

STSM – Selection and Award Criteria 2016/2017

The following guidelines will be applied in selecting STSM awards for the 2016/17 STSM round in the COST action CM1401. They are provided to all applicants and hosts to ensure transparency in the application and selection process.

All action members should be aware that, as agreed by the MC in approving the 2016/17 work-plan and associated annual budget, the TOTAL funding available for STSMs in 2016/17 is ~€22 k. This will be awarded in three tranches, or approximately equal sums of €7-8 k total award sums each time.

Applications will be accepted at any time, but only considered at the specific closing dates. Members should note that COST rules dictate STSM's cannot cross a work-plan period, so at this stage, you may assume that no STSM travel is anticipated for the months of April or May 2017. If funds allow additional STSMs will be offered in Feb - March 2017. A decision on this will be made after the Faro "Astrochemical Week" Jan 16th – 20th 2017. When the 2017/18 work-plan and budget is adopted by the MC and COST, new funds will be made available for STSMs in 2017/18 (after May 1st 2017).

For information, 34 applications requesting a total of €25 k were received in the May 2016 round: ~50 % of these applications were successful in receiving an award, typically at a value of 40 – 60 % of the sum requested.

In comparison to "past COST actions", or even the early years of this action, there are now significant financial pressures on COST (many grants are cut or reduced), so in line with many other actions, we find ourselves in a position where an application for STSM money does not guarantee that the funds can be awarded. STSMs are competitive, and may not necessarily be awarded in full. This is fantastic news as it enables excellence in the science we are supporting, and the opportunities for scientific outputs. There is no obligation for STSMs to fully fund a visit – indeed they can be a useful 'seed-funding' to release additional institutional, facility, and national funding – we encourage hosts and applicants to pursue such avenues.

The STSM applications will be evaluated and selected as follows;

1. All applications must be fully completed by 23:59 CET on the closing date. This includes all supporting materials. Those without appropriate materials will be rejected.
2. All applications must fit the eligibility rules of COST for STSMs. Those that do not will be rejected.
3. "Our Astrochemical History" is a Chemistry COST Action – significant emphasis will be placed in awarding STSMs if at least one partner has not previously been significantly engaged in the Astrochemical community. If both partners are not actively engaged in the community, then a clear plan for dissemination of the STSM work into Astrochemistry fields should be stated.

4. A clear work-plan, with an achievable agenda for the time-period of the stay is necessary. If follow-up is required this should be stated, as should the plan to tangibly disseminate the STSM work in the form of papers, thesis or conference contributions. Scientific excellence should always be demonstrated by successful proposals. It does NOT necessarily follow that rejected proposals are not scientifically excellent.
5. Our COST action encourages diversity, training and inclusiveness; applicants involving PhD students and postdocs will be favourably viewed; likewise those involving an action member travelling to / from a COST inclusiveness country will also be positively encouraged.
6. In the case where STSM's have previously been held by the applicant, the STSM committee would expect to see evidence of significant scientific output resulting from the original STSM visit i.e. applicant named as 1st author on peer-reviewed publications, applicant as invited or contributed conference talks, thesis chapters, clearly acknowledging the support and input from the COST "Our Astrochemical History" Action. This evidence may be appended to the application, particularly if a paper is submitted or in review.
7. In the case where STSM's have previously been held by the host, the STSM committee would expect to see evidence of significant scientific output resulting from the original STSM visit i.e. host named on peer-reviewed publications involving the original applicant, invited or contributed conference talks naming the host and applicant in the abstract, on-going or awarded grants as a result of the collaborative work, acknowledging the support and input from the COST "Our Astrochemical History" Action.
8. In the case where a number of applicants / hosts have previously been awarded STSMs travelling to / from specific institutions, the new STSM will have to clearly identify how the newly proposed work differs significantly from that already supported.
9. The STSM committee will carefully consider diversity in all areas, including (but not limited to) career stages of applicant and host, nationality, gender and laboratory – theory – observation, to achieve a fair balance for the action in terms of STSM awards across the entire grant period in subjects supported, countries sending and receiving applicants, promotion of researchers from inclusiveness countries and training for young researchers.