

Weibel International Research Visit Award (WIRVA)

1. Introduction

The **Weibel International Research Visit Award (WIRVA)** was established through the generous legacy of Prof. Ewald Weibel and his wife, Verena Weibel, to Life Sciences Switzerland (LS²).

The award honors Prof. Weibel's lifelong commitment to scientific excellence, international collaboration, and innovation in the life sciences by supporting the next generation of researchers. Through short-term international research visits, WIRVA aims to facilitate technology transfer, foster new scientific collaborations, and enable postdoctoral researchers to acquire knowledge, skills, and methodologies that will benefit their future careers and the Swiss life sciences community.

2. Aim of the Award

The Weibel International Research Visit Award supports **short-term international research visits** by postdoctoral researchers based in Switzerland.

The award is intended to enable researchers to:

- establish new international collaborations;
- acquire novel experimental or computational methods;
- access specialized expertise, datasets, model systems, or infrastructure unavailable at their home institution;
- strengthen their scientific independence and career development;
- promote the transfer of knowledge and technology back to Switzerland.

Research visits should be based on a clearly defined scientific project with mutual benefit for both the applicant and the host laboratory.

3. Eligibility

Applicants must fulfil all of the following criteria:

1. Be an **active LS² member** at the time of application and throughout the research visit;
2. Be employed as a postdoctoral researcher at a Swiss university or hospital, research institute, or company (e.g., postdocs at Roche/Novartis), holding an employment contract of at least **50%** during the application period;
3. Have obtained their **PhD** within the previous **five years** or a **medical degree (MD, 'Staatsexamen')** within the previous **eight years before the call deadline**. Career breaks will be taken into consideration where appropriate (e.g., parental leave, caregiving responsibilities, periods of unemployment);
4. Have guaranteed employment for at least **three months after returning** from the research visit;
5. Propose a research visit to an institution **outside Switzerland**. Research visits to the applicant's country of origin are normally not supported unless a strong scientific justification is provided.
6. The proposed research visit must begin between one and twelve months after the award decision.

Researchers holding career-development fellowships that do not provide enough financial independence to lead their own lab (e.g., Ambizione, MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowship or equivalent) remain eligible provided they fulfil the eligibility criteria above.

4. Research Visit

The proposed research visit should:

- Last between **1 and 3 months**;
- Take place at a recognized research institution outside Switzerland. Research labs within industry (e.g., pharmaceutical R&D labs) are also accepted if strong justification is provided;
- Be centered around a clearly defined scientific project;
- Provide expertise, technologies, or training that cannot reasonably be obtained at the applicant's home institution.

Research visits may include experimental work, computational research, technology transfer or specialized training, provided these are directly linked to the proposed research project.

5. Funding

The WIRVA Award provides financial support towards the costs of a short-term international research visit. The maximum award amount is **CHF 5,000** per application.

Applicants should provide a brief cost estimate associated with the proposed research visit. This estimate serves only to assist the Evaluation Committee in determining an appropriate award amount and does not represent a reimbursement claim.

The cost estimate may include any expenses directly related to the research visit, including, but not limited to:

- travel;
- accommodation;
- local transportation;
- visa fees;
- travel and/or childcare costs for accompanying children.

The WIRVA Evaluation Committee will determine the final award amount based on the proposed research visit, its duration, destination, and the submitted cost estimate. Awards of up to **CHF 5,000** may be granted. LS² reserves the right to award a lower amount where appropriate.

Awardees are not required to submit receipts or a financial report following the research visit. The award is intended as a contribution towards the proposed visit and should be used for the purposes described in the application. Expenses related to accompanying partners or other accompanying adults are not eligible for support through the WIRVA Award.

6. Call Schedule

The WIRVA Award is offered **once per year**. The timeline is:

Activity	Timeline
Call opens	October 01
Application deadline	February 28 (or 29 during the leap year) of the following year
Evaluation period	March - April
Notification of results	Early May
Earliest possible start of research visit	One month after receiving the award (~ early June)

Applicants are encouraged to plan their proposed research visits accordingly. Research visits must begin between one and twelve months after the award notification.

7. Application

The application should be concise and focused, as the Evaluation Committee values clear and well-structured proposals. Application **must include**:

1. **Curriculum Vitae** (maximum 2 pages) including the date of your PhD defense/Medical exam. List only the most relevant publications and include your ORCID ID.
2. **Personal statement** (maximum 1 page). It should **focus on the applicant** and explain:
 - a. the applicant's motivation for undertaking the research visit;
 - b. how the proposed visit fits into their career development;
 - c. why the selected host institution is particularly suitable for achieving these career goals.
3. **Proposed research project** (maximum 3 pages excluding references). It should **focus on the science** and include:
 - a. Background and rationale: scientific context and why the project is important;
 - b. Aims and objectives: the scientific questions to be addressed during the visit
 - c. Research plan and methods: describe only the work to be carried out during the research visit;
 - d. Timeline: proposed schedule of activities. Please also indicate the expected timing of the visit (exact dates are welcome, but not required; an approximate period or month(s) is sufficient).

4. **Cost estimate** (maximum 1 page). Template provided.
5. **Home Institution Confirmation** (home institution). This should be provided as a letter from the employer (e.g., supervisor, department head, HR Office...) using the provided template (maximum 1 page). Must include employment dates, employment percentage, expected employment duration following the completion of the research visit, and a comment on support from the home institution.
6. **Host Institution Confirmation** confirming willingness to host the applicant (maximum 1 page). Template provided.

8. Evaluation

Applications will be evaluated by the WIRVA Evaluation Committee.

Evaluation will consider:

- scientific qualifications of the applicant;
- scientific quality and originality of the proposed project;
- feasibility of the proposed research visit, including the suitability of the host institution
- expected benefit for the applicant's scientific development;
- expected impact for the Swiss life sciences community;
- applicants' previous engagement with LS² (e.g., duration of the membership, volunteering or chairing sessions at LS² meetings)

9. Award Conditions

Awardees are expected to:

- undertake the approved research visit within the agreed timeframe;
- notify LS² of any significant changes to the planned visit;
- acknowledge the WIRVA Award in presentations and publications arising from the supported work, where appropriate;
- submit a short research visit report (maximum 2 pages) within six weeks of completing the research visit. A Research Visit Report template will be provided by LS². The report should include a brief confirmation from the host supervisor (or be co-signed by the host supervisor) confirming that the research visit was completed as described;

- present the outcomes of their research visit at a future LS² event, such as the Young Scientists' Satellite at our Annual Meeting. LS² will inform you about the meeting and presentation specifics in advance.

10. Award Administration

Applicants will be notified of the award decision by email. Following acceptance of the award, awardees will be asked to provide by email:

- confirmation that they accept the award;
- the confirmed start and end dates of the research visit;
- any updated contact details, where applicable.

Upon confirmation, LS² will provide an award payment form requesting the awardee's banking details. The award payment (in CHF, single lump sum) will be transferred by LS² before the confirmed start date of the research visit.

If the planned research visit is significantly postponed, cancelled, or substantially modified (e.g., change of host institution or project), awardees must inform LS² as soon as possible. Exceptional circumstances preventing completion of the research visit will be considered individually by the WIRVA Evaluation Committee. If a research visit is cancelled after the award has been paid, any unused funds must be returned to LS². Reasonable, non-recoverable costs incurred in preparation for the research visit may be retained, subject to approval by the WIRVA Evaluation Committee. Awardees are expected to seek reimbursement for any refundable expenses wherever possible.

11. Contact

Questions regarding the WIRVA Award may be addressed to **Life Sciences Switzerland (LS²)**, info@ls2.ch.