

Call for innovation projects Swiss Data Science Center – Canton of Vaud 2025–2028

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1. Context

The collaboration between the Swiss Data Science Center (SDSC) and the Canton of Vaud aims to generate **a tangible and lasting impact on the economy and public community of the Vaud region**. Within this framework, the SDSC supports **collaborative projects in the field of data science**, bringing together the strengths of academic excellence, businesses, particularly SMEs, and public actors.

Financial support and technical expertise are provided to projects selected through a competitive call for applications, evaluated jointly by a group of experts and a committee comprising the SDSC and representatives of the Canton of Vaud's Department of Economic Development and Innovation (SPEI). Beneficiaries must be based in the Canton of Vaud. **They may be companies, academic/industrial consortia or representatives of the cantonal public administration.**

Each collaborative project must demonstrate significant potential impact, ideally (but not exclusively) in one of the following areas:

- Energy and sustainability
- Health and biomedical
- Social impact and digital transformation

Examples

The following examples are intended for illustrative purposes only and should not be interpreted as limiting the scope.

- *Energy projects*: improving the energy efficiency of buildings through the analysis of data from sensors; optimising material manufacturing processes; forecasting and optimising energy networks; environment and sustainable mobility.
- *Biomedical projects*: use of biochemical indicators to optimise cell cultures in personalised oncology; discovery and development of treatments and therapies; improvement of patient care quality.
- *Digital transformation and social impact projects*: prevention in the field of care for the elderly and/or vulnerable people; optimisation of logistics/supply chain flows; detection of anomalies on a production line.

2. Submission guidelines

The call for projects is divided into two phases: **pre-proposal** and **full proposal**. Applicants must provide the following documents.

Phase I - : Pre-proposal

Project presentation (max. 2 pages according to the form):

- Description and objectives of the project
- Market needs
- Partners involved and their respective roles
- Budget estimates

Phase II - Full proposal (for selected projects)

1. Project description (max. 10 pages according to the form):
 - Detailed description of the project
 - Partners involved and their respective roles
 - Project budget and financial details, description of the business model
 - Project timeline (stages)
 - Performance indicators (e.g. KPIs)

2. A presentation equivalent to approximately 10 minutes (max. 5 slides) highlighting the key points of the project, in PPTx, PDF or video format. Please note that finalists will also be required to present their project to the selection committee.

Projects are reviewed by a committee who is responsible for selecting projects. Both Pre- projects and full projects must be submitted via the dedicated portal.

Any requests for information can be sent to vaud-projets@datascience.ch. The SDSC is also available to provide support in drafting the proposals, if needed.

3. Nature and amount of support

This call for projects does not constitute a request for funding. It is part of a collaborative approach aimed at designing a solution based on data science, with the objective of generating a significant economic and societal impact.

Support is offered in the form of human expertise and financial assistance :

- **SDSC will provide 1 FTE (full-time equivalent staff) for 12 months to support project management and implementation** of the selected projects. This person can be a data scientist, data engineer, AI operations expert, or experienced project manager, depending on the project's needs. This support is co-funded by canton de Vaud and SDSC, for a total budget equivalent to CHF 125,000.
- Direct financial assistance will be granted to selected candidates to support project-related salary costs, **up to a maximum of CHF 125,000**. The amount awarded will depend on the submitted budget. In the case of an academic/industry consortium, the recommended distribution of this financial assistance should be two-thirds for the industrial partner and one-third for the academic partner.

In return, selected applicants are required to contribute to the budget of their project as follows :

- **Companies or public/semi-public cantonal entities:** in cash, for an amount equivalent to at least **20% of the requested budget**, for the duration of the project.
- In the event that the company works **in a consortium with an academic partner:** the academic partner must provide **at least 0.1 FTE** for the duration of the project.

4. Eligibility Criteria

Applications must meet the following criteria to be eligible for the call for projects :

- ☐ The project must involve at least **one non-academic company/entity** located in the Canton of Vaud (as the 'lead applicant').
- ☐ The call for projects is also open to candidates that are part of the **cantonal public administration**.
- ☐ As the lead applicant, the company must be **registered in the Canton of Vaud**.
- ☐ The duration of the project (or the phase of the project to be developed within the framework of this call for projects) is estimated **at a maximum of 12 months**.
- ☐ The company shall contribute to the project with an amount equivalent to at least **20% of the requested budget** in cash.
- ☐ If the company is working in a consortium with an academic partner: the academic partner shall provide **at least 0.1 FTE** for the duration of the project.
- ☐ This project is an innovation initiative designed to deliver **tangible benefits to Vaud's socio-economic landscape**.
- ☐ Applicants agree that the results of the project may be used and (at least partially) disclosed publicly.

Please note that the **participation of one or more academic partners in the consortium is strongly encouraged** (the complementarity of academic partners will be greatly appreciated).

5. Selection process and criteria

All proposals are evaluated in two steps. First, a pool of selected experts from the SDSC reviews the projects (pre-project), and second, a Selection Committee validates the best proposals (full project).

Phase I : Pre-project evaluation criteria

Criteria 1: Innovation and regional impact
Identifiable innovative character, potential for significant impact on the economy of the canton of Vaud
Criteria 2: Relevance in Data Science
A major component of data science, justifying collaboration with the Swiss Data Science Center (SDSC)
Criteria 3: Ethical and legal compliance
Compliance with ethical principles in the use of data, in accordance with Swiss data protection legislation
Criteria 4: Feasibility
Achievable outcome within 12 months
Criteria 5: Level of adoption of artificial intelligence*
<p>The company leading the project must demonstrate sufficient maturity in the field of artificial intelligence.</p> <p><i>A beginner level in data science is by no means a disqualifying factor. In such cases, the SDSC may offer instead a support programme aimed at strengthening the skills needed to develop a proof of concept within a six-month period.</i></p>

* Proposal for an alternative form of support

All applicants are required to follow the standard call for proposals process by submitting a pre-project that aligns with the evaluation criteria outlined above. Entities interested in collaborating with SDSC whose projects show limited data science maturity may be eligible for targeted support to help strengthen their proposal. **This support, provided by the SDSC, includes workshops and coaching by senior data**

scientists to help the entity (re)structure its pre-project. At the end of this phase, the application may be considered for a 6-month exploratory collaboration aimed at developing a proof of concept. This support programme is offered free of charge but does not entitle the applicant to the financial contribution of CHF 125,000.

Phase II : Full project evaluation criteria

On average, two reviewers are assigned per proposal. They assess the quality of the application based on criteria like the degree of innovation, the expected economic impact, the societal benefit, and the alignment with the call objectives. After the experts' evaluation, the projects are ranked; then, a Selection Committee, including members from Canton Vaud, academia, the private sector, Biopôle, and SDSC, takes this input to ratify the successful projects. The assessment criteria and grading scale are as follows:

Criteria 1 : General (max. 5 pts)
Proposal's clarity, completeness, feasibility and coherence
Criteria 2: Degree of Innovation (max. 5 pts)
Field influence of the proposed innovative solution
Scalability and replicability of the solution
Criteria 3: Economic Relevance (max. 5 pts)
Expected impact of the proposed solution on the Vaud cantonal (and Swiss) market
Potential creation create of job opportunities in the local ecosystem
Criteria 4: Societal Impact (max. 5 pts)
Expected impact of the proposed solution on people life, wellbeing, or access to services
Criteria 5: Call Alignment (max. 3 pts)
Consortium's quality and expertise and alignment with the strategic domains of the call
Criteria 6: Proportionality of support in relation to the maturity and size of the host company
The economic viability of the company should not depend on this project.

The candidates will receive a summary of the experts' feedback **within three weeks** from the notification of the outcome (accepted/rejected). A project which is not selected for a call can be re-submitted at the following one, provided the missing elements have been addressed.

A company or organisation may submit several projects in response to the same call for proposals, but **no more than two projects**.

5. Calendar

Phase I – pre-project :

- **8 September to 8 October 2025:** submission period for pre-projects.
- **8 October 2025:** Submission deadline.
- **Mid-November 2025:** Decision communicated to applicants.

Phase II – Full project (for selected project from phase I) :

- **Mid-15 November 2025 to 23 January 2026:** submission period for full projects.
- **23 January 2026:** Submission deadline.
- **March 2026:** Presentation to the selection committee for finalists.
- **End of March 2026:** Notification of selected projects.

April 2026: Project launch.

6. Roles and responsibilities

The following roles and responsibilities are defined:

- **Project Leader:** the main applicant to the call. Must be a member of a company or organization based in Canton Vaud;
- **Project Partner:** a co-applicant to the call. May be a member of a company, academic organization or public sector entity, preferably based in Canton Vaud;
- **Program Manager:** SDSC person in charge of managing the collaboration.

Commitment of the project leader

The Project Leader agrees to:

- Communicate regularly with the Program Manager on the progress of the project.
- No later than 2 months after the end of the project, submit to the Program Manager a financial report outlining the use of funds and a technical report outlining the project's achievements, results and prospects.
- Make public at least some of the results of the project and participate actively in the promotion activities of projects funded by the Program (events, video clips, press releases, etc.).

The project leader is responsible to the SDSC and the Canton of Vaud for ensuring that the project is executed properly.

Commitment of the project partners

The Project Partners agree to:

- Use the grant in accordance with the budget presented in the application.
- Provide interim results to the Project Leader on a regular basis.
- Contribute to the preparation of financial and technical reports.
- Define rights and obligations regarding intellectual property and exploitation of project results in accordance with the following minimum requirements:
 - Prior knowledge controlled by each Partner shall remain under its control, and no rights to it shall be granted free of charge to the other Partners, beyond what is necessary for the performance of the tasks assigned to each other Partner in the project; any rights to prior knowledge that may be necessary for the exploitation of the results of the project shall be negotiated and granted on fair and reasonable terms.
 - Each Partner's confidential information is protected by confidentiality agreement.
 - Each staff member of an Academic Partner involved in the project shall enjoy the freedom to conduct research, to teach and to publish scientific articles with regard to the results of the project.
 - Inventions and software directly based on joint results will be promptly disclosed to the other Partners and will be the subject of an agreement

between the relevant Partners prior to any commercial use and/or use requiring licensing to third parties.

- The Implementation Partner(s) will be granted at least a non-exclusive, royalty-free right to use the results in a product and service area to be defined.

7. Applicable Law/ Disputes

In case of any dispute arising between SDSC and the project partners, SDSC and the concerned member shall first strive to resolve it amicably, escalating it to their respective higher management. If the dispute is not resolved amicably within two months, any concerned party may bring the dispute before the courts. The exclusive place of jurisdiction shall be Lausanne, Switzerland.

8. Contact

Johanna Dousse, Swiss Data Science Center - Program Manager
johanna.dousse@datascience.ch

Any request pertaining to this document may be addressed to
vaud-projets@datascience.ch