through a clear science-policy initiative. Such initiatives are based on the following elements.

Science-policy gap

The project is addressing a clearly identified science-policy gap that needs to be addressed to help progress towards the policy challenge. The science-policy gap refers to any improper access to and/or use of scientific information by policy actors, which constrains the possibility of making informed decisions. Frequently observed gaps are:

- gaps in available evidence and knowledge (access, availability and quality of evidence),
- gaps in the production of evidence and knowledge,
- gaps in effective exchange of expertise (problems with timing, capacity, brokers' legitimacy, expertise content and formats),
- gaps in capacities, motivation and resources of scientists, policy actors and managers of science-policy interface,
- gaps in the operational side of science-policy interfaces.

Science-policy initiative

A science-policy initiative is a "bridging" intervention that aims to address the identified science-policy gap. Initiatives usually do this

by promoting greater engagement between researchers and policymakers. 'Engagement' implies greater interaction at the interpersonal or inter-institutional level and can involve many different types of activities (see below).

Science-policy activities

Activities undertaken to address a science-policy gap depend on the context, and objectives of a given initiative. They usually fall within one of these categories, although specific context and policy issues might require other approaches:

Producing policy-relevant knowledge

- Identifying and communicating needs for evidence
- Shaping research agendas
- Joint production of knowledge
- Evidence synthesis, knowledge assessment

Facilitating knowledge translation and exchange

- Facilitating access to research
- Translating and disseminating research in relevant formats and language
- Organising science-policy dialogues and other forms of knowledge exchange forum

Facilitating knowledge use in policy

- Advocating for evidence use in policy discussions
- Organising briefings, scientific advice activities
- Commissioning analysis, assessment, synthesis of evidence
- Collaborating with scientific institutions to monitor and evaluate the outcomes of policies at the national or international levels

Creating sustained mechanisms for science-policy engagement

- Building relationships and networks
- Building partnerships and collaborations

Building skills

- Building capacity of scientific actors to engage with policy
- Building capacity of policy actors to engage with scientific knowledge
- Building capacity of intermediary actors to shape and facilitate science-policy interaction

The GSPI encourages **engagement activities** that result in **direct interaction** between scientists and:

- Policymakers, such as member states,

government officials, leaders in international organisations or close proxies.

- Policy shapers: policy professionals (policy officer, expert, specialist, analyst) in IO secretariats, governments, diplomatic missions, other international institutions involved in policymaking processes.

- Policy implementers: professionals from programmes and units in IOs and other institutions in charge of promoting, assisting, monitoring and evaluating policy implementation.

Outcomes and impact pathway

The ultimate goal of a science-policy initiative is to have an impact on either

- The quality of policy decisions taken in a given context
- The quality and relevance of the knowledge produced for a policy purpose
- The quality of interactions between science and policy actors.

Specific project's outcome(s) can also reside in addressing specific aspects of a science-policy gap, such as:

- Improving knowledge exchange between science and policy organisations;
- Empowering policy and science actors to engage with one another;
- Building more diverse and stronger networks and relationships;
- Creating or leveraging policy windows to link knowledge production with use in policy-making

Project activities might have interim concrete outcome objectives (eg. greater awareness of existing research, interest on the part of decision-makers, willingness to converse, or initiation of relationships). The link between interim activity-specific outcomes, science-policy outcomes and final policy impact are the constituent parts of the initiative's theory of change/pathway to impact.

To be effective, activities should be based on a clear gap analysis, a good understanding of the global policy context, a clearly defined overall goal that has been discussed with key stakeholders, activity-specific goals and pre-specified outcomes.

Application process

The collaboration partners are invited to apply through an [online platform](#). They designate the **main applicant** which will be the applying institution, responsible for the grant administration and reporting in case of selection. The ICP 2024 application process consists of a single, lightweight stage on our online platform (see below).

Projects are assessed as follows:

1. All projects are assessed qualitatively by the GSPI.

2. The top tier projects (approximately 10-12 projects) emerging from GSPI ratings are assessed qualitatively by an evaluation committee composed of independent reviewers with specific expertise on science-policy-implementation engagement mechanisms, as well as reviewers with expertise in the specific issues covered by the projects under review.

3. The top 4-5 projects that emerge from the committee's assessment are invited to a 30-minute online interview with the GSPI. The applicants will briefly present the project and answer any clarifying questions.

4. Selected and rejected projects are notified at the end of the evaluation (6-7 weeks after the end of the submission deadline). They are provided with their overall score and a summary of their qualitative evaluation or reasons explaining their non-eligibility.

Reviewers remain anonymous during the process. They formally agree to disclose conflicts of interest and to evaluate the projects based on the formal evaluation criteria provided by the GSPI as impartially and objectively as possible. The assessment process is non-archival (i.e. the GSPI does not keep a public database of the submissions) and based on the selection criteria specified above.

For more information, **contact:** icp@gspi.ch