

SustainGov Impact Innovation Report 2024–2025

Mobilising with the North Star in sight

Publisher: SustainGov

Title: Impact Innovation Report 2024–2025, Mobilising with the North Star in sight

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Published: 19 February 2026

ISBN: 978-91-89905-43-6

Registration No.: 2026:00699

Photo: SustainGov, Patrick Trägårdh, DIGG, The Swedish Board of Agriculture, Unsplash, Anders Skogh, Mostphotos

Illustration, graphics: Kristine Widlert, SustainGov

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Foreword – measuring impact beyond the numbers

When we talk about *impact*, it is easy to focus on what is simple to measure – like the number of funded projects or completed activities. Of course, quantitative metrics will always matter since they help us understand, follow up and compare results and trends over time. Impact, however, is fundamentally about something much greater. It is about real change; for people, organisations and society that occur thanks to the programme. This is likely to involve new ways to govern, steer and organise public services as well as shifts in attitudes, cultures and norms, all of which are much harder to capture numerically.



As Programme Director, I see our role as bridging the gap between the theoretical objectives expressed in our mission and the practical reality – in other words, between ambition and actual impact. True systems effects will arise (only) when our combined efforts shape working methods, decision-making and behaviours in the public sector that ultimately improve individual citizen’s outcomes and lived experiences. Creating an enabling environment for those systemic shifts is exactly where we focus our efforts.

Over the first two years of programming our efforts have involved a mixed approach. On the one hand, it has comprised external open calls and strategic funding instruments to mobilise and activate system actors. On the other hand, it has involved hands-on work to build up and operationalise the Programme Office including establishing mission-oriented ways of working, learning processes as well as building a shared systems understanding and trust. The benefit of ‘walking the talk’ is that we can share first-hand experience of what it takes to succeed with system innovation, not least to the projects in our portfolio.

System effects seldom appear overnight. They emerge over time, often through many intertwined efforts rather than via single breakthroughs, where trust and relationships constitute critical success factors. The very fact that our programme exists as a neutral, yet active enabler of systems approaches and systems innovation - in the “institutional void” between current organisational boundaries – is already enabling a shift.

This report is an attempt to capture how SustainGov’s imprint is beginning to form – both through effects that can be comfortably measured and those that, for now, are best observed and qualitatively described. It does not claim to show the entire picture, but it does show directionality towards our mission. Looking ahead to the next phase, we will deepen, strengthen and scale what works – while staying humble to the reality that lasting system change requires perseverance, learning and continuous adaptation. That is how change becomes enduring and systemic.

Mariell Juhlin, Programme Director

Summary

Working on complex societal challenges and systems innovation across organisational boundaries requires perseverance, courage and trust. In the programme's first two years, our focus has therefore been on mobilisation: bringing actors together, building structures and creating a shared commitment towards the mission.

Programming efforts have been prioritised within four Focus Areas: *Complex Care Needs*, *An Inclusive Society*, *Resilient Food Supply*, and *A Future Social Contract* – in order to strengthen the programme's ability to generate system effects. To date, the programme has funded 54 projects within five interventions with a total budget of SEK 194 million. 155 unique actors from across Sweden – from the public sector, business, academia and civil society - have participated. The impact lies not only in the number of projects and partners reached, but in the capacity for change that has been built across organisational boundaries.

Most funded projects are feasibility studies, in line with the aims of the programme's initial, mobilisation phase. They have primarily led to the development of new ways of working within participating public sector organisations. The next step will be to fund more mission-oriented projects that operate within institutional voids. This will occur through more emphasis on funding of experimentation and the forming of long-term, strategic alliances. Moving forward, there is also a need for greater involvement in the portfolio from both the Government Offices of Sweden and government agencies given that they largely shape the conditions for other system actors.

In 2025 the Programme Office was reorganised into four working groups to better meet the requirements of the next phase of programme development. The new set-up consists of fewer people with more time as well as with relevant competences linked to the Focus Areas. Through the four working groups – *Direction & Influence*, *Learning & Scaling*, *Capabilities & Mindsets*, as well as *Research* – we have strengthened the Programme Office's ability to manage the portfolio and contribute to new knowledge.

Over the first phase, SustainGov's external engagement has broadened, both nationally and internationally. At the same time, the Programme has faced structural challenges, including a limited mandate for the Programme Office vis-à-vis the funding agencies, as well as a limited toolbox to fully support a mission-oriented approach. These challenges were also highlighted by the OECD in an analysis of Impact Innovation during 2025. Hence going forward the collaboration with funders must deepen and involve clarifying roles and mandates, as well as arriving at a shared understanding of the programme.

From 2026 to 2028 the programme enters a new phase, focusing on developing new knowledge, testing and establishing innovative practices with a systems perspective across governance levels. This means more emphasis on efforts that shift practice, including targeted capability-building as well as structures to enable shared learning and scaling. In this way we take the next step towards our mission: a reformed public sector that promotes better health and wellbeing for all residents.

1 Our mission – why we exist

SustainGov’s mission is to promote the health and wellbeing of all residents.¹ We are reforming the public sector to better address complex societal challenges through systems approaches, joint actions and shared responsibility long term.² Our mission is our North Star: we know the direction, but not every step there. We explore and learn with the courage to test, adjust and scale what works. The first phase (2024–2025) has been about mobilisation: bringing actors together, creating a shared narrative, initiating a complementary portfolio of efforts and enabling the kinds of joint action around complex needs that we want to see emerge over the ten-year programming period.

“We must ensure that people and businesses receive the same service and have equal opportunities to take part in the transition, no matter where in the country they live or operate.”

Helene Hellmark Knutsson,
County Governor, Chair of the
Board and one of the initiators
of SustainGov



1.1 Our Theory of Change is our compass

Our Theory of Change addresses *how* and *why* we work towards the mission. It helps us understand current structures and constraints³, while opening up to alternative futures that challenge established assumptions and create the conditions for a reformed public sector. A core premise is that the mission can only be realised through a broad palette

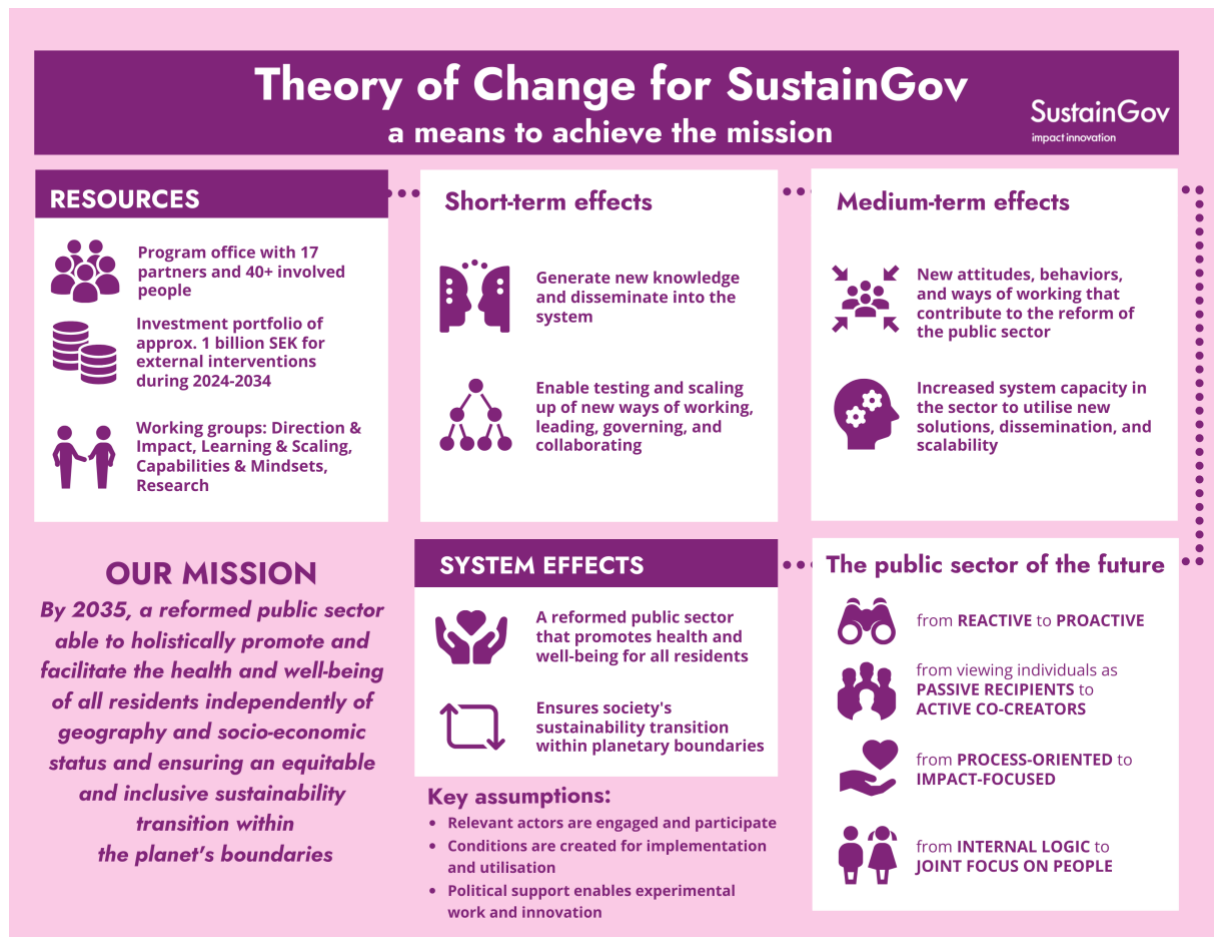
¹ Our mission: By 2035, a reformed public sector able to holistically promote and facilitate the health and well-being of all residents independently of geography and socio-economic status and ensuring an equitable and inclusive sustainability transition within the planet’s boundaries.

² By *joint action* we envisage a situation in which several independent actors coordinate and integrate their efforts in order to act together and solve problems that none of them could address individually (that is, something more advanced than conventional collaboration). By a *systems approach* is meant understanding problems and solutions in relation to the whole and to the interdependencies that characterise a complex system.

³ For example, shortcomings in knowledge transfer and system leadership, low capacity to identify and implement changes, and a culture that does not encourage experimentation and innovation.

of efforts that combine practical experiments, capability-building, learning, knowledge generation and policy change – with change driven by and with people.

The Theory of Change shows the links between actions and activities across the programme and the Programme Office and the expected outputs and effects in the short, medium and long term. It is continuously evolving based on what we learn.



SustainGov contributes to several key shifts: from *doing things right* to *doing the right things*:

- *from reactive to proactive* – shift the focus from only dealing with problems as they arise to anticipating and preventing them, enabling a more sustainable and efficient use of resources.
- *from viewing the individuals as passive recipients to active co-creators* – recognise individuals as active co-creators in developing solutions in order to achieve more sustainable and relevant outcomes.
- *from process-oriented to impact-focused* – shift the focus from being process-driven and measuring only short-term results using simple indicators to assessing long-term effects that genuinely contribute to societal development.
- *from internal logic to joint focus on people* – create shared solutions that centre around people's needs rather than being bound to fixed organisational structures.



1.2 Our Focus Areas – prioritising our efforts

In order to focus our resources and create greater traction during 2024–2028, partners in the Programme Office co-created four Focus Areas (autumn 2024), later approved by the Board (January 2025). These are:

- **System-wide joint action for Complex Care Needs.** Residents with complex care needs – accounting for a large share of health and care costs – face fragmented systems and weak coordination, leading to quality gaps, inefficient resource use and inequity. Meeting future needs requires a renewed, jointly acting public sector, putting the individual’s health and long-term wellbeing at the centre.
- **An Inclusive Society for All.** Groups in society face significant barriers to full participation. Structural issues, lack of a holistic view and poor coordination between public actors around people’s actual needs exacerbate exclusion. A more inclusive society requires joint public-sector efforts that address root causes and strengthen people’s opportunities for participation and co-creation.
- **Resilient Food Supply for Health and Wellbeing.** Sweden faces a vulnerable food system while climate change and unhealthy diets affect both the environment and public health. A resilient food supply requires long-term solutions that strengthen preparedness, reduce environmental impact and secure access to nutritious, affordable food for all. The public sector has a key role, but fragmentation and goal conflicts make the work difficult.
- **A Future Social Contract.** Renewing the relationship between people and the public sector. To handle growing demands and complexity, the public sector must redefine its role and build stronger bonds with residents, business and civil society. A renewed social contract is built on active joint actions where all actors contribute to shared solutions and sustainable development. By strengthening trust and designing needs-driven services we can secure an effective, inclusive and future-ready public sector.

FOCUS AREAS

complex societal challenges require system innovation



The first three Focus Areas have a clear connection to policy areas where system innovation is required to achieve lasting societal improvements in health and care, inclusion and food system resilience. The fourth Focus Area has a more overarching character and concerns the renewal of the public sector as a whole – in other words, the core of SustainGov. Together, they form a comprehensive direction that strengthens the public sector's ability to meet societal challenges and contribute to health and wellbeing for all residents, in collaboration with others, not least the residents themselves.

1.3 From mobilisation to learning and system effects

The Theory of Change shows we need to move from broad mobilisation to more targeted efforts that lead to learning, culture change and system effects. In 2024–2025, the Programme Office laid the foundations by establishing shared ways of working, building learning structures and shaping the first outward-facing initiatives. Our starting point has been to meet stakeholders where they are and create the conditions to begin reform with a systems approach.

Our largest investment – a broad, recurring call⁴ – resulted in 77 applications in 2025, of which 30 were funded, including one System Transformation Alliance. This marked the

⁴ The main levels of support are feasibility studies, implementation projects and System Transformation Alliances. Feasibility studies give stakeholders and system actors the opportunity, together with the target group, to identify and map the extent of system challenges within the Focus Areas. Implementation projects make it possible to test new ways of organising, leading and steering work using a systems approach. System Transformation Alliances are a flagship initiative aimed at establishing long-term joint action around solutions to system challenges across all levels of government.

start of a new phase. The projects form a hub and test-bed for realising the mission. The Programme Office supports, follows, makes learning visible and complements with open and strategic interventions as needs emerge.

1.3.1 Organisational principles and ways of working

SustainGov is unique in that the public sector co-finances and drives the work towards the mission. The Programme Office is staffed by seventeen partners⁵ across all administrative levels, providing broad systems understanding and strong ownership. As a mission-oriented research and innovation programme, SustainGov turns theory and evidence into practice, strengthening legitimacy and engagement among actors.

To enable this, we have developed ways of working and an organisation adapted to our goals and phase of development. Four building blocks have been central:

- **Shared direction – the mission**
A common understanding of the mission, the Theory of Change and milestones that steer prioritisation and coordination.
- **Complementary competences**
A wide range of experiences and perspectives that make it possible to think and act systemically.
- **Learning and access to information**
Open sharing of insights and ideas, supported by a secure digital environment and a platform for ongoing, needs-based dialogue.
- **Trust and mutual respect**
A culture where we dare to test, challenge one another and learn from both successes and mistakes.

Our ways of working have evolved with the programme's maturity and are applied in how we support projects, which we see as part of the SustainGov family.

1.3.2 An organisation fit for the future

The Programme Office initially comprised 16 organisations and 78 people (52 women and 28 men) from municipalities, regions, national agencies, universities and companies. By bringing these perspectives together we built a shared understanding of the system's needs and conditions for change.

As part of continuous learning, we reviewed our organisation in spring 2025. The new structure – in place since 1 September – includes 44 people (24 women and 20 men) with a balanced competence mix linked to the four Focus Areas and other expertise. In the reorganisation, Stiftelsen Compare (a non-profit digital innovation foundation) joined to strengthen innovation management and procurement competences, while the Västra Götaland Region⁶ replaced Region Västernorrland to broaden geographic reach and strengthen competences within health-care.

⁵ Mid Sweden University, the County Administrative Board of Västerbotten, the National Veterinary Institute (SVA), the Agency for Digital Government (DIGG), Sundsvall Municipality, Tomelilla Municipality, the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR), Norrbotten Municipalities, Region Jämtland Härjedalen, the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU), the Stockholm School of Economics, the School of Public Administration at Södertörn University, Samhällsnytta at Karlstad University, Skellefteå Science City, Bron Innovation, Stiftelsen Compare (from 2025), and Västra Götaland Region (from 2026). Region Västernorrland left the Programme Office during 2025.

⁶ In January 2026, Västra Götaland Region joined SustainGov as a programme partner.

"For me, SustainGov is about taking shared responsibility for the whole of the welfare system. With a joint systems perspective, grounded in digitalisation, we can learn faster, adapt, and develop solutions that actually work. SustainGov brings together different areas of expertise to drive that transformation collectively."
Anna Eriksson, Director-General of DIGG and Board Member of SustainGov



1.3.3 Working groups

To deliver the mission, the Programme Office is organised to enable change in the public sector through a structure that can:

- *Scale deep*: Knowledge, understanding and values are deepened and shape mindsets that build a shared systems orientation. As these views take root, norms and practices shift, enabling sustained change over time.
- *Scale up*: Embed a systems approach in institutions, governance and regulation and change the conditions for how system actors can act. By integrating new practices and solutions into policy and governance, structural conditions for long-term systemic change are created.
- *Scale out*: Spread and adapt practices and a systems orientation so they gain traction in more organisations across the public sector. As methods and learnings are taken into new contexts, more actors can contribute to change.

In addition to a small secretariat, the new Programme Office is organised into four working groups: *Direction & Influence*, *Learning & Scaling*, *Capabilities & Mindsets*, and *Research*.

Direction & Influence Leads SustainGov's outward-facing and reform-oriented work to strengthen system leadership and influence the future public sector (focus: scale up).

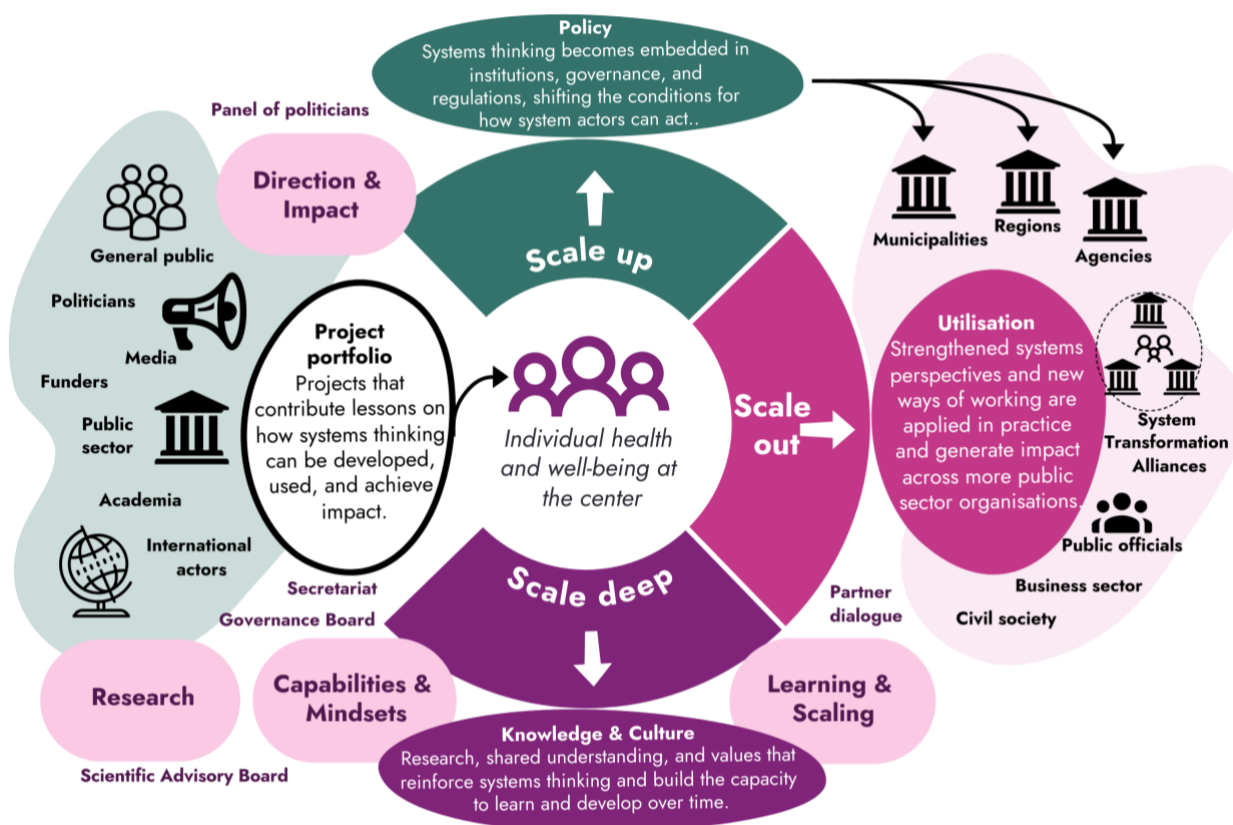
Learning & Scaling Enables shared learning, change leadership and the scaling of system-relevant ideas across the programme portfolio (focus: scale out).

Capabilities & Mindsets Develops practical methods, tools and frameworks that strengthen actors' capacity for system transformation (focus: scale deep).

Research Ensures scientific grounding and develops new knowledge that supports the reform of the public sector across all areas.

An operational leadership group has been established that include the leaders of each working group, as well as the Programme Directors and the Communications Officer.

In the picture below we depict the landscape in which the Programme and Program Office works.



Focus Area strategists, scientific advisory board, governance board, panel of politicians and partner dialogue

Four Focus Area strategists have been appointed to deepen systems understanding within each Focus Area and connect this to the work of the Programme Office’s groups. The purpose is to accelerate shared learning and maintain a whole-system perspective across the working groups.

A forum for partner dialogue has been established for strategic matters, and the programme’s governance board—with decision-makers from the Programme Office organisations, as well as representatives of business and civil society—serves as the highest decision-making body. In addition, an international scientific advisory board provides independent expert advice, and recurring round-table meetings with a panel of politicians help to build engagement and increase attention to the need for system innovation among policymakers.

Roles and mandates are set out in the Programme Office’s Rules of Procedure, and an annual work plan is prepared each year. The participants in the programme’s various groupings are listed in the annex.

1.4 The international context we operate in

SustainGov operates in a Swedish public sector marked by transparency but also silos and rule-driven processes. In order to address complex system challenges and

strengthen our own development we learn from countries that are further ahead and actively seek international collaborations. Mission- and systems-oriented approaches are growing in numbers internationally, but many are driven top-down and hard to transfer to Swedish conditions. SustainGov's contribution is a Swedish model that combines bottom-up learning that stems from local practice with national and international policy and capability efforts. For example, together with Systems Innovation Networks and the European Commission's Joint Research Centre we co-hosted a workshop in Brussels to show the value of practice-oriented system innovation at EU level. International perspectives are also introduced via our Scientific Advisory Board and through the sharing of case study examples within the Programme Office as well as with broader stakeholders, e.g. from the Netherlands and Australia.

In February 2026, the Governance Board adopted an internationalisation strategy to strengthen SustainGov's role as a global actor and position Sweden as a reference case for systems innovation in the public sector.

1.5 How we work with equality and equity

We integrate gender equality and equity perspectives into our funding calls, our monitoring and internal organisation. This includes ensuring a conscious allocation of roles and responsibilities within the Program office as well as analysing equal opportunities within the portfolio. The Focus Area *An Inclusive Society* is particularly important here.

An analysis by the Impact Innovation funding agencies (autumn 2025) showed SustainGov to be the only Impact Innovation programme with projects explicitly addressing gender equality and equity. 70% of all portfolio projects are led by women. Application approval rates are the same regardless of the project leader's gender, indicating assessments are not biased. The high share of women reflects the typical gender balance present in the public sector.⁷

"We have worked from a holistic perspective, including all factors that affect the everyday lives of students and staff. Our starting point has always been the child's perspective. By strengthening understanding and collaboration across professional and organizational boundaries, we can act early and proactively — already at the first weak signals. This stands in contrast to how today's school system often functions, where action is taken reactively only once problems have grown large."
Cecilia Åkerblom, RISE, Project Manager for A Health-Promoting School for Children, Young People and Adults in Collaboration



⁷ Swedish Gender Equality Agency (2025) *Jämställdheten i Sverige – Lägesbild över de jämställdhetspolitiska målen 2025*. 2025:15

The Programme in Figures

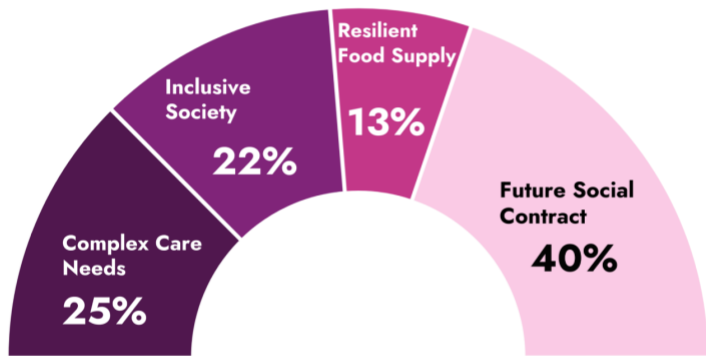
Budget, actors and the nature of the projects

2024–2025

Budget per focus area

Of all 54 approved projects in the intervention portfolio, the total budget of 194 million SEK is distributed across four focus areas:

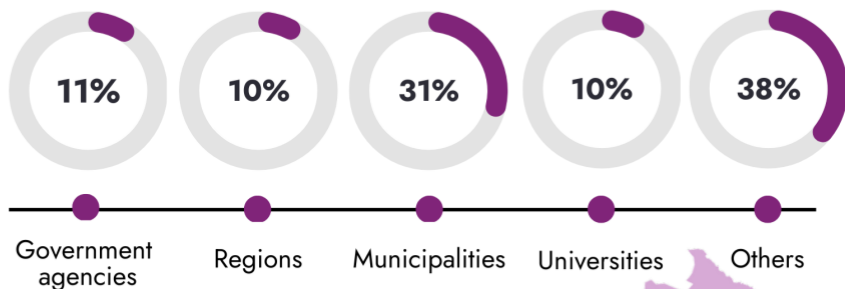
- Complex Care Needs 49 MSEK
- Inclusive Society 43 MSEK
- Resilient Food supply 25 MSEK
- Future social contract 76 MSEK



Actors

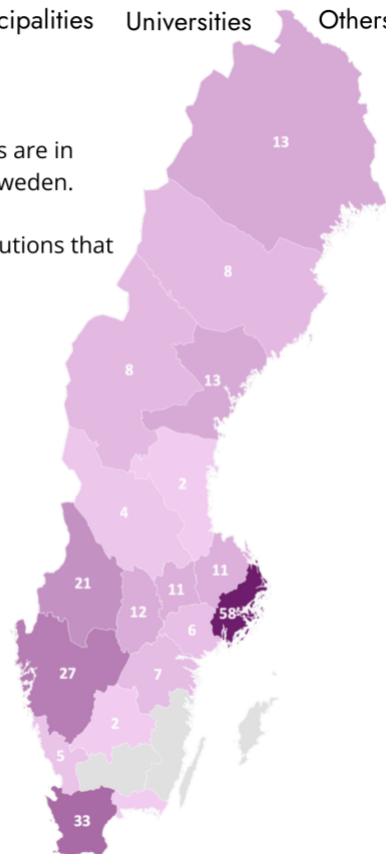
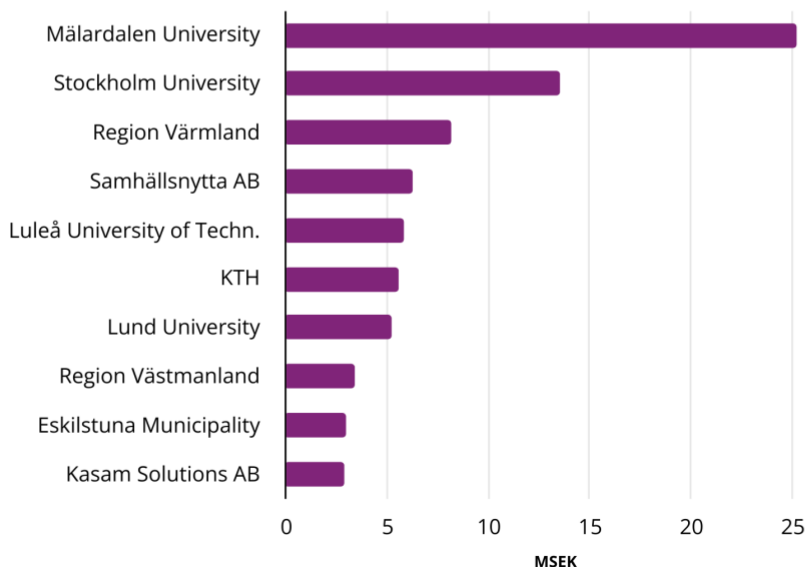
231 different actors across Sweden applied for funds in 131 applications. 54 projects were approved with 155 participating organisations:

- 17 government agencies
- 15 regions
- 49 municipalities
- 15 higher education institutions
- 59 others (companies, non-profit orgs, etc.)



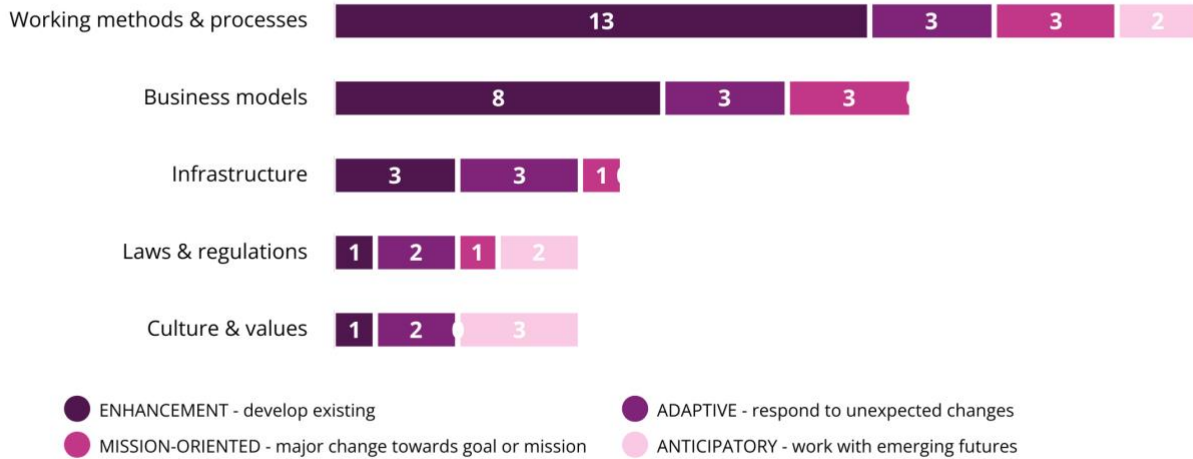
A total of 250 actors participate in the approved projects (some organisations are in more than one project). These organisations are found across almost all of Sweden.

The ten largest grant recipients are dominated by the higher education institutions that have been granted funds for the research school.



Nature of the Projects

All approved projects analysed based on five system dimensions (Vinnova) combined with OPSI's innovation facets (OECD). The projects have been categorised based on their primary focus. The system dimensions are adapted for the public sector concerning what in the system that needs to change. The innovation facets show how change is approached, from improving what already exists to engaging with emerging futures.



Below, all projects are shown based on the zone model (Future by Lund). This reflects where the projects' main focus lies from an organisational perspective. Whether it is primarily to develop one's own organisation, partnership in the space between, or to explore the unknown.



Combining all three models, it appears that the majority of the approved projects, where most are feasibility studies, have an emphasis on developing existing working methods, processes and operational models within their own organisation.



Proportion of women as project managers



Proportion of participating non-profit organisations



Proportion of participating private companies



Proportion of participating municipalities with <15,000 inhabitants



Proportion of participating municipalities that are sparsely populated rural municipalities

2 Programme activities

Systems change is enabled by and with people; relationships and trust are its invisible but fundamental ingredients. In the first two years SustainGov has been in a mobilisation phase, actively building relationships with development-oriented people working in and with the public sector. The goal is to create a movement for a reformed public sector that better promotes health and wellbeing for all residents. Through our interventions we have enabled the formation of cross-boundary coalitions of the willing, raised awareness of complex systems challenges and strengthened the sector's capabilities and know-how. We have further demonstrated what human-centred practices and joint actions with a systems approach looks like.



*"Through SustainGov and HelhetsEnkelt, we have gained new perspectives on how our operations connect with other authorities and actors. This has helped us see the bigger picture, learn from others' development work, and understand what is required for genuine simplification. This is crucial for fulfilling our mission, now and in the future."
Anna Olofsson, Director-General,
Swedish Board of Agriculture*

2.1 Mobilising for change

All Programme Office partners met for a kick-off in April 2024 which marked the start of the programme. A central part of the initial phase has been to engage system actors who want to contribute to the mission. This engagement began already during the application phase and will continue through outreach and continued presence on various arenas. Whereas some organisations have become partners; others have been mobilised to take part in activities or calls. Jointly, these efforts have strengthened awareness of the SustainGov brand and increased interest in the mission.

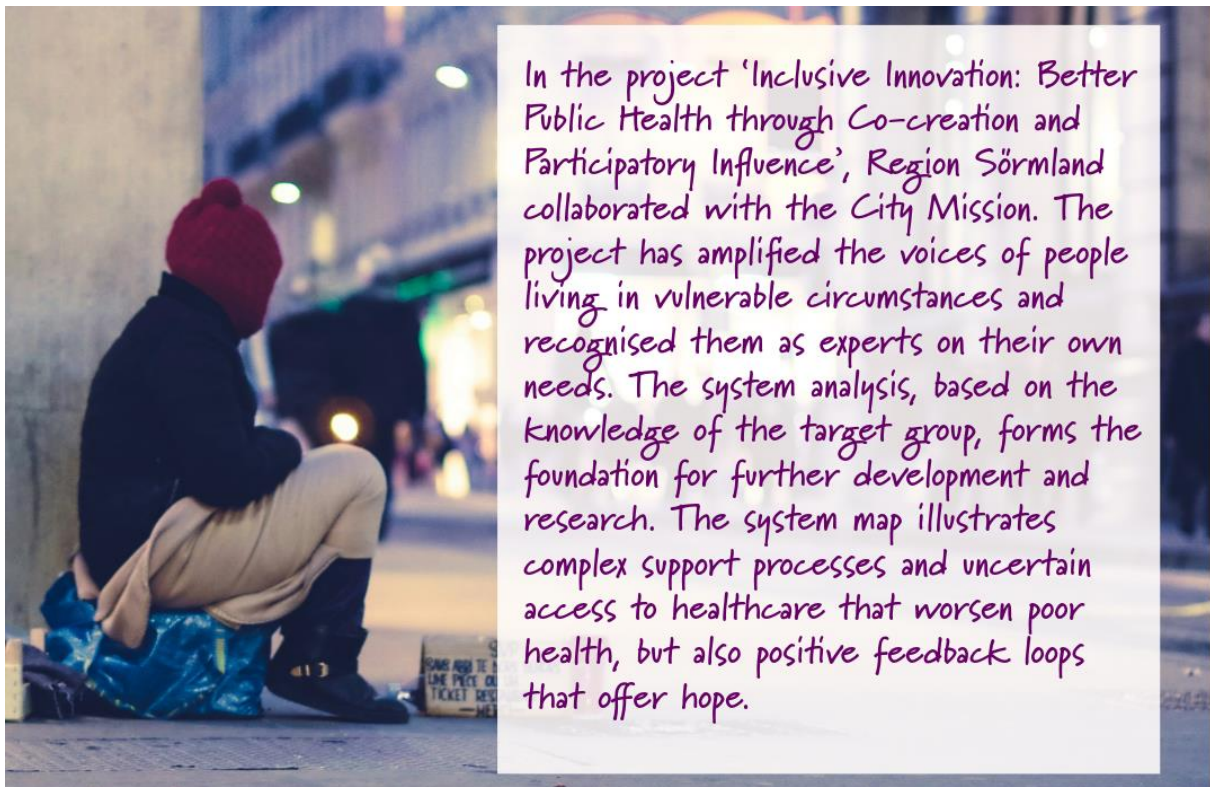
2.2 Interventions that contribute to a systems approach

During 2024 and 2025, SustainGov financed five interventions that resulted in 54 projects in our portfolio. In line with our Theory of Change, the shared aims of these

interventions have been to increase awareness of systemic challenges, generate new knowledge using a systems approach, lay the groundwork for cross-boundary coalitions of the willing, and begin the shift towards a new role for the public sector.

Learning has been at the centre of all efforts connected to our project portfolio. This has involved creating opportunities for project partners to learn from one another, enabling other actors to benefit from the projects' experiences, and drawing our own lessons to inform the development of future interventions. This has meant continually analysing and adjusting methods for engaging stakeholders, formulating needs ahead of calls, supporting funded projects, and enabling evaluators of project applications to better understand what we are striving for.

We have combined mission-oriented strategic interventions with broad calls across the four Focus Areas. Through the broad calls, we have reached a diverse range of actors within the public sector and civil society. These interventions are described in more detail below.



5 INTERVENTIONS 54 approved projects



1

System Design

- **SYSTEM DESIGN** for reduced perceived regulatory burden for farmers
- **HelhetsEnkelt**
Preparation project 18 months start Oct 2024
- Coord: KaU Samhällsnytta AB
Partners: SVA National Food Agency Board of Agriculture Agency for Economic and Regional Growth County Administrative Boards in Jämtland, Värmland & Skåne Stockholm School of Economics LR Växa Sverige individual farmers & KSLA
- Budget 10 MSEK & grant 7 MSEK



2

Capacity Building

- **CAPACITY BUILDING FOR SYSTEM TRANSFORMATION**
Mapping and analysis of public sector's ability to manage and lead system transformation
- **FEASIBILITY STUDY**
Part 1: Mapping of needs and existing capacity-building interventions
Part 2: Analysis and recommendations
Start Dec 2024 12 months
Budget 1.9 MSEK grant 1.7 MSEK
- **FINAL CONFERENCE**
24 Nov + report - Coord: Stockholm School of Economics



3

Promote & Prevent

- **COLLABORATION FOR PREVENTIVE AND PROMOTIVE INTERVENTIONS FOR HEALTH & WELL-BEING**
Identify promotive or preventive interventions that contribute to a lasting transition and more proactive efforts
FEASIBILITY STUDIES
linked to new Social Services Act
- 48 applications, 21 approved projects
- 12 MSEK budget & 10 MSEK grant



4

Research School

- **RESEARCH SCHOOL FOR THE PUBLIC SECTOR OF THE FUTURE**
Combine public sector's need for knowledge and well-founded decisionmaking support with academia's ability to challenge and question
- **FOFOS** Transdisciplinary, innovative research school that functions as a national knowledge node for development of action-oriented knowledge for transformation of public sector
- Coord: Mälardalen University
Partners: KTH LTU GU SU LU
- 60 MSEK budget & 52 MSEK grant



5

Annual Broad Call

- **FOR A REFORMED PUBLIC SECTOR**
Projects in all focus areas
- *Feasibility Studies 500 kSEK 6 months*
Implementation projects 4 MSEK 2 years
System Transform Alliances 10 MSEK 3 years
- **77 APPLICATIONS** 30 approved
- **SYSTEM TRANSFORMATION ALLIANCES**
1 in complex care.
Coord: Region Värmland
- **IMPLEMENTATION PROJECT**
14 projects
- **FEASIBILITY STUDIES**
15 projects
- **BUDGET & GRANTS** total 110 MSEK & 67 MSEK grant

54 projects
approved within
the framework of
five interventions
during
2024–2025

Total budget:
194 MSEK
Grant from
SustainGov:
138 MSEK

SustainGov
impact innovation

2.2.1 HelhetsEnkelt - a strategic intervention

For SustainGov, it was important to demonstrate early on that a systems approach can lead to healthier systems outcomes when applied within the public sector. We therefore chose to tackle a long-standing, complex problem by testing a system design methodology with the explicit aim that it could be re-used in other contexts as well.

'*HelhetsEnkelt – System Design to Reduce the Perceived Regulatory Burden on Farmers*' serves as a test arena for inter-agency collaboration on a complex challenge with direct relevance to health and wellbeing. Led by Karlstad University Samhällsnytta AB with a broad constellation of actors⁸, the project addresses one of Swedish administration's most persistent challenges: the regulation and enforcement of agriculture. By convening systems actors, including farmers themselves, and focusing on their health and wellbeing, the aim has been to use new methods to reduce farmers' perceived regulatory burden and to create a more coordinated, comprehensible and predictable regulatory environment.



Regulation and oversight of agriculture have long been characterised by complexity, duplicate inspections and unclear responsibilities between public and private actors. This has led to uncertainty, mistrust and unnecessary administration, and it has also weakened the system's own capacity for learning. *HelhetsEnkelt* addresses this by bringing together the entire ecosystem: farmers, national agencies, municipalities, regions, academia, industry and private certification bodies. For the first time, senior leaders, case officers, inspectors, policy developers and, not least, the farmers themselves meet in a shared environment to understand the system and look for new solutions.

Through a series of workshops from four perspectives – farming, inspection, inspection strategy and policy-making – the project has identified overlaps, frictions and goal conflicts as well as enabled shared mindsets and practices with vertical links between administrative levels. Tangible system effects are already visible including new forms of

⁸ The project also involves the National Veterinary Institute (SVA), the Swedish Food Agency, the Swedish Board of Agriculture, the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth, the County Administrative Boards of Jämtland, Värmland and Skåne, the Stockholm School of Economics, the Federation of Swedish Farmers (LRF), Växa Sverige, individual farmers, and the Royal Swedish Academy of Agriculture and Forestry.

collaboration, greater acceptance for design-oriented methods, and establishment of a Director-General forum for shared system leadership.

The work now continues along several work streams, focusing on redesigning the inspection system and engaging with actual farmer as part of the regular impact assessment processes. Director-Generals play an active role in removing barriers and creating room for manoeuvre.

We see *HelhetsEnkelt* as a flagship project that has inspired our System Transformation Alliances. It shows that a new type of change capacity can be built within the public sector – combining design, systems understanding and leadership – and offers a model that can be applied elsewhere in the portfolio.

2.2.2 New Social Services Act: collaboration for promotion and prevention

In light of the a new Social Services Act coming into force on 1 July 2025, we launched a broad call in 2024 focusing on promotion and prevention. The purpose was to give public actors the opportunity to analyse system challenges and develop solutions that would make the public sector more proactive. This is in line with both the new Act and one of the central shifts of our Theory of Change - *from reactive to proactive*.

"The project has highlighted gaps between the goals of inclusion and the actual practices at the operational level. An important insight is that an 'everyone is welcome' approach is not sufficient for young people with disabilities to participate in mainstream leisure activities on equal terms. To create genuine participation, planning, structure and proactive efforts are required."
Project Manager, Hvaninge Municipality

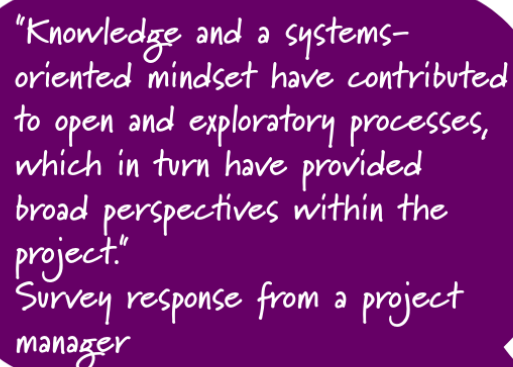


A total of 21 feasibility studies were granted funding. They began in January 2025 and concluded in the autumn. The projects contributed deeper analyses of system challenges, revealed existing barriers and opportunities, and pointed to possible next steps. All together the results provide a clearer picture of the system-level effects that can be achieved and what is yet to be done.

The Programme Office actively enabled a shared learning process, combining both digital and in-person elements that strengthened collaboration, knowledge exchange and openness between the portfolio projects. Examples of activities in the learning process included: an in-person kick-off conference, a digital book circle on Systems

Thinking in Practice,⁹ digital pulse meetings for networking and experience sharing, a digital mid-term review and a final in-person conference.

The learning process has generated clear added value for both the projects and the programme. In parallel, the Programme Office conducted surveys covering both project results and participants' experiences of the support provided. In the follow-up carried out in autumn 2025, 19 out of 20 project leaders stated that the support from the Programme Office had contributed to and strengthened their results. The focus on a systems approach has also deemed to have opened the way for more exploratory methods and broader perspectives.



*"Knowledge and a systems-oriented mindset have contributed to open and exploratory processes, which in turn have provided broad perspectives within the project."
Survey response from a project manager*

2.2.3 Capacity-building for system transformation

To achieve the mission, the public sector needs the capacity to lead and carry out systems innovation. Despite many initiatives, there has been no comprehensive picture of the sector's strengths, obstacles and opportunities. For this reason, in 2025, the programme funded a feasibility study on capacity-building, conducted by the Stockholm School of Economics and Mid Sweden University.

The study mapped existing capacity-building initiatives, identified bottlenecks, and developed indicators and tools to assess quality, cost-effectiveness and innovation potential. The work included 39 interviews, quantitative analyses of procurement data, literature reviews, workshops, and two round-table discussions with more than 60 participants from the public sector, academia, civil society and business.

The results, published in a report,¹⁰ show a strong desire for renewal but low actual capacity, particularly in leadership, shared learning platforms and long-term governance. Procurement emerges as a central bottleneck, as it is seldom used strategically for innovation and collaboration.

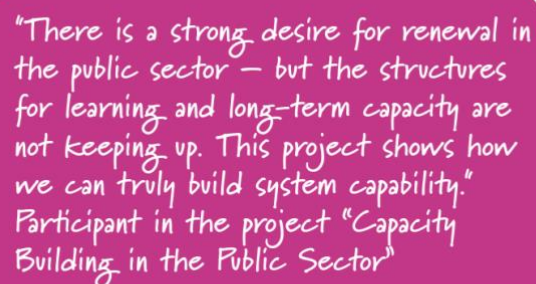
The report also presents a framework for assessing interventions based on feasibility (time, cost, resources) and value creation (societal benefit, resilience). The framework specifies measures for quality, cost-effectiveness and innovation potential, and provides a foundation for future initiatives.

⁹ Wittberg, Lennart & Alexius, Susanna (2024). *Systemsyn i praktiken*. Whip Media.

¹⁰ www.sustaingov.se/kapacitetsbyggande

The project also demonstrates how capacity-building — that is, the ability to lead, learn and collaborate across system boundaries — can become a strategic tool for strengthening innovation capability, trust and resilience in the public sector.

The scoping study identified 30 proposals for capacity-building initiatives, of which one third were considered priorities due to their feasibility and potential to strengthen the public sector's future capacity development. These proposals serve as qualitative guidance for the Programme Office's upcoming initiatives.



"There is a strong desire for renewal in the public sector — but the structures for learning and long-term capacity are not keeping up. This project shows how we can truly build system capability."
Participant in the project "Capacity Building in the Public Sector"

2.2.4 Research School for the Future Public Sector

To strengthen knowledge and competence in the public sector over the long term, the programme launched and initiated the establishment of a research school in 2025. The purpose is to address complex societal challenges by combining the public sector's need for well-founded decision-support with academia's ability to analyse, question and advance established perspectives. In this way, the foundations are created for mission-driven knowledge development that is both relevant and robust.

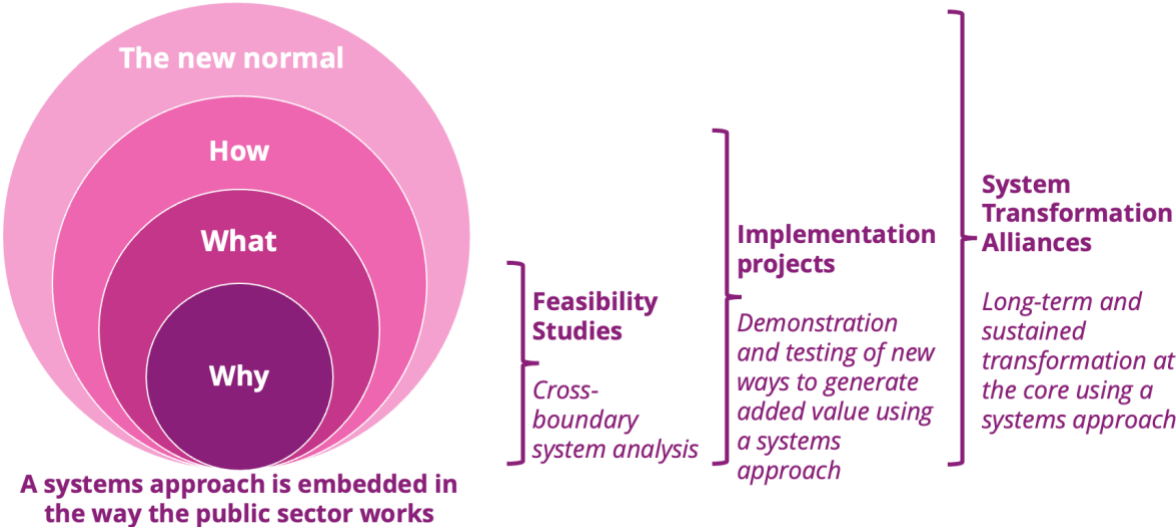
The research school aims to help rethink and improve current practices within the public sector, while also giving academia the opportunity to test new approaches. The funded initiative, *Research School for the Future Public Sector (FOFOS)*, began in autumn 2025 and comprises ten research projects at doctoral level, linked to SustainGov's four Focus Areas.

FOFOS is led by Mälardalen University, in collaboration with KTH Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm University, Lund University, Luleå University of Technology and the University of Gothenburg, together with a range of public-sector actors. The strategic collaboration between academia and stakeholders in the public sector is intended to ensure that the research school generates knowledge that is both practically useful and scientifically robust. The work is conducted collaboratively across the country and in close dialogue with the research group within the Programme Office.

2.2.5 Broad call for a reformed public sector

To strengthen the public sector's ability to address complex societal challenges, the programme carried out a broad open call in 2025 for feasibility studies, implementation projects, and System Transformation Alliances across SustainGov's four Focus Areas. The projects range from analysis and experimentation to the implementation and spread of new practices and solutions, where different actors engage in joint action to develop new systems-oriented ways of working and to change the overarching conditions shaping how system actors can operate.

The different project types are illustrated by the figure below, where the System Transformation Alliances represent SustainGov’s flagship initiatives.



Feasibility studies are expected to mobilise actors, build shared understanding of system challenges and strengthen knowledge about the system’s conditions.

Implementation projects are intended to develop, test and further refine new ways of organising, financing, steering and working within the public sector using a systems approach.

System Transformation Alliances are designed to establish and spread new solutions and practices that, over the long term, change governance, organisation, ways of working and culture at all administrative levels.¹¹ By convening actors with authority over key structural conditions across all Government levels, the alliances can create the system-changing prerequisites required for others to act. In this way, they lay the foundation for wider dissemination and practical use of solutions that can be scaled as more actors gain the ability to contribute. The alliances are intended to operate and evolve over a longer period, meaning that follow-up calls may be issued within SustainGov’s ten-year programming period.

Out of 77 applications, 30 projects were granted funding with a total budget of SEK 110 million, of which SEK 66 million came from SustainGov. The call demonstrates the programme’s focus on systems innovation and how collaboration across organisational and administrative boundaries can create better conditions for change in the public sector. The funded projects form a platform for continued development, learning and directionality across the system.

To strengthen collaboration around complex societal challenges, larger projects were required to include actors from multiple administrative levels. The purpose was to deepen the understanding that complex societal challenges cannot be solved by individual actors within their own organisation.

¹¹ National, regional and local levels of government.

Table: The 2025 broad call, based on approved and submitted applications per Focus Area and level of support. Approved projects by Focus Area and project type. The number of applications is shown in parentheses.

Focus Area	Feasibility Studies Analyze 6 months 500 TSEK	Implementation Projects Experiment 2 years 4 MSEK	System Transformation Alliances Systemic change 3 years 10 mMSEK
1. Complex Care Needs	7 (15)	3 (5)	1 (3)
2. Inclusive Society	4 (12)	4 (10)	0 (1)
3. Resilient Food Supply	0 (4)	1 (3)	X
4. Future Social Contract	4 (15)	6 (9)	X
TOTAL	15 (46)	14 (27)	1 (4)

One System Transformation Alliance, *OMTÄNK*T, has been funded within the Focus Area *Complex Care Needs* and is coordinated by Region Värmland. In addition to Region Värmland and Region Jämtland Härjedalen, all municipalities in both counties participate. The alliance also includes Region Västernorrland, Härnösand Municipality, the University of Gothenburg, Karlstad University Samhällsnytta AB, the National Board of Health and Welfare, and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR).



In January 2026, all funded projects from the broad call met at a joint kick-off conference to learn and exchange experiences. A single project cannot reform the public sector on its own, but together – and over time – the projects create a critical mass that can contribute to reform in line with the mission.

2.2.6 Portfolio analysis¹²

The project portfolio comprises a total of 155 system actors from across Sweden. Fifteen of the 21 regions and 49 of the 290 municipalities participate in one or more projects. Among the municipalities that have been granted funding, 22 per cent are small

¹² See also section 1.6 The Programme in numbers.

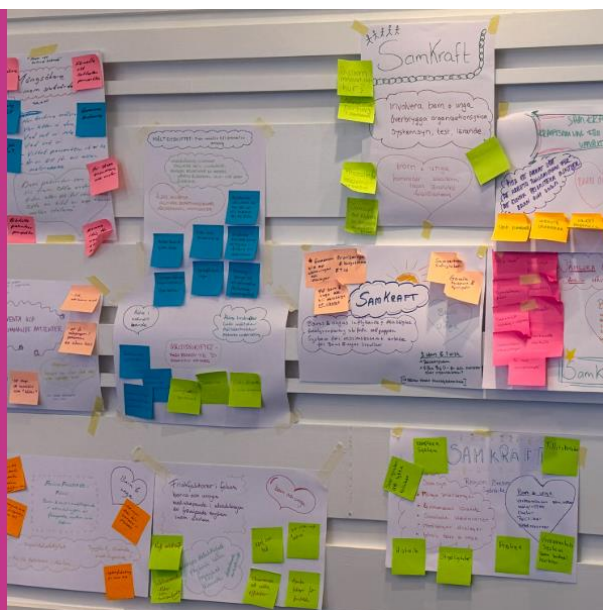
municipalities and 6 per cent are sparsely populated rural municipalities.¹³ Civil society accounts for 21 per cent of project participants and private companies for 11 per cent, demonstrating a broad diversity of actors.¹⁴

The largest share of approved project funding is found within the Focus Area *Future Social Contract* at 44 per cent. Projects within Focus Area *Resilient Food Supply* currently account for 13 per cent, while *Complex Care Needs* and *An Inclusive Society* share the remainder. The largest funding recipients are dominated by higher-education institutions due to funding a research school, of which most doctoral-level projects pertain mainly within the Focus Area *Future Social Contract*.

The characteristics of projects in the portfolio have been analysed using three different models: OECD OPSI's Innovation Facets, Vinnova's five system dimensions, and the Zone model (Future by Lund).¹⁵ The analysis shows that most funded projects primarily focus on improving existing practices, processes and operating models within their own organisations.

Taken together, the portfolio analysis indicates that the first calls have reached a broad range of actors across Sweden, though fewer national government agencies. Most projects also focus on strengthening internal organisational capacity. The next phase of funding therefore aims to place greater emphasis on achieving joint action between actors (including national agencies) and on more exploratory work in line with the mission.

"Without SustainGov, we would have continued working separately. The programme has provided the mandate and structure to address the problems systemically."
Voice from the 2026 kick-off conference



¹³ According to the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth's urban-rural classification, a total of 27 out of 290 municipalities (9 per cent) are defined as sparsely or very sparsely populated rural municipalities, with more than 45 minutes' travel time by car to an urban area with at least 50,000 inhabitants. According to Statistics Sweden (SCB, 2025), 132 municipalities are classified as small municipalities with fewer than 15,000 inhabitants (46 per cent of all municipalities).

¹⁴ Approved project funding: higher-education institutions 45%, regions 14%, municipalities 14%, national government agencies 2%, other actors 25%.

¹⁵ [Future by Lund - the zone model](#), reflects where the primary focus lies from an organisational perspective: whether the emphasis is on developing the organisation itself, building partnerships in the "in-between space", or exploring the unknown. [OPSI's Innovation Facets \(OECD\)](#), describe how change is approached, ranging from improving existing practices to exploring the unknown. [Vinnova's five system dimensions](#) concern what in the system needs to change.

2.3 Growing understanding of system challenges

Interest in SustainGov continues to grow as the programme develops and results become visible. The Programme Office regularly contributes to national and local forums as speakers, co-organisers and partners. Through these arenas we share experiences, disseminate knowledge and bring together perspectives from different parts of the system.

2.3.1 Bold political steering is needed

System-wide reforms require political leadership that both commissions and enables change. Since the start of the programme, we have initiated and maintained dialogue with current and former politicians across all levels of government. Our role has been to provide systems insights, analysis, and supporting materials that offer new perspectives on how political leaders can enable and steer system transformation. This work continues through round-table discussions, meetings, seminars, and targeted advocacy efforts.¹⁶

Ongoing engagement with political decision-makers at national, regional and local levels is essential for creating a shared understanding of the need for systemic change. The *Almedalen Week*¹⁷ is a particularly important arena for this work.



2.3.2 Being present where transformation occurs

SustainGov has chosen to be present at arenas where the future public sector is discussed and formed. Through participation, co-arrangement and new collaborations, we reach wider audiences, build relationships and influence norms and assumptions about what is possible in and for the public sector.

At the *Impact Innovation Summit 2024*, we brought together leaders to analyse needs and discuss emerging system challenges. We also contributed to conferences such as

¹⁶ For example, the opinion piece titled “We need a reformed public sector” in *Dagens Samhälle*: <https://www.dagensamhalle.se/opinion/debatt/vi-behover-en-reformerad-offentlig-sektor/>

¹⁷ This is a democratic forum open to all – a unique blend of political summit and openness, offering a space for dialogue, exchange, and unexpected encounters that contribute to the development of society. <https://almedalsveckan.info/>

Solutions for the Public Sector, *Good Tech Conference* and *Skellefteå Society Summit*, where we, together with participating actors, explored how institutions' ability to meet complex challenges can be strengthened. Through *Innovationsveckan* and *Almedalen Week*, we continue to highlight results, open up opportunities for collaboration and bring decision-makers together to discuss the need for reform.

2.3.3 Being present on the international arena

SustainGov has begun to establish itself internationally. By participating in and co-organising conferences, networks and policy forums, the Programme Office has shared experiences, built relationships and positioned Sweden as a frontrunner in the development of a mission-driven public sector.

Activities during 2025 included participation in the OECD conference *Mission Forward* in Vienna as well as in a panel discussion during COP29 on data and governance. SustainGov's Programme Director delivered a keynote address at the first ever System Innovation Conference in London and co-organised a systems innovation conference in Brussels together with the European Commission's Joint Research Centre and Systems Innovation Networks. In November 2025, the Programme Office, together with Swecare and Vinnova, arranged an international exchange with the Centre for Healthcare Innovation in Singapore. We also welcomed a delegation from the Norwegian Government and took part in international panel discussions.¹⁸

Through these efforts, SustainGov has not only increased its international visibility but also contributed to shaping a growing global discussion on how the public sector can drive systemic change for health and wellbeing.

2.3.4 Our own arenas for learning and dialogue

To strengthen awareness of SustainGov and establish the programme as a relevant platform for change-oriented actors within the public sector, we have developed our own arenas for learning and knowledge exchange. In 2025 we launched the concept of *Learning Lunches*, regular digital sessions where participants meet guests who share insights, methods and experiences from public sector of relevance to the mission.¹⁹

An internal forum for joint reflection and learning - *SustainGov Live* - has also been established. Here, the entire Programme Office meets once monthly to develop practices, share and deepen knowledge across themes and working groups.

2.3.5 Information and matchmaking ahead of calls

An important aim for the programme is to attract high-quality projects to our portfolio that can contribute to systemic change in the public sector. Ahead of programme calls, we have therefore arranged digital information meetings, matchmaking sessions and in-person events in order for applicants to meet each other as well as representatives of the Programme Office and Vinnova.

¹⁸ For example, by participating in a UNICEF event together with the African Union, AfriLabs and Innovate Strategy on accelerating system-level impacts in a sustainable direction, and in a panel discussion on the future of healthcare at the British Embassy.

¹⁹ All Learning Lunch sessions can be viewed on the programme's YouTube channel: www.youtube.com/@SustainGov

Experience shows that these activities generate strong engagement and lower barriers to collaboration across sectors. An important lesson, however, is that we need to reach and broaden participation further. To make this possible, we plan to complement digital meetings with more in-person events around the country, and to seek collaborations with established arenas such as *Kvalitetsmässan*, a national conference dedicated to leading and developing the public sector.

2.4 Communication – telling the SustainGov story

Communication efforts developed and became more professional during 2025, with a clearer structure and more of a strategic focus. As the programme has grown, the need to bring together the SustainGov narrative and make both practices and results visible has become increasingly important.

Since spring 2025, the Programme Office has had a full-time communications lead, which has made it possible to strengthen content planning and produce more cohesive messaging. The website, launched in 2024, has been expanded with more relevant and up-to-date information about the programme and the project portfolio. SustainGov's presence on LinkedIn has also grown, with more regular postings and more than two thousand followers. In the autumn, SustainGov launched its first newsletter as an additional tool for sharing knowledge and reaching more actors in and around the public sector.

SustainGov appears regularly in the media in connection to programme calls, project results and our participation in various public-sector arenas.

Communication has played an important role in increasing awareness of SustainGov, explaining the mission and providing a consolidated picture of what is happening across the portfolio. It also supports mobilisation, builds recognition and strengthens a shared understanding among actors who want to contribute to public-sector development. Honing communications – including more consolidated and accessible information about project learnings and programme practices – will be central in the next phase.

2.4.1 A platform for learning, co-creation and community

SustainGov aims to be a knowledge hub and a meeting place for individuals and organisations that want to contribute to the development of the public sector. In 2025, a digital platform for learning, knowledge exchange and joint knowledge creation was launched.

The platform has initially been used internally as a work and communication tool for the Programme Office. From January 2026, it was opened to new participants within the project portfolio. Moving forward, it will also open to other interested actors. The ambition is for the platform to grow organically by gradually inviting established networks and groups, thereby creating an ever-expanding SustainGov community.

Selection of seminars, workshops and conferences that SustainGov has organised or participated in.

April–Sept 2024

24-25/4 Programme office kick-off, Sundsvall
25-28/6 Impact Innovation Day, Almedalen Week, Visby
30/8 Information meeting call Promote & Prevent
17/9 Political dialogue, pre-meeting Impact Innovation Summit, Helsingborg



Oct–Dec 2024

30/9 - 4/10 Innovation Week, 3 seminars
17/10 Good Tech Conference, Sundsvall
22/10 Symposium, Södertörn University
4/11 OECD conference, mission-oriented innovation, Vienna
20/11 Society Summit, Skellefteå
27/11 New European Bauhaus, Linköping



Jan–March 2025

25/1 Solutions for the Public Sector, Kista
4/2 First Learning Lunch – Curious about SustainGov
4/2 Kick-off conference Promote & Prevent, Stockholm
14/2 Systems Innovation Public Sector Conference, London
19/3 Learning Lunch - System perspective in practice



April–May 2025

28/4, 13/5 information meeting for the annual broad call
6/5 Learning Lunch – Social innovation
14/5 The Government Agency Festival Östersund
16/5 Impact Innovation Seminar - How we create impact in an unstable world
22/5 Matchmaking meeting for the annual broad call
28/5 Society Summit, Skellefteå



June–Aug 2025

5/6 Transition Lab forum, Linköping
9/6 Matchmaking meeting
23-27/6 Seminar, roundtable discussion and Impact Innovation Day, Almedalen Week, Visby
19/8, 22/8, 26/8 Information meeting and matchmaking for the annual broad call



Sept–Oct 2025

11/9 Learning Lunch – One stop agency shop
17-18/9 Kick-off for the new programme office
30/9 Closing conference Promote & Prevent
4-7/10 Innovation Week – three digital events
15/10 Conf. system innovation in the public sector, Brussels



Nov–Dec 2025

13/11 Learning Lunch – Collaboration between public sector & civil society
21/11 Symposium Capacity Building in the Public Sector, Stockholm
11/12 Learning Lunch – Procurement-friendly innovation management



www.sustaingov.se

3 From mobilisation to new knowledge and practice

SustainGov now enters a new phase of the ten-year programme: the period up to 2028, which focuses on deepening and further developing the work initiated during the mobilisation phase. After bringing actors together and establishing a shared direction, the next step is to develop new knowledge, test new practices and lay the groundwork for emerging reform proposals. This requires targeted ways of working, deepened collaborations and structures that strengthen shared learning and knowledge exchange.



3.1 The work ahead: developing new knowledge, practice and reform inputs

Going forward, the focus will shift from mobilising actors to developing new knowledge and new practices that can contribute to long-term systemic change. This entails developing more targeted approaches, deepening collaborations and strengthening the structures that enable continuous learning and knowledge exchange.

This, in turn, requires continued alignment and joint understanding within the Programme Office, as well as strengthened external conditions for change in dialogue

with the programme's wider ecosystem, not least the funding agencies within Impact Innovation.

3.2 New knowledge: project portfolio, learning and research

3.2.1 Learning, scaling and portfolio development

Working jointly on societal challenges and systems innovation across organisational boundaries places high demands on everyone involved. The Programme Office brings together many perspectives daily, and we have seen how patience, structure and trust have been crucial for maintaining directionality. Learning has been a guiding principle and compass helping us to navigate towards our mission.

As the programme develops, the project portfolio will become the main engine of change. We therefore prioritise structures and approaches that enable deeper shared learning, reduce barriers between projects and improve the conditions for scaling promising solutions. The Programme Office's new organisation, physical and digital meeting places and upcoming interventions are expected to contribute to more consistent support and a learning culture in which experiences are shared and further developed. The Programme Office will identify patterns, understand system effects and use these insights to develop concepts that can contribute to long-term change in the public sector.

3.2.2 Capabilities and new practices for system transformation

Insights from our mission-strategic projects – *HelhetsEnkelt* and *Capacity-building for System Transformation* – highlight the importance of strengthening public actors' abilities to understand, operate in as well as influence complex systems. This involves both developing individual competences as well as fostering a new type of change capacity in the public sector, where design, systems understanding and leadership enable long-term systems transformation.

In the coming years we will therefore further develop methods, tools and capacity-building interventions in areas such as systems understanding, strategic foresight and impact measurement. The work will be carried out in close collaboration with agencies, regions, municipalities and actors operating between the public and private sectors, with the ambition of enabling more actors to contribute actively to the mission.

3.2.3 Research as a foundation for legitimacy and learning

Research is an integrated part of SustainGov's change work. Going forward, and in close collaboration with the research school, we will focus on a limited number of research approaches that support mission-driven innovation and system interventions. Through transdisciplinary sub-studies, concept development and work on measurability, we aim to strengthen both the programme's scientific foundation and its practical relevance. Research will contribute to increased legitimacy, but also to learning that continuously develops the programme's orientation and helps us to prioritise.

3.3 New practice: development, testing and diffusion

New practice is developed in the project portfolio. Through annual calls and complementary instruments, we create arenas for systems understanding, experimentation, learning and joint action.

3.3.1 Annual broad call

The programme aims to conduct a broad annual call within our Focus Areas for feasibility studies, implementation projects and System Transformation Alliances. The benefits of an annual call are several, not least that awareness among potential applicants increases, which can raise both application volumes and quality. Our portfolio analysis shows broad participation, but also that we need to involve more small and rural municipalities to increase geographical reach and broaden the reach to their societal challenges. Moreover, a greater number of national government agencies need to be engaged in order to address complex issues that require involvement of actors from across all three political-administrative levels.²⁰

3.3.2 Tailored instruments for a mission-oriented approach

To achieve our mission and test new knowledge and practices, we need funding tools and ways of working that complement purely open and competitive calls. This includes targeted support to small municipalities that lack the capacity to participate in extensive application processes, as well as tools that facilitate collaboration with the Government Offices of Sweden. We try to draw lessons from our sibling programmes within Impact Innovation when shaping new instruments and in identifying opportunities for collaboration.

The intervention plan going forward contains proposals where more innovative funding formats will be needed, for example for collaborating with the Government Offices on systems innovation. In 2026, a *Systems Workshop* will be launched as an additional support for portfolio projects, focusing on methodological support, facilitation of learning and exchanging of experiences. To strengthen the knowledge-based approach, work is also planned to further develop theory and methods linked to the measurement of system effects.

3.4 Inputs for reforms: system influence and dialogue

In the coming years, the project portfolio will play an increasingly important role in SustainGov's work on strategic directionality and systems influence. The projects make systemic obstacles and opportunities visible, and show what changes are needed for actors to better manage complex societal challenges.

An important task for the Programme Office is to capture insights and learning from the projects that are most relevant for systems transformation. By bringing these insights into dialogue with policymakers and other actors, we create connections between what happens in the projects and the levels where long-term decisions are made.

²⁰ Specific efforts are being made to involve more national government agencies, including presenting the programme at the annual meetings of the Director-General Association and the Director-General Forum, as well as proactive outreach to agencies ahead of calls.

SustainGov will therefore continue to create arenas for dialogue across party lines, where project results can be discussed together with policymakers, researchers and other actors. The ambition is to contribute to a shared understanding of reform needs and to develop SustainGov as a knowledge and dialogue platform where project experience informs shared learning and further public-sector development.

3.5 Internationalisation

SustainGov aims to increase its international visibility and influence over the coming years. The internationalisation strategy seeks to position the programme as a relevant actor in the global discussion on public-sector transformation, contribute to EU-level policy development and establish long-term collaborations with international initiatives and research environments.

Through this work, both our knowledge base and our ability to contribute to systems change are strengthened, while experiences from Swedish projects can be brought into a broader international context. As SustainGov develops new knowledge and new practices, these international exchanges become particularly important for evolving our methods and giving additional legitimacy to the programme's continued development.

3.6 Remaining structural challenges

During the programme's build-up, we have identified several factors that continue to pose challenges. These include capacity constraints among the funders,²¹ strict rules for co-funding²² and limited access to data.²³ There will also continue to be a need to adjust the design of funding instruments and support both assessors and applicants in better understanding the programme's systems logic. For example, the third Focus Area, *Resilient Food Supply*, is now more clearly oriented towards preparedness, and we are also reviewing the orientation of the fourth Focus Area, *Future Social Contract*, as well as the mission statement.

In its analysis,²⁴ the OECD raises the question of the Impact Innovation programmes' actual scope to shape strategic direction.²⁵ At present, the Programme Office has a limited mandate in shaping calls, no role in the assessment of applications, and little influence over many decisions that affect the content of the portfolio. Strengthening the programme's strategic direction will therefore require new forms of collaboration with the funding agencies and a stronger mandate in matters that are decisive for the portfolio's content and thus the programmes directionality. The OECD also emphasises

²¹A major bottleneck in the past has been the lack of capacity among the funders. Staff turnover and limited resources have affected the programme's ability to realise planned interventions.

²² According to the funders' interpretation of GBER Article 27, only 50 per cent of costs may be covered per participating organisation rather than per consortium, regardless of whether the actor is public or private. This restricts the Programme Office's ability to finance shared costs. In addition, accountability requirements and legislation mean that a public actor is rarely able to finance the costs of another public actor.

²³ The Programme Office has limited access to data from Vinnova's application system, which makes learning and analysis of the project portfolio more difficult.

²⁴ https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2025/11/governance-of-ecosystem-driven-missions_25323007/72521628-en.pdf

²⁵ Including the Programme Office's limited ability to co-finance joint activities within the Programme Office using Impact Innovation funding (partly due to the funding agencies' interpretation of GBER Article 27), the limited decision-making mandate of the Programme Office secretariat and board to influence the outcome of programme calls, and the programme's dependence on competences and resources from the funding agencies in order to prepare, publish and manage interventions.

that current funding tools are not adapted to mission-oriented programmes, further underscoring the need for change.

3.7 The Theory of Change in the next phase

Experiences from the first years show that the Theory of Change must remain relevant and evolve as new knowledge and practices emerge and external contexts change. The theory should provide direction but also be adjusted as insights develop and the programme’s role changes.

Going forward, the Theory of Change needs to describe more clearly how SustainGov can act strategically despite limitations in mandate, and how system effects can arise in a fragmented governance environment. This requires continued exploration of the programme’s role as an enabler and a neutral platform for reforming the public sector. SustainGov has already begun to fill this role by bridging gaps between ecosystems, sectors and existing silos.

Our focus going forward is to strengthen the capability for long-term systems transformation – not only through project funding, but also through knowledge generation, exchange of experiences, experimentation, capacity-building, shared processes and new forms of system leadership. By continuously developing our work and our Theory of Change, SustainGov maintains its relevance and its ability to contribute to long-term systemic transformation. We keep our mission – the North Star – in sight as we work to create a reformed public sector that promotes health and wellbeing for all residents.



“Linguistic barriers, digital divides and fragmented government information make it difficult for many older foreign-born individuals to make well-informed decisions. Our preparatory project has resulted in a comprehensive solution: a module in the KASAM portal that consolidates and simplifies information, combined with a working method in which the target group are co-creators. The project has also built a broad alliance of actors and now a full implementation project that will deliver a solution for the life event ‘inclusion in my municipality’ as well as a scalable model for co-creation and system change.”
Michael Danielsson, Kasam Solutions AB

Participants in the programme office January 2026

Governance Board

Helene Hellmark Knutsson, County Administrative Board of Västerbotten (Chair)
 Anders Fällström, Mid Sweden University
 Ann Lindberg, the Swedish Medicines Agency
 Anna Eriksson, DIGG
 Camilla Asp, Swedish Church
 Christina Forsberg, Gävle Municipality
 Fredrik Rakar, Tomelilla Municipality
 Jens Hedström, Confederation of Swedish Enterprise
 Ola Odebäck, Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR)
 Therese Svanström, The Swedish Confederation of Professional Employees (TCO)

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Harald Rohrer, Linköping University
 Helen Forslind, National Audit Office
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 Michal Miedzinski, JRC, European Commission
 Matthijs Janssen, Utrecht University

Partners in the programme office

Mid Sweden University (coordinator)
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 County Administrative Board of Västerbotten
 Agency for Digital Government (DIGG)
 Norrbotten Municipalities
 Region Jämtland Härjedalen
 Science City Skellefteå AB
 National Veterinary Institute (SVA)
 Compare Foundation
 Sundsvall Municipality
 Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR)
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Funding agencies**

Marcus Nyberg, Vinnova
 Camilla Sjors, Vinnova
 Jonas Gumbel, Vinnova
 Lena Berg, Vinnova
 Coralie Chasset, Swedish Energy Agency
 Henrik Pompeius, Formas

*FOS: focus area strategist, 1-complex care needs, 2-inclusive society, 3-resilient food supply, 4-future social contract

**at responsible financiers, not a formal part of the programme office