IEA TECHNOLOGY COLLABORATION PROGRAMME ON

DISTRICT HEATING AND COOLING

ANNEX XV

(1 May 2026 – 30 April 2029)

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

PROGRAMME PERIOD 2026 – 2029 (ANNEX XV)

List of abbreviations

4GDH	4th generation district heating
CHP	Combined Heat and Power
CV	Curriculum Vitae
DC	District Cooling
DH	District Heating
DHC TCP	Denomination for IEA DHC within the IEA
DHW	Domestic hot water
ExCo	Executive Committee of IEA DHC
IEA	International Energy Agency
IEA DHC	International Energy Agency Technology Collaboration Programme on District Heating and Cooling
TCP	Technology Collaboration Programme
USD	United States of America Dollars

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Disclaimer on Gender Equality

IEA DHC is committed to promoting gender equality and ensuring inclusive participation in all aspects of its work. We strongly encourage proposals that integrate gender considerations in project design, implementation, and evaluation. All applicants must demonstrate a commitment to gender equality and non-discrimination. Proposals that actively promote equal opportunities for all, regardless of gender, will be given favourable consideration.

Background

The International Energy Agency

The International Energy Agency (IEA) was established in 1974 to strengthen international co-operation on energy technologies. It works to ensure reliable, affordable and clean energy for its member countries and beyond. As an element of its international energy technology co-operation, the participating countries undertake co-operative actions in energy research, development, and demonstration. These are known as Technology Collaboration Programmes (TCPs).

The Technology Collaboration Programme for District Heating and Cooling

The 'IEA Technology Collaboration Programme for District Heating and Cooling' (IEA DHC) was established in 1983. It is the only international research and development programme for this technology that has global reach.

Specifically, IEA DHC deals with the design, performance, and operation of non-individual heating and cooling generation, distribution systems and consumer installations. It is dedicated to helping district heating and cooling, renewables, combined heat and power and the recycling of excess heat become powerful tools for energy conservation and the reduction of environmental impacts of supplying heating and cooling.

IEA DHC has proceeded since 1983 through three-year cost-shared 'annexes', and since 2011 also carries out task-shared research. More information about current Annex XIII projects and previous annexes can be found on the IEA DHC website, http://www.iea-dhc.org.

In this document, the term "Programme Manager" shall refer to the programme management of the IEA Technology Collaboration Programme on District Heating & Cooling (IEA DHC) as represented by its Programme Manager.

Call for Proposals for Annex XV

The IEA DHC Executive Committee (ExCo) through its Programme Manager hereby launches a **Call for Project Proposals.** This fifteenth three-year period (Annex XV) will run from 1 May 2026 to 30 April 2029.

Proposed projects may range in duration up to a maximum of 30 months, terminating not later than 30 April 2029.

Requested project funding are requested to be within the range of 150 000 to 300 000 USD. Smaller or larger projects may be considered if the benefits are clearly demonstrated.

Proposals should be based on one or more of the priority themes, as set out below. (Proposals on innovative issues outside these areas will be considered only after written confirmation from the IEA DHC Programme Manager).

Proposals should have clear relevance to district energy[1] practice, provide a clear contribution to a more sustainable energy system, and they should be relevant to all the participant countries of the IEA DHC programme.

The project selection is based on a 2-stage proposal process. The first stage is the submission of an outline, while the second stage is the submission of a full proposal. For details, see respective chapters of this document.

Proponents who are successful in the first stage of the selection procedure should explain in their full proposal how and to what extent they contribute to a more sustainable energy system, i.e., they should describe how the proposed research helps to decrease carbon emissions and resource consumption. This explanation is expected to be qualitative. However, proponents are invited to quantify their contributions to a sustainable energy system.

Proponents sending in full proposals should clearly state and explain how and why their research tackles a well-defined need, who will use the results of their research, and to what benefit. Target groups should be clearly specified and there should be a clear communication plan towards these groups.

[1] District energy has the same meaning as district heating and cooling and may include combined heat and power generation.

Proponents should illustrate links to other international activities where and if applicable, like related IEA TCPs, Mission Innovation etc. and should avoid duplication of existing research. Clear links to other IEA TCPs are very welcome.

Proposals can cover project types from theoretical studies, applied research, to experimental investigations and demonstration projects.

Challenges and Research Priorities

Theme 1: Integration of Low-Temperature District Heating Systems

Challenge: Traditional district heating systems often operate at high temperatures, which limits the integration of renewable energy sources and increases heat losses. Transitioning to low-temperature systems is essential for improving energy efficiency and sustainability.

Research Priorities:

- Development of regulatory frameworks and technical standards for low-temperature systems in both new and existing buildings.
- Optimization studies to reduce supply and / or return temperatures in existing heat networks, enabling and improving the use of diverse heat sources like industrial waste heat[2] and data centre cooling and renewable energy sources such as solar thermal, geothermal…
- Digitalization of control systems to enhance operational efficiency and adapt to dynamic energy demands and fluctuating resource availability.

Rationale: Lowering system temperatures reduces heat losses, strengthens the competitiveness of district heating, and facilitates the integration of renewable and surplus heat sources.

Theme 2: Utilization of Waste Heat

Definition: IEA DHC considers waste heat as an unavoidable by-product of a main process that needs to be removed to allow the production of the main product or service. This main process can be industrial production, waste elimination or cooling. The label waste heat is being used synonymous with surplus heat, excess heat and residual heat. If heat is provided

[2] Waste heat refers to unavoidable heat as a by-product from industrial and commercial activities, which is fed into a DH network. The label is used synonymously with surplus heat, excess heat and residual heat.

at temperature levels that are higher than necessary, such as in combined heat and power plants, the heat is considered a co-product and not waste heat.

Challenge: Significant amounts of waste heat from data centres, industrial processes, and hydrogen production, often remain untapped. Efficiently capturing and integrating this heat into DHC systems is a priority.

Research Priorities:

- Strategic siting of data centres, industrial processes, electrolysers for hydrogen production as well as other sources, so that waste heat can be recovered in district heating networks.
- Potential for long-distance heat networks (e.g. 100 km) to transport waste heat from remote sources to urban centres.
- Development of business models that optimize revenues by utilizing waste heat while at the same time decreasing global emissions.

Rationale: Leveraging waste heat reduces reliance on fossil fuels, enhances system sustainability, and supports decarbonization goals.

Theme 3: Digitalization and Smart Control

Challenge: Ageing infrastructure and the increasing complexity of modern DHC systems require advanced tools for monitoring, optimization, and maintenance.

Research Priorities:

- Implementation of AI-based methods and digital twin technologies for predictive maintenance and network assessments.
- Examine the potential for smart meters to enable supply and return temperatures to be optimised, and improve asset management so that wear and tear can be addressed before failure occurs.
- Development of cost-efficient tools for evaluating the condition of pipelines and optimizing reinvestment strategies.
- Integration of digital solutions to enable real-time control and flexibility in energy systems.

Rationale: Digitalization can enhance the reliability and efficiency of DHC systems, reduce operational costs, and extend the lifespan of infrastructure.

Theme 4: Sector Coupling and Strategic Energy Planning

Challenge: DHC networks can play an important role in delivering a future energy system that is flexible, resilient and sustainable. However, in order to expedite the interconnection of DHC with other energy systems, such as electricity grids and hydrogen production, and at the same time enable a full decarbonization of the system it is essential to devise effective strategic energy planning.

Research Priorities:

- Analysis of the interaction between large scale heat pumps, chillers, and other power-to-heat units, combined heat and power (CHP) systems, organic rankine cycle (ORC) technologies, district heating (and cooling), and electricity markets, including flexibility services.
- Storage – to decouple supply and demand. Small and large-scale thermal energy storage solutions to bridge hourly, daily and seasonal mismatches and enhance flexibility and maximises use of renewables.
- Simultaneous production of heating and cooling – optimized utilisation of waste heat from chillers.
- Utilization of the waste heat from hydrogen production, and using hydrogen in CHP processes for optimized resource efficiency.
- Development of multi-infrastructure energy planning tools in collaboration with city planners and municipalities.

Rationale: Sector coupling helps maximize the use of renewable resources, enhances system flexibility, and supports the transition to a more interconnected energy landscape.

Theme 5: New Business Opportunities in DHC

Challenge: The economic framework for DHC is evolving, with increased competition from individual heating solutions like heat pumps and the need for innovative business models.

Research Priorities:

- Design of business models for low-temperature district heating and heat flexibility services.
- Customer engagement, particularly to highlight the wider benefits that can be offered, including more than one product (e.g. cooling as well as heating; the use of carbon dioxide and low-temperature return water to promote glass house crops).
- Strategies to manage competition for biomass and other energy resources, ensuring sustainable and cost-effective operations.

Rationale: Adapting business models and market conditions is crucial for maintaining the economic viability of DHC systems in a competitive energy market.

Theme 6: Asset Management of New and Existing Thermal Networks

Challenge: Effective asset management of both new and existing thermal networks increasingly requires a strong focus on installation costs. As many district heating and cooling systems in mature markets age and approach the end of their operational life, reinvestment strategies must balance maintenance needs with the high upfront costs of modernizing or expanding infrastructure.

Research Priorities:

- Development of cost-effective renewal strategies, such as predictive maintenance models and phased replacement approaches.
- Exploration of non-disruptive renovation techniques to minimize the impact on consumers.
- Strategies to optimize the lifespan of existing infrastructure and reduce reinvestment costs.

Rationale: Modernizing ageing infrastructure ensures the long-term sustainability and competitiveness of DHC systems.

Theme 7: Policy and Incentives to Accelerate Implementation

Challenge: Public policies and incentives play a significant role in shaping the development of DHC systems, particularly in emerging markets. For countries with mature markets, modernisation of the existing systems is important.

Research Priorities:

- Analysis and optimization of financial support mechanisms and public-private partnerships to stimulate DHC development.
- Analysis of policy instruments to enhance the competitiveness of district heating relative to alternative solutions.
- Development of clear roadmaps and regulatory frameworks to guide municipalities and private sector actors.
- Exploration of the role of carbon trading and other market-based instruments in supporting DHC investments.

Rationale: Effective policies and incentives create a favourable environment for DHC expansion and encourage the adoption of sustainable solutions.

Theme 8: District Cooling

Challenge: District cooling (DC) represents a small but increasingly important part of thermal energy systems. With rising urbanization, higher living standards, and more frequent heatwaves—even in temperate regions—demand for efficient and low-carbon cooling is growing rapidly. DC can offer major energy and emissions savings as well as better space utilization over individual systems but faces barriers such as high upfront costs, limited awareness, and regulatory challenges that hinder wider adoption.

Research Priorities:

- Development of innovative and cost-effective district cooling technologies and system architectures suited to a range of climate and urban contexts.
- Integration of renewable and low-carbon energy sources (e.g., solar thermal, absorption chillers, cold recovery, and geothermal) as well as storages into district cooling networks.
- Advanced planning and design methodologies for implementing or retrofitting district cooling in existing building stock and dense urban environments.

- Load forecasting, optimization, and control strategies for improving operational efficiency and grid flexibility of DC systems.
- Comparative analyses of district cooling and decentralized cooling solutions in different socioeconomic and climatic settings.

Rationale: Scaling up district cooling is essential to meeting future cooling demand while reducing resource use and carbon emissions. Research should contribute to practical, replicable solutions that improve efficiency, reduce costs, and enable broader deployment of DC systems in urban areas.

Procedure

The call will follow a two-stage procedure:

1. As a first step, a short project outline (limited to 2 pages) should be submitted by February 28th 2026 to the Programme Manager. The outline will be screened and evaluated jointly, and results will be notified to the participants by March 30th 2026.

2. Partners with approved outline proposals will be invited to submit a full project proposal (limited to 12 pages) by May 15th 2026. Submission guidelines can be found in the section on full proposals. Submitting proponents will be notified by July 15th 2026.

The two-stage process has been introduced to minimize lost effort for proponents not selected for funding.

Outline proposal format – stage 1

Proposals should contain the following information and should not exceed **2 pages** (Arial 11pt, line spacing 1.3, 2 cm borders). CVs, Letters of Support and Bibliography are not required as part of outline proposals.

Ideally, the file name is as follows: OP (for outline proposal) plus lead country (internet country code) plus project acronym or short title. All connected with underscores. E.g. “OP_CA_DHC_with_more_RES.PDF” or “OP_KR_Finance4DHC.PDF”.

1.	Title of project
2.	Priority theme and further themes addressed
3.	Proposal summary (300 words maximum) ● Include a clear statement of the research area, stating the target audience(s) and the specific issue(s) that will be addressed. Define the end product(s) / deliverable(s) of the research.
4.	Lead organization; country, description (one sentence), contact, email
5.	Partner organizations; country, description (one sentence), contact, email
6.	Objectives / goals ● What is the principal objective of the project? ● How will the research assist the development of the District Heating & Cooling Sector? ● In what timeframe will these results occur: short term (< 5 years), medium term (5 to 15 years), long term (>15 years).
7.	Project plan ● State the deliverables and products of the project. ● What about these outcomes is new? ● How relevant are these outcomes to the international DHC community?
8.	Budget ● State the upper limit of your required budget in USD.

The structure of the proposal outline should follow this table. The table itself can be used as a template for the proposal outline.

Selection process for outline proposals

Outline proposals will be assessed according to the following ranking process:

Issue	
	Maximum per issue
Contribution to DHC[3]	15
Novelty	10
Scientific competence of involved organization	5
Relevance of expected results	10
Benefit to important target groups	10
Cost-benefit-ratio	10

The following guidelines should apply when clustering proposal outlines.

- Top 10 – A
- Top 11 – Top 20 – B
- Below Top 20 – C – Not invited for sending in full proposal

Feedback of average scores for outline evaluation will be sent to research teams selected for sending in full proposals (Top 20) to allow for an improvement of the full proposal documents.

[3] Contribution to DHC is considered something that will likely help DHC to be more successful in a future energy system. This means that the research enables the DHC community to perform better in the transition towards a carbon-neutral, sustainable energy system.

All proponents who submitted proposal outlines that are not selected (below Top 20) will be notified by the IEA DHC Programme Manager with a generic email without communicating the score or its composition. This aims to limit the potential abuse of the proposal outline evaluation process and keep communication efficient.

Requests for providing evaluation scores by proponents that have not been invited to send in full proposals will not be answered. By sending in a proposal outline, all proponents accept this condition.

Please note that IEA DHC usually receives proposal outlines of good or excellent quality. That means, not being invited to send in a full proposal only means that at least 20 proposal outlines were sent in that were considered more likely for project funding by IEA DHC. Lack of invitation to send in a full proposal therefore does not provide feedback on the absolute quality of the proposal outline.

Full Proposals – Stage 2

Full Proposals should contain the following information and should not exceed **12 pages** (Arial 11pt, line spacing 1.3, 2 cm borders) excluding CVs, Letters of Support and Bibliography. The latter should be directly attached to the full proposal PDF, so that only one file is sent.

Ideally, the file name is as follows: FP (for full proposal) plus lead country internet country code plus project acronym or short title. All connected with underscores.
E.g. “FP_CA_DHC_with_more_RES.PDF” or “FP_KR_Finance4DHC.PDF”.

1.	Title of project
2.	Priority theme and further themes addressed
3.	Proposal summary (1,000 words maximum) Include a clear statement of the research area, stating the target audience(s) and the specific issue(s) that will be addressed. Define the end product(s) / deliverable(s) of the research.

4.	Lead organization; project manager, address, country, telephone number, email
5.	Partner organizations; project participants, addresses, countries, telephone numbers, emails
6.	Objectives / goals • What is the principal objective of the project? • How will this research address the needs of the priority theme? • How will the research assist the development of the District Heating & Cooling Sector? To demonstrate the value to a specific target group (e.g., industry, communities, and policymakers) a letter of support would be an asset. • How will the research and its benefits advance sustainable energy systems and be transferable to other countries, particularly those countries who are members of IEA DHC? • In what timeframe will these results occur: short term (< 5 years), medium term (5 to 15 years), long term (>15 years).
7.	Project plan • Describe fully the content of your proposal and the methodology for your research. • Provide a Gantt Chart showing the overall project schedule together with major milestones for project review and interim deliverables. • Identify the use of any confidential or proprietary material, equipment, etc. • State the deliverables and products of the project.
8.	Previous research in this area • What is the current global level of knowledge in this area? • Is this research unique or does it call upon previous work either by the proponent or by others? • If it does call upon previous research, please specify in detail how the intended work follows on from what has already been done. • What linkages or communication exists between this research and other areas of research (other IEA TCPs, universities etc.)?

9.	Budget ● Provide a detailed budgetary breakdown according to the proposed project plan (section 7 of this table) in terms of hours worked, subcontracts, promotion, travel & accommodation. ● Identify and quantify any in-kind contributions from participants (see Appendix A). ● Additional cash funding will be regarded favourably. (A letter of intent or similar is required.)
10.	Communication plan ● Describe how you intend to communicate and disseminate your research results. ● Outline how your budget supports this plan. ● Include details of any related promotional opportunities for the project e.g., webinars, websites, conferences, social media etc.
11.	Project team ● Identify the organizational structure, experience, roles, and responsibilities within the project team. ● Include CVs of personnel who will be working on this project. These individuals will be specified within the project contract and any changes will require approval of the Programme Manager.
12.	Conflict of interest ● Please declare any conflict of interest.

Selection process for full proposals

Full proposals will be assessed according to the following ranking process. The highest-ranking proposals that fit within the IEA DHC Annex XV budget are considered for funding first. The final selection of projects to be funded will be made by the IEA DHC Executive Committee. Further details on the scoring process can be found in section 4.

Area	Issue	Score	
		Maximum per issue	Maximum per Area
Technical	Are the expected research results new and significant?	15	40
	Is a high level of competence evident in the proposal? Is the methodology appropriate?	10	
	How well does the research contribute to a more sustainable energy system?	10	
	How well does the research plan address the theme specified in the section on “Challenges and Research Priorities” of the proposal?	5	
Management	Is the research team qualified?	10	20
	Is there a sound management structure, and are the project plan and budget realistic?	10	
Target group	How well does the proposal demonstrate value to the target group(s)?	10	20
	How relevant will the research results be to IEA DHC member countries?	10	
Information dissemination	How effective is the communication plan? Does it include interim dissemination so that the target audience remains aware of the project?	10	15
	To what degree, information sharing between the researchers and the final users has been considered?	5	
Additional Funding	To what extent has additional funding (including in-kind contributions) been secured and proved by a letter of intent or similar and submitted with the project proposal?	5	5

Details on the project selection process

IEA DHC is a funding programme without full-time staff. Therefore, certain procedures were developed to allow a well-grounded selection of projects, while also remaining efficient from a management perspective.

Proposal outlines are selected as follows:

1. All proposal outlines are scored by several IEA DHC member country representatives.
2. The scores were then averaged excluding minimum and maximum numbers, to minimize the impact of extremes.
3. Based on average scores, a ranking is prepared.
4. The TOP10 proposal outline authors receive an invitation to submit a full proposal and feedback on their scores to allow them to consider the scores when submitting a full proposal. Please note that the scores are not commented or explained by the IEA DHC ExCo members. So, no information on the details of the evaluation is available – neither directly nor on request.
5. Authors of proposal outlines that scored between the TOP11 and TOP20 authors receive an opportunity to submit a full proposal and feedback on their scores to allow them to consider the scores when submitting a full proposal. Please note that the scores are not commented or explained by the IEA DHC ExCo members. So, no information on the details of the evaluation is available – neither directly nor on request.
6. **Authors of proposal outlines that scored below the TOP20 receive a generic notification of non-acceptance without detailed scores**. This helps to ensure that only serious proponents are submitting their ideas in the proposal outline stage. **Please note that scores will not be provided as feedback nor on request to ensure a level playing field for all proponents.**

IEA DHC usually receives many more proposal outlines than projects that can be funded. Most of these proposals are of good or excellent quality. This means not receiving a positive answer is not an indication of a low score.

IEA DHC does not provide phone support for proponents in the proposal outline stage. All questions that are not answered in this call for proposals document can be submitted via e-mail to iea-dhc@agfw.org and the programme management will try to answer them in a timely manner.

Full proposals are evaluated as follows:

1. All full proposals are scored by all IEA DHC member country representatives.
2. The scores are then averaged excluding minimum and maximum numbers, to minimize the impact of extremes.
3. Based on average scores, a ranking is prepared.
4. Depending on the available IEA DHC budget, a number of high-ranking full proposals are selected (e.g., 7 projects in Annex XIV). The selection is based on the scoring results by the IEA DHC ExCo. The authors of the selected proposals receive an invitation to start the contracting process for an IEA DHC project.
5. Authors of full proposals that were not offered a contracting process, receive feedback with their average scores to allow improving upon their idea and obtain alternative funding.

Generally, all questions that are not answered in this call for proposals document can be submitted via e-mail to iea-dhc@agfw.org and the programme management will try to answer them in a timely manner.

If solving open issues via email was attempted unsuccessfully, IEA DHC offers the possibility of phone support for proponents in the full proposal stage.

Please be aware that usually only a share of around 30% – 50% of full proposals sent in can receive funding. Not qualifying for a funding offer from IEA DHC usually means that the full proposal was good or even excellent, but not among the top-ranked ones.

More than one proposal outline can be submitted by the same person. More than one proposal outline or full proposal by the same organisation can be submitted.

However, any project leader indicated in a full proposal submitted in this Annex should be unique. This refers to the person leading the project. This means that even if a proponent

wins two or more projects by score, only one of those projects might be selected. **It is therefore recommended to avoid submitting full proposals with the same project leading person.** In case that a project leading person gets invited to submit two or more full proposals, it is recommended to transfer the lead indicated in the proposal outline to another person in the same organisation as lead for the full proposal.

Details on IEA DHC projects once they are contracted

The following information should be considered at least before drafting a full proposal. It details what is expected of the proposals selected for funding by IEA DHC once they are contracted.

Format requirements for funded projects

- All reports should be sent in “Microsoft Word” **and** “PDF” format.
- All presentations should be sent in “Microsoft PowerPoint” **and** “PDF” format.
- Reports and presentations (including e.g. requirements for graphics) should be prepared as specified by the Programme Manager; templates will be provided.

Deliverables of funded projects

Project managers are required to prepare at least the following deliverables. Templates will be provided by the IEA DHC Programme Manager:

During the project:

- Status reports (including budget expenditure and a one-page status report overview) - twice a year, one month before the DHC TCP ExCo meetings, usually by April 1st and October 1st unless specified otherwise by the IEA DHC Programme Manager . The status reports should summarize the progress of the research in relation to the proposal and include an explanation of any deviations from the original proposal.
- A six slide ‘status presentation’ – updated twice a year and submitted along with each status report. This should comprise a quick overview of project progress and any interim results. It should be aimed at the intended target audience(s) and decision makers.

- At least two meetings of the project teams per year, and at least one over the duration of the project involving the assigned group of technical Experts designated by the IEA DHC Programme Manager. Over the duration of the project, at least one of the project meetings should be face-to-face. These meetings should be minuted, and the minutes should be sent to the Programme Manager no later than two weeks after the meeting took place.
- To make management more effective and keep deadlines, IEA DHC will reserve the right to charge a late fee to the contractor for delivering information after mutually agreed deadlines. The project manager is advised to include a similar agreement in his contracts with the subcontractors.
  A contract template is part of the information package that project teams selected for full proposals receive from the Programme Manager with the request for a full proposal. Please consult the sample IEA DHC project contract – section 3 for details.
- Communication is a vital aspect of the IEA DHC programme: provision of at least one public webinar is required.

At the end of the project:

- A final public technical report including supporting drawings, models, pictures etc. describing the work completed in the project. The report will be reviewed by an external reviewer assigned by IEA DHC and considered final after the reviewer accepts the final version.
- A summary report of up to 12 pages for decision makers which presents the results in an easily understandable way.
- A one-pager that highlights the key findings from the projects for decision makers.
- A technical article (1,500-1,800 words) for publication in international DHC magazines.
- A final PowerPoint slide deck (up to 6 content slides) aimed at decision makers.
- An oral presentation of the results at an IEA DHC End of Annex seminar or a major conference or meeting relevant to the project target audience **and** as agreed with the Programme Manager. This presentation should be recorded on video and a copy of the video file should be provided to the Programme Manager for publication.

Review of IEA DHC projects

To ensure high-quality results, IEA DHC requires final project reports (summary and final report) to be reviewed by an external reviewer. The reviewer will be selected by IEA DHC. The project manager will have to consider the comments of the reviewer and get his / her approval for publication before the finalization of the project is accepted and the final funding rate is paid. The review process can be expected to take up to 3 months, starting with the delivery of the pre-final versions to the IEA DHC Programme Manager. Ideally, this review phase is part of the project time plan presented in the full proposal.

Publication and property rights

The Programme Manager and the project team will each have a non-exclusive copyright of all project results. Preliminary project results can be published under a creative commons licence after the written agreement of the Programme Manager. All mandatory and explicitly agreed deliverables of IEA DHC projects will be public after final delivery and approval. The project team is entitled to conduct further projects based on preliminary and final results from projects. This requires proper scientific reference to the research funded by IEA DHC (e.g. “IEA DHC final report: title…”).

All project reports will be available to the public on the IEA DHC website (www.iea-dhc.org) and possibly in selected scientific libraries.

Changes in the project

After a proposal has been selected for funding, all changes to personnel and timeline of the project need approval by the IEA DHC Programme Manager. This approval is usually provided as long as the new personnel is of similar qualification as the one being replaced and as long as shifts in the timeline of the project still enable it to deliver within Annex XV running time.

The IEA DHC project budgets are fixed. This means requests for increasing IEA DHC project budgets after contracting will not be accommodated. As a consequence, proponents are asked to calculate conservatively and consider project risks realistically in their budget calculation.

Submission conditions (outlines and full proposals)

- Communication between the project team and IEA DHC shall be through the Programme Manager (iea-dhc@agfw.org) mainly via email.
- The language of all proposals, reports and any communication with the Programme Manager shall be English.
- The Lead Organization has to be from a member or sponsor country of IEA DHC.
- Project teams should comprise at least two countries. More than four countries are not recommended.
- Organizations from non-member countries are only permitted to participate as subcontractors.
- Proposals will be judged based on their merit and are expected to be within the range of $150 000 to $300 000 (USD). The project budget is an upper limit that should include all project related cost, including overhead costs, travelling etc.
- The total budget for this Call is approximately $1 650 000 (USD). Full proposals can include an adapted budget and project team compared to the proposal outline. Significant deviations from the outline should be explained in a dedicated section of the full proposal document that does not count toward the 12-page limit.
- IEA DHC funding is considered international research funding and therefore the proponents are asked to **invoice without VAT**. Upon request and by providing a template text, IEA DHC can prepare an official letter explaining why the money from IEA DHC should be treated similar to research grant money from the EU or the government.
- The budget of the proposal outlines should be in USD. In the past IEA DHC projects have been paid in USD only. There is a good chance that this tradition will be kept up and all IEA DHC projects will be paid in USD[4]. Consequently, in the proposal outline and in the full proposal, **the proponent is asked to consider the exchange rate risks in this budget calculation if using different currencies internally.**

[4] IEA DHC plans to review its policy towards non-USD currencies for IEA DHC projects by the date that the invitations for full proposals are sent out. Thus, the “buffer” for exchange rate risks might not be required at the full proposal stage in case IEA DHC decides to change its long-standing USD-only policy for Annex XV. To be on the safe side, proponents are nevertheless asked to expect that IEA DHC projects will be contracted and paid in USD.

Currently, IEA DHC considers 15% on top of the project budget in national currencies a reasonable size of this exchange risk buffer vs. USD. Proponents are asked to highlight the percentage of their exchange rate buffer in their proposal outline. **Please note:** The recommended exchange rate risk buffer of 15% is expected to cover exchange rate risks in almost every case. The remaining risk is born by the projects in exchange for the opportunity to benefit from exchange rate developments. This means if exchange rates develop favourably for the project team, they can keep buffer money to improve their research. However, this also means that **changes to the budget or the proposal due to foreign exchange risks will not be accommodated after the full proposal submission deadline.**

- Proposal outlines and full proposals should be submitted as one document in "PDF" format. Attachments such as CVs, Letters of Support and Bibliographies are not required for the proposal outlines. For full proposals, they should be directly appended to the full proposal text of maximum 12 pages.

- Project managers will be informed of the assessors' decision by the Programme Manager in writing. The assessors' decision will be final, and any further correspondence is at the discretion of the Programme Manager.

- Project managers will be solely responsible for the outcome in respect to IEA DHC. Project partners will be contracted as subcontractors of the project manager and do not have direct communication with IEA DHC. The project manager is advised to use similar conditions for the subcontracts as are laid out in the project contract with IEA DHC.

- Please consider some administration time for a group of Experts appointed by IEA DHC, who will advise your project during Expert (web) meetings, ideally one per year. The first Expert meeting could be attached to the first project meeting, so all participants get to know each other. Expert meetings can be integrated with the project meetings that take place at least twice per year.

- Please consider some time for your final technical report being reviewed by the assigned Expert group (We recommend to reserve one month for the feedback loop after your first draft of the final report). Furthermore, please consider that you will be expected to provide a line numbered draft report for professional review by a reviewer assigned by IEA DHC.

It is recommended that you **plan three months** for the review and improvement phase from your final draft report delivery to the delivery of the final version of your technical report.

Schedule

The outline and the full proposal must be sent **in PDF format** by e-mail exclusively to the IEA DHC Programme Manager at:

IEA-DHC@agfw.org

The proposal outline must be received
by **February 28th, 2026, 6pm** Central European Time.

The full proposals of project teams with approved outline proposals must be received by **May 15th, 2026, 6pm** Central European Time.

The results of the proposal outline evaluation will be communicated to the participants by March 30th, 2026.

Successful project teams selected for funding will be notified by the Programme Manager by July 15th, 2026.

Appendix A - Calculation of In-Kind Contributions

In-kind support refers to the contribution to a project of goods or services rather than cash. In-kind support indicates a partnership rather than a contractual arrangement whereby the party providing in-kind support is accepting a share of any risk.

Three different approaches to the valuation of in-kind support may be considered:

- Market value - the cost to IEA-DHC if the proponent were to purchase the goods or services directly.
- Provider's acquisition cost - the original or depreciated cost to the proponent of the goods and services that were in turn provided to IEA-DHC.
- Provider's incremental cost - the incremental or actual cost to the proponent to provide the support to IEA-DHC.

Eligible In-Kind assessment methods

CATEGORY	**ACCEPTED**	**NOT ACCEPTED**
Access to proprietary databases	Incremental costs of access	Cost of collecting the data and developing the database
Analytical and other services	Commercial rate (best "preferred customer" rate if applicable)	

CATEGORY	ACCEPTED	NOT ACCEPTED
Shared task work performed by the partner	Staff time to perform part of the scientific work as well as guidance on the project, billed at rates reflecting the partner's full costs calculated using internal rates (maximum $1100 per day)	External consultant rates Costs relating to administrative support where overhead has been included in salary costs
Equipment	• donated (used) - fair market value • donated (new) - selling price to most favoured customer • cost of manufacture (if one of a kind) • loaned - rental equivalent based on depreciation	Development costs
Use of facilities	The lower of: Internal rates for logistical support, food and lodging for proponent research personnel working on provider's premises or on field work, OR current IEA per diem allowances Internal rates for use of specialised equipment by proponent research personnel	Commercial rates

CATEGORY	ACCEPTED	NOT ACCEPTED
Software	Internal costs to provide for: • copying • providing documentation • training of IEA-DHC experts • support of software • cost of equivalent commercial product (where donated software is not commercially available)	Development costs
Materials	• unit cost of production of commercial products • selling price to most favoured customer • cost of production of prototypes • and samples	Development costs
Travel	Travel costs to meet with proponent research personnel at their request	Conference attendance by sub-contract staff