SWEET Call 2-2022

Questions and answers (Q&A)

Please carefully read the SWEET Call Guideline and this Q&A document.

1 Questions related to the full proposal phase

Q 1.1: **While the addendum to the Call Guideline helped with our understanding of "own" vs. "third-party" funding, additional clarifications. are requested regarding financial contributions from cooperation partners, if they should be declared as "own", or "third party"?**

Some examples:
- **If a cooperation partner contributes hours of an employee's time for discussion or attending meetings?**
- **If the cooperation partner partially sponsors a PhD student working on a task through contributions to a professor's lab?**
- **If funding from a European project is used in part to support a task in a professor's lab?**

Answer:

If cooperation partners have their own personnel costs or external costs, then it is considered as own funding of the cooperation partner. If, on the other hand, they only pay financial contributions to applicants but do not do anything themselves, then this is considered to be third party funding of the applicant.

Regarding the three examples:
- Hours of an employee are personnel costs and therefore own contribution of the cooperation partner.
- If the cooperation partner only gives money to the lab (applicant) for the PhD student, then it is third party contributions of the applicant/lab.
- Funds from European projects used for consortium tasks are third party contributions.

Q 1.2: **Could you provide guidance on the recommendations of improvement to the pre-proposal in the evaluation report?**

Answer:

As long as the evaluation phase of the SWEET call is ongoing, the SFOE is available to answer your questions related to the call guideline, procedure itself or application documents, but does not provide guidance on changes to the content of your proposal.

If you have specific questions that relate to the feedback provided in response to your pre-proposal, e.g., about unclear statements, please let us know. We may attempt to clarify such statements, but to preserve the independence of the evaluation panel, we will not elaborate on or alter its feedback.

Q 1.3: **Considering P+D projects: do these projects have to produce a "hardware" demonstrator as output or is it possible to demonstrate "feasibilities" (e.g. the transport of energy) at a larger scale and follow the description "...gather scientific, technical, economic and societal data that cannot otherwise be gained in laboratory tests" (Vollzugsweisung Appendix I, S. 20, 2. Abs.)?**

Answer:

No, P+D projects do not have to produce "hardware" as output. But, as you have correctly read in the "Vollzugsweisung", a P+D project must go beyond laboratory tests commonly executed in research and must allow for the collection of data that cannot be obtained in a "laboratory or research environment" (e.g. modelling or small scale experiments). A P+D project should hence include a practical component at a larger, more realistic scale rather than purely theoretical considerations.

Q 1.4: **Considering the counting of applicants: would a KTT person, if not employed at an existing applicant, with responsibility for the KTT Work package be counted as an additional applicant?**

Answer:
There are two possibilities:

-       If this person is part of the consortium, then yes, this person's company/institution automatically becomes an additional applicant.

-       If this person is not part of the consortium, you have a subcontract with him/her or his/her employer. Then the person's company/institution is not an applicant, but you have to include VAT for the subcontract with him/her or his/her employer (there is no VAT within the consortium, but there is VAT for payments outside the consortium). See also the answer to Q2.7 regarding subcontracting.

Q 1.5: **Considering the reporting and accounting rules: is it possible to shift budgets (after approval of the project) …**
(1) over years, i.e. from one to another year with respect to the budget plan submitted with the full proposal
(2) from one applicant to another applicant, if necessary for conducting the research
(3) from "internal" to "external" costs, if necessary for achieving the deliverables
(4) does the rule of a single final financial report (Directive on the submission and evaluation of applications pilot and demonstration projects and sandbox projects 21.12.2022 version) also apply to the SWEET projects? Are there additional annual financial reports?

Answer:
The proposal budget should provide as accurate an estimation as possible of costs and contributions to cover them at this stage, especially for the first few years. Some flexibility to adjust the budget of approved SWEET consortia is allowed: As the work programme of consortia last for typically 6 to 8 years, we assume that some adjustments are part of a normal implementation. Typically 10 % deviation per year and per WP is considered acceptable, originating from e.g., shifting a small fraction of the planned budget

-       between consortium members, between work packages, between years

-       from the internal cost category to external category cost

All approved consortia must report annually on the budget (actual cost incurred and financing) based on the calendar year (consortia are required to submit annual financial reports, see Call Guideline, Section 7) and justify any deviations.

2   Questions related to the pre-proposal phase

Q 2.1: **How are external teams supposed to build upon the results of a study that aren't even published (SHELTERED)?**

Answer:
A pragmatic approach would be to plan your modeling activities such that they ramp up while SHELTERED is ramping down and incorporate the available information about SHELTERED's objectives, methods, and time plan (see the link to ARAMIS in the Call Guideline). While SHELTERED's final results are not known yet, this would strictly speaking also be the case if it were simply another project in your consortium's project portfolio. (To support your planning, the

SFOE has made available – as an exception and with the consent of the SHELTERED project team – most of the SHELTERED proposal on ARAMIS.)

Q 2.2: **Does the host institution have to be from ETH, EMPA, PSI, EPFL etc. or can it also be a university of applied sciences?**

Answer:
Yes, the host institution can also be a university of applied sciences (see Call Guideline 3.2.1).

Q 2.3: **With regard to the own contribution, I wanted to ask how high it is and what it depends on?**

Answer:
Consortia are encouraged to undertake reasonable efforts to secure adequate own and third-party funding. However, there are no requirements in this respect and it is not expected that there will be so-called matching funds (see Call Guideline 3.4).

Q 2.4: **What do you mean by an applicant? If, for example, we were three different institutes/labs from one university in the project proposal, would we be counted as three project partners or just one (university)?**

Answer:
The term "applicant" is here broken down into each entity part of an institution that individually reports its costs to the institution, and that bring a distinct contribution to the proposed work programme (see pre-proposal template). This means that these 3 institutes/labs are counted as 3 applicants.

Q 2.5: **In the answer to Q 2.4 of the Q&A document it is written, that the term "applicant" is broken down into entity parts of an institution (…) and that bring a distinct contribution to the proposed work programme. Does this mean, that if an entity part (e.g., a lab) needs scientific or technical support from another lab of the same institution, these supporting labs are not counted as additional applicant?**

Answer:
If this "scientific or technical support" is essential to the work programme and cannot be provided by the first lab, then it is a distinct contribution and the supporting lab is considered an applicant. If, the contribution is very minor (e.g., borrowing a device, using a piece of equipment from that lab, requesting scientific advice) then the lab is not considered an applicant.

Q 2.6: **Can a cooperation partner provide services for a consortium and be reimbursed for these services from the consortium's own funds, i.e., the reimbursement would not come directly from SWEET funding?**

Answer:
Yes, this is possible.

Q 2.7: **Can an institution participate in a consortium's activities as a subcontractor (as opposed to as an applicant or cooperation partner)?**

Answer:
Yes. However, the SFOE will closely scrutinize the pre-proposal and full proposal as well as the

consortium's scientific and financial reporting to ensure that subcontracting is not used to cir-cumvent the link between the core budget and the number of applicants, see Section 3.4.1.

Q 2.8: **Can a cooperation partner be part of several consortia?**

Answer:

Yes, cooperation partners can be part of several consortia (see Call Guideline, 3.2.3).

Q 2.9: **In the Call Guideline (Section 3.4.1) it is written, that the "number of applicants must be equal to the number of entries in Table 1-1 of the pre-proposal template". We expect, that "Table 1-1" is meant as "Table 1-2". Is this correct?**

Answer:

Yes, "Table 1-2" is correct. In the meantime, an adapted version of the Call Guideline is on the website.

Q 2.10: **In the Call Guideline (Section 3.2.2), applicants are defined as "legal entities with due representation". We couldn't find a further subdivision. However, in the answer to Q 2.4 in the Q&A document, a further subdivision into "entity parts of an institution that indi-vidually reports its costs to the institution" is introduced. Is there a difference regarding applicant counting in the call guideline and in the Q&A document?**

Answer:

Depending on the context, the applicant can be either an institution/legal entity (for instance for the subsidy contract) or a group/lab. As you noted, in the Call Guideline section 3.4.1, the num-ber of applicants is the number of entries in Table 1-2 of the pre-proposal template, requested at the level of each group/lab (as well as in the budget description in Section 5). Since each group/laboratory provides a different role/expertise, and human and budgetary contributions, the break-down to that level is required to properly evaluate each proposal.

Q 2.11: **In section 4.2.2 of the Call Guideline the content of the LOI is mentioned. Do you have a template for this or are there certain requirements that the LOI must fulfil? What do you mean by "contributions"? Do you mean contributions in terms of content or financial contributions?**

Answer:

The SFOE does not provide a template for LOIs (see Call Guideline, 4.2). The requirements to be fulfilled by LOIs can be found in the Call Guideline under 4.2.2: 1) List of work packages in which the applicant intends to participate, 2) Type of contributions of the applicant and 3) own and third-party contributions. "Contribution" in point 2 refers to content-related contributions (what can the applicant contribute in terms of content?) and "Contributions" in point 3 refers to the budget, i.e. financial contributions.

Q 2.12: **The project should reflect the diversity of the Swiss national languages and regions. When is this criterion fulfilled? Does this point refer to the level of application partners or cooperation partners?**

Answer:

This criterion is assessed by the experts (see Evaluation Criterion 2b in the Call Guideline, 6.2.1) and there is no specific minimum requirement. This point refers to the applicants.

3 Questions related to the notification

Q 3.1: **I would like to submit a letter of intent for a SWEET project application by 27 October. However, the form on your website is not entirely clear to me and I would appreciate it if you could clarify the following points:**

- Is only the consortium name and coordinator information required?

- Am I correct that no partner and project description is required if all partners are based in Switzerland? (As the form only asks for the description of foreign applicants).

Answer:
The submission of a "notification of intent to submit a pre-proposal" (see Call Guideline section 5.1.1) should not be confused with the submission of "letters of intent" (see Call Guideline section 4.2.2). The notification of intent must be sent by the coordinator by 27 October, while the applicants' letters of intent must be submitted together with the pre-proposal by 9 December.

In the template for the notification of intent, the name and acronym of the consortium, host institution and coordinator's contact details are required, and the second part only needs to be filled in if a foreign applicant is involved (see Call Guideline section 3.4.4). It is therefore correct that no partner and project description is required at this stage, provided that all applicants are based in Switzerland.

The notification of intent allows us to: (1) approve potential foreign applicants before proceeding to the evaluation of the pre-proposal, in accordance with our funding rules, and (2) plan the evaluation according to the maximum number of pre-proposals we might receive.

Q 3.2: **Must foreign cooperation partners also be mentioned in the notification form (or only applicants)?**

Answer:
No, foreign cooperation partners do not have to be mentioned in the notification, only foreign applicants.