

SITES Strategy 2023-2028: Vision, Mission and Strategic Goals

The Swedish Infrastructure for Ecosystem Science (SITES) is a network of stations that enables field-based research of the highest international standards. Each station brings a unique profile of research foci, expertise, experiments, long-term monitoring data and societal settings to the infrastructure built on shared scientific goals and methodologies. To facilitate comparison between climate zones, landscape elements and management systems, as well as to strengthen the collaboration within the network of stations, SITES has Thematic Programs in remote sensing, water monitoring and aquatic mesocosms. SITES focuses on terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems and recognizes the connectivity of elements within landscapes and between regions. Open access to the infrastructure and open data policies help attract national and international scientists to the possibilities that SITES provides for doing excellent environmental science. This has made SITES a highly valued, critically important infrastructure for research on ecosystems and landscapes found in Sweden, not least in the context of how the Earth System will respond to drivers of environmental change such as a warming climate.

Vision

Excellent research enabled by SITES supports evidence-based approaches to sustaining the integrity of ecosystems as a foundation of human well-being and in their own right. The quality and impact of the SITES field-based ecosystem research infrastructure makes it a compelling choice for use in new research initiatives.

Mission

SITES provides an ecosystem research infrastructure that enables scientists to develop and test theories with the observed realities of ecosystems in specific localities and landscapes. SITES facilitates access to field stations where context for new research is provided by long-term, standardized and openly available monitoring data, comprehensive documentation, as well as engagement with local residents and stakeholders. The stations also have on-site expertise to assist in the design and execution of scientific investigations that can span spatial and temporal scales as well as disciplinary boundaries. These features of SITES support national and international researchers who want to pursue research questions about how ecosystems function in response to anthropogenic pressures, natural variability and management efforts to achieve specific goals.

Strategic Goals

SITES meets the current needs of today's researchers while developing new opportunities that contribute to the understanding of long-term interactions between society and its environment. To achieve its mission, SITES strives to achieve strategic goals¹ characterized by the watchwords: Quality, Openly Available, and Sustainable. Progress towards these goals is reviewed annually.

¹ "Key Indicators" required by the Swedish National Research Council: Users (gender, career stage, PI, affiliation), Publications (by scientific discipline), Staff (gender, position title), Data downloads
"Key Indicators" initiated by SITES: Data usage, multiple station projects, publications by station and/or Thematic Program

Quality

1. *SITES promotes excellent ecosystem research and high-quality data that support this research.*
2. *More research projects utilize multiple SITES stations.*
3. *SITES Thematic Programs provide a basis for testing the generality of theories, including connections between aquatic and terrestrial processes.*
4. *SITES participates in international collaborations.*
5. *SITES becomes more integrated and cohesive.*
6. *The SITES network expands strategically.*
7. *SITES supports research that responds to societal challenges and needs.*
8. *SITES coordinates with other relevant research infrastructures, especially ACTRIS, ICOS and eLTER.*

Openly Available

9. *Data produced with SITES resources are quality-controlled, secure and readily available in accordance with the FAIR principles (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Reusable) with quality and methodologies well-documented.*
10. *Data treated by SITES is secure and openly available via the SITES Data Portal.*
11. *SITES works towards data standardization and the use of a single data entry (i.e. SITES Data Portal), especially within its Thematic Programs.*
12. *SITES Data Portal provides context that increases the power and feasibility of new research at, with and between the stations.*
13. *The use and awareness of SITES stations and data expands and diversifies, especially among early career scientists.*
14. *SITES engages constructively with local residents and stakeholders within its areas of activity.*
15. *SITES user support develops in response to researchers' needs.*

Sustainable

16. *SITES supports a good working environment for staff members, including opportunities for developing competencies.*
17. *Staff duties are appropriate to the available time and resources.*
18. *SITES has resilience in the capacity to accomplishment its tasks.*
19. *SITES is prioritized for long-term support by its host organizations.*
20. *SITES is diverse, inclusive, equitable and promotes gender equality.*