



3rd National Call for Collaborative Projects

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Introduction

The Swiss Data Science Center (SDSC) was founded as a joint initiative of EPFL and ETH Zürich for the period 2017-2024, with the mission to promote and facilitate the adoption of state-of-the-art data science methods across different scientific disciplines within the ETH Domain. It has offices at EPFL in Lausanne, ETH Zürich, and at the Paul Scherrer Institute (PSI) in Villigen. Since its creation, the SDSC has been providing services to academic researchers, the public sector, and industries. Every year the SDSC engages in collaborative projects spanning a wide range of applications and scientific use cases. Our collaborative projects are selected following a careful review process within the context of a competitive yearly call for projects.

In 2025, the SDSC became a National Research Infrastructure. In this transition, it expanded its offer nationwide and to new types of collaborations. In particular, in addition to the Collaborative Research Data Science projects, the SDSC offers support and collaboration on projects aiming at the development of software and data infrastructure, and on End-User Innovation projects.

Types of Collaboration

Expertise requests and three categories of projects can be submitted in this call:

Collaborative Data Science Research Projects: In these projects, the SDSC will contribute in-kind expertise in statistical modeling, machine learning and AI to projects (of up to 2 years) from different application domains, from designing tailored ML formulations incorporating domain knowledge, to implementing algorithms, to performing analyses and evaluations.

Collaborative Data Science Infrastructure Projects: Through these projects, the SDSC will support community-driven, FAIR-aligned initiatives to design, prototype, or develop sustainable and reusable data science infrastructure with potential for lasting impact across scientific domains and institutions.

For Infrastructure projects, two project types are available, depending on the maturity and readiness of the proposed infrastructure:

- ***Proof-of-Concept projects*** (6 months) *focus on technological exploration, validation, and prototype development where the need is understood but the implementation approach or conditions for operational deployment remain uncertain.*
- ***Full Development projects*** (up to 2 years) *develop, deploy and test data science infrastructure for initiatives that have demonstrated sufficient technical feasibility and stakeholder readiness.*

End-User Innovation Projects: In these projects, the SDSC will contribute in-kind staff to ensure that novelty developed in an academic or “R&D” context achieves its full potential in end-user contexts. The expected output is an innovative solution validated and deployed

in a real-world setting.¹ Collaborations last one year and benefit from the support of data scientists and ML engineers.

Expertise Requests give access to a lighter form of support, corresponding to around 10 half-day support sessions of any of the three types above. Through this collaboration format, the SDSC offers in-kind independent advice, training and validation by senior SDSC members for organizations seeking guidance to design concrete data science initiatives, projects or infrastructure without entering a full project partnership.

Resources granted

In our calls, the SDSC contributes in-kind personnel and computational resources needed for the work carried out by the SDSC. Please note that the SDSC cannot fund third parties and does not grant any resources in cash.

Resources in personnel allocated by the SDSC

The resources in personnel allocated in-kind by the SDSC for a project are determined based on the needs of the project. They are typically of the order of 0.5 FTE per year (and can be up to 1 FTE for the Research and Infrastructure calls) for the duration of the project. More significant personnel allocation is possible, provided it is motivated by a larger project, comprising several teams with sufficient in-kind involvement from co-applicants, and possibly from different institutions.

The number of FTEs allocated to the project will be assigned based on the evaluation of the project needs through the review process.

Computational resources used during the project

If relevant, SDSC will provide in-kind computational resources needed for the work of its staff and for the related data analysis and data science work carried out by the project partners for the duration of the project, including temporary storage and CPU/GPU resources. An estimate of the amount of resources should be proposed and motivated in the proposal.

The cost of computational resources required for intensive numerical computations to produce data, and resources for a subsequent intensive use of algorithms or results of the project, cannot be contributed in-kind by the SDSC.

Similarly, the SDSC will not take care or cover the cost of long-term storage of the data and results produced by the project, but can help transfer the data to long-term storage at the end of the project.

The amount of computational/temporary storage resources allocated in-kind by the SDSC will be assigned based on the evaluation of the project needs through the review process.

¹ Technical deployment in a specific infrastructure might require an infrastructure work package.

Eligibility Conditions

Applicants to our calls must meet the following eligibility conditions, which are based on those for SNSF project funding.

Applicants must be in a position to carry out projects under their own responsibility and to lead project staff both technically or scientifically and as personnel.

Applicants must be able to show that:

- They have the relevant qualifications to contribute to the proposed project.
- They are **employed at least for the duration of the project** at the institution they are affiliated with or have been given assurance of such employment in writing;
- The necessary resources are at their disposal to contribute appropriately to the proposed project.

Eligible institutions

The main applicant must be affiliated with a Swiss federal or cantonal administration, or with one of the recognised Swiss higher education research centers pursuant to Art. 4c RIPA ²:

- The two Federal Institutes of Technology and Research Institutes within the Federal Institutes of Technology Domain,
- Higher Education Institutions and other institutions that are accredited under the HEdA ([list of accredited institutions](#)),
- Research facilities of national importance (Art. 15 RIPA). ([list of accredited institutions](#)),
- Swiss national nodes of internationally coordinated research infrastructure networks ([list of national nodes](#)).
- Swiss cantonal or federal administrations
- Swiss NGOs and international organizations (IOs) with a strong presence in Switzerland.

Co-applicants must be affiliated with non-profit institutions. In projects from the End-User Innovation call, private companies can participate as joining implementation partners and benefit from first-mover advantage.

If you are unsure about your institution's eligibility, please contact us for clarification.

² <https://www.fedlex.admin.ch/eli/cc/2013/786/en>

Application Procedure

Submitting a project to the National Call is done in three steps.

1. Collaboration or expertise request

Requires filling a form indicating:

- ⇒ affiliation information for the PI and co-PIs requesting collaboration or expertise
- ⇒ a brief presentation of the motivation & impact (200 words), objectives (200 words), type of SDSC expertise requested (100 words per expertise), own resources contributed (200 words), potential risks (200 words)
- ⇒ Applicants requesting a collaboration for Infrastructure development and meeting the initial eligibility requirements are subsequently invited to complete an Infrastructure Collaboration Assessment Form.

2. Project presentation and discussion with SDSC staff

Following the request, a member of the SDSC will reach out to you, and unless there is a feasibility issue or the request does not correspond to support that can be provided by the SDSC, we will propose to schedule a video call for a presentation of the project followed by a discussion with SDSC staff. The objective is to:

- ⇒ clarify the expertise needed and what could be contributed by the SDSC
- ⇒ help identify challenges, risk, feasibility issues, and possible approaches
- ⇒ determine readiness for the requested type of collaboration and identify the materials and documentation required to support it (in particular, for infrastructure projects).
- ⇒ provide general information for the preparation of a full proposal

3. Proposals for full projects

Proposals have different requirements for Research, Innovation and Infrastructure projects:

- For **Research projects**, the full proposal details: project plan (1500 words), data characteristics) work package structure, contributed and requested resources and risk assessment.
- For **Infrastructure projects**, the full proposal consists of the validated Infrastructure Collaboration Assessment Form and relevant supporting materials and documentation that detail: infrastructure requirements, target users and validation criteria, proposed solution and architecture, data, stakeholders, risks, expected impact and sustainability; supported when required by architecture diagrams, prototypes, repositories and other technical materials.
- For **Innovation projects**, the full proposal specifies: motivations, proposed approach, data, expected impact, project plan, contributed and requested resources, evaluation criteria.

Evaluation

Supports for the evaluation

Expertise requests and PoCs are evaluated based on (a) the information provided in the *Collaboration and Expertise Request Form*, (b) the subsequent project presentation and discussion with SDSC, (c) presentation materials and (d) any supplementary material proposed by the authors or requested by the SDSC after the discussion.

Full research and end-user innovation projects require an additional proposal submission in November.

All requests for Infrastructure collaborations additionally require (a2) the completion of the *Infrastructure Collaboration Assessment Form*. The supporting documentation and materials required are adapted to the type of collaboration and scope of support requested.

Evaluation procedure

The evaluation of proposals for full projects is carried out both by internal and external reviewers. For research projects, scientific merit and impact of the project are evaluated by external reviewers identified in the international research community of the domain, and technical feasibility on the data science side is evaluated both by internal and external reviewers.

For end-user innovation projects, the main evaluation criteria are twofold: on the one hand, the innovation degree and proposed methodology; on the other, the expected impact jointly with the project consortium's capability to deliver upon the intended scope. Prior achievements in the field and «track record» are a secondary but important criterion in the evaluation of the proposal. Similar to research projects, external reviewers identified in relevant domains are involved in the selection. The latter may belong to the academic research, public and industrial sectors.

For Infrastructure projects and expertise requests, applicants complete the *Infrastructure Collaboration Assessment Form*. During the discussion with the applicants, the SDSC reviews the assessment, confirms the appropriate type of collaboration, and identifies any additional documentation or materials required. Applicants are then given time to finalize their submission and provide the requested supporting materials. Together, these constitute the proposal for Infrastructure Project Proposal or Expertise Request, which is submitted to external experts for review. The requirements for supporting documentation and materials are proportionate to the collaboration type, project maturity, and scope of support requested. Projects aiming for full development may be asked to provide additional materials to substantiate their readiness for implementation and deployment.

Evaluation Criteria

Proposals are evaluated based on the following criteria:

- **Impact:** Potential for scientific, societal, or community-wide benefits across institutions. Contributions towards sustainable and reusable data science infrastructures are particularly welcome.
- **Feasibility and risk assessment:** The objectives are realistic within the proposed duration. The proposal includes clear milestones, identification of potential risks, and mitigation strategies.
- **Commitment to collaboration:** The role of the SDSC is clearly described. Applicants commit sufficient time, domain expertise, and technical resources to co-design, iterate, and test solutions with SDSC engineers.
- **Reusability:** Potential for outcomes to be shared and reused beyond the immediate project context, and to build upon existing solutions.
- **Stage of readiness and appropriateness:** Suitability of the project for the requested type of support (Expertise Request, Proof of Concept, or Full Project). Requested collaboration may be redirected to a different type in agreement with the applicants.
- **Sustainability and adoption potential** (*for full development projects only*): Credible plans for long-term use, integration with existing infrastructures, and scaling across domains or institutions.

Domains and Tracks

In our call, proposals can be submitted to one of the following 6 tracks:

- Environment & Climate (EC)
- Energy & Sustainability (ES)
- Health & Biomedical (HBM)
- Data Science for Large-Scale Infrastructures (LSI)
- Digital Society (DS).
- General (G)

We encourage submissions that strive to create community-oriented solutions with long-lasting impact, benefiting both the scientific community and society at large. Within each area, we welcome both research-oriented projects (e.g. developing data science methods and models) and infrastructure-oriented projects (e.g. developing reusable, FAIR-aligned components, platforms, and governance frameworks).

Environment and Climate (EC)

In the EC track, we welcome project proposals on data science methods for environmental and climate sciences at large, focusing on open broad, impactful open problems in the

domain. Environmental sciences at large are rapidly steering towards adopting and developing dedicated data science approaches, aiming at facilitating and improving data parsing and interpretation, modeling of spatio-temporal phenomena and forecasting of key processes related to the Earth and its components. In this track we encourage submissions spanning the use of data science and machine learning in ecology and biodiversity, natural hazards, climate and weather modeling, climate change adaptation and mitigation, among others. Projects will rely on and leverage the use of data of various forms and modalities, such as in-situ measurements and sampling, large scale Earth observation datasets from remote sensing instruments, gridded climatological and weather data, biodiversity databases, and any other form of spatial or temporal data source describing any relevant process. Infrastructure-focused initiatives may target interoperability of such data sources, the development of standards, metadata enrichment, or shared platforms that facilitate sustainable collaboration across institutions.

Energy and Sustainability (ES)

In the ES track, we encourage submission of data science and AI-based projects that accelerate Switzerland's transition to a low-carbon, resource-efficient future. We thus welcome projects where data-driven and ML/AI-based approaches are instrumental in enhancing energy generation forecasting, optimizing its distribution and consumption, and accelerating the deployment of renewable energy sources, such as wind, solar or geothermal, as well as their interaction with the national grid. We also encourage the submission of projects that leverage sensor-collected data to improve the energy efficiency of assets (e.g., buildings, industrial processes, etc). In the area of sustainability, we welcome project proposals that promote the responsible use of natural resources in relation to human activities, with emphasis on green technologies, sustainable manufacturing practices, development and application of circular materials, and innovative waste management technologies.

Health and Biomedical (HBM)

In the HBM track, we invite research proposals focused on developing and applying data science methods in the field of health and biomedical sciences. We welcome submissions on a wide range of topics, including but not limited to biomedical imaging (e.g., MRI, CT scans, histological images, spatial omics), time-dependent data analysis (e.g., built around patient monitoring data, electronic health records), integration of multiple data modalities (e.g., genomic, proteomic, imaging, clinical) to provide a comprehensive view of patient health, and related to data science for preventive or precision medicine. Infrastructure-focused initiatives in this domain may target areas such as secure and privacy-preserving architectures, data access governance, interoperability across institutions, metadata and semantic integration, or platforms enabling reproducible and FAIR biomedical research. We also welcome proposals focused on translating validated methods or prototypes into robust tools ready for adoption in clinical, public health, or research operations settings. Proposals to the HBM track should aim to bridge the gap between data science and

biomedical research, fostering interdisciplinary collaboration and innovation. Selected examples of past and current contributions can be found in our [projects page](#).

Data Science for Large-Scale Infrastructures (LSI)

In the LSI track, we encourage the submission of research data science projects relevant for the design, operation, and exploitation of large and complex research infrastructures. These include projects related to the improvement of the data production and acquisition capabilities, the control and maintenance of such facilities and instruments, as well as projects related to the data ingestion, processing and analysis for specific scientific use cases and end-user applications associated with their exploitation.

A large-scale infrastructure can be a complex dedicated research facility with specialized instrumentation and associated databases that serves a scientific and/or industrial community well beyond the owners/maintainers/operators of such infrastructure, and whose exploitation contributes to the strategic advantage of Switzerland in the research and development landscape. Examples of qualifying infrastructures are specialized instrumentation and facilities such as particle accelerators (e.g., beamlines), electron microscopy, power plants, large monitoring and sensing networks (e.g., satellite, environmental, smart buildings), or the Square Kilometer Array (SKA), to name a few.

If you are uncertain whether your project qualifies for the LSI track please, feel free to contact us.

Digital Society (DS)

In the DS track, we invite project proposals that advance and apply data science methods to empower individuals and communities, strengthen public services, and address fundamental societal challenges.

Projects should aim to develop and deploy data-driven solutions that improve the efficiency and accessibility of public administration and services (e.g., resource planning optimization, advanced knowledge extraction, reasoning over standard operating procedures and regulations); enable collective participation (e.g., citizen science initiatives, collaborative knowledge-sharing and problem-solving platforms); expand access to essential services (e.g., interpretation tools for low-resource languages); support vulnerable or underserved populations (e.g., humanitarian aid delivery); and support efforts to use data science and AI for open-access knowledge and personalized education (e.g., adaptive learning systems).

We particularly encourage proposals involving multidisciplinary teams and consortia, aiming for trustworthy and reusable solutions, and addressing critical aspects such as interoperability of public and proprietary data, fairness, transparency, and security.

General Track (G)

In the general track, we accept project proposals relevant to other domains. Examples of past and current research projects can be found on our [projects page](#).

Projects submitted in the EC, ES, HBM, LSI, and DS track, and which do not qualify in the proposed track will be automatically transferred and considered in the most relevant track.

Open Science and Open Research Data

The SDSC strongly supports Open Science, Open Research Data (ORD), and the development of data science projects and research data infrastructures that meet the FAIR (findable, accessible, interoperable, reusable) standards ³. Projects promoting Open Science and ORD are particularly welcome. Specific support to build research data infrastructures, enhance their FAIRness, implement strong ORD practices or develop associated data science platforms can be obtained from the SDSC by applying to the Collaborative Data Infrastructure Projects call.

Timeline

- National Call Opening Webinar – **Aug 26, 2026**
- Collaboration or expertise request submission deadline – **Sept 19, 2026**
- Full proposals submission deadline – **Nov 6, 2026**
- Decisions on Expertise Requests & Proof of Concept projects – **Dec 01, 2026**
- Start of Expertise Requests & Proof of Concept projects – **Early 2027**
- Final decision on full proposals – **Feb 19, 2026**
- Start of collaborative projects – **Spring 2027**, or earlier upon agreement and resource availability for shorter projects.
- **Clarity:** The project is described with sufficient detail, in a manner accessible to reviewers from different domains.

³ Wilkinson, M. D. et al. The FAIR Guiding Principles for scientific data management and stewardship. Sci. Data 3:160018 doi: 10.1038/sdata.2016.18 (2016)

Appendix

This appendix provides additional information for the different types of collaborative projects.

R. Collaborative Research Data Science Projects

Collaborative Research Data Science projects are projects of up to two years, undertaken in collaboration with beneficiaries affiliated with Swiss institutions of higher education and research and/or with federal or cantonal administrations. In these projects, the SDSC commits to contribute competences in statistics, machine learning, and AI, including, but not limited to, computer vision, natural language processing, statistical signal processing, and optimization. The SDSC is involved via the in-kind contribution of personnel (e.g., data scientist) working on the project.

The SDSC data scientists involved in our collaborative research projects typically have a PhD in one of the data science technical domains listed above. Many of them also have expertise in specific applied domains and their corresponding data science approaches. The contribution of the SDSC goes in most cases beyond the identification of relevant classical models and techniques required to solve a given problem. Instead, it typically consists in designing and implementing analyses and algorithms tailored to the problems and research questions considered, so as to best incorporate the prior domain expertise into state-of-the-art data science techniques. The work of the SDSC can also complement or support directly the contributions of other teams with methodological expertise in data science.

We are looking forward to supporting projects with strong scientific and societal impact, in which the contribution of the SDSC is important for the success of the project. The impact should be understood not only in terms of the immediate scientific results but also in terms of algorithms or technologies that can be operationalized after the project, or of open source algorithms and open research data produced as part of the project outcomes. A large fraction of our past and current research projects can be found on our [projects page](#).

Given the mandate of the SDSC as a National Research Infrastructure, we particularly welcome projects benefiting a broad community of stakeholders aiming at one, or several, of the following: Developing Data Science/ML/AI tools and/ or generating new datasets/data sources that can contribute to the development of Data Science and/or Research Data Infrastructure platforms.

Expected mode of collaboration in Research projects

Successful projects in data science often crucially rely on strong collaborations between domain experts and data scientists. The SDSC is fully invested in the projects in which it collaborates and typically leads or co-leads several work packages. We expect the domain expert collaborators to also be actively involved in the project, to help guide the development of the methods, and to participate directly in data exploration and analyses.

In most of our projects, the involved SDSC data scientists meet on a weekly or bi-weekly basis with collaborators from the partnering teams. These meetings can be at the SDSC,

in the partnering lab, or via video calls. Given the importance of communication and informal exchanges of ideas in interdisciplinary research, for some projects, our data scientists can regularly spend time in one of the partnering labs. This possibility is examined on a case-by-case basis. We also organize bi-monthly progress meetings with all collaborators, co-PIs, and SDSC project coordinators.

Expected project outcomes of Research projects

The typical outcomes of *Collaborative Data Science Projects* include:

- Scientific code, implementing methods or analyses, which will be made *publicly available* whenever possible in the context of the project;
- Curated and *openly accessible datasets* (to authorized users/organizations);
- Papers published in the journals of the community of the domain scientists;
- Communications in conferences in the domain sciences.

S. Collaborative Data Science Infrastructure Projects

The 2026 Call for Collaborative Data Science Infrastructure Projects supports community-driven, FAIR-aligned initiatives to design, prototype, or develop sustainable and reusable data science infrastructures with potential for lasting impact across scientific domains and institutions.

SDSC supports infrastructure initiatives at different stages of their development, from early exploration to operational and reusable research infrastructure. The appropriate form of support depends on the current maturity of the initiative, the questions to be addressed, and the intended outcomes.

The infrastructure lifecycle combines a **design-thinking development approach**, from understanding needs through experimentation to building and testing operational solutions, with **six-month project cycles** that structure SDSC involvement in development projects.

Design-thinking Development Approach

Infrastructure development follows a double-diamond approach covering three broad phases: Understand, Experiment, and Build & Test (Figure 1).

- The **Understand phase** (need → proposal) focuses on understanding user or community needs, competitive landscape, and initial problem framing. At this stage, the responsibility lies primarily with call applicants holding their domain expertise.
- The **Experiment phase** (ideate → validate → prototype) explores and validates possible technical approaches. **Proof-of-Concept** (PoC) projects typically enter here, where the need is sufficiently understood but the implementation approach or conditions for operational deployment still require exploration and validation.
- The **Build & Test phase** (develop → deliver → MVP) focuses on developing, integrating, and testing robust and reusable infrastructure components in realistic

settings. This phase is supported through Full Development projects intended for initiatives that have demonstrated sufficient technical feasibility and stakeholder readiness to move towards operational infrastructure, adoption, and scaling.

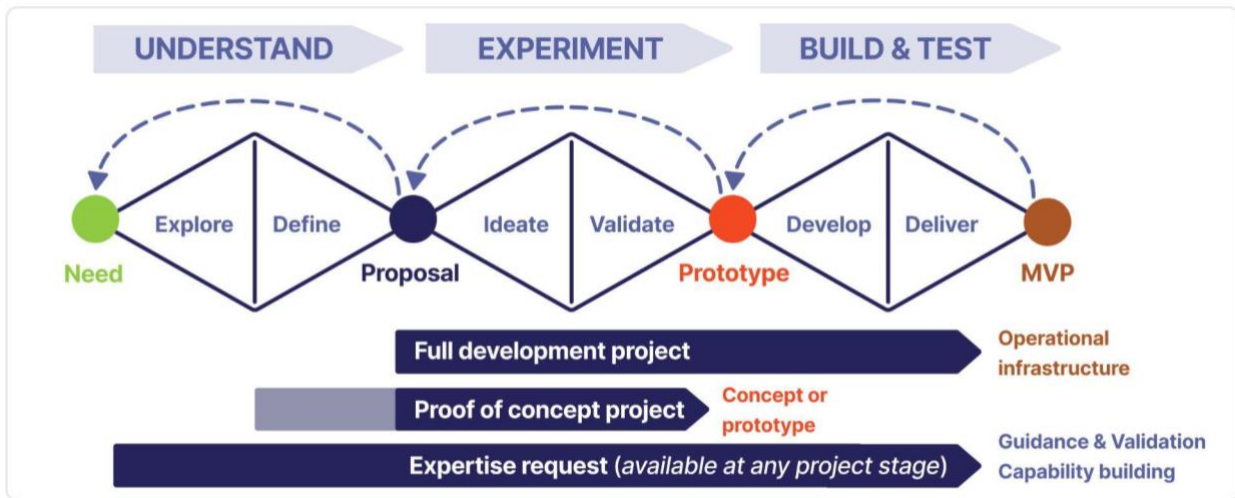


Figure 1. Infrastructure Development Lifecycle and SDSC Support Formats. Support is adapted to project maturity and intended outcomes: Proof of Concept projects deliver concepts or prototypes, Full development projects deliver operational infrastructure components, and Expertise Requests provide guidance, validation, and capability building at any stage.

Expertise Requests can support initiatives at any point in this lifecycle. They provide targeted advice, validation, training, or technical guidance where a specific question or capability needs to be addressed, without establishing a development project. This may include both early-stage initiatives seeking direction and mature infrastructures requiring independent expertise on a specific aspect.

Six-Month Project Cycles

Proof-of-Concept projects are completed within a single six-month project cycle. Depending on the outcomes, they may progress to a Full Development project or, where justified, receive a limited extension to complete the Proof of Concept. Full Development projects may run for up to 24 months and are structured in six-month project cycles.

During each cycle, SDSC and project partners work towards agreed objectives reflecting the project's current stage of development. Progress is reviewed based on demonstrated advances in technology maturity, infrastructure impact, partner capability, and project outcomes.

Based on the review, a project may:

- successfully conclude;
- for Proof-of-Concept projects, progress to a Full Development project or receive a limited extension where justified;
- for Full Development projects, continue for a further six-month cycle;

- for Full Development projects, progress towards integration into SDSC's longer-term infrastructure operation and maintenance, where appropriate; or
- conclude SDSC involvement where further investment is not justified.

Continuation is based on demonstrated progress and the expected value of further SDSC involvement, allowing projects to mature at different rates while keeping SDSC support responsive.

I. Collaborative End-User Innovation Projects

The objective of End-User Innovation collaborations is to ensure that novelty developed in an academic or “R&D” context fulfills its potential in production/end-user contexts. Examples of such collaborations include:

- The **industrialization of research prototypes** in the form of data products or licensable software with clear market potential;
- The **adoption of data science solutions** designed by academic/research organizations **by public sector entities** such as cantonal administrations or federal offices, benefitting their end-users;
- The **translation** of machine learning models created in specific domains (e.g. clinical research) into robust applications benefitting specific end-users (e.g. practitioners and their patients).

Why submit a proposal?

SDSC offers its partners a unique advantage in Switzerland: its strategic and operational know-how resulting from supporting 50+ companies/public sector entities/NGOs over multiple years to achieve impact in data science. Concretely, you should submit a proposal if you seek the following support by the SDSC:

- **Validation** of research findings and innovation prototypes in a productive environment: thanks to the extensive experience in multiple industrial domains and to the rich skillset of its innovation team, the SDSC can support partners in ensuring that their solutions achieve their intended impact.
- **Pathways to adoption & market:** thanks to its long-standing collaborations with a broad network of industrial, public sector and not-for-profit organizations in Switzerland, the SDSC can support partners in the industrialization and marketability of their innovation.

Who should submit a proposal?

The primary intended **beneficiaries** of these collaborations are research organizations, public/para-public sector and not-for-profit organizations. Private companies can participate as joining implementation partners and benefit from first-mover advantage.

What kinds of proposals may be submitted?

1. Collaborative Projects

The primary purpose of a collaborative project is to benefit from the complementarity of applicant partners and SDSC staff to deliver concrete and impactful solutions in line with the objectives above.

Contribution by the SDSC: The Call will fund several collaborative projects per year, lasting 12 months. Each funded project is entitled to an in-kind contribution, as follows:

- SDSC: At least 0.5 FTE, specific nature of contribution to be defined based on the nature of the project (data scientist/applied AI engineer, data engineer, MLOps specialist, ...).
- The SDSC will ensure an appropriate ratio of project management and business analysis to guarantee the impact/value creation of the proposed solution.
- Compute/storage as evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

2. Expertise requests

The primary purpose of an expertise is for the applicant to benefit from the strategic and operational expertise of SDSC staff to acquire maturity and confidence in view of concrete data science initiatives.

Contribution by the SDSC: The Call will fund several expert support mandates per year, each lasting 12 months and involving dedicated strategic and operational expertise delivered by senior SDSC members.