

AXA Research Fund

AXA CHAIRS GRANT - APPLICATION

GUIDELINES

As the scientific philanthropy initiative of the leading global insurer AXA, the AXA Research Fund is dedicated to supporting research around key societal issues and risks.

This guide contains the information needed to apply for an AXA Chair: the 5-year premium grant of the AXA Research Fund aimed to support top-tier senior scientists. It includes a general overview of the selection process of the prospective Chairholder and their program. It also provides information on grant agreement terms and conditions.

This guide and the F.A.Q. section (page 14) may be used as a reference by both institutions and candidates. The information presented within overrides any contrary terms that could be found elsewhere.

Participation in this call for applications implies acceptance of the following rules.

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1. Introduction

The AXA Research Fund was launched in 2007 to support science in responding to some of the most pressing societal issues and risks. Through this program, AXA, a leading insurer, is committed to **supporting science in order to contribute to societal progress** and better inform decision making. **The AXA Research Fund supports projects in the broad risk areas of health, climate and environment, and socioeconomics.**

The AXA Chair is a highly selective funding scheme intended to **support significant advancements** in the **development of a research area within a host institution** in line with the institution's long-term strategy. It aims at creating a **full-time academic position in the host institution and fostering a step-change in the career of the appointed AXA Professor**. The host Institution must intend to create a **permanent full-time position**.

The selection of the research projects is an independent process undertaken by the AXA Research Fund's Scientific Board and following a rigorous process of academic pre-screening and peer review. The Scientific Board, composed of top-tier scientists, guarantees a transparent and fair selection process.

The AXA Research Fund does not interfere with the researchers work and is committed to providing full research independence to its endorsed grantees. The AXA Research Fund believes these conditions are crucial to ensure the innovation, the impact, and the quality of the research results.

Visit our webpage to learn more about the AXA Research Fund: <https://www.axa-research.org/>.

2. Research topics

The AXA Research Fund supports academic projects that contribute to better understanding and addressing global risks, notably in the areas of:

Climate and Environment

- Adaptation to Climate Change
- Biodiversity & Natural Capital Protection (including nature-based solutions)
- Circular Economy
- Climate Transition
- Handling the Impact of Climate Change on Populations and on the Environment (including sustainable and resilient cities)
- New Technologies Solutions applied to Climate and Environment (including natural catastrophes)
- Planetary Boundaries
- Pollution and its Management
- Sustainable Resources Management (including notably food, water, and energy)

Health

- Adaptation to Longevity and Aging
- Air Pollution and Health implications
- Inclusive Health & Healthcare
- Mental Health & Neurogenerative diseases
- New Technologies Solutions applied to Well-being, Prevention, & Personalized Health
- One Health / Planetary Health
- Prevention and Management of Infectious Diseases & Epidemics
- Prevention and Management of Chronic & Non-Communicable Diseases

Socioeconomics and New Technologies

- Building an Inclusive and Diverse Society (including gender equality, social and economic inclusion)
- Cyber Risk & Protection
- Geopolitical Risks & Conflicts
- Responsible Investment Strategies & Sustainable Finance (including financial inclusion)
- Social Dimensions of Climate Change
- Social and Economic Impacts of New Technologies (including AI and big data/quantum)
- The Macroeconomic & Societal Role of Insurance

Only research projects with relevance to the above list will be considered for funding.

3. Key information and Timeline

Institutions can submit only **one candidate per campaign**.

Non-selected institutions will not be able to re-apply for the same candidate or research program the following year.

The AXA Research Fund's grant can amount **up to €1 million** and is awarded for **a period of 5 years**. The grant will be paid in yearly installments (up to 200 000 € maximum per year).

The prospective Chairholder is expected to be **PhD + 10 years minimum**.

Timeline:

Campaign	Fall 2023
Registration (Only if your institution is not already registered on the AXA Research Fund's online platform.)	September 18 – September 27 (4PM CEST)
Expression of Interest	September 18 – October 5 (4PM CEST)
Full application submission	October 23 – November 20 (4PM CET)
Rebuttal	March 4 – March 11, 2024 (4PM CET)
Online Q&A session with the Scientific Board's members – <u>for shortlisted candidates only</u>	To be communicated in due time
Results	June 2024

NB: The AXA Research Fund Team will inform all applicants of the status of their application, shortlisted or not. However, no feedback will be given on the reasons for shortlisting or not.

4. Eligibility criteria

Host institution

The AXA Research Fund partners with **academic institutions only**. Associations, foundations, governmental bodies, hospitals, independent research centers, museums and NGOs are not eligible for AXA funding.

Host institutions must be **registered in the AXA Research Fund's database**. To register, please click on the following link and follow the instructions: <https://institution.axa-research.org/>



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Institutions can host several AXA Chairs if they are not carried by the same department or laboratory within the Institution.

Host institutions will be expected to participate in the Chair's general funding through studentships, post-doctoral support and material resources related to the research program. The Institution is responsible for providing details of this support in the application.

Chairholder

The Chairholder is expected to be of the highest caliber, as evidenced by the standard indicators for assessing academic excellence: publications in first-rate journals, international stature, and network.

The profile of the candidate should be **at least PhD+10 years from PhD defense date** to the time of application.

The AXA Chairholder is expected to spend their full time in the host Institution, and their publications will be issued in the name of the host institution during the chair duration.

At equal level of excellence and transformational potential, preference will be given to institutions hiring a Chairholder from another Institution. AXA Chairs are not intended to substitute for an internal promotion.

Chair research program

The application must be **submitted in English, on time, and complete**. It must **respect the template structure** and **include all required documents**.

The research topic must lie within the scope of the eligible areas as listed under section 2 of this document (see page 3).

Proposed programs must address academic research and not research & development (R&D). R&D is the process by which a company works to obtain new knowledge that it might use to create new technology, products, services, or systems that it will either use or sell.

Projects must deal with research that conforms to the [AXA Group Compliance and Ethics Guide](#)

The Following is a non-exhaustive list of disqualifying factors:

- Research violating national regulations
- Research supporting any political activity
- Research having direct military use
- Research having potentially dangerous environmental impacts
- Research relying on the artificial production of highly infectious pathogens with potential for large scale harmful/lethal effects for humans and research involving gain of function
- Biomedical research conducted without the fully informed consent of the participant
- Research on embryonic stem cells (incl. animal, with inferred subsequent human application)
- Research processing private personal data without the informed consent of the concerned parties (incl. genetic information)
- Research activities aiming at human cloning

Cases of scientific misconduct such as fabrication, falsification, plagiarism, or misrepresentation of data will be considered as breaches of fundamental ethical principles and the proposals concerned will be excluded.

5. Evaluation criteria

The AXA Research Fund has developed an **independent** peer review evaluation process, designed to assess scientific excellence irrespective of the gender and nationality of the Chairholder or any other potential biases. The evaluations are monitored to guarantee transparency, fairness, and impartiality in the treatment of proposals.

The AXA Research Fund provides clear evaluation criteria. When writing their applications, candidates are strongly urged to keep these criteria in mind to ensure that their proposal provides the required information for reviewers to reach an informed opinion on each individual criterion.

Applications will be assessed against the evaluation criteria below:

- **Potential to transform the considered research field**
 - Scientific originality and innovative nature of the Research Program.
 - Potential to strengthen international academic networks, including planned collaborations on the Research Program
- **Feasibility of the Research Program**
 - Operational strength of the Chair Program. The methodology should be consistent and clearly presented.
 - Alignment of the Research Program with the long-term research strategy of the Institution.
 - Organizational set-up to launch and support this Chair, including the size of the team and its competencies, as well as a realistic and coherent budget. The institution is free to make an appointment at a higher cost level but must support the extra expenditure from its own funds. The host institution could also invite other funding partners as long as the conditions of the agreement with AXA are still respected, notably regarding the publicity on the grant (see “Publicity on grant” on page 12).
- **Chair outreach and engagement activities**
 - Impact for society and timeliness of the Research Program, and potential outreach of Research activities, in particular dissemination activities within and beyond the academic community.
 - Engagement with the AXA Research Fund in dissemination activities (conferences, webinars, publications, videos...) towards practitioners.

Chairholder profile criteria

- 1) **Academic excellence and strong track record** (publications, scientific commitment, academic collaboration...)
- 2) Previous **achievements and innovative capacity**
- 3) Applicants' **strong and proven expertise** aligned with submitted research topic”

- 4) **International recognition** of the Chairholder by their peers (proven international collaborations, prizes, outreach, policy-oriented publications, participation to impactful events/conferences...)
- 5) **Leadership skills & ability to implement** the Research Program.
- 6) **In case of two equally scored applications, please note that mobility will be prioritized.** Particular attention will also be paid to the **relevance** of this mobility, e.g., alignment with the research strategy of the host institution and laboratory, adequacy of the move with the track record of the candidate.
- 7) **Personal commitment of the Chairholder** to achieving the aims of the Chair Program.

Each criterion has equal weight and will be marked on a scale of four as follows:

Score	Wording	Definition
A	<i>Excellent</i>	<i>All relevant aspects of the assessment criteria successfully addressed.</i>
B	<i>Very Good</i>	<i>All assessment criteria very well addressed but a small number of shortcomings are present.</i>
C	<i>Fair</i>	<i>Assessment criteria broadly addressed, however there are significant weaknesses.</i>
D	<i>Serious reservations</i>	<i>Assessment criteria addressed in an inadequate manner, or there are serious inherent weaknesses.</i>

6. Selection process

Application documents

All information listed below is required from the host institution:

Expression of Interest

- *Personal details of the prospective Chairholder and their current institution*
- *Research program details: title, area (Health, Environment, or Socioeconomics) and project description (3000 characters including spaces)*
- *A short CV (maximum 3 pages) of the prospective Chairholder and a link to an online detailed CV.*

Full application

- *The application form duly completed in English*
- *Requested supporting documents:*
 - *Letter of intent from the prospective Chairholder*
 - *A short CV (3 pages) for the prospective Chairholder and a link to an online detailed CV*
 - *For the prospective Chairholder, a list of 20 publications including the top 10 most impactful publications and the 10 most recent ones*
 - *For the host laboratory, a list of 20 publications including the top 10 most impactful publications and the 10 most recent ones*
 - *One support letter by the president/rector of the institution*
 - *Two letters of recommendation from peers.*



Application process step-by-step

Step 1 – Registering

To apply for AXA Research Fund grants, academic institutions must be registered on our platform (<https://institution.axa-research.org/>). You can check if your Institution is already registered in the database via the above link. If your Institution is already on our database, you can omit the registration and your institution's operational contact can log in directly using the login details they defined.

Institutions should appoint a single point of contact ("Operational Contact") who will handle relations with the AXA Research Fund.

Step 2 – Expression of interest ([VIA OUR ONLINE APPLICATION PLATFORM](#))

The expression of interest provides initial information on the candidate and on the program submitted in the aim of accessing rights to the full application process.

To submit an online expression of interest, please follow the steps below:

1/ Log onto our online application platform: <https://institution.axa-research.org/>

2/ Go to the "Application" tab and click the "Chair" link to go to the "expression of interest" page

3/ Click "New" and fill in the online expression of interest form. Attach a short CV (3 pages maximum)

4/ Click Submit.

You will receive an email confirming that your expression of interest has been submitted. If you don't receive the email, please check your spam folder, and contact axachairs@axa.com if you did not receive the confirmation email.

As long as you have not clicked on "Submit" you will be able to edit your expression of interest. Click on "Submit" for your expression of interest to be considered. Once submitted, your expression of Interest can no longer be edited.

Please ensure you are working on one and only draft until submission of your final expression of interest. Indeed, in case of different drafts created, you will not be able to submit your application.

All expressions of interest will be reviewed by the AXA Research Fund Team and the shortlist for full applications will be selected based on the relevance of the topics (refer to the list page 3) and the scientific CVs of the applicants. You will be informed of the decision pertaining to your expression of interest by email. Shortlisted candidates only will be invited to submit a full application.

Step 3 – Full Application ([VIA OUR ONLINE APPLICATION PLATFORM](#))

Candidates who are invited to submit a full application will receive an email to create their own account on the AXA Research Fund application platform.

Candidates will be able to download the full application template, complete it and upload it along with other requested supporting documents (see list page 7).

Step 4 – Scientific assessment

Each application is reviewed by at least three independent experts who will assess the candidate's excellence and the research program's scientific quality.



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Please note that the AXA Research Fund neither interferes in the experts' assessments nor modifies the submitted reviews (apart from formatting when needed) as these are independent based on the Fund's values.

Step 5 – Rebuttal

Candidates will have the opportunity to reply to the peer reviewers who assessed their applications through a “rebuttal”. The main purpose of the rebuttal is to provide applicants with the possibility to comment on any potential misinterpretation or misunderstanding in the assessment of their proposals. This step is strongly recommended.

Step 6 – Shortlist

The AXA Research Fund and AXA internal experts assess the relevance of the projects based on the existing portfolio and on the scientific peer-review assessment. They define a final shortlist. The AXA Research Fund Team will inform all applicants of the status of their application, shortlisted or not. However, no feedback will be given on the reasons for shortlisting or not.

Step 7 – Video presentation – when requested- ONLY FOR SHORLISTED PROPOSALS

Shortlisted candidates are invited to submit a maximum 3-minute video to present themselves and their research program. Candidates should be facing the camera and provide neither fieldwork nor PowerPoint slides. This video aims at assessing a candidate's communication skills and ability to provide a large audience with clear and comprehensive explanations in an engaging manner. Videos can be submitted by email to axachairs@axa.com through online storage services such as WeTransfer. The video will be viewed by the AXA Research Fund's Scientific Board to assess the prospective Chairholder's ability to summarize their research program.

Step 8 – Selection & results publication

The AXA Research Fund's Scientific Board will review the shortlisted proposals based on the application submitted by the candidates and the assessment carried out by the reviewers and the rebuttal. With the support of strictly independent external reviewers, the Board commits to ensuring a fair selection based on academic excellence.

In line with the Fund's philosophy, every board member provides their expertise and experience to select the best researchers with the highest transformative potential from top academic institutions.

Once the Scientific Board has made its decision, the AXA Research Fund will inform the Institution and the candidate through the institutional contact. **The Scientific Board's decision is final and cannot be appealed.**



PLEASE NOTE

We are not able to provide any feedback on our selection process and decisions.

7. Grant and agreement terms and conditions

Each selected project is a combination of a candidate, a proposal (including the submitted budget) and a host institution. The proposed candidate, and no other, is expected to carry out the project as described in the proposal and the grant agreement¹.

The host institution will receive an official letter via email specifying the proposed grant amount & duration and conditions of said grant. Upon written acceptance of the grant offer by the selected institution and the new Chairholder, the AXA Research Fund will liaise with the institution to launch the contracting process and agree on a joint communication. Grantees should be kept updated by their Institution throughout the process.

The grant offer is effective for a period of 2 weeks. The AXA Chair will be officially announced once the agreement is signed. The institution and the Chairholder can however jointly with the AXA Research Fund, communicate on the selection.

Kindly note that the communication should be done in close coordination and agreement with the AXA Research Fund.

It is expected that the Chairholder take their position **no later than 6 months upon receipt of the grant offer**. The AXA Research Fund reserves the right to cancel a grant if the proposed start date goes beyond this limit.

Should the Institution fail to recruit the Chairholder proposed in the application, the AXA Research Fund will cancel the grant and the agreement process will be terminated.

Should the Chairholder leave the Institution during the duration of the tenure, said Institution must immediately inform the AXA Research Fund to explore alternative options as stated in the agreement.

Payment terms and conditions

The grant will be paid in **yearly installments**, following the Institution's **submission of calls for funds**. The funds will be processed in accordance with a payment schedule stipulated in the agreement.

The first transfer of funds is triggered by the signature of the agreement, the Chairholder's official acceptance of the AXA Chair, and the receipt of an official project start letter (to be sent via email) confirming that the research program has begun. The Institution will need to send the first call for funds to axarf.agreement@axa.com to start the payment process.

In case of early termination on behalf of the researcher, the Institution shall provide AXA with a statement of expenses. The remaining funds will be retained by the AXA Research Fund.

¹ A legal agreement signed between the AXA Research Fund and the host institution will specify the terms and conditions whereby AXA will lend financial support to the institution by providing funding to enable it to finance the AXA Chair.

Use of grant

Any amount awarded by the AXA Research Fund is expected to primarily cover the Chairholder's salary, the research environment – e.g., Research staff salaries – and any expenses directly connected to the Chair Research Program.

The AXA Research Fund does not cover expenses that are not directly connected to the Chair Research Program. Therefore, **the AXA Research grant cannot be used for administrative and infrastructural expenses.**

Eligible costs are:

- AXA Chairholder expenses (incl. annual gross salary, travel & accommodation costs, etc.);
- Post-Doctoral, PhD expenses (incl. selection process costs, Junior Research Fellows Grants, etc.);
- Purchase of scientific equipment and resources (databases, survey costs, consumables, etc.); and
- Costs associated with the organization of academic and public engagement activities.

Institution support to the Chairholder

It is the remit of the institution to provide the Chairholder with a research environment (at minimum) aligned with the conditions described in the Chair application (resources, equipment, budget, etc.).

Host institutions will be expected to participate in the Chair's general funding with studentships, post-doctoral support and material resources related to the research program. The institution shall demonstrate this participation in the application.

The AXA Research Fund has signed the Charter for European Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers. As such, it is particularly important that institutions demonstrate their commitment to providing an attractive, supportive, and stimulating environment in which the Chairholder will carry out the research program. The institution should commit to providing its researchers with the means to be internationally and inter-sectorally competitive and mobile.

Monitoring of grant and obligations of Chairholder/Institution

Each year, the institution will provide a report composed of 2 separate documents:

A. An Activity Report:

This activity report will provide the highlights of the Research Program, progress, achievements, and outputs versus objectives, impacts of the AXA Grant, and research related activities. It is to be submitted on the AXA Research Fund's online portal. The Chairholder will receive dedicated and secure access credentials upon signature of the agreement.

B. A Financial Report:

This financial report must include the annual expenditures explaining how the grant has been allocated. This report is to be submitted on the AXA Research Fund's online institution portal by the operational contact.

Intellectual property

The Chairholder remains fully independent to conduct their Research project. AXA will not claim any right to the ownership or use of the results coming from the Research Program, and the institution and/or the Chairholder and members or their team keep full ownership of their results, in accordance with the legal and/or contractual provisions.

Publicity on the grant

The AXA Research Fund is a philanthropic initiative and any publicity or communication on the grant will aim at enabling AXA to promote its general interest purpose. For communication purposes, **the Chair title should include “AXA” and the Chairholder title should include “AXA Professor”**. When communicating about the AXA Chair, the institution, the Chairholder and the member of their team will **mention the support of the AXA Research Fund**. Grantees must acknowledge the AXA Research Fund support in all research publications even if they are not the leading author. Acknowledgements must be included in the funding and **acknowledgement sections**, and/or in any other relevant section in the publication with the following sentence **"this work benefitted from funding by the AXA Research Fund"**.

Open access policy

The AXA Research Fund believes that providing free and unrestricted access to the scientific outputs of the research projects it supports to be a fundamental part of its mission. Since July 1st, 2016, an Open Access policy is effective for all new agreements and granted funding. To build on best existing practices in this area, this policy closely follows the guidelines instituted and recently updated by the European Research Council.

Considering the fast evolution of current debates and the diversity of approaches between disciplines, no binding commitment to this policy will be requested from the Chairholder.

To comply with the open access policy, the AXA Research Fund:

- Requests that an electronic copy of any research article, monograph or other research publication that is supported by the AXA Research Fund be deposited in a suitable repository immediately upon publication. Open access should be provided as soon as possible and, in any case, no later than six months after the official publication date. For publications in the Social Sciences and Humanities domain a delay of up to twelve months is acceptable.
- Strongly encourages funded researchers to use publishing venues and discipline relevant repositories for their publications that ensure that the publications are publicly discoverable and accessible as soon as possible, and in places that enable long term preservation. If there is no appropriate repository, researchers should make their publications available in institutional repositories or in centralizes ones.
- Reminds researchers supported by the AXA Research Fund that open access fees are eligible costs that can be charged against AXA RF grants, provided they are incurred during the duration of the project.
- Asks host institutions to cover open access fees of any research publications supported by the AXA Research Fund arising after the end of the project

The AXA Research Fund furthermore strongly encourages its researchers to:



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- Retain files of all the research data they have produced and used during their work, and that they be prepared to share these data with other researchers whenever they are not bound by copyright restrictions, confidentiality requirements, or contractual clauses.
- Use discipline-specific repositories for their research data. If there is no appropriate discipline specific repository, researchers should make their research data available in institutional repositories or in centralized ones.
- Establish good research data management in accordance with the current best practices in their respective fields and to share their data with other researchers in a responsible way.

Participation in the call for applications implies acceptance of the above-mentioned rules.

8. F.A.Q

1. THE AXA RESEARCH FUND

Who are we?

The AXA Research Fund is the scientific philanthropy initiative of AXA, the leading insurer, dedicated to supporting research around key societal issues and risks. Our work is based on values of transparency, excellence, relevance, diversity, and the support of a community of researchers that is committed to building solutions towards the best possible future.

Why does AXA support science?

Academic research provides us with the capacity for anticipation, adaptation, innovation, and solution building. To navigate increasingly complex and inter-twined environments and novel risks requires the development and support of the best scientific knowledge and its dissemination towards informing decision-making and the public debate.

What do we expect from supported researchers?

Chairholders are expected to fully commit to their research program for its whole duration and to demonstrate high level of rigor, seriousness, and professionalism. Grantees and their host institutions are expected to update the AXA Research Fund on a regular basis and must submit their activity and financial reports yearly and in due time.

2. ELIGIBILITY

Who can apply?

Our grants are open to **all academic institutions and researchers worldwide**. Associations, hospitals, foundations, NGOs, governmental bodies, independent research centers, cultural institutions (museums) **are not eligible for AXA funding**.

3. APPLICATION

What is an expression of interest?

An expression of interest provides initial information on the candidate and on the program submitted in the aim of accessing rights to the full application process. The expression of interest is submitted through the AXA Research Fund's [online platform](#).

Who can submit an expression of interest?

Academic institutions should appoint a single point of contact “Operational Contact” (holding an administrative position within the institution) who will have access to the application platform and who will be able to submit the expression of interest. **Candidates cannot submit their expression of interest independently of a host institution.**

Who assesses the expression of interest?

Expressions of interest are reviewed by the AXA Research Fund Team and the shortlist for full applications are selected based on the relevance of the topics (refer to the list page 3) and the scientific CVs of the applicants.



What is the difference between an expression of interest and a full application?

Only candidates selected following the expression of interest phase can submit a full application which consists of a robust application providing in-depth information on a candidate's research background and research proposal.

Who assesses the full application?

Full applications are assessed by a panel of independent experts in a standard peer-review process according to our criteria and the expert's knowledge.

Who makes the final decision in granting funding?

The final decision in granting funding is made by the AXA Research Fund's Scientific Board composed of top-tier scientists from a variety of research fields and following a rigorous process of academic pre-screening and peer review. The selection of the research projects is an independent process in which neither the AXA Research Fund nor AXA, interfere.

How many times can institutions apply for an AXA Chair?

Institutions can apply for an AXA Chair each time a new campaign is launched. However, it is not possible to re-apply with the same candidate or research program.

Will I receive feedback on my project if it is not selected?

Whether or not your project has been successful, you will be informed about this decision by email. However, we are not able to provide any feedback on our selection process or decisions.

How will I find out if my project has been granted funding?

An official letter mentioning that you have been selected for an AXA Chair will be sent by email to the dean of your institution. You will be on copy of this email.

How long do I have to accept the grant offer?

The grant offer is valid for a period of 2 weeks following the announcement of the results.

How is the agreement process initiated?

Once the institution officially accepts the grant and the conditions, the AXA Research Fund and the Institution enter the process of negotiating the agreement. The AXA grant is officially announced only when the agreement has been signed. The agreement covers the entire duration of the research grant.

When do research projects start?

Projects are expected to start **no later than 6 months** after the results are announced.