Impact Collaboration Programme 2022

Overview

Establishing fruitful relationships between science, policy and practice is a complex endeavour riddled with challenges at the individual, institutional and systemic level. Yet, more and more scholars and policy-makers are developing creative ways to span boundaries and 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 and partnership between Geneva-based international policy actors and scientific institutions in Switzerland and beyond. Through the Impact Collaboration Program (ICP), it provides a unique funding instrument to spot, support and scale collaborations that contribute to strengthening science-informed policy-making and build policy-relevant research and tools.

What does the ICP offer?

- Maximum 40,000 CHF per project (120,000 CHF total for projects selected in 2022)
- tailored support services to help maximise impact
- a learning framework to elicit knowledge and build capacity in science-policy boundary-spanning.

Who is eligible?

The call supports projects that stem from collaborations that involve at least one actor from an academic institution (no geographical limitation), and one actor from the International Geneva ecosystem carrying policy work (e.g. international organisations, programmes, funds, NGOs). The ICP provides support to projects which focus on science-policy engagement activities and explicitly support science-informed policy/programming and/or policy-relevant science in the context of International Geneva. Individuals (with affiliations), institutions and consortia can apply to the programme. See 'eligibility criteria' for more information.

Dates of the ICP 2022
- Project submission: opens on 17 November 2021 and closes on 30 January 2022 (23:59 CET)
- Project selection: Selected projected are announced by the end of March 2022

How to apply?

Submit your 1,700-word application through this platform.

See below for more information.

Contact: icp@gspi.ch

What is the ICP?

The Impact Collaboration Programme is a funding instrument that aims to generate new opportunities for science-policy engagement within the Geneva ecosystem and enhance the quality of boundary-spanning activities at the interface of science and international policy.

Background

The potential of science to enrich policy-making is increasingly recognised as crucial within international policy institutions[1]. 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 culture, lost momentums, overwhelming costs and barriers and a somewhat limited understanding of what makes science-policy interfaces successful, all account for many missed opportunities[2].

Yet, more and more scholars and policy makers are developing creative ways to span boundaries and engage in impactful collaborations. International Geneva 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.

Rationale

The Geneva Science-Policy Interface (GSPI) is a platform that brings together leading scientific institutions from Switzerland and Europe, committed to enhancing the social and policy impact of their research community. The GSPI supports science-policy collaborations and promotes best practices and knowledge on boundary-spanning.

In 2019, the GSPI launched the Impact Collaboration Programme (ICP), a specific funding instrument to spot, support and scale collaborations that contribute to strengthening science-informed policy-making and build policy-relevant research and tools. The ICP does not only provide small grants to concretise opportunities of collaboration. It also provides tailored support services to help maximise impact and proposes a learning framework to elicit knowledge and build capacity in science-policy boundary-spanning within the Geneva ecosystem.

The ICP is supported by funds from the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs.

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[1]For example, the latest Global Sustainable Development Report emphasises the need to take an evidence-based approach to achieve the United Nations 2030 Agenda and provides frameworks and indicators to do so (Messerli et al., 2019). Recently, a report from the UN Joint Inspection Unit on Strengthening the Research Uptake within the UN has contributed to raise awareness on the need to integrate research in decision making in support of the 2030 agenda.

[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.

Dates of the ICP 2022

- Project submission: opens on 17 November 2021 and closes on 30 January 2022 (23:59 CET)

- Project selection: Selected projected are announced by the end of March 2022

- Start of the project: An inception meeting with project partners is organised by the end of April 2022 at the latest. Funds are released within a month after the signature of the agreement letter, following the inception meeting

Goal of the ICP

Goal

The goal of the ICP is to enhance boundary-spanning capacity at the interface of science and international policy within the Geneva ecosystem.

Specific objectives

The specific objectives of the ICP are the following:

1. Generate opportunities for science-policy collaborations;
2. Support the design and implementation of science-policy projects to enhance their impact;
3. Generate knowledge and resources to build the capacity of science-policy boundary-spanners

How does the ICP work?

The ICP is a programme that entails three components that are interlinked in a single package.

Grant

The ICP provides small grants to support the realisation of science-policy projects with grants amounting to a maximum of 40,000 CHF per project. The global amount of the ICP is 120,000 CHF in 2022.

The ICP grants provide seed money that can cover costs related to personnel or activity (see ICP rules and regulations to find out what types of cost are eligible). We expect that the bulk of the grant will 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 submission of the final report.

Support services

The GSPI can bring tailored support to the project holders to strengthen the project's strategic approach and maximise its impact potential. The services provided are adapted to the specific needs and context of each project. They are identified in the course of the project and imply a close collaboration between project partners and the GSPI. The services provided fit within the limit of the GSPI's available resources and can relate to:

- Strategic planning and project design
- Multi-stakeholder engagement, neutral convening and networking
- Communication and dissemination of results
- Scaling and long-term sustainability beyond the ICP framework
- Capacity-building and learning

Learning framework

The GSPI is committed to learning from the projects it supports and sharing insights with the broader science-policy community. Additionally, the GSPI believes that fostering reflection among project partners, in turn, can help improve project implementation, maximise the chances of achieving the intended impact and enhance project partners' capacity.

We provide project partners with a Learning framework at the beginning of the project that constitutes the canvass for the ICP monitoring and reporting process. To the extent possible, the GSPI participates in the project activities' design and implementation to support and ease the monitoring and learning efforts. Thanks to the data collected throughout the project implementation, we write case studies, identify methodological insights and develop tools that can benefit future ICP applicants and the science-policy community of practice more broadly.

What projects?

The ICP provides support to projects which explicitly support science-informed policy/programming and/or policy-relevant science in the context of International Geneva.

In particular, projects are expected to:

1. Address a global policy issue of relevance to International Geneva;
2. Establish a science-policy collaboration as part of their impact strategy;
3. Focus on science-policy engagement activities;
4. Have a clear pathway to impact that leads to actionable outputs.

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.

Global policy issues are issues that are or should be the focus of global governance actors. Global governance includes governmentally steered processes of international public policy

as well as newer forms of transnational policy communities that coalesce around specific policy issues and involve non-state actors (such as academia, NGOs, private actors)[3].

International Geneva is home to a number of global policy hubs in the areas of environment and sustainable development, global health, human rights, humanitarian law and action, migration, peace and security, labour, economic affairs, trade, science, and digital communications. More information on the International Geneva ecosystem can be found [here](#).

Science-Policy collaborations

The ICP supports projects that establish collaborations as part of their impact strategy. Collaborations are formal or informal relationships between scientists and stakeholders in policy processes that are formed around a common goal, and are based on a strategic management of tasks and responsibilities.

We support collaborations that add value to a policy process either in and of themselves, through the interactions they create, or through the outputs they aim to produce.

Partners of the collaboration must be academic institutions from any location in the world on the one side, and policy/implementation actors from the Geneva ecosystem on the other side (See detailed description criteria in the eligibility section). We welcome proposals from academic institutions located outside of Geneva and Switzerland and can facilitate connections with the Geneva ecosystem.

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
A collaboration is about to start and needs resources to build trust, set objectives, plan activities and deliver a proof of concept.	A collaboration already is in place but needs resources to produce impactful outputs that will allow the collaboration to prove its value and scale.	A collaboration already delivered important outputs and needs resources to enhance the impact of such outputs.

Focus on science-policy engagement activities

We favor projects that envision science-policy engagement activities at the core of their strategy, with explicit engagement objectives and a corresponding engagement methodology.

We welcome approaches in which the project is jointly developed, and activities undertaken in a co-productive way.

Clear science-policy impact pathway

We support projects that articulate a clear framework for impact, linking activities, outputs, outcomes and long-term impact and a statement of how the activity will be evaluated.

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[3] Stone, D. (2019). *Making global policy*. Cambridge University Press, Stone, D. (2019). *Making global policy*. Cambridge University Press, https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108661690

We distinguish between immediate science-policy outcomes and longer-term, indirect policy impact. Immediate science-policy outcomes can include the following[4]:

- *Improved knowledge exchange*: projects create opportunities for iterative knowledge exchange, co-learning or co-creation among scientists and policy actors

- *Empowered actors*: projects increase the capacity of scientists to engage more deliberately with policy actors and/or the capacity of policy actors to use science in policy processes

- *Stronger networks:* projects develop networks or entities that organise a sustained science and policy dialogue around a specific issue.

- *Policy windows:* projects create policy windows to link knowledge production with use in policy-making

Longer-term policy impact refers to the change(s) in specific aspects of a policy process that are expected to occur as a result of the science-policy outcomes. While difficult to demonstrate, and often indirect, the expected policy impact must still be explicit in the overall impact pathway.

Project duration

The work plan of the projects supported by the Impact Collaboration Program must be completed within 12 months. We welcome projects that articulate scaling, dissemination and follow-up activities taking place outside the project framework as part of their impact strategy and support, to the extent possible, these activities as part of our collaboration with the ICP project partners.

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 in case of selection. The ICP 2022 application process consists of a single, lightweight stage on our online platform (see below).

Projects are assessed against eligibility by the GSPI and for selection by an evaluation committee composed of the GSPI and independent reviewers with specific expertise on science-policy-implementation engagement mechanisms. Expertise in the specific subject covered by the project might be sought on a case-by-case basis. Experts 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 anonymous (i.e. reviewers do not receive the applicants' names), non-archival (i.e. the GSPI does not keep a public database of the submissions) and based on the selection criteria specified below. Reviewers are anonymous during the process.

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[4] Posner, S. M., & Cvitanovic, C. (2019). Evaluating the impacts of boundary-spanning activities at the interface of environmental science and policy: A review of progress and future research needs. *Environmental science & policy*, *92*, 141-151. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envsci.2018.11.006

Selected and rejected projects are notified at the end of the evaluation (6-7 weeks after the end of the submission deadline).

Eligibility and selection evaluation

Eligibility criteria

The proposed collaboration must involve at least one actor from an academic institution (no geographical limitation), and one actor from the International Geneva ecosystem carrying policy work or implementation work with global reach (e.g. international organisations, programmes, funds, international NGOs). The collaboration may also involve actors from civil society organisations and the private sector. Individuals (with affiliation), institutions and consortia can apply to the programme.

Specifically:
1. We define 'collaboration' as formal or informal relationships between scientists and stakeholders in policy processes, around a common goal, based on a strategic management of tasks and responsibilities.
2. Eligible actors from academic institutions hold PhD and work as researchers or equivalent.
3. We define 'policy and implementation actors' as people who work for international organizations, programmes, funds, NGOs, diplomatic missions and delegations, or Member-States. They may carry activities related to policy advice, formulation, adoption and implementation or be active in a field of practice of relevance to international policy formulation. At least one policy or implementation actor must be part of the international Geneva ecosystem. To be considered part of the international Geneva ecosystem, organizations must be in this list. If your organization is not in this list, please reach out to us so that we can assess whether you are eligible or not.

The eligibility evaluation is performed against four criteria:

Objective fit	Does the project address the policy issue through a clear science-policy impact pathway
Collaboration fit	- Is the project a collaboration? - Is there an academic party and does it satisfy our definition? - Is there a policy/implementation party and does it satisfy our definition?
Geneva relevance	1. Does the project address a global policy issue? 2. Is the policy issue or the collaboration relevant to International Geneva?
Budget	1. Is there co-financing (cash and or in-kind)? 2. Is the budget mostly focused on science-policy engagement activities?

Selection criteria

Importance of the problem	To what extent is the policy problem - and its related science-policy challenge - important and timely?
Understanding of and engagement with the strategic context	To what extent is the project familiar with its strategic environment and relevant stakeholders?
Relevance the project's science-policy intended outcomes	To what extent are the project's intended outcomes (impact achieved in the timeframe of the project) relevant to address the problem at stake?
Relevance and quality of the project's science-policy approach	To what extent is the project's methodological approach (activities and outputs) relevant, feasible, and effective to achieve the intended outcomes?
Relevance and quality of the collaboration	To what extent is the science-policy collaboration relevant and able to implement the methodological approach and to achieve the intended outcomes?
Existence of a convincing long-term strategy	To what extent does the project formulate a convincing sustainability or scaling strategy?

Reporting and learning framework

Objectives

The ICP learning framework is a flexible tool to support reflexivity at the GSPI, allow monitoring multi-actor collaborations projects and facilitate learning from the projects we support.

Through this simple tool, our aim is twofold: 1) to support ICP projects' strategic planning and implementation and 2) to generate insights and share them with the broader community of science-policy boundary-spanners.

Framework

The learning framework is structured along four dimensions with corresponding criteria and guiding questions.

Dimension	Criteria	Guiding questions
Background/ purpose for engagement	*Assess the relevance of the project in relation to the strategic settings in which it operates*	
	Context analysis	What is the policy issue? What is the specific science-policy challenge?
	Stakeholder analysis	What are the key stakeholders in relations to the project objectives? To what extent is the project able to engage with them?
	Timeliness of the project	Are there windows of opportunity or mechanisms to address the science-policy problem in a timely manner?
Collaboration	*Encompasses the way the operational collaboration is organised, implemented, managed and valorised*	
	Collaboration arrangement	Is the arrangement related to leadership, roles, decision-making and communication clear and appropriate?
	Skills and resources	Does the partnership have access to the skills and resources required for the project to reach its objectives?
	Partners engagement	Is the arrangement conducive to knowledge integration, co-learning and co-creation? Does the collaboration have a long-term goal beyond the project framework? Why (not)?
Pathway to impact	*Defines the pathway taken and related methodological aspects*	
	Envisioned science-policy outcomes	What is the type of science-policy outcomes envisioned ? ● Improved knowledge exchange: opportunities for iterative knowledge exchange, co-learning or co-creation among scientists and policy actors ● Empowered actors: scientists capable to engage more deliberately with policy actors and/or policy actors to use science in policy processes ● Stronger networks and relationships to sustain science and policy dialogue around a specific issue. ● Policy windows created to link knowledge production with use in policy-making
	Activities	To what extent are the project activities and their related methodology relevant and effective to produce the envisioned outputs and outcomes?
	Outputs	To what extent are the project's outputs contributing to produce the expected outcomes?
Outcomes and impact	*Comprises intended and unintended effects, outcomes, impacts and follow-up strategy*	

	Results	Has the project achieved its intended outcomes? What are the indicators and sources of information to assess the results at the end of the project and in the long run? Are the core constituencies satisfied?
	Unintended results	Are there any unintended results?
	Impact	To what extent are the project's science-policy outcomes going to contribute to address the policy issue and/or the science-policy challenge?
	Sustainability and scaling	To what extent has the project generated

Process

The learning framework is still being tested and improved. It is conceived as a light tool to guide reflexivity, discussions and reporting throughout the project life cycle. It is systematically reviewed on at least three occasions:

1) Inception meeting: at the beginning of the project, the GSPI meets with project holders to review the project's strategic approach, streamline baseline information and identify indicators and sources of information to collect insights throughout the project;

2) Mid-term review: the project holders are invited to conduct a review with the GSPI team.

3) Within two months after the end of the project: the project team submits a written report based on the learning framework and is invited for a final learning discussion with the GSPI team.

Outputs

The learning framework serves to support the drafting of the final report.

Based on prior consent, the ICP learning framework also allows the GSPI to write up case studies for each project. The insights generated also feed into the ICP guidance note, which is updated every year.

Glossary

Science refers to the systematic pursuit of objective knowledge and encompasses both natural and social sciences. Scientific research is conducted not only by academic institutions such as universities and national research institutes, but also by certain governmental agencies, industry, civil society, and other organizations[5].

Policy-making is the social and technical process that blends information and interests into collective decisions, as it typically happens within governments and international organizations[6]. It can be schematically described as a **cycle** involving several stages: problem framing, agenda setting, policy formulation, decision-making, policy implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Policymaking however is a complex, multifactorial and nonlinear process with many stakeholders involved, both formally and informally, in the different stages of the policy cycle.

Science-informed policy-making aims to ensure that the best available research evidence and the most relevant scientific methodologies are used to inform decision-making. It is characterized by systematic and transparent access to and appraisal of evidence and scientific advice as an input into the policy-making process. The GSPI uses the term "science-informed" or "evidence-informed", rather than "evidence-based", recognizing that research evidence is only one input into a policy decision. It also considers that science's contribution to decision-making extends beyond the mere provision of evidence to include tools, methodologies, technologies and broader intellectual inputs.

Boundary-spanning is a large concept that seeks to encompass all types of activities aimed at bridging the policy and the scientific spheres in order to facilitate research uptake and foster science-informed policy-making. **Boundary spanners** are the individuals or organizations that specifically and actively facilitate this process.

International Geneva refers to the ecosystem of global governance actors that coalesce in and around the city of Geneva.

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[5] https://www.ipcp.ch/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/IPCP-Sci-Pol-Report2019.pdf
[6] Capano, G., & Howlett, M. (Eds.). (2020). *A Modern Guide to Public Policy*. Edward Elgar Publishing.