Concept Note

Fourth Call for Initiatives under the International Decade of Sciences for Sustainable Development

(2024–2033)

Background

The International Decade of Sciences for Sustainable Development (IDSSD, 2024–2033), proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly and led by UNESCO, aims to mobilize the sciences in all their diversity to support the achievement of sustainable development. The Science Decade provides a global framework to strengthen scientific cooperation, promote open and inclusive science, and ensure that scientific knowledge contributes more effectively to solutions for people, societies and the planet.

Since its launch, the IDSSD has mobilized a growing portfolio of endorsed initiatives across regions, disciplines and sectors. These initiatives demonstrate the potential of science, technology and innovation to address complex sustainability challenges, strengthen partnerships, and support more evidence-informed decision-making.

Building on the momentum and priorities emerging from the 2026 Global Conference of the International Decade of Sciences for Sustainable Development in July 2026, the Fourth Call for Initiatives places particular emphasis on actionable scientific knowledge: knowledge that is relevant to a defined sustainable-development challenge and connected to a credible pathway towards decisions, implementation, uptake, adaptation or measurable impact.

This Call also supports initiatives that strengthen the science-policy-society interface and produce knowledge, data, tools or practices that are accessible, usable and beneficial to a wide range of stakeholders, especially in countries and communities with greater capacity needs. Initiatives aimed at assisting African countries and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in advancing the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals are particularly welcome. Initiatives are also encouraged to promote open and inclusive science, incorporate gender considerations, and align their expected contributions to sustainable development with human rights.

The Fourth Call for Initiatives will remain open **until 20 October 2026**, via this link:

https://webforms.unesco.org/en/form/pbs003

Priority Focus: Actionable Scientific Knowledge

For the purpose of this Call, "actionable scientific knowledge" means scientific knowledge, data, evidence, tools or practices that are relevant to a defined sustainable-development challenge; accessible, understandable and usable by identified users; and connected to a plausible pathway through which they can inform decisions, guide implementation, support problem-solving, improve systems or contribute to measurable outcomes in alignment with human rights. Such knowledge may be produced through research, co-produced with decision-makers, practitioners, communities and other knowledge holders, or adapted to local contexts.

- Proposals should demonstrate how they will produce, translate, or apply actionable scientific knowledge through one or more of the following pathways:
- Science-based solutions that address clearly defined sustainable development challenges and are designed with, or for, identifiable users;
- Decision-support tools, data products, platforms, indicators or models are fit for purposes and that can be used by policymakers, practitioners or communities or other intended users;
- Evidence-informed policy support, including policy briefs, guidelines, standards, advisory mechanisms or science-policy-society dialogues, with a clear connection to a decision or implementation process;
- Demonstration projects that test, validate, adapt or scale scientific solutions in real-world settings, and generate evidence on their performance, feasibility or effects;
- Capacity-building activities that enable stakeholders to access, interpret, and use scientific knowledge effectively;
- Open, accessible knowledge products that support wider uptake and reuse;
- Community-based, Indigenous, or locally informed applications, of scientific knowledge that respond to context-specific needs.

Indicative Thematic Areas

While proposals from all scientific fields relevant to sustainable development are welcome, priority will be given to initiatives that clearly demonstrate a science-to-action pathway and contribute to one or more of the Decade's expected outcomes. The following indicative thematic areas illustrate the types of challenge and impact that the Call seeks to support:

1. **Science, technology and innovation for clean, circular and resource-efficient production**

Initiatives that apply advances in physics, chemistry, materials science, biotechnology, engineering and related disciplines to develop cleaner production processes, sustainable materials, resource-efficient technologies, renewable and low-carbon energy solutions, waste valorization and circular production systems. Proposals should identify intended users and demonstrate a credible pathway from research and innovation to testing, deployment, adoption or scale.

2. **Science for safe, inclusive, resilient settlements and infrastructure**

   Initiatives that apply the natural, health, social, human and engineering sciences, including systems approaches, to improve the safety, reliability, accessibility and sustainability of cities, human settlements, and infrastructure. Relevant areas may include resilient buildings, transport, energy systems, water and sanitation infrastructure, waste management, fire safety and protection against natural or technological hazards.

3. **Integrated science for food and water security, healthy ecosystems and resilient livelihoods**

   Initiatives that integrate agricultural, ecological, hydrological, geological, ocean, climate and related sciences to deliver practical solutions for food and water security, sustainable land and ocean use, ecosystem restoration, pollution prevention and resilient livelihoods. Proposals should move beyond general research or awareness-raising and demonstrate how scientific knowledge will be applied in specific places and by identifiable communities, producers or resource managers.

4. **From scientific evidence to policy and practice: operational tools for implementation**

   Initiatives that convert scientific observations, experimental findings, assessments, indicators, scenarios, models or monitoring systems into operational tools for policy implementation, institutional planning, regulation, public investment and resource management. Proposals should identify the responsible decision-making institution and demonstrate how the scientific output will be incorporated into an actual policy, planning or service-delivery process.

Across all priority areas, proposals should demonstrate how knowledge, methods, data or technologies from the full diversity of sciences—including the natural, health, social, human and applied sciences—and, where relevant, Indigenous and local knowledge systems, will be co-designed or translated into practical solutions, operational tools, improved services or measurable societal benefits. Priority will be given to initiatives that involve end users and knowledge holders from the design stage, address equity

and gender considerations, and provide a credible pathway for testing, uptake, adaptation, replication or scaling. Priority will be given to initiatives that involve end users and knowledge holders from the design stage, address equity and gender considerations, and provide a credible pathway for testing, adoption, replication or scaling.

Categories of Initiatives

Applicants may submit proposals under one of the following categories:

i. **Programme**
   A long-term, large-scale initiative composed of multiple coordinated projects or activities, with clear objectives, governance arrangements, partnerships and expected outcomes.
   Applicants whose proposals pass the initial screening may be contacted by the IDSSD Secretariat and requested to provide additional supporting information or materials concerning the proposal's existing foundation, available facilities and equipment, institutional support, resources and implementation capacity.

ii. **Project**
   A time-bound initiative with defined objectives, activities, outputs, partners, resources and expected results.

iii. **Activity**
   A specific event, campaign, workshop, training, dialogue, exhibition or other focused action that contributes to the objectives of the Science Decade.