



# SocSES

SOCIETY FOR SOCIAL-ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS



# CALL FOR THEMATIC STREAMS 2025 – 2027

Released 27 November 2024



# SUMMARY

**After much anticipation, the Society for Social-Ecological Systems (SocSES) will launch March 2025!**

We now invite **working groups** to submit proposals to run thematic streams for a three-year term (2025–2027).

These **Thematic Streams** will drive SocSES's mission by advancing innovative social-ecological systems research, fostering interdisciplinary connections, and creating impactful scientific and policy contributions.

- Thematic Streams are collaborative networks led by dedicated working groups, which will be central to the activities of SocSES.
- Each thematic stream will focus on a specific area of interest relevant to social-ecological research and practice.
- Each working group (consisting of 5–10 members with two co-leads) will take the lead in organising activities, producing outputs, and guiding the stream's direction.
- Society members will be able to join up five streams that align with their interests.

**Call released**  
Nov 2024

*Optional  
Expression of  
Interest (3rd) &  
Connection  
Event  
4th Dec 2024*

**Applications due**  
31 Jan 2025

**Final themes**  
Feb 2025

**SocSES launch**  
March 2025





# THE SOCIETY FOR SOCIAL- ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS

The Social-Ecological Systems Society (SocSES) aims to advance and support inter- and transdisciplinary social-ecological systems-based research, practice, and action towards a just and sustainable future. The Society provides an intellectual home, community, and identity for social-ecological systems researchers, practitioners, research institutes and networks.

The Society's objectives include advancing the understanding of complex social-ecological systems dynamics, providing a collaborative community for global researchers and practitioners, supporting the development of next-generation sustainability leaders, advocating for trans- and interdisciplinary research funding, and leveraging research for policy impact.

The launch of the new Society is being co-led by the Program on Ecosystem Change and Society ([PECS](#)) and the Resilience Alliance ([RA](#)), along with other partners.

The new society will launch in March 2025, with a 2-3 year transition phase. The thematic streams will play a critical role in this initial period.

Our core values emphasise embracing diverse knowledge frameworks and methodological approaches, particularly those from the Global South, while maintaining a coherent identity across different work areas.

The Society values innovative knowledge co-production and dissemination methods, promotes inclusive learning spaces beyond traditional education, and champions environmentally sustainable networking practices that address existing inequities in academic opportunities.



# Why convene a working group and lead a theme?

- Thematic streams will serve as the heartbeat of our emerging society, playing a vital role both during our initial phase and in our long-term development.
- The society's broader structure and processes will be co-designed with members over the next two to three years, but thematic working groups will drive intellectual engagement and activities from day one.
- Leading a thematic stream offers an exciting opportunity to shape the SES research agenda while building a vibrant community of researchers and practitioners around your thematic area.
- As thematic stream leaders, your group will have the chance to convene scholars and practitioners, foster new collaborations, and advance cutting-edge thinking on critical sustainability challenges.
- The embedded working group structure provides a platform to develop joint academic outputs while creating meaningful engagement opportunities for the broader membership through your proposed activities.
- This is an ideal opportunity for researchers and practitioners who want to take a leadership role in SES research and the new Society, in building new communities of practice, and bridging different approaches and perspectives.



# Working Group Structure and Objectives

- Each thematic stream will be led by a working group of 5-10 members. The proposal should specify who these WG members are (WG leads may choose to change some of their membership over time). We encourage diverse teams that bring together different career stages, disciplines, and perspectives from across the globe.
- Working group members of a Thematic Stream will work collaboratively on cutting-edge SES research areas towards at least one journal article, other peer-reviewed publication, or policy-practice engagement process over the three years.
- Working groups will also be expected to host three to five activities per year for members of the society who sign up to the thematic stream. These activities can be different instances of the same activity (e.g. three webinars during the year). We encourage creativity (see suggestion box), but activities should first and foremost be practical.

## **Working Groups:**

**consist of 5 to 10 people, with two co-leads, who want to actively collaborate on a thematic area of interest that has been selected through an open call.**

## **Thematic streams:**

**are a network of social-ecological system researchers and practitioners who engage on themes of interest through scientific collaboration and activities, such as seminars, workshops, and hackatons.**

# continued...

- Each working group should have two co-leads, who will be responsible for reporting on the group's activities. The working group can however decide how they want to govern their activities.
- Working group members may participate in a maximum of two thematic working groups and as members of up to five thematic streams. Co-leads may lead only one working group at a time.
- The society's central coordination team will develop and support the virtual infrastructure to support thematic theme activities, such as a discussion forum and mailing lists (these could be used to advertise activities among thematic stream members) support with communication, as well as platforms to run webinars, virtual discussions etc. (most likely Zoom). Please get in touch with us if you are unsure how the society would support your envisioned activity.
- Whilst most activities will be virtual, we aim to look for funding to support one working group meeting in early 2026.

## Core responsibilities of the Working Groups:

### Activities

**Organise at least three engagement activities annually for thematic stream members.**

### Communication

**Maintain an active presence on the society's communication channels by posting at least once a month to the thematic stream's forum and mailing list.**

### Outputs

**Work towards at least one peer-reviewed scientific publication or policy-practice process in a group.**

# Working Group versus Broader Stream Member roles

## Working Group Members

## Broader stream Members

### Purpose

Lead the working group's research agenda and produce working group outputs, organize activities for the thematic stream

Engage with stream activities and discussions as participants.

### Commitment

Three-year term, regular engagements, plus leading 3 to 5 activities per year.

Flexible participation; engage in activities of interest.

### Activities

Responsible for planning and facilitating activities, e.g., seminars, hackathons.

Attend and participate in activities such as seminars or workshops.

### Outputs

Produce at least one peer-reviewed publication or output over three years.

Can contribute ideas and expertise during collaborative activities.

### Communication

Maintain a monthly presence on stream forums, sharing updates and coordinating activities.

Receive updates via forums and emails, with optional engagement

## *Suggestion Boxes*

# What activities could your working group organise?

Working groups should organize at least three activities for their thematic stream annually. Some examples of activities are suggested below, but these are merely examples. Don't hesitate to get more creative, but also similarly don't feel that tried-and-tested approaches (such as webinars) are not welcome!

## Knowledge Exchanges

- **Seminar/Webinar Series:** Regular sessions featuring expert speakers on stream-specific topics (similar to the PECS Collaborative Governance series).
- **Skills Workshops:** Interactive training on methodologies, tools, or techniques (e.g., participatory research, GIS applications, modelling).
- **Expert Roundtables:** Small-group discussions in virtual breakout rooms exploring pressing issues within the theme.
- **Policy-Practice Dialogues:** Structured engagement with non-academic stakeholders to bridge research and application
- **Reading Groups:** Inter- and transdisciplinary discussions of key literature, frameworks, and emerging concepts.







## Collaborative Innovation

- **Research Incubators:** Short-term sprints or hackathons for developing new research ideas and tools.
- **Digital Innovation Labs:** Bringing together coders, designers, and researchers to create tools supporting SES research.
- **Collaborative Platforms:** Spaces for crowdsourcing ideas, sharing data, and co-creating outputs like briefs and guidelines.
  - **Cross-sector Mentoring:** Connecting early-career researchers with professionals outside academia (e.g., Indigenous leaders, policy-makers, business innovators).
  - **Pop-up Labs:** Temporary research or innovation spaces at conferences or public venues for live engagement.

## Creative Engagement

- **Virtual Field Trips:** Immersive experiences (e.g., using VR) showcasing real-world social-ecological dynamics.
- **Interactive Games:** Role-playing exercises or simulations exploring SES decision-making and trade-offs
- **Film Forums:** Curated screenings of documentaries and films with expert-led discussions.
- **Story Banks:** Collecting and sharing personal narratives about social-ecological research impact through blogs or podcasts.
- **Audio Journeys:** Curated soundscape experiences exploring human-nature connections.
- **Innovation Sharing:** "Fail Fest" events celebrating learning from unsuccessful projects.

# Application Process & Timeline

To facilitate connections and early networking, we are running a two-phased process detailed below.

*Optional*

**3 Dec '24**

Submit an **Expression of Interest** for proposing a thematic stream and associated working group (±3 sentences, with keywords, and optional contact details).

**4 Dec '24**

**FAQ & Connection Event**

**31 Jan '25**

Deadline for proposals  
(the submission link will be provided in January)

**10 Feb '25**

Selection of proposals.

**March '25**

Launch of SOCSSES along with the Working Group Thematic Streams and Activities.

## Phase 1: Optional Expression of Interest

- As a first, optional step, please complete an "**Expression of Interest**" (EOI) form by **Tuesday 3 December 2024**. This brief form is designed to gather a snapshot of proposed thematic streams and identify shared interests across applicants. You can still submit a full proposal if you don't submit an EOI form.
- We will use these EOIs to create an idea gallery that participants can explore ahead of a short "**Connection Event**", which will be held on **Thursday 4 Dec** at 2pm CET.
  - During this event, we will host a short info session and Q&A, and participants will have the opportunity to discuss their ideas in small groups and consider possible synergies with others who share similar themes. A recording will be made available afterwards.

## Phase 2: Full Application, due **31 Jan 2025**

Your full application must be submitted via our [website](#).  
The online submission portal will be made available in January and will require the following information:

- Thematic stream title,
- Names and details of co-leads and proposed members (including their expertise and confirmation of participation),
- A 200-word summary of the stream's focus,
- Up to five keywords,
- A 350-word description of the research problem and approach,
- A 250-word outline of planned academic outputs and timeline,
- A list of 3–5 proposed activities with brief descriptions (150 words each),
- Short CVs (up to two pages) for each co-lead.

Proposals will be evaluated by members of the society's transition team.





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If you have any questions about this call, application process, or the role of thematic streams and working groups, please don't hesitate to reach out at [info@socses.org](mailto:info@socses.org).

We look forward to supporting you in your application and collaboration!

