



SWEET Call 1-2020

Questions and answers (Q&A)

**Please study the SWEET Call Guideline and this Q&A document carefully.
At this point, the SFOE can no longer answer questions in relation with
SWEET Call 1-2020.**

Final version of 28 July 2020



1 General questions

Q 1.1a: *What is the relationship between this call and the preproposals we sent out earlier this year”? I.e.: were there any direct feedbacks to the groups at the hearing level? Or what were the preproposals used for, as it seems that this call targets exactly the same areas as the hearing one → what was the hearing for?*

Q 1.1b: **I was wondering if there would be a formal answer to our proposal for research topics?**

Answer:

We refer to Chapter 2 (Introduction – SWEET) of the Call Guideline: the SFOE contacted the research community to submit «potential research topics» for SWEET Call 1-2020 during the so-called «stakeholder consultation phase» prior to the publication of this call. The submitted suggestions served as input for the formulation of the research challenges. There will be no additional communication and no formal response from the SFOE with regard to the submission of potential research topics.

Please note that the proposed potential research topics should not be confused with a pre-proposal. SWEET Call 1-2020 is a one-step procedure with one definitive proposal to be submitted by 12 October 2020. The previous submission of potential research topics will not affect the evaluation of a subsequent proposal for SWEET Call 1-2020.

Q 1.2: **Would it be possible to receive the list of submitted potential research topics during the consultation phase?**

Answer:

As explicitly communicated in the «Request for Information on Potential Research Topics», proposals submitted to the SFOE are treated confidentially. Such a list can thus not be published.

Q 1.3: **The question arose as to the “broad topics” of the next calls, so that the laboratories could better plan and prioritize their participation in the SWEET program. Would it be thinkable to have some “rough plan” published in this regard?**

Answer:

At this time we only answer questions in relation with SWEET Call 1-2020. The SFOE will inform in due course about further calls.



2 Questions related to the scope of the call

Q 2.1: *Based on our proposal and in light of the guidelines, I would like to know whether I could receive any feedback on our preliminary research angle, either through e-mail or through the organization of a short phone call. It appears that our concept can be eligible for sections 4.1 and 4.2., and we would like to build an ambitious research program [..]. Building an ambitious and executable plan would be facilitated by discussing with your office.*

Answer:

The scope and expected impact of each research challenge is described in detail in Chapter 4 (Objective of SWEET Call 1-2020) of the Call Guideline. Please note that this is an open and competitive call. Therefore, **the SFOE will neither provide preliminary feedback nor have any private discussions with potential applicants as long as the call is open.** It is up to the applicant to carefully study the scope of each research challenge and draft their proposal accordingly.

Q 2.2: *We have a question about the scope of the third research challenge “Enabling renewables for heating and cooling”. The scope of this topic is extremely broad. Since it seems impossible to cover all these aspects in adequate depth, certain choices will have to be made. We would be grateful if you could share your expectations with regard to the broadness of the expected proposals. **Do all mentioned topics need to be considered, or should we choose the ones with the most significant impact?***

Answer:

Each specific research challenge is described by the actual challenge, its scope and the expected impact as outlined in Chapter 4 of the Call Guideline. Proposals will be evaluated according to the criteria detailed in Section 6.4 of the Call Guideline. Impact of the research receives particular weight. Consortia should thus focus on the aspects they consider most important and that can be best addressed based on the competences of their members. It is entirely up to the consortia how to respond to a research challenge.

Q 2.3: *To understand the scope of the SWEET call better, in particular for challenges 1 and 2, **can we consider CO₂ to be renewable?** My point is that CO₂ can be captured in decentralized fashion (from community boilers), and converted in CH₄ to be pumped in the Swiss natural gas grid.*

Answer:

This call focuses on renewable energy sources. How to (or whether to) feature CO₂ in their proposal is up to the applicants.



Q 2.4: *The four Challenges are of general nature and include various topics (technical and non-technical) within the four challenges. There are two extremes for how the research community can reply to the four challenges:*

- *During the application phase, the research community organises itself into a low number of consortia (maybe only one) applying for each challenge. Each consortium or the only consortium includes a lot of applicants and co-operation partners, who work on a large number of projects covering many different aspects of the call topic. Each project has little direct funding from SWEET but needs substantial third party funding, which might not be guaranteed when the proposal is submitted.*

- *The research community forms a large number of consortia each consisting only of few partners. In a few projects, with substantial direct SWEET funding, only a few key aspects of the call topic (but not all aspects) are worked on. Only one consortium is accepted and all others are excluded for the next 8 years.*

Does the SFOE have a preference for one of these two extremes?

Answer:

A similar question has already been addressed, please refer to **Q 2.2**. The SFOE has no preference with regard to the response of the research community or composition of the consortia. However, we feel we need to clarify two other important points that you raise: (i) Third party funding must be guaranteed by the host institution and partners by means of letters of commitment at the time of proposal submission; (ii) The call guideline and the Q&A document only refer to SWEET Call 1-2020. The SFOE foresees to launch further SWEET Calls in the coming years.

3 Questions related to the application procedure

Q 3.1: *What is **the size of the expected consortia**? Are the **foreseen budgets** intended for one consortium only, or to be shared between several consortia, e.g. 8 Mio CHF per challenge to be shared by 2-3 consortia? Are the budgets intended per year, or to be spread over e.g. 8 years?*

Answer:

Please read the Call Guideline carefully. The budget of the call is described in the first paragraph of Chapter 4 (Objective of SWEET Call 1-2020). Details about the composition and term of consortia are provided in Chapter 5 (Rules for participation), in particular in Sections 5.3 - 5.5. The indicated budget per research challenge will be for one consortium and the entire duration. Typically, consortia consist of partners from both academia and private industry or public entities. Additional funding will be available for P+D projects.

Q 3.2: *Is there a list with consortia looking for cooperation partners? I could contribute to Research Challenge 4, not as a leader, but as partner. So I am wondering if there is a database with institutions and universities looking for cooperation partners in this domain.*



Answer:

The SFOE does not provide a particular platform for interested parties to connect. If you are looking for a project partner or want to share your ideas, we suggest you refer to third party websites such as www.energy-connect.ch or contact potential research partners directly yourself.

- Q 3.3:** *The call document does not mention overheads. How much, if any, overhead can partner institutions, e.g. from the ETH Domain, expect? Is there an agreed rule applying to all ETH Domain institutions or is it planned to negotiate this on a bilateral basis?*

Answer (updated 28 July 2020):

Consortia recommended for funding after evaluation will negotiate a research contract with the SFOE pursuant to Article 16 of the Research and Innovation Promotion Act (RIPA)¹. Overheads are therefore eligible only if the research program is carried out by third parties. SWEET is managed and implemented by the SFOE. **The specific interdisciplinary and consortia research projects under the SWEET Call are therefore not eligible for Overhead costs.**

- Q 3.4:** *Under 5.2.2 of the SWEET call it is mentioned that "The host institution is a Swiss institution of higher education and the legal entity applying on behalf of a consortium." Is the Swiss Federal Institute for Forest, Snow and Landscape (WSL) recognized as such?*

Answer:

Institutions pursuant to Article 4 letter c of the Research and Innovation Promotion Act (RIPA)¹ are eligible as host institution. This includes universities and the two Federal Institutes of Technology, research institutes within the ETH Domain, universities of applied sciences and other accredited higher education institutions.

- Q 3.5:** *If a foreign private company has a branch office or subsidiary (operated as GmbH) in Switzerland, then can this branch office or subsidiary participate as an applicant in a SWEET consortium as a Swiss partner?*

Answer:

If the foreign company acts through an independent branch or subsidiary listed in a Swiss commercial registry, it can be considered a Swiss partner.

¹ Federal Act on the Promotion of Research and Innovation (RIPA; SR 420.1).
www.admin.ch/opc/en/classified-compilation/20091419/index.html



Q 3.6: *The call states that separate proposals for P+D projects can be submitted during the 6-8 year term of a consortium. I assume that such P+D projects can run beyond the 6-8 year term of the consortium. Is that correct?*

Answer:

Yes, this is correct, since P+D projects are funded through SFOE's separate (P+D) programme.

4 Questions related to the evaluation procedure

Q 4.1: *How many members are in the proposal evaluation committee and with which percentage women are represented?*

Answer:

The SFOE does not expect the size of the expert panel to have an impact on proposers and the elaboration of proposals to this call. The SFOE strives for gender balance which - besides availability of experts - will be affected by the aim to have an odd number of independent experts. The panel will comprise international and recognized experts in the field of renewable energy with a track record of expertise and practice in research, innovation and industry-led introduction of market-driven demand for renewable energy. Relevant will also be expertise and practice in science, technology, economy, government and administration, and business strategy.