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

Swiss Federal Office of Energy SFOE
Energy Research and Cleantech

SWEETER Call 1-2026

Questions and answers (Q&A)

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

sweeter swiss research for the energy transition & emission reduction

1 Questions related to the pre-proposal phase

Q 1.1: The call states that one host institution is allowed. Would it also be possible to have two co-host institutions?

Answer: No, only one host institution is permitted.

Q 1.2: The call states that one director is allowed. Would it be possible to appoint two co-directors? If so, could they be affiliated with different host institutions?

Answer: No, only one director is permitted. You are free to have several deputy directors, however.

Q 1.3: In Table 3-3 what exactly does the 85% ("Sum of SWEETER funding for all WPs") refer to?

Answer: This is the fixed budget, see Section 3.3.1 in the Call Guideline. Assuming the number of members is not greater than 15, the fixed budget amounts to 85% of 11.95 Mio CHF. (The remaining 15% is the flexible budget.)

Q 1.4: What is the expected relationship between SWEETER funding and in-kind contributions for both academic and non-academic members?

Answer: We assume that by 'in-kind contributions' you mean 'own contributions.' There is no relationship in the sense that there is no expected minimum for own contributions, irrespective of whether they come from academic or non-academic partners. However, note that evaluation criterion C5 includes the aspect "Plausibility of the budget allocation in light of the principle of subsidiarity, the research challenges, and the proposed activities", where the "principle of subsidiarity" is explained at the beginning of Section 3.3: "To ensure that the overall funding is sufficient for the work programme of the consortium, members and collaboration partners supplement the requested SWEETER funding, each according to its abilities, with own and third-party contributions: […]"

Q 1.5: Is there a maximum percentage of SWEETER funding that can be allocated to an industry partner, with the remainder to be provided as in-kind contribution? If so, what proportions apply?

Answer: No, there is no maximum percentage for members, irrespective of whether they are academic or non-academic. However, note again evaluation criterion C5 as stated in our answer to Q1.4.

Q 1.6: Do you know of any interested Swiss universities or institutes of the ETH domain we could join as consortium partner? Is there a matchmaking platform available or an event planned to support the consortium creation in order to submit a joint notification of intent to submit a pre-proposal?

Answer: The SFOE does not get involved in the formation of consortia. After 12 May, the SWEET Office will publish the names of the directors of those consortia that have submitted a notification of intent to submit a pre-proposal (see Section 4.1 of the Call Guideline) and that have agreed to the publication of their names.

Q 1.7: Can the Coordinator change between the 12th of May and the preproposal submission?

Answer: Yes, it is possible to change the director between the notification and the pre-proposal submission. Unless otherwise specified, the SWEET website will display the name of the person listed in the notification until the pre-proposal is submitted.

Q 1.8: Is it correct that it will be possible to join to a consortium also in phase of pre-proposal, after the 12th May?

Answer: Yes, by 12 May, only the potential host institutions need to have been identified; the full consortia do not need to be finalised yet (see Point 5a in Section 1.2.1 of the Call Guideline).

Q 1.9: Do both topics need to be addressed within a single consortium (1. High temperature processes and 2. Reuse, repurposing, remanufacturing and recycling), or may a consortium focus on either Topic 1 or Topic 2?

Answer: A consortium must address both research challenges, see the beginning of Section 2 in the Call Guideline.

Q 1.10: In the proposal it states that the director must provide 30% of his time to the project - may this 30% be delegated to his group heads as deputy directors? Or are deputy directors additional?

Answer: No, the required 30% FTE must be provided by the director personally and cannot be delegated. Deputy directors may support the director, but they are additional and do not replace this requirement.

Q 1.11: Could you please clarify whether applicants are expected to submit: a proposal covering the full six-year duration with a total budget of approximately CHF 12 million, or a proposal covering only the first three-year period, corresponding to roughly half of the total budget (CHF 5–6 million)?

Answer: Applicants are expected to submit a proposal covering the full six year duration (see Point 7 in Section 1.2.1 of the Call Guideline).

Q 1.12: Since the initial funding is for three years, with a possible extension subject to evaluation, would it be possible to include a PhD student on a four-year contract within the project proposal?

Answer: Whether you apply for funding to finance personnel – e.g., PhD students, postdocs, or senior researchers – for 4 years is up to you. As specified in Point 7 of Section 1.2.1 of the Call Guideline, SWEETER funding will initially be granted for 3 years only. Further funding may be granted depending on an evaluation of progress and the proposed activities for another three years. If further funding is not granted, it will be your responsibility to find alternatives to finance the fourth year.

Q 1.13: Could you please clarify whether the reuse, repurposing, remanufacturing, and recycling of components in Research Challenge 2 refers specifically to components from the same industrial process (as addressed in Research Challenge 1), or if it also requires addressing the reuse of components from other processes within the Swiss energy system?

Answer: Applicants may choose to focus on components from the process addressed in Research Challenge 1 if this creates meaningful synergies. They may also consider components originating from other parts of the Swiss energy system, provided that the proposed work clearly contributes to improving the energy efficiency, sustainability, viability and societal acceptance of reuse, repurposing, remanufacturing, and recycling pathways, in line with the objectives of Research Challenge 2. It addresses components that already play, or are expected to play, an important role in the Swiss energy system, such as PV panels, batteries, heat pumps, electrolysers, power electronics, wind-turbine components, etc.

Q 1.14: If an industrial partner is part of two distinct forming consortia, we have to prove that it will be involved in activities and in technical developments that are very different in the two different consortia? If yes, this "proof" must be explicitly stated in some part of the pre-proposal document or is some other kind of procedure suggested by SFOE?

Answer: Members are not required to provide a separate proof in the pre-proposal that their contributions differ from contributions they may offer to another consortium. However, if a member participates in more than one consortium, the member is expected to inform the directors of all concerned consortia. The contributions described in each pre-proposal must be specific to that consortium and must not be substantially the same as the contribution offered to another consortium, except in the case of the integration and KTT experts, see Section 3.1.2. The SFOE may ask for clarification if, during the formal check or evaluation, a possible overlap is identified.

Q 1.15: Can an organization that participated in a consortium whose pre-proposal was not selected subsequently join another consortium that has been invited to submit a full proposal after the pre-proposal phase?

Answer: Yes, it is possible for members of a consortium that has not been selected to join a consortium that has been invited to submit a full proposal. However, it should be taken into account that the total call budget depends on the number of consortium members (see Section 3.3.1 of the Call Guideline).

Q 1.16: Directors: 1) Can 30% of the time also be considered supervision of PhD students / Project engineers who are directly working on this project? Or would this need to be one top of the 30%. 2) If we are able to show that a person, without experience in SWEET or Horizon call coordination, would still be a suitable candidate to overtake the director role (e.g. due to support network, degree of competence, involvement in large consortiums, and that we allocate more budget to management etc), can we submit with them, or will this be a significant grounds for rejection?

Answer: The 30% FTE is intended to cover leadership and management of the consortium itself. Note however that the 30% is not a hard eligibility rule. If the minimum expectations are not met (this applies to both the experience of the director and the available FTE), the credibility of the explanation of why this person is still suitable enters the evaluation (Criterion C3).

Q 1.17: What would happen if an industrial partner of the project must leave the consortium for unforeseen reasons during the course of the project? Or, said more broadly, will the chosen consortium need to foresee the writing of a consortium agreement (DESCA model?) as in EU projects? Or will SFOE suggest one?

Answer: Yes, if the consortium is awarded funding, it must negotiate a consortium agreement with all the member institutions before a subsidy contract is signed with the SFOE (see Section

3.1.1 of the Call Guidelines). We specify certain key elements that must be covered in a consortium agreement, but leave the details to the consortium. It is up to the consortium to decide how the collaboration with the collaboration partners is to be organised (e.g. within the consortium agreement or through separate arrangements).

In case a member leaves the consortium during the implementation phase, the consortium must ensure that the work programme can still be carried out, for example by identifying suitable replacements. Such changes need to be agreed upon with the SFOE.

Q 1.18: In Section 5 ("Overview of activities") of the pre-proposal template the instructions state: "Limit: 2 pages per research challenge, with each research challenge starting on a new page. [...] Focus on the 10-12 most important activities from your impact model." Given that Section 5 is split into two separate subsections (5.1 Research challenge 1 and 5.2 Research challenge 2), each with its own 2-page limit, we would like to confirm that the guidance to focus on "10-12 most important activities" applies separately to each research challenge (i.e., approximately 10-12 activities for RC1 and a further 10-12 for RC2) rather than referring to a combined total of 10-12 activities across both research challenges.

Answer: Yes, "the 10–12 most important activities" apply separately to each research challenge.

Please note the instructions can be interpreted differently, therefore it is okay for the pre-proposal, if one assumed there were 10–12 in total and did it differently.

Q 1.19: Just to clarify the number of 3-5 Outcomes and 5-10 Outputs are in total and not per research challenge. Is this correct?

Answer: Yes, this is correct.

Please note the instructions can be interpreted differently, therefore it is okay for the pre-proposal, if one assumed there were 3-5 Outcomes and 5-10 Outputs per RC and did it differently.