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Swiss Confederation

Federal Department of the Environment,
Transport, Energy and Communications DETEC

Swiss Federal Office of Energy SFOE
Energy Research and Cleantech

Research Programme Electricity
Call 2026 for Research Proposals

Questions and Answers

According to the call text, questions about the content or procedures could be sent to the SFOE by email until 15 January 2026. These were answered immediately. Apart from anonymisation (indicated by [..]), this document lists the questions and answers in their exact wording, making them available to all potential applicants.

General questions

1. Muss das Pre-Proposal auf Englisch geschrieben werden?
   ➔ Das pre-proposal kann in Englisch oder einer Landesprache eingereicht werden.
2. *Gilt die maximale Projektlaufzeit von 3 Jahren auch für Projekte, die Januar 2027 starten? (i.e. Laufzeit bis Dez. 2029)*
   ➔ Ja, die max. Laufzeit von 3 Jahren gilt für alle Projekte (ausser in Topic 1) unabhängig Ihres Startdatums.
3. *Laut Call-Text werden Projekte typischerweise mit 50 bis 300 kCHF gefördert. Gibt es eine Möglichkeit, diesen Betrag zu überschreiten? /// In den Ausschreibungsunterlagen werden Fördersummen zwischen 50 und 300 kCHF angegeben. Unsere erste grobe Abschätzung hat jedoch eine benötigte Fördersumme um die 500 kCHF ergeben. Würde eine Bewerbung trotzdem Sinn machen oder ist diese Spanne hart verankert?*
   ➔ Grundsätzlich gilt, was im Aussschreibungstext steht: «Supported projects typically receive public funding between 50 and 300 kCHF.» Je nach Konstellation und Projektinhalt kann das auch mal etwas mehr sein, sollte aber im Rahmen bleiben. Die Gesamtkosten sind ein Evaluationskriterium (Punkt 3, Implementation).
4. *Ist die Annahme korrekt, dass die finanzielle Kalkulation der Projektkosten wie bei den bisherigen P+D Projekten erfolgt, nur dass bei dieser Ausschreibung nicht 40% (seit 2024 50%) Förderquote für anrechenbare Projektkosten angesetzt werden können, sondern bis maximal 80%?*
   ➔ Grundsätzlich gilt die Vollzugsweisung, die im Ausschreibungstext verlinkt ist. Insb. bei der Kostenrechnung gibt es durchaus Unterschiede (z.B. Overhead, Stundensätze, Materialkosten) von P+D zu F+E. Bei dieser Ausschreibung beträgt die max. Förderquote 80% der anrechenbaren Kosten.
5. *In this context, we would like to ask whether private (commercial or industrial) institutions outside Switzerland may also participate in a consortium, and if so whether they are eligible for BFE funding, or whether their participation would be possible only on a self-funded basis.*
   ➔ In principle, private companies from abroad can participate in all projects we fund. However, whether they can receive a part of the funding depends primarily on whether they contribute essential expertise to the project that is not available in Switzerland or is not available to you for other understandable reasons. In any case, the research questions must be relevant to Switzerland and the project coordinator must also be based in Switzerland (see call text).

6. *The description of hourly rates in the directive mentions that for professors "a maximum of 20% of the total working hours and not more than 200 hours per year and employee may be declared." and we are not sure how to interpret it: if we are two professors, does that mean that each of us can report up to 20% of the total working hours ? Or the total for both of us cannot exceed 20% of the total working hours ?*
   ➔ A maximum of 20% of the total project costs may fall under Category A. Up to that point, however, each of you may claim a maximum of 200 hours. Please note that the "appropriateness of allocation and justification of requested resources" are part of the evaluation.

7. *How detailed must one be in the pre-proposal phase re: own and third party contributions ? We are in contact with an industrial partner, however, it will take few more weeks before we have a commitment. Is it enough to indicate contacts with and interest from the partner ? (regardless, we have our own contributions at about 25% of the planned budget, so even if they don't contribute we will still be eligible)*
   ➔ According to the call text, you do not have to formally confirm the funds at the pre-proposal stage. Please still name the potential industrial partner and describe the situation exactly as you did in your question. But also note, however, that the presence or absence of an industrial partner could have an effect on the evaluation, especially in terms of impact.

8. *Können wir es so machen, dass das Pre-Proposal nur von den Partnern unterschrieben wird, die auch BFE-Gelder beantragen? Von den anderen Partnern würden wir unterschriebene Absichtserklärungen beilegen.*
   ➔ Ja

9. *Darf ich auf der Titelseite den Text «Submission deadline for pre-proposals: 16 February 2026. Pre-proposals (PDF, max. 6 pages for sections 1 to 7) have to be submitted by e-mail to: energieforschung@bfe.admin.ch» auch entfernen?*
   ➔ Ja

10. *Darf ich im Feld «Call topic addressed» alle anderen Topics löschen ?*
    ➔ Ja

11. *I wonder if the call also covers the system level and distribution point of view such as indoor wireless power transfer and its integration with green energy.*
    ➔ Basically, the technically oriented Electricity research program covers the system and distribution grid level, while the EES research program focuses on regulatory and socio-economic aspects. The respective call text describes in detail the topics for which pre-proposals can be submitted. Indoor wireless power is not currently a focus, while the integration of renewable energies plays a role, particularly in Electricity Topics 1 and 3.

Topic 2: Demand flexibility

12. *Wäre es bei Topic 2 auch möglich (oder sogar erwünscht?), Umfragen durchzuführen (zur Bewertung von Wirtschaftlichkeit / Kundeninteresse / Akzeptanz?) oder Forschende aus Sozialwissenschaften einzubinden?*
    ➔ Das Forschungsprogramm Elektrizität unterscheidet sich von EWG primär in dem Aspekt, dass v.a. "technical and techno-economic aspects" behandelt werden. Ohne die konkrete Projektidee zu kennen, erscheint uns die Durchführung von Umfragen sowie der Einbezug der Sozialwissenschaften nicht unbedingt zielführend, ist aber auch nicht grundsätzlich ausgeschlossen.

13. *We would propose to investigate demand flexibility at the intersection of District Heating Networks (DHN) and Power-to-Heat (specifically using Heat Pumps). Does the programme have an interest in Power-to-Heat solutions within this topic, or is the scope strictly restricted to Electricity (e.g., E-mobility)?*
    ➔ The focus of Topic 2 is clearly on creating flexibility primarily in the electricity system. The aim is not to develop new demand flexibility options, but to elaborate ways how consumers can be involved as effectively as possible (see call text). Demand flexibility potentials that can be addressed fully automatically without interaction with the consumer are not covered by the call. Therefore, DHN is not in the focus of the call.

Topic 3: Power quality and stability

14. *We were brainstorming on a potential project proposal focusing on voltage stability. We initially thought this topic fits well with Topic #3, but the call text gives the feeling that you are more interested in power quality, with its traditional meaning being "harmonics" if one looks at the bullet points. [..] Do you think voltage stability is relevant to Topic #3?*
    ➔ Although the examples only refer to power quality, Topic 3 does indeed cover all questions relating to system stability (frequency, voltage, etc.).

Topic 4: Converter-driven end-use equipment for grid support

15. *We would propose a project [..] to operate heat pumps optimally via a Digital Twin interface. The goal would be to stabilize the grid by [..]. We would like to confirm if this approach meets the requirements of Topic 4 to investigate "which functions could support the grid in these converters, and how they would be implemented, controlled, and steered". Additionally, does focusing on the consumption-side flexibility of heat pump converters align with your priorities for this call?*
    ➔ For Topic 4 (as for Topic 2), at least the questions listed in the call text must be answered. The aim is not to examine specific use cases, but to provide an overall overview. The focus is on the functionalities and specifications of the power electronic inverters themselves and how these can support the grid, e.g. stabilization of frequency, voltage, improving of power quality etc.

Topic 6: Digitalization

16. *Is the intention of topic 6 to explore one single core AI-based innovation and analyse its potential applications through five distinct disruptive use cases, or rather to explore five different AI-based innovations? In addition, the concept of "disruptive use cases" is not entirely clear to me. Are these expected to be prospective and hypothetical use cases, or are real-world cases required, such as demonstrators or proof-of-concept?*
    ➔ Topic 6 definitely focuses on five distinct use cases. Whether these are based on one or more AI-based innovations is up to the applicants. The aim of the call for proposals is not to pick low-hanging fruits, but to find energy-related use cases that may not yet be obvious or explored today. Thus, prospective and hypothetical use cases are sought.

17. *Unser Ansatz [..] ist die Entwicklung eines digitalen energetischen Zwillings für eine einzelne [..] Sehen Sie Chancen, für dieses Forschungsprojekt [..] Fördergelder vom BFE zu erhalten?*
    ➔ Ziel von Topic 6 ist gemäss Ausschreibungstext die Voruntersuchung von 5 use cases, bei denen der Einsatz von künstlicher Intelligenz Vorteile (im Sinne der Energie- und /oder Systemeffizienz) gegenüber konventionellen digitalen oder nicht-digitalen Verfahren bringt. Je nach Ergebnis könnte daraus ein Folgeprojekt entstehen, in dem die Details weiterentwickelt und die Grundlagen für eine anschliessende Umsetzung geschaffen werden. Pre-proposals, welche nicht 5 use cases enthalten, erfüllen die Ausschreibungskriterien nicht.

18. *We are considering a project focused on quantifying the impact of AI in the energy transition compared to state-of-the-art methods (without AI). E.g. while AI cannot change the physical efficiency limits of a specific measure (e.g., window retrofitting), it can increase total system impact by identifying and prioritizing the highest-yield applications.*
    Would the programme be interested in a project that primarily focuses on putting the potential impact of AI into this perspective?
    ➔ Yes

19. *Should such a project also include the implementation of small-scale AI prototypes for the specific opportunities identified?*
    ➔ No, that would then be the subject of a follow-up project, if appropriate.