

Avdelningen för forskning, innovation och affärsutveckling

Competence centres 2027-2031

The Swedish Energy Agency welcomes project proposals aimed at establishing, developing, and operating Competence Centres in the energy field for a period of up to 10 years. This call concerns the first five-year phase for the Centres.

Disclaimer: The Swedish original version of this call text is legally binding. This English translation is provided solely for the convenience of applicants. In case of discrepancies or ambiguities, the Swedish text shall prevail.

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1 About the call

The Swedish Energy Agency welcomes applications aimed at forming, establishing, and operating competence centres in the energy field for a maximum period of 10 years. This call for proposals concerns the first five-year period (2027-2031) for the competence centres. Ahead of the next period (2032-2036), approved competence centres will be monitored with regard to the establishment, development, and results of their activities.

1.1 Skills supply – a key to the energy and climate transition

Sweden is currently in the midst of transitioning from a fossil fuel-based society to a fossil fuel-free one. This transition means that various advanced technical solutions with low environmental impact and high efficiency are replacing older technology, while solutions for controlling, balancing, and monitoring energy flows are being expanded. New systems, value chains, and business models are being developed to ensure that these technical solutions work together.

Energy technology is a complex and knowledge-intensive field, and Sweden therefore needs good access to excellent knowledge environments that generate well-educated experts in a range of areas related to energy and energy technology. A shortage of highly educated workers not only risks hampering the development and competitiveness of the business sector but also weakening the public sector's capacity to meet society's needs. The Energy Research Bill also identifies skills supply and skills development as an area that should receive increased focus¹.

1.2 What is a competence centre?

A competence centre is a long-term form of collaboration in which universities, research institutes, industry, and the public sector work together. These centres conduct high-quality scientific research with clear links to the needs of society and industry. They serve as hubs for knowledge development and innovation, bringing together actors with different perspectives and competencies. This creates the conditions for interdisciplinary research and joint problem-solving.

A key objective is to educate the researchers and experts of the future. Doctoral students and postdoctoral researchers benefit from an environment that enables active participation in projects where universities and colleges work closely with external actors. Through this collaboration, they gain a broader and more industry-based understanding of the complex energy and climate transition. This strengthens their ability to contribute solutions both in academia and in practice.

Another important objective for the competence centre is that research results should be put to practical use by companies and social actors. Close collaboration with external partners creates conditions for new knowledge to be quickly translated into new solutions, methods, and technologies that strengthen both the

¹ [Proposition 2024/25:72](#)

competitiveness of industry and society's ability to manage the energy and climate transition.

1.3 *That is why the Swedish Energy Agency is investing in competence centres*

The energy and climate transition is a complex societal challenge that involves both developing new technology and changing behaviours, social structures, and policy instruments. Success requires research that enables radical change and can manage and further develop the technical solutions that have already been implemented.

The technological shifts and new value chains brought about by the energy transition require more researchers who can contribute to the development of technology, processes and entrepreneurship. These highly educated experts are needed in both the business sector and public administration to provide cutting-edge expertise and a systemic perspective. However, the number of doctoral students in technology has declined in recent years, making targeted efforts to secure the supply of expertise necessary.

Competence centres have proven successful in securing long-term relevant knowledge and expertise because they are based on close collaboration between academia, industry and the public sector. Through this collaboration, the actors can jointly develop solutions that strengthen the resilience of the energy system, increase its flexibility and promote the expansion of renewable and diversified energy sources. In other words, the competence centres aim to build up the knowledge, innovation capacity and cutting-edge expertise needed to shape the energy system of the future. Such a system should be:

- **Secure** – resilient to disruptions and crises,
- **Competitive** – with strong innovation capacity and technological development,
- **Sustainable** – ecologically, economically and socially.

1.4 *Focus of the call*

The competence centre shall be designed so that its activities complement existing competence centres, stimulate collaboration between relevant actors and promote the development of new networks and structures that strengthen the energy system. Competence centres that contribute to skills development in research areas that increase the stability, flexibility, resource efficiency and security of supply of the energy system are considered particularly relevant.

The competence centre shall contribute to an inclusive research environment with an international character. It should also aim to become a leading player in global energy research by actively collaborating with international partners, seeking external funding and strengthening Sweden's position in the field.

The host university for the competence centre must demonstrate that the selected area is an established area of strength, or the university management must have made a decision to focus and prioritise the university's activities on the selected area (provided that funding is granted). The application must also state how the competence centre intends to complement and find synergies with the activities of existing competence centres.

The thematic focus of the competence centre shall be based on a thorough analysis of the challenges and problems associated with the transition of the energy system. The analysis should also highlight the vulnerabilities of the energy system in the event of extraordinary events. The purpose of the analysis is to identify relevant competence needs and justify the research focus based on society's need for a secure, competitive and sustainable energy system. The analysis shall also show how the competence centre can be designed to meet the changing and varying needs that arise as the energy system transitions.

The competence centre must be able to adapt its activities over time in line with changing needs within the energy system. The ability to innovate is crucial for the centre to maintain its relevance and contribute to long-term solutions in the energy and climate transition. This means that the centre should have structures for continuous analysis of the external environment, the ability to adjust its research focus when necessary, and flexibility in forms of collaboration.

To ensure the feasibility of the research projects, the competence centre shall collaborate in a well-organised manner with various actors in accordance with a well-developed plan for the agreed five-year period. The objectives shall be ambitious and measurable, with a realistic budget and a clear plan for communication and dissemination of results. The centre shall promote mobility between academia and industry (in both directions) and work actively on issues relating to inclusion and gender equality.

The constellation of actors in the competence centre shall consist of parties with high competence and scientific excellence and should include strategically important parts of the value chain – especially those that are value-creating, commercially viable or constitute critical links in the energy system. The centre director and management team shall have the necessary expertise and a clear commitment to leading and organising the activities. The constellation of actors in the centre shall have a relevant and balanced distribution between small, medium-sized and large companies.

The competence centre should also be designed in such a way that it is possible to include new actors during the programme period. This can be achieved through special efforts to identify and invite relevant parties to join via supplementary agreements. The centre must be able to deal with organisational and structural obstacles that may limit growth and the broadening of the constellation of actors.

1.5 Conditions for the call

The call for proposals concerns support in the form of grants to universities, colleges and research institutes. A total of approximately SEK 300 million is available in this call for proposals for the competence centres that are awarded support. The maximum amount of support per competence centre is SEK 100 million. The maximum amount of support per project partner² is SEK 100 million.

The call for proposals is being conducted within the framework of the Swedish Energy Agency's Competence Centre Programme. There are currently eleven ongoing [competence centres](#) in the energy field, established through the first call for proposals for competence centres for a sustainable energy system conducted by the Swedish Energy Agency in 2020–2021. The ambition is to conduct calls for proposals every five years, subject to the availability of funds.

The main objective of the programme (including ongoing competence centres) is to graduate at least 200 doctoral students and to have at least 100 postdoctoral researchers employed at the centres during the period 2027-2031.

2 Key Dates

- Application period: 25 August 2025 – 31 March 2026
- Decisions planned earliest: October 2026
- Project start: 1 January 2027
- Project completion: No later than 31 December 2031
- Maximum project duration: 60 months

On “Mina Sidor,” the call is titled “Kompetenscentrum 2027-2031.”

3 Who Can Apply?

The call is directed at university-led consortia wishing to build research environments for excellent needs-driven research for a sustainable energy system.

Coordinator (lead applicant) must be a university collaborating with other universities, research institutes, companies, and/or societal actors.

Only Swedish universities and research institutes are eligible for support from the Swedish Energy Agency. However, other organisations that co-finance the competence centre may be either Swedish or foreign. Cooperation between the various parties is central to a competence centre, but there is no requirement regarding the number of partners.

² In this context, a project partner refers to a university, college or research institute.

4 How Is My Application Assessed?

The Swedish Energy Agency reviews project proposals based on the criteria below (scoring scale 1–5). An expert panel provides advisory input to the Agency's review process.

1. Relevance and potential for the future energy system

- a) The research area's potential to contribute to the transition towards a secure, competitive and sustainable energy system
- b) The research area's potential to support the business sector's transition to new technologies, methods and system solutions in the energy field
- c) The competence centre's contribution to a holistic understanding of the energy system, for example through analysis of interactions between different energy carriers and sectors
- d) The competence centre's contribution to strengthening the long-term competitiveness of the participating stakeholders
- e) The competence centre's contribution to improving the capacity of industry or the public sector to identify and manage the necessary structural changes required for the transition of the energy system.

2. Potential for competence enhancement in the area

- a) The potential of the competence centre to strengthen or complement existing activities in the relevant field of research, including other competence centres, and to promote the development of new networks and structures with an international dimension..
- b) The competence centre's competitiveness in comparison with relevant international centres or equivalent structures
- c) The number of planned doctoral students and postdoctoral researchers in proportion to the size and scope of the competence centre
- d) How the generated knowledge is integrated into undergraduate and postgraduate education at the higher education institution
- e) The competence centre's ability to attract doctoral students and international researchers to the field.

3. Feasibility

- a) Credibility of the approach, organisational structure and collaboration between project partners to achieve the competence centre's vision and objectives
- b) Alignment between the competence centre's focus and the university's long-term strategy and priorities
- c) Quality and realism of the plan for the competence centre's development over the next five years, including start-up and gradual scaling of activities
- d) Clarity and relevance of the objectives – the objectives must be measurable, specific, well-defined and sufficiently ambitious
- e) Plausibility of the budget and financing plan in relation to the planned activities and expected results
- f) Plan for communication, dissemination of results and management of intellectual property rights and patent-related costs

4. Constellation of actors

- a) The combined expertise, capacity, and ambition of the participating parties to strengthen the research area
- b) The scientific excellence of the participating parties from an international perspective
- c) The level of engagement of the business sector and/or public sector in strategically important parts of relevant value chains or system solutions
- d) The competence, capacity and commitment of the centre director and management team to lead and organise the centre
- e) A representative and relevant mix of small, medium-sized and large companies in the relevant field

In order to decide which competence centres will be granted support, the Swedish Energy Agency may also take the following factors into account:

- The overall composition and thematic focus of all competence centres within the programme, in order to ensure a balanced and strategic whole
- Results from interviews with a selection of applicants, as a supplement to the written application

5 Required content of the application

Be careful when writing your application and attach relevant material. Read more about what the application should contain in **Manual för att ansöka om och hantera stöd till forskning och innovation via Mina sidor**

(<https://www.energimyndigheten.se/491cfb/globalassets/sharepoint-dokument/process-dokument/publicerade-dokument/manual-for-forskningsansokningar-via-mina-sidor.pdf>).

The application should be written using the template 'Template for KC application'. The application may be no longer than 25 pages, including images, figures, tables, etc. This template replaces the text boxes on My Pages except for Project Title, Project Title (in English), Brief Summary of the Project and Brief Summary of the Project (in English). Write an 'X' in the other text boxes on My Pages to be able to submit the application. Name the file after your intended competence centre.

Eligible costs must be entered separately for all participating higher education institutions and research institutes on Mina sidor. The funding for these must also be entered for each participating higher education institution and research institute. For participating companies and public organisations, it is possible to enter the funding as a lump sum on Mina sidor. We encourage you to specify the funding for these actors – as far as possible – per organisation directly on Mina sidor. This facilitates the assessment of the project's funding structure. PLEASE NOTE that costs and funding must be defined for each participating party in the budget appendix in Excel format, which is attached to the application.

Attach the following:

- CVs for project leader and key personnel (max 2 A4 pages each)
- Letters of Intent (LOI) from co-applicants and main applicant (templates available)
- Budget appendix in Excel

Additional guidelines, templates, and information about the Centre agreement (for information only, not to be enclosed) are available on the call page.

[More about how the Swedish Energy Agency processes personal data.](#)

6 How to Apply

Follow these steps to facilitate the processing of your application:

- Use the e-service “Finansiering av forskning och innovation” (Funding for research and innovation) on Mina sidor to write your application (<https://minasidor.energimyndigheten.se>)
- Write your application in English.
- Start by applying for authorisation to represent the coordinator, i.e. the organisation that will coordinate the project, receive the support from the Swedish Energy Agency and forward the support to any other beneficiaries participating in the project. Apply for authorisation in good time, as it may take a few days to obtain authorisation. You will receive an email when your application for authorisation has been approved.
- Once you have been granted authorisation for the e-service, you will have access to the form “Ansökan om finansiering av forskning och innovation” (Application for funding for research and innovation), which you must complete and submit.

Submit your application by 23:59 on 31 March 2026 at the latest. We provide support until 16:00 on the same day.

7 Funding Levels

The Swedish Energy Agency provides funding through grants to universities, colleges (högskola in Swedish) and, where applicable, research institutes. The Swedish Energy Agency's grants can only be awarded to participating educational institutions and research institutes, while other participants from the business sector, public sector, etc. must co-finance the activities, either with cash or through their own contributions. All costs in the project must be actual and auditable, which means that they must be reported separately in the accounts.

The Swedish Energy Agency's support can finance both basic academic and needs-driven research at universities, colleges or research institutes. A smaller portion can be used for coordination of the competence centre, to facilitate international exchange and for dissemination of research results. This portion must be specified in the budget.

Funding for a competence centre shall be divided equally between the Swedish Energy Agency, universities and research institutes, and industry, the public sector (and equivalent organisations). See Figure 1. The Swedish Energy Agency's share may vary between SEK 5 and 20 million per year and is conditional on the universities and research institutes, as well as the business sector and public sector, each co-financing at least the equivalent amount.



Figure 1. The Swedish Energy Agency's Competence Centre has three-part funding.

The framework conditions for the Swedish Energy Agency's funding of competence centre are:

- Swedish Energy Agency funding = $< 1/3$ of total costs
- Swedish Energy Agency funding = $<$ funding from universities and research institutes
- Swedish Energy Agency funding = $<$ funding from other actors (e.g. business, public sector)

The main applicant (coordinator) for a competence centre must be a university or university college (högskola in Swedish). The application is submitted jointly with research institutes, companies, and other societal actors. Higher education institutions may collaborate with one another in a joint application. However, one institution must take the lead by hosting the centre and acting as the main applicant. Funding from the applicant higher education institutions should come from their basic grants. It must also clearly demonstrate how the application aligns with the institutions' long-term goals, vision, and strategic priorities.

The activities of research institutes shall be conducted within the institute's non-economic activities. Institutes that conduct both economic and non-economic activities are required to clearly distinguish between economic and non-economic activities and to report the costs, funding and revenues from economic activities separately from those from non-economic activities.

For newly established competence centres, it may take time to get fully up and running. In 2027, the amount applied for should therefore be approximately half of the regular amount for 2028 and onwards.

About co-funding from universities and research institutes

One third of the total funding for competence centres provided by universities and research institutes may consist of cash funds in the form of faculty funds, funds from foundations that universities can use freely, etc. They may also be

financed through own contributions or by making physical fixed assets available in the form of laboratories, etc. Please note that time reports must be available for inspection at the request of the Swedish Energy Agency.

For a cost to be considered an own contribution, it must:

- Have arisen within the framework of the competence centre's activities
- Have arisen during the agreed project period
- Be actual, auditable and recorded in the accounts of the party reporting it
- Not be financed by other project funds (e.g. EU projects)
- Not relate to basic education.

For more detailed information on support levels, eligible costs and types of activities, see [Bilaga 1](#). See also [allmänna villkor](#) (the general terms and conditions) that apply to applications that are granted support.

8 After Submission

The Swedish Energy Agency's assessment is based on the version of the application that you submitted before the closing date of the call for proposals.

The Swedish Energy Agency may request that you submit additional information if we find reason to do so.

The Swedish Energy Agency may carry out a credit check on applicant companies, project partners, owners and boards of directors.

Communication during the processing of your application will mainly take place via Mina sidor.

The Swedish Energy Agency will decide whether to approve or reject your application, taking into account the assessments according to the criteria above. Shortly thereafter, you will receive a notification from us regarding the decision and the reasons for it.

You can follow the progress of your case on Mina sidor.

Payment of the grant will be made according to the payment plan specified in the decision. For more information about payment, see Allmänna villkor (the General Terms and Conditions) for Grants that accompany the grant decision.

9 Programme Context

The Competence Centre Programme aims for:

1. **Long-term university-industry collaboration.** Creation of strong partnerships that promote continuous knowledge transfer and innovation, leading to faster implementation of research results.
2. **Leading research environments with international partnerships.** The competence centre is an intellectually stimulating environment and a leading player in global energy research, which can attract competitive funding.
3. **Rapid uptake of research results in industry/public sector.** Research results are used effectively to improve energy systems and technologies, which strengthens competitiveness.
4. **Strong integration of research outcomes into education.** The knowledge generated is integrated into the university's educational programmes, which raises the quality and relevance of education.
5. **Skills supply.** Society has long-term access to cutting-edge expertise and skilled labour in the energy field, which is crucial for developing, maintaining and managing fossil-free energy systems.

10 Contact

We at the Swedish Energy Agency are happy to answer any questions you may have about the call for proposals. However, we are not permitted to comment on project ideas or make recommendations, but can only answer questions about the call for proposals itself.

Please note that we usually receive a large number of calls on the last day of the call for proposals, which may make it more difficult to get help at that time. The Swedish Energy Agency is only available for questions until 4 p.m., after which you cannot expect to receive help and support.

Please note that applications for this call for proposals are made in [Mina Sidor](#). Instructions on how to proceed can be found in [Manual för forsknings-ansökningar via Mina sidor](#).

If you have any questions about the content of the call for proposals, please contact one of the following administrators:

- Kalle Svensson, kalle.svensson@energimyndigheten.se, 016-544 21 09

- Klaas Burgdorf, klaas.burgdorf@energimyndigheten.se, 016-542 06 28

Technical support and authorization issues: registrator@energimyndigheten.se,
Tel: +46 16-544 20 00.

Bilaga 1. Regler för olika typer av stöd

1 De typer av stöd som ges i den här utlysningen

1.1 Stöd till aktörer som bedriver icke-ekonomisk verksamhet

Stöd lämnas enligt 4 § förordning (2008:761) om stöd till forskning och utveckling samt innovation inom energiområdet.

Projektparter som inte bedriver ekonomisk verksamhet (såsom exempelvis universitet, högskolor, kommuner och forskningsinstitut, i den utsträckning arbetet bedrivs inom den icke-ekonomiska verksamheten) kan få stöd med upp till 100 procent av projektpartens stödberättigande kostnader i projektet. För att kunna erhålla stöd måste projektet uppfylla villkoren i tillämplig artikel 25 och 28 i kommissionens förordning (EU) nr 651/2014. Följande regler gäller för indirekta kostnader när stödmottagaren bedriver icke-ekonomisk verksamhet:

- 1 Universitet och högskola får göra påslag för indirekta kostnader enligt den fullkostnadsprincip som de tillämpar. Universitet och högskola behöver i sin bokföring bara särredovisa stödberättigande kostnader motsvarande bidragsbeloppet.
- 2 Följande organisationer får, när de deltar i projektet i sin icke-ekonomiska verksamhet, ta upp faktiska indirekta kostnader till ett belopp motsvarande högst 45 procent av sina stödberättigande lönekostnader:
 - forskningsorganisationer som är
 - aktiebolag eller handelsbolag där staten direkt eller indirekt utövar ett rättsligt bestämmande inflytande, eller
 - stiftelser i vilka regeringen utser en eller flera styrelseledamöter
 - statliga myndigheter (andra än universitet och högskolor) som enligt sin instruktion ska bedriva egen forskning,

Villkoret om högst 45 procent gäller förutsatt att organisationen genom regeringsbeslut får medel för att bedriva oberoende forskning. Om organisationen även bedriver ekonomisk verksamhet som exempelvis uppdragsforskning ska verksamheterna redovisas separat. Om organisationen deltar i projektet med sin ekonomiska verksamhet gäller villkoren i avsnittet *Stöd till företag för forsknings- och utvecklingsprojekt* nedan.

Stödberättigande kostnader

Följande kostnader är stödberättigande om projektaktiviteterna som du söker stöd för utgör forskning eller utveckling enligt artikel 25 i kommissionens förordning (EU) nr 651/2014:

- a) Personalkostnader: forskare, tekniker och annan stödpersonal i den omfattning som de arbetar med projektet.
- b) Kostnader för instrument och utrustning i den utsträckning och under den tid som de används för projektet. Om instrumenten och utrustningen inte används under projektets hela livscykel anses endast de avskrivningskostnader som motsvarar forskningsprojektets livscykel, beräknade på grundval av allmänt accepterade redovisningsprinciper, vara stödberättigande.
- c) Kostnader för byggnader och mark i den utsträckning och under den tid som de används för projektet. När det gäller byggnader anses endast de avskrivningskostnader som motsvarar forskningsprojektets livscykel, beräknade på grundval av allmänt accepterade redovisningsprinciper, vara stödberättigande. För mark är kostnader för överlåtelse på affärsmässiga villkor eller faktiska kapitalkostnader stödberättigande.
- d) Kostnader för kontraktsforskning, kunskap och patent som köps eller hyrs in från externa källor på marknadsmässiga villkor, samt kostnader för konsulttjänster och motsvarande tjänster som används uteslutande för forskningsverksamheten.
- e) Andra allmänna omkostnader och andra driftskostnader, inklusive kostnader för materiel, förrådsartiklar och liknande produkter, som uppkommit som direkt följd av ett projekt.

Stödmottagare som är företag (stödmottagare som bedriver ekonomisk verksamhet) får ta upp faktiska **indirekta kostnader**, dock högst med ett belopp som motsvarar 30 procent av sina stödberättigande lönekostnader. Detta gäller också om en stödmottagare bedriver både ekonomisk och icke-ekonomisk verksamhet, om projektet genomförs i den ekonomiska verksamheten.

2 Stöd till internationella aktörer

Energimyndigheten är restriktiv med att ge forskningsmedel till aktörer som inte har någon verksamhet i Sverige. Detta kan ske i undantagsfall om samtliga av nedanstående kriterier är uppfyllda:

- 1 Det kan styrkas att de aktörer som inte har någon verksamhet i Sverige har en unik kompetens som inte finns hos aktörer i Sverige.
- 2 Projektet är väsentligt för att uppnå programmets mål.
- 3 Det kan ske en tydlig kunskapsöverföring till aktörer i Sverige.

Energimyndigheten kan neka finansiering till aktörer som inte har någon verksamhet i Sverige även om samtliga av ovanstående kriterier anses vara uppfyllda.