

Joint Risk Resilience Partnership



AXA Research Fund / Swiss Re Institute – Joint Risk Resilience Partnership

2024 Call for Proposals

Theme: Resilience post natural catastrophes - disaster preparedness and reconstruction



2024 Call Information

Theme: Disaster Preparedness and Reconstruction

The Scope:

Every year, extreme weather events around the world become more frequent and severe. The world is witnessing an increasing amount of floods, rainfall, hailstorms, wildfires and droughts. Since the 1970s, incidents resulting from weather-related disasters have increased sevenfold. 2023 alone accounted for USD 280 billion global economic losses – while many natural, social and cultural losses remain unaccounted for and remain opaque. The physical, social and economic repercussions caused by these events often leave regional economies or local communities unfunctional for weeks or sometimes months while houses and infrastructure are being rebuilt and public services repaired. In 2020 and 2021 alone, disasters disrupted the provision of over 363,184 basic services in 44 reporting countries, including health and educational services¹. Reconstruction is often slow and does not always contribute to resilience, especially in places that are likely to be hit again. Therefore, a key challenge is to improve preparedness and enable swift reconstruction which positively contributes to reducing vulnerabilities and avoids unsustainable, costly and dangerous repetitions. The UN defines this process as “building back better” (BBB) or the process of *“recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction after a disaster to increase the resilience of nations and communities through integrating disaster risk reduction measures into the restoration of physical infrastructure and societal systems, and into the revitalization of livelihoods, economies and the environment.”*²

Insurance plays a central role in this scenario. It is essential to safeguard people against disaster related losses, help reduce the broader economic fallout and accelerate the recovery of people, businesses, and communities. Yet, the insurance industry is increasingly challenged by its business model, as risks – and potential losses - caused by various factors may outweigh probable profits. As the severity of perils increases so does the cost for insurers and those insured. In addition, not everyone benefits from insurance. This can affect financial stability and weaken the financial position of governments, which have to step in to provide relief or cover losses in the aftermath of a catastrophe, and further widen economic inequality.

This call for projects therefore asks researchers to investigate how to improve reconstruction/post-disaster recovery (e.g. private homes, buildings and infrastructure, social services, general economic activity) and economic resilience building after extreme weather events causing systemic risk to societies and economies. It shall look at how to effectively organize and finance activities pertaining to ‘build back better’. It shall **not** focus on predicting where and when future extreme weather events will strike but rather look at the aftermath of a catastrophe, the ripple effects of impacts including lack of funding for reconstruction and people falling into the poverty trap and help develop the right incentives to build resilience in places and for people that are likely to be exposed repeatedly.

¹ Sendai Framework Monitor, 2022

² [Build back better | UNDRR](#)

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Direction of work:

Building on existing work, in particular recommendations and suggestions on how "building back better" (BBB) would work, e.g. Hallegatte et al. 2027 & 2018; Cambridge Centre for Risk Studies, 2024; Kunreuther et al. 2021; Platt et al. 2026, 2018 & 2020; Tanner et al. 2025; Strulik & Trimborn, 2019. We ask researchers to contribute to increasing our understanding of resilience building related to the impacts of increasing extreme weather events. To this end, this grant will consider research projects exploring ideas to create or contribute to functional, replicable and sustainable frameworks to BBB, with close references to the role of insurances and financial institutions. Such framework should include, but is not limited to, one or multiple of the following aspects:

- Providing an understanding how **different stakeholders** (i.e. (re)insurers, government bodies, private sector players (large and small), NGOs, civil society and individual citizens) could best work together to advance on disaster preparedness and reconstruction to enable BBB.
- Identifying key **success factors to enable BBB**. This may include investigations into motivations and incentives for community and individual risk reduction, multi-level governance arrangements, policy and regulatory leavers, investment and cost distribution decisions, as well as considerations for specific population groups and their financial resilience.
- Regarding incentives, investigating **how to measure and promote co-benefits in BBB processes** though different economic stakeholders.
- Considering **financing aspects to BBB (i.e. "who pays")** and the role of financial institutions and insurance in that context.

Funding Guidelines

The AXA Research Fund / Swiss Re Institute – Risk Resilience Partnership, hereafter referred to as "the Partnership", aims to support top-tier research on systemic risks. Research project proposals should demonstrate their scientific originality and innovative nature and have the potential to contribute to a step change in the Call specified areas.

The proposals are expected to:

- Be scientifically outstanding
- Create results applicable for risk identification and risk assessment by corporates, and
- Inform governments and/or private sector on how to build resilience against systemic risks in the specific Call themes

Target Beneficiaries and Institutional Eligibility

The grant aims to support promising researchers or research groups. Funding recipients need to be academic institutions which can either apply as 1) a **Sole Applicant** (one academic institution) or 2) **Consortium Applicant**, (collaboration amongst two or more academic institutions). Project Proposals must always be led by ONE Principal Investigator who is nominated by the institution leading the application process.

Application from academic institutions across the globe are accepted. Academic institutions are the only eligible direct beneficiaries which may receive funding under this call. Private companies, NGOs, governmental bodies, foundations, independent research centers, cultural institutions (such as museums), and hospitals are not eligible as direct beneficiaries. However, due to the applied nature of the funding, it is

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possible for academic institutions to collaborate and partner with other organizations from public and private sectors. The non-academic institutions can be listed as **associated partners** and may receive part of the funding from the institution, agreed upon within each proposal's own set-ups. **Each Applicant can hand in only ONE PROJECT PROPOSAL. In case of several applications submitted, all applications would be disqualified. No change of host institution will be possible after submission of the application.**

Requirements Applicant:

As Sole Applicant: The Principal Investigator (PI), nominated by an institution, should be of the highest caliber and have demonstrated outstanding research achievements, as evidenced by the usual indicators for assessing academic excellence such as research outputs (e.g., publications, citations), research activities (e.g., organizing networks, being involved in communities) and research impact (e.g., policy reports, specific recognition through awards, etc.). The PI needs to be affiliated with an academic institution that has nominated him to be the Principal Investigator of the Project. It is required that the PI brings together a strong team demonstrating expertise and ability to complete the tasks of the proposed project with the best quality. Ideally, the team shall be composed of promising early career researchers, as well as reflects the principle of diversity (gender and geography).

As Consortium Applicant: The requirement and recommended qualification of the Team Lead of the Project Coordinator (PC, the lead university) are identical to those of the Sole Applicant. In addition, the PC team needs to ensure that all partner academic institutions, are chosen based on the best possible match of required expertise, skills, availability, and cost-benefit analysis. The PC remains the main contact between the consortium and the contacts of the Partnership. The institution nominating the PC will represent the consortium as the signee of the contract and will receive the related funding.

Open-Data Framework, Reporting and Engagement

In principle, awarded proposals are required to be proactive in engaging their projects and use an open-data framework when applicable.

Key reporting responsibilities for the funded project include:

1. A mid-term activity meeting halfway through the project duration. The meeting will be accompanied by a short mid-term activity report, if the project is > 12 months;
2. A final report (activity and finance), summarizing highlights of the research project, progress, achievements, and outputs versus objectives, impacts of the grant, and research related activities as well as an expenditure overview explaining how the grant has been allocated;
3. A short project result summary (in form of a green / white paper, as appropriate) to be published on the Partnership's websites of AXA Research Fund and Swiss Re Institute;
4. After project completion teams shall commit to sharing their project results and disseminating their research to a broader audience, including speaking engagements with Swiss Re Institute and the AXA Research Fund on the project.

Duration

Proposals with duration of **9 – 18 months** are considered eligible for this call.

Budget and Eligible Costs

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A maximum of three projects will be chosen in this call. A single proposal may be rewarded a maximum amount of **150,000€ in total**. It is the applicant's responsibility to submit a carefully calibrated budget, appropriate for the ambition of the research program and justified in a detailed and coherent manner. The institution to which the PI or the team lead of the PC is associated, has the role of distributing the received funding based on internal agreements.

The eligible costs are:

- Salary of the researcher/s (based on institution internal policy)
- Cost incurred for the collaboration with associated partners
- Equipment/resources (databases, survey costs, consumables, etc.), academic activities (conferences, workshops, fieldwork, etc.)
- Outreach activities (beyond academic audiences).

Any other type of costs not listed above should be justified in the application template. **No overhead costs are eligible**. No additional budget will be granted. Budget reallocation during an ongoing project must be strongly justified.

Payment of the grant is contingent on the launch of the research project. The grant is paid in 2 installments, on the Institution's submission of the relevant call for funds. Calls for funds should be ideally sent 1 month before the schedule corresponding due date. On date T + 1 month (T corresponds to the date on which the project starts), payment of 50% of the grant agreement, at the end of the project, payment of last 50% subject to the receipt of the final report defined in the contract.

Ethics

The AXA Research Fund and Swiss Re Institute place extremely high importance on the ethics of the work it supports. Programs are required to comply fully with all relevant ethical review processes and for this compliance to be evidenced. Cases of scientific misconduct (such as fabrication, falsification, plagiarism or inappropriate behavior towards staff or other parties) will be considered as breaches of the ethical principles³ and will be excluded from funding.

Intellectual Property

The researcher and the host institution remain fully independent to conduct the research project. AXA or Swiss Re will not claim any right to the ownership or use of the results.

Timeline & Application process

The Risk and Resilience Partnership funding evaluation process has been designed to assess project excellence. The evaluations are monitored to ensure transparency, fairness and impartiality in the treatment of proposals.

³ AXA Group Compliance and Ethics Code, 2019: [Compliance and Ethics Code | AXA](#)

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The AXA Research Fund and Swiss Re Institute partner with independent external providers to carry out the peer review process in accordance with criteria defined by the AXA Research Fund and Swiss Re Institute, the results of which are submitted to the Evaluation Panel for final selection. Please note that:

- The complete application must be submitted in English, on time, and online. It must respect the template structure and the page limit.
- The research topic must fall within the scope of the eligible topic focus.

Timeline

Researcher and Research Institution	<p>Step 1 – Research proposal submission</p> <p><i>On the online project platform. On the ESF (European Science Foundation) platform, our partner organization (online link to be provided on due time)</i></p>	<p>December 2nd 2024 to January 31st 2025</p> <p>17 PM Paris/Zurich time</p>
Evaluation Panel	<p>Step 2 – Selection Process</p> <p><i>The joint AXA RF- SRE Evaluation Panel, specifically set up for the theme is responsible for selecting projects to be funded. Eligible project applications will be assessed by remote reviewers with expertise in the respective field; this peer review step will be independently handled by the ESF.</i></p>	<p>January 31st, 2025 – June 30th, 2025</p>
AXA Research Fund/ Swiss Re Institute	<p><i>Results announcement by email to the candidates</i></p>	<p>July 31st, 2025</p>

Projects selected for funding are expected to start between September 2025 and November 2025.

Application process

Step 1 – Registering & Research Proposal Submission

To apply for this call fund, Applicants need to register on via European Science Foundation (ESF)'s platform for application. The platform provides a dedicated proposal template that informs you about all the information required for submission. Generally applicants will have to fill out an online application from providing individual information and contact details (Name, Title, Affiliation) and submit a PDF application containing (the application form duly completed in English; a short CV (2 pages) of the prospective Principal Investigator / Project Coordinator including a link to a detailed CV; short CVs of potential project team

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members (2 paragraphs each), a list of the top 5 publications, a list of the most recent 5 projects in the relevant field. After you complete your application, you will receive an email confirming that your Research Proposal has been submitted. If you do not receive the email, please check your spam folder, and, if needed, contact esf-panels@esf.org. You will be able to edit your Proposal as long as you have not clicked on "Submit". Once submitted, your Proposal can no longer be edited. Your proposal will then be reviewed. You will be informed of the decision pertaining to your application by email.

Applications received after the deadline, by email, or incomplete will not be considered.

Step 2 – Proposal Evaluation

The evaluation of the scientific quality of research proposals is carried out in a fully independent manner by our Evaluation Panel. Each application is reviewed by two relevant experts who will assess the candidate's excellence and the research program's scientific quality.

Step 3 – Selection & Results Publication

The Evaluation Panel selects to fund applications based on strength of the scientific excellence, project impact, candidate profile, feasibility and outreach potential. The Swiss Re and AXA Research Fund informs the candidates of the decisions by email.

The Evaluation Panel's decision is final and cannot be appealed. It can neither be disputed nor subject to explanations or justifications, no feedback will be provided.

Participation in the call for applications implies acceptance of the aforementioned rules.

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Overview of the Partnership and Its Key Theme:

Systemic Risks Systemic risks are associated with cascading impacts that spread within and across systems and sectors (e.g. health, infrastructure, food etc.) via the movements of people, goods, capital and information within and across boundaries (e.g. regions, countries and continents). The spread of these impacts can lead to potentially existential consequences. Increasing system interdependencies highlight that there is a growing need to better understand cascading impacts, and the possible responses of systemic risks. This includes improving understanding of their root causes, both biophysical, socio-economic, and technical. Addressing systemic risks requires integrating different systems perspectives and fostering system thinking across disciplines and geographies, notably through collaboration and research.

The insurance industry stands at the forefront of protecting our world against adverse developments. Both AXA and Swiss Re stand out due to their strong relationship to science and their support for risk research. Building on a strong track record of financing scientific and applied research, AXA and Swiss Re commit to establish a Partnership to jointly identify, incentivize and fund independent research and innovation projects with the highest potential to transform our industry and help our society become more resilient.

The aim of this partnership is to bring together scientifically engaged corporates in the insurance and finance industry to jointly fund top-tier risk research on systemic risks that will inform private and public decision-making to build societal resilience. More specifically, the Partnership aims to:

- Close shared knowledge gaps within the insurance industry on emerging and aggravating risks that pose serious threats to societal resilience
- Leverage research outcomes to develop business applications and inform public and private decision-making

AXA Research Fund

The AXA Research Fund is AXA Group's global scientific philanthropy initiative, launched in 2008 to address the most important issues facing our planet. It supports human progress by funding research in key areas related to risk and helping inform public and private decision-making based on science.

Swiss Re Institute

Swiss Re Institute, founded in January 2017, is the thought leadership and R&D arm of one of the world's largest reinsurance companies, Swiss Re. We share our risk knowledge in re/insurance through our publications and data sets. We produce and support risk research across Swiss Re and partner organisations.

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Appendix:

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organisations. Our knowledge ecosystem further assists decision making within Swiss Re and for our clients and stakeholders. We believe success in re/insurance is best achieved through a forward-looking understanding of our risk landscape. In doing so, we foster [greater resilience](#) across society.