The Scientific Equipment Program (SEP)

A. General

The goal of the Scientific Equipment Program is to facilitate the renewal and updating of major scientific and technological equipment including computer hardware at ETH Zurich. The program only supports investments that exceed the budgets of the applicants. There are two major funding categories:

- requests up to CHF 50'000 (requests below CHF 10'000 are not considered) are handled by the Office of Research
- requests above CHF 50'000 will be forwarded to the Equipment Commission; reviews by external experts and/or the Research Commission may be requested if deemed necessary.

The Equipment Commission, chaired by the VP for Research, comprises the following members: President of the Research Commission, VP for Infrastructure, VP for Finance & Controlling, Director of ICT Services, and delegated staff members of the Office of Research, the Purchasing Coordination and the Real Estate Management.

B. Who may submit an SEP application

- An application may be submitted by a Principal Applicant (PA) and further co-applicants provided they have used up their start-up funds.
- The PA must be an ETH Zurich employee with an at least 50% ETH Zurich position. All co-applicants that wish to receive funding from the program must also be ETH Zurich employees. Professors with joint appointments (e.g., UZH/ETH) may act as PAs and co-applicants irrespective of their level of employment at ETH.
- In general, the PA must have a permanent position. If his/her position is not permanent, it must be guaranteed for at least 3 years after proposal submission.
- As a general rule, the PA is the Budget Officer (Budgetverantwortliche/r) of his/her unit (e.g., an appointed professor or a managing director of a technology platform). In case the PA is not a Budget Officer, the Budget Officer of his/her unit must be a co-applicant.

C. What can be funded by the Program

- Acquisition (new and replacement investments) and major repairs of scientific apparatus for research and teaching
- ICT hardware for research including shares of central compute servers and memory
- Scientific software
- Machine tools in departmental workshops (usage must be compliant with the ETH workshop concept)

D. Scope of funding and applicants' contributions

For academic units (departments, institutes, professorships, departmental platforms and facilities), the following rules apply:

- Applicants **must** make an own contribution in order to qualify for a grant. In general, we expect a contribution of at least 20% of the effective investment costs.
- For larger investments of strategic importance for the applicants' department(s), additional departmental co-funding is expected.
- The Office of Research and the Equipment Commission take both the track record of former SEP applications as well as the overall funding situation of the applicants into account when determining the level of support. Applicants with ample resources will be required to participate to a higher extent. In general, for a tenured professorship, the PA and – if applicable – the departmental contribution should cover at least 30% of the total investment costs.
- In general, if the uncommitted reserves of the PA exceed CHF 300'000, the amount in excess of CHF 300'000 will first be subtracted from the total cost of the acquisition and the shared percent contributions of SEP and applicants will be determined for the remaining fraction.
- In case of extensive departmental investment programs, the financing scheme is determined a priori. Such programs must be announced in a timely manner and discussed in advance with the Vice President for Research. A departmental contribution of at least 30% is expected for large investment programs.
- Acquisitions of highly priced microscopy instruments for academic units are no longer supported. Such investments need to be discussed with and approved by ScopeM. Accordingly, the planned purchase must be included in the investment budget of ScopeM. Resulting applications must be submitted by ScopeM.

For ETH-wide technology platforms the following rules apply:

- Platforms are required to budget CAPEX (capital expenses) in addition to operational expenses. The investment budgets are subject to approval by the Executive Board and might take into account third-party income, e.g., R'Equip or ETH Foundation, when appropriate.
- Every investment exceeding CHF 50'000 requires an approval by the Equipment Commission according to the rules set forth in the SEP Guidelines.
- Acquisitions of capital items listed in the platform business/investment plans will be charged to the investment budgets of the respective units.
- In case of a denied external funding application, e.g., R'Equip, or an unexpected procurement not accounted for in the platform investment plan, a substantial contribution by prospective users of the equipment is expected.
- Start-up funds may be used to co-finance equipment in technology platforms, and newly appointed professors are encouraged to contribute to platform investments to cover their technology needs.

E. R'Equip matching funds applications

All SEP requests exceeding CHF 200'000 must be submitted to the SNSF R'Equip program for co-financing, provided that the research equipment in question is eligible for R'Equip funding (see R'Equip regulations for further details). Applicants need to ensure that their proposal is submitted to the SNSF by the next possible date following the SEP application (currently, the R'Equip deadline is May 2). In general, decisions on such SEP proposals will depend on the outcome of the corresponding R'Equip application. However, the Equipment Commission will review applications independently and an approved R'Equip grant does not entitle to SEP support.

IMPORTANT: The SNSF has decided to discontinue the R'Equip funding program by the end of 2024. Thus, the last possible submission to R'Equip is in May 2024. If you plan to submit to R'Equip and to the SEP for matching funds, please explicitly mention this in your SEP application.

F. Language

To allow applications to be reviewed externally, they must be written in English. Exceptions must be discussed with the Office of Research prior to submission.

G. When to submit applications

Requests up to CHF 50'000 are not subject to deadlines. They can be submitted throughout the year from January 15 to November 30. For requests above CHF 50'000, there are three submission deadlines per year:

- **January 15, 17:00 CET**
- **May 1, 17:00 CEST**
- **September 1, 17:00 CEST**

H. Review and decision procedures

SEP requests up to CHF 50'000 are handled by the Office of Research.

Requests above CHF 50'000 are handled by the Equipment Commission. The opinion of the Research Commission and/or external experts may be sought for any request greater CHF 50'000. Investments in excess of CHF 500'000 require an approval of the ETH Executive Board.

Proposers of major scientific investments might be asked to explain the scientific and technological importance of the equipment requested at a hearing before the Equipment Commission.

Review criteria are as follows:
- How well are the applicants qualified to conduct the proposed research and to operate the requested equipment?
- How suitable is the proposed equipment to conduct the planned research?

- What is the significance of the request for the equipment portfolio at ETH?
- What is the expected scientific impact?
- Are the requested resources adequate?
- Are there alternative products/suppliers?

I. When to expect a decision

Notification of decisions made by the Office of Research will be usually announced within 2 months of the submission date.

Decisions of the Equipment Commission will be communicated in writing to the Principal Applicant within 3 to 4 months of the respective submission deadline. For SEP requests submitted in connection with SNSF R'Equip applications (see E) the Principal Applicant will receive a preliminary answer within the above time frame, followed by a final decision after the outcome of the R'Equip application has been communicated by the SNSF.

Notification of decisions concerning requests greater than CHF 500'000 may require a longer processing time. Nevertheless, decisions should normally be made within 5 months of the respective submission deadline.

J. Formal reasons for rejection

Proposals will be rejected without review if one or more of the following applies:

a) The application is submitted by someone who is not allowed to submit an application (see point B).
b) The summary is not written in a form that allows the educated layperson to understand the objectives of the proposed request.
c) The description of the project(s) associated with the request is inadequate.
d) The required documents specified under point L are missing or incomplete.
e) For requests greater CHF 50'000, the signature of the head of the department or organizational unit is missing.

K. Online submission of SEP requests

Applications must be submitted using the ETH Zurich grant application system **eResearch** (https://eresearch.ethz.ch/).

Please register on eResearch with the email address composed of your ETH user name (nethz) and @ethz.ch (username@ethz.ch) and set a password to create an account. Having registered once, you can log in at any time with your eResearch login details. Note that access is restricted to members of ETH Zurich. If you do not know your ETH user name (nethz), contact the Helpdesk (Phone 044 632 77 77 or send an email to helpdesk@id.ethz.ch).

In eResearch, click "My Applications" in the navigation bar on the left and then proceed to "New Application". Two different application forms are available for SEP requests: one for requests up to CHF 50,000 and one for requests above CHF 50,000 (the form for requests above CHF 50,000 usually is visible on eResearch 2 months before the deadline and open for submissions approximately 6 weeks before the deadline). Please select the appropriate form to enter information for your equipment request. Submit the application by clicking the "Submit" button at the bottom right of the application summary page.

The application must be started initially by the Principal Applicant. This applicant will be responsible for all correspondence. All relevant co-applicants should be added to the application. They will be able to access the application form.

For **technical support** in completing the online application form, please contact eresearch-support@ethz.ch. For **content-related support**, please contact the Office of Research at equipment@sl.ethz.ch .

L. Information to be included in an application

All submitted documents must be converted to PDF format prior to uploading.
The following information must be provided with all applications (see following sections for details):

1. Abstract (text box): Concise project summary with key details on the goals and expected outputs to be achieved with the requested equipment (max. 400 words).

2. Project description (PDF): Project description and a description of the significance of the equipment to ETH Zurich (max. 5 pages).

3. List of current research projects (PDF): List of projects relevant to the requested equipment.

4. Quotations from suppliers (PDF): Quotations from suppliers

5. Additional information (PDF): Any additional information (optional) that may support the application (e.g., teaching, awards, a list of patents or other relevant outputs).

Supplementary information required for requests greater CHF 50'000:

6. Reviewer suggestions (contact details in online form): Details of 5 potential reviewers

7. CVs and publications lists (PDF): For each applicant, put the CV and publication list together in a single PDF file (max. 8 pages per applicant).

8. Building request/ Bauantrag (PDF)

9. Letter of Support from the department or organizational unit (PDF)

10. Visa Preliminary Offer from the Purchasing Coordination (PDF): Visa Preliminary Offer from the Purchasing Coordination (Einkaufskoordination) is required if the price of the equipment is above CHF 200'000 (incl. VAT, irrespective of the amount requested from SEP).

11. Agreement or operational concept (PDF): Agreement or operational concept if applicants from two or more departments or organizational units submit the request.

M. Details of the documents' content

1. Abstract

The application system eResearch asks you for an Abstract (text box). Please provide a concise summary of the proposed activities, goals and expected outputs that would result from research conducted using the requested equipment. It should be comprehensible to the educated layperson. Please do not use more than 400 words and avoid (or adequately explain) technical abbreviations and jargon.

2. Project description

To allow internal and external evaluation of the proposal, the specific nature, purpose and need for the requested equipment should be described in sufficient detail. The project description, limited to a maximum 5 pages, should be informative to experts working in the same or related fields and understandable to a scientifically or technically literate lay reader.

Equipment to be purchased, modified or constructed must be described in sufficient detail to allow comparison of its capabilities with the needs of the proposed research activities. Applicants must provide information that the corresponding infrastructure does not yet exist at ETH, or that existing ones are already being used to their full capacity.

Each co-applicant may wish to describe her/his project for which the equipment will be used. These descriptions must be succinct (not necessarily as detailed as an individual request) and should emphasise the importance of the equipment to their research field. In cases where the user base is broad (e.g., technology platforms), potentially interested users along with typical applications may be listed.

3. List of research projects

A single list of the Principal Applicant's and co-applicants' completed, current and planned projects <u>relevant to the requested equipment</u> should be included with the application.

Please provide the names of the applicants, full titles of the projects, funding sources, amounts of funds and relation to the requested equipment. In case the requested equipment is used for teaching activities, please also provide the details (lecture, frequency, number of students, utilization of equipment in lecture) in this list.

4. Quotations from suppliers

The application must include manufacturers' offers for the requested equipment.

5. Additional information

The applicants may submit information they feel will help to clarify the importance of their equipment request.

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Supplementary documentation for requests exceeding CHF 50'000

6. Reviewer suggestions

Applicants should include a list of five potential external reviewers who they feel are qualified to assess the proposal. The suggested external reviewers should be independent of the Principal Applicant, co-applicants and any person who may be a potential user of the equipment. As examples, the suggested external reviewers should not be (i) close colleagues, (ii) former supervisors or students, (iii) co-authors of publications, (iv) co-editors of journals or books or (v) co-investigators on other grant applications. The application system eResearch provides you with a form to include the contact details of potential reviewers.

7. CVs and publications lists

A concise Curriculum Vitae (CV) of the Principal Applicant and co-applicants including a list of the most relevant publications should be submitted with the application. Applicants are encouraged to restrict the list of publications to a maximum of two pages, with emphasis on publications from the past 5 years. For each applicant, put the CV and publication list together in a single PDF file (max. 8 pages per applicant).

8. Building request / Bauantrag

A completed form "221F03_ETH_Raum_Bauantrag_EN" has to be submitted – irrespective of the expected costs for possibly needed constructional modifications. The form can be downloaded from the website of Real Estate Management. It serves to ensure that the infrastructure necessary to run the equipment is available or can be provided. It also helps estimating the engineering costs required to install and operate the requested equipment.

The pre-filled form "221F03_ETH_Raum_Bauantrag_EN" has to be handed in to Real Estate Management (Abteilung Immobilien) **upfront** by the applicant organisation's Real Estate Services SPOC (Single-Point-Of-Contact) via the Real Estate Services Portal (GMIS). The pre-filled form "221F03_ETH_Raum_Bauantrag_EN" should contain a description of the intended physical location of the requested equipment and include other information required for the appropriate handling of the proposal (e.g., any required cooling fluids, special electrical power needs etc.).

Applicants must submit the completed form, which is signed by Real Estate Management, "221F03_ETH_Raum_Bauantrag_EN" with their application via the submission interface.

IMPORTANT: After the approval of your SEP application by the Equipment Commission a new building request (Bauantrag) must be submitted to Real Estate Management to ensure the planning of the construction project will be initiated. For questions regarding this process please contact Real Estate Management.

9. Letter of Support from the department or organizational unit

Proposals exceeding CHF 50'000 require a Letter of Support from the head of the department or the head of the submitting organizational unit in case of non-departmental entities. The letter should ensure that the department or the organizational unit supports the proposal, and that the

equipment is compatible with the scientific strategy of the department/unit. The information contained in the Letter of Support is used in the review process.

10. Visa Preliminary Offer from the Purchasing Coordination (for equipment above CHF 200'000)

If the price of the requested equipment exceeds CHF 200'000 (incl. VAT), a Visa Preliminary Offer for suppliers' quotations must be obtained from the Purchasing Coordination (Einkaufskoordination), see also general information on [procurement](). The Visa Preliminary Offer helps to ensure an effective management of orders, including a timely purchase of equipment once the request is approved. Please mail supplier quotes to einkauf@fc.ethz.ch to obtain a Visa.

11. Agreement or Operational Concept

If the request for equipment exceeds CHF 200'000 and is jointly submitted by two or more departments or organizational units, the Office of Research may request an agreement or operational concept that contains information on how the requested equipment would be compatible with (i) existing or planned infrastructure and (ii) the scientific objectives of the departments or organizational units.

The Applicants may provide an agreement if one has been established or already exists.

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