



Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule Zürich  
Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich



**ETH for Development (ETH4D)**

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## Call for Proposals Spring 2025

# ETH4D Research Challenges and ETH4D Pilot Grants

### 1. Background

The objective of **ETH for Development (ETH4D)** is to develop innovative solutions and technologies that effectively address the challenges of the global population and to educate the future leaders of sustainable development. Eligible are projects, in collaboration with partners from low- and lower-middle-income countries (LMICs) according to the DAC-list of the OECD 2024-2025.<sup>1</sup> To that end, ETH4D offers the following two research grants:

- **ETH4D Research Challenges** support project-based research between ETH Zurich researchers, practitioners (i.e. from the private sector, NGOs, governmental organisations) and partners from low- and lower-middle-income countries<sup>1</sup> to identify effective solutions to poverty reduction.
- **ETH4D Pilot Grants** provide a smaller amount of funding to explore new collaborations and pilot a new applied research project with partners from low- and lower-middle-income countries.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-standards/DAC-List-of-ODA-Recipients-for-reporting-2024-25-flows.pdf>

Grant	Purpose	Applicant	Grant Sum	Duration	Matching Funds	Deadlines
<b>ETH4D Research Challenges</b>	To develop innovations to improve the lives of people living from less than \$10 a day.	ETH Professor with a non-academic partner from a LMIC.	20 – 200 kCHF	Up to 18 months	Cash or in-kind contribution corresponding to 50% of requested funding amount	21 April
<b>ETH4D Pilot Grants</b>	To pilot research ideas that improve the lives of people living from less than \$10 a day.	ETH Professor with a non-academic partner from a LMIC.	Up to 20 kCHF	Up to 18 months	×	21 April

Applications for both types of grants are open to a consortium that consists of ETH Zurich researchers, practitioners (i.e. from the private sector, NGOs, governmental organisations) and partners from low- and lower-middle-income countries (LMICs).

## 2. Definition of projects

### 2a. Definition of ETH4D Research Challenges

An ETH4D Research Challenge needs to be a **clearly defined research question** that has the objective of creating **positive impact** for people living in low- and lower-middle-income countries. It must be a research question related to (a) the research interests of an ETH Zurich research group and (b) the current or future work of a private or public organisation. Only solid research proposals with high scientific quality will be funded.

The objective of ETH4D Research Challenges must be the development, testing, evaluation or implementation of an innovative product, policy or service – involving a technology (as part of the solution or as part of the research) that responds to a specific development challenge. The challenges addressed must be relevant for people living in low- and lower-middle income countries as defined in footnote 1.

Examples include:

- remote sensing for micro-insurance products based on weather risks
- a mobile-phone application for subject identification in low governance settings
- policies to support the use of solar energy
- a system for recycling plastic bottles in low-income settings
- a mobile-phone application to improve governance of public infrastructure
- low energy refrigeration
- medical equipment that can be used without access to electricity
- 3D printing for the physically disabled in low-income settings
- a mobile-phone decision support tool for optimal agronomic practices
- information and education programmes for energy literacy and public health

## 2b. Definition of ETH4D Pilot Grants

ETH4D Pilot Grants can be used for:

- Feasibility and pilot studies that might lead to a proposal for a larger research collaboration

## 3. Eligibility

For both grants, at least one partner (academic or non-academic) must be from a **low- or lower middle-income country**, as defined by the DAC-list of the OECD 2024-2025.<sup>2</sup> If well justified, projects in upper middle-income countries can be funded in exceptional cases.

The team must consist of at least one **ETH4D member professor** as main applicant and at least one non-academic partner (such as industry, an NGO, or a policy organisation). Postdocs or doctoral candidates may apply as a co-applicant, accompanied by a letter of support from the professor.

ETH Zurich research groups which are not yet a member of ETH4D can also apply for the grant and will become a member if they receive the funding.<sup>3</sup>

## 3. Duration

Projects for both grants can last up to **18 months**. In the case of ETH4D Research Challenges, this includes potential iterations of prototyping and user testing, as well as informing key stakeholders of the findings.

## 4. Funding and Budget

Funding for **both grants can be used** for any travel and material costs, as well as for salaries of staff or consultants in the partner country hired specifically for this project, and for salaries of postdocs, doctoral candidates, or research assistants at ETH.

### 4a. ETH4D Research Challenges Grants

The ETH4D Research Challenges grant sum ranges between **20 kCHF and 200 kCHF**.

**The partners (academic and non-academic combined) must provide matching funds corresponding to at least 50% of the requested ETH4D RCG, and can include both cash and in-kind contributions.** Cash contributions can come from third-party funding (from industry, public organisations, NGOs etc.), professorship reserves or base funding. In-kind contributions can be travel

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-standards/DAC-List-of-ODA-Recipients-for-reporting-2024-25-flows.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> ETH4D membership is open to all professorships at ETH Zurich. Please see the ETH4D website for the cost of membership.

and material costs as well as salaries of postdocs or doctoral candidates. Salaries of ETH professors and senior scientists and overheads *cannot* be counted as in-kind contribution.

#### 4b. ETH4D Pilot Grants

The maximum grant sum of an ETH4D Pilot Grant is **20 kCHF**.

**No matching funds** by the professorship or partners are required.

### 5. Submission Procedure and Deadlines

The call for applications for both grants is launched once yearly. The current call closes on **21 April 2025**.

All application documents must be written in English and must be submitted electronically through the online application form on the call webpage ([see here](#)). The application must include the following elements:

- Completed electronic application form
- Application, to be uploaded as one pdf document, including all annexes in the following order:  
(Application template see Appendix 2)
- Bibliography, in the annex
- Work packages and Milestones shown in a Gantt Chart, in the annex.
- Letter(s) of support from the non-academic partner(s), clearly stating the interest in the project and the partnership, its relevance to the organisation, and the time-related and financial contributions the partner is willing to make to the project, in the annex.
- CVs of all involved partners (2 pages max. per partner), in the annex.
- Budget (using the budget template Appendix 3) as a separate file.

ETH Zurich strives to promote diversity and inclusion in scientific research. Factors such as gender, race, ethnicity, age, disabilities, must be consistently considered from the start of the proposal development to the research and dissemination phase.

Projects that involve humans as research subjects (e.g., end-users, patients, or survey respondents), must consider gender roles in experimental design, data collection, analysis, and interpretation of the outcomes. If the gender dimension is not being considered, a short justification of why it is not being addressed must be included.

If applicable, relevant ethical, legal, and social considerations should be included in the proposal. The prospective research must comply with the existing ethics regulations and adhere to the principles of research integrity valid at ETH Zurich.

Recipients of the ETH4D Challenge Grant or ETH4D Pilot Grants whose research includes human subjects must receive approval from the ETH Ethics Commission and submit the ethical clearance to ETH4D as soon as they receive approval and before starting field work.

In case the submitted proposal is part of a bigger research project (for instance a doctoral project), the applicant must explain the history of proposed Research Challenges project and the links to bigger ongoing project.

## 6. Evaluation and Selection

All Research Challenge and Pilot Grant proposals will be evaluated by an ETH4D selection committee consisting of three academic members of ETH4D, the executive director of ETH4D and a representative from industry, policy, or an NGO. The following evaluation criteria will be considered when taking the final selection:

- **Quality and feasibility** of the research proposal: The proposal needs to include specific information on the scientific methodology and field study (if applicable).
- **Relevance** of the project: The project has the potential to address a pressing challenge faced by people in low- and lower-middle-income countries. In that sense, it tackles important - but understudied - problems that affect many people in low-income countries and develops scalable solutions. Projects should provide clear arguments for why the research project differs from and/or improves upon existing or similar efforts.
- **Applicability**: The results will be used by the partnering non-academic institution. Having a realistic long-term implementation plan and measurable goals is important. We advise applicants to be explicit about how their partner organisation (and, potentially, other organisations) will use the results of their research.
- **Team qualifications and diversity** (including gender, race, ethnicity, disabilities)
- **Own financial and in-kind contributions.**

Notification of the decision will usually be given within two months of the submission deadline. Projects may start at the latest within three months after the reception of the notification letter.

## 7. Deliverables

- Recipients of both grants will participate in an onboarding call with both ETH4D and the project partners before the start of the project.
- Recipients of both grants are required to present at an ETH4D Research Challenge Seminar, which typically take place each semester.
- Grants recipients must submit a 2-4-page scientific report no later than three months after the completion of the project. The report outlines research and other activities conducted with the grant, the results of the research project and the planned next steps.
- Grant recipients shall also submit a financial report, which includes the relevant excerpts from Refine no later than three months after completing the project.
- In addition, recipients can choose **one** of the following deliverables, which must be submitted to the ETH4D Executive Office no later than three months after the grant period has ended:

- A short video that explains the project to a non-scientific audience
- An article in the ETH Ambassadors Blog (or other ETH outlet)
- A policy brief that presents the findings to a non-scientific audience
- One year after the project completion, Research Challenge Grantees and their partners will have separate follow up calls with ETH4D to discuss the project impact.

An important aspect of ETH4D is building bridges between science and society at large. The submitted material will be made public on our website and may be used for reporting and other outreach activities.

## 8. Terms of collaboration between partners of granted projects

Data exchanged within the ETH4D challenge programme are generally not considered confidential information. A non-disclosure agreement should be signed before exchanging confidential data. An agreement between ETH Zurich (for the involved ETH4D member) and the non-academic partner(s) must be signed. Such an agreement will define the rights and obligations of the partners. It may allow the partners to use the results of the project for commercial and non-commercial purposes and will specify the relevant conditions.

If personally identifying information is used, exchanged, or collected in the framework of the research, the involved partners shall comply with applicable data protection laws and regulations, and shall establish a data management plan, including a data protection concept and appropriate data protection agreements in writing.

The projects must comply with the KFPE principles.<sup>4</sup>

All collaborations must follow the Code of conduct for scientific cooperation of ETH Zurich (RSETHZ 416) and the Guidelines concerning Contracts in the Field of Research at ETH Zurich (RSETHZ 440.31).

## 9. Financial Administration for both grants

The financial structure for the ETH4D Research Challenges or Pilot Grant will be implemented by the finance desk upon reception of the notification letter.

One psp-element will be opened for the ETH4D Research Challenges or Pilot Grant within the Responsibility Center (Verantwortungsbereich) of the professorship. Expenditures of the running project can be booked on this grant from the beginning of the project (according to the approved budget).

A second psp-element will be opened by the finance desk for the committed matching funds. The matching funds will be transferred from the research reserves of the professorship on this psp-element.

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<sup>4</sup> [https://naturalsciences.ch/organisations/kfpe/11\\_principles\\_7\\_questions](https://naturalsciences.ch/organisations/kfpe/11_principles_7_questions)

In case the project partners provide the matching funds, individual solutions need to be found with the ETH4D Grants Office.