CALL FOR PROPOSALS

Research profiles 19

The Knowledge Foundation invites Sweden’s university colleges and new universities to apply for funding for research profiles. The programme is intended to be an essential tool to help universities further profile and develop their activities, through the establishment of internationally competitive research environments in well-defined areas of knowledge relevant to the business sector.

If you have questions about the call, please contact:

Stefan Östholm, programme manager
stefan.ostholm@kks.se 073-712 81 43

Åsa Ödling, programme administrator
asa.odling@kks.se 073-712 81 45

We require your application no later than 3 p.m. (15:00) on 21 January 2020
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About the Knowledge Foundation

The Knowledge Foundation finances research and competence development at Sweden’s university colleges and new universities1 with the purpose of strengthening Sweden’s competitiveness. We provide funding when activities are conducted in collaboration between academic staff and business sector partners. The aim is to build strong and profiled knowledge environments that co-produce research and education with the business sector.

The Knowledge Foundation will therefore also evaluate whether project proposals will contribute to the establishment of such integrated research and education environments.

Background of the programme

The Knowledge Foundation’s evaluations show that the individual research profiles generally have achieved the objectives that the Knowledge Foundation has established for the programme, i.e. they have produced favourable results and contributed to the development of universities and business partners. Given this background, the Knowledge Foundation once again invites to apply for funding to develop research profiles.

Purpose and objective of the programme

The programme aims to be an essential tool to help universities further profile and develop their activities.

The programme’s objective is to help universities to, systematically and over a longer period, develop and establish internationally competitive research environments in well-defined areas of knowledge relevant to the business partners and the business sector. Hence, the research profile is expected to maintain activities after the funded programme ceases.

1 Blekinge Institute of Technology, Swedish Defence University, The Swedish School of Sport and Health Sciences GIH, Dalarna University, University of Borås, University of Gävle, University of Halmstad, Jönköping University, Kristianstad University, University of Skövde, University West, Karlstads University, Konstfack University College of Arts, Crafts and Design, Linnaeus University, Malmö University, Mid Sweden University, Mälardalen University, Royal Institute of Art, Royal College of Music, Stockholm University of the Arts, Södertörn University and Örebro University.
Programme design

Research profiles is a strategic programme aimed at university management. An important starting point for the programme is that the application should be preceded by an internal process where university management actively have prioritised and selected a limited strategic area. A condition is that the research environment identified has received previous and ongoing grants from the Knowledge Foundation and from other research funding sources.

The Knowledge Foundation finances research profiles with between 30-40 million SEK over a period of 6 to 8 years. In addition, there will be a sum to cover overhead (OH) costs corresponding to 20 % of the direct costs. All funding from the Knowledge Foundation must be used for research, with a clear majority going towards senior researcher time. The percentage of senior researchers may vary over time depending on career planning and strategic recruitment for the research profile.

The research profile grant will serve as a hub for continued strategic development of a strong and sustainable research environment. Therefore it is important for the environment to attract further research grants from other funding sources to reinforce and complement the Knowledge Foundation’s investment.

Who may apply?

The call for proposals is open to Sweden’s university colleges and new universities. The vice-chancellor is responsible for the application, not the individual researcher or research group.

A university that plans to apply for funding must contact the programme manager as soon as possible well before the application deadline. The reason is to plan a meeting with the university to discuss the conditions for a research profile. Thereafter the application can be submitted in accordance with this call.

How should the funds be used?

Budgeting of funds must be in accordance with the instructions presented in the document Guidelines on Approved Expenditures (see www.kks.se).

The funds applied for should not include overhead. This will be added to the proposed contract, should the application be approved.
The Knowledge Foundation finances research profiles up to a maximum of 30-40 million SEK (excluding funding for OH) over a period of 6 to 8 years.

**University involvement**

The Knowledge Foundation requires that universities provide direct co-financing for the research profiles. The application must describe the university’s planned co-financing of the research profile over time. The university’s co-financing must be in accordance with the instructions presented in the document *Guidelines on Approved Expenditures* (see www.kks.se).

Universities must also supply the organisational support, to ensure that the research profile will achieve the objectives presented in the application.

Evaluation of university involvement focuses on the economic and organisational support provided by the applying university.

**Business sector involvement**

The application must present the planned co-financing of the research profile by the business partners, corresponding to at least 15-20 million SEK, i.e. full co-financing for the first half of the project. The remaining co-financing is reported to the Knowledge Foundation prior to the second half of the project period.

By “business sector”, the Knowledge Foundation refers primarily to privately owned companies. The concept, however, may include companies under public ownership that are active in competitive markets and where the company finances its operations in the same manner as private companies. Hence, public subsidies or fees may not constitute a significant part of the company’s revenues. None of the organisations may be solely administrative enterprises. Primarily they must produce goods or services. The companies must operate in Sweden to the extent that their input provides value for co-production and that they have the potential to integrate the results from co-production into their organisation here.

For information on co-production, see www.kks.se.
Formal requirements

An application must meet the following requirements before the Knowledge Foundation will consider it for evaluation. If the application does not meet the following requirements, it will be rejected without further evaluation.

- The project must be in line with the purpose and objective of the call.
- If any economic or personal links exists between the involved companies, between any company and university, or between any company and individual researcher(s), this must be disclosed on the application form. For example, ownership of shares, board memberships, employment/consultant work should be specified.
- Budgeting of funds must be in accordance with the instructions presented in the document Guidelines on Approved Expenditures (see www.kks.se).
- Senior researchers (PhD) must account for at least 50% of the research time financed by the Knowledge Foundation.
- The earliest starting date for the project: 2020-09-01.
- The latest starting date for the project: 2020-11-01.
- The application must specify the co-financing from participating companies in accordance with requirements presented in the call.
- The application must be signed by the vice-chancellor, the project owner and the project manager.

Evaluation

The secretariat of the Knowledge Foundation reviews the applications to determine if the application complies with the formal requirements. International experts review the scientific quality of the project (peer review). The Knowledge Foundation’s external evaluation panel will meet the applicants at a hearing. Thereafter, the panel will submit a recommendation to the General Manager of the Knowledge Foundation. Funding decisions are made by the board of Knowledge Foundation, based on the recommendations from the General Manager.

No additions or modifications to the application will be approved after submission of the application.
Evaluation criteria

Scientific quality:
- To what extent is there a progressive research agenda that provides the conditions for establishing an internationally competitive research environment?
- How strong is the knowledge about relevant research? How well does the scientific questions/problems address this?
- How clear and realistic are the scientific objectives?
- How clear and relevant are the scientific methods?
- How is the level of scientific expertise in the project group?

Benefits to the business partners:
- How relevant is the research agenda and the scientific goals in relation to the needs of the business partners?

Expected results and effects:
- How and to what extent does the proposed research profile lead to the realisation of an internationally competitive research environment?
- How and to what extent does the proposed research profile promote the development of the business partners?
- How and to what extent does the establishment of the research profile contribute to the university’s further development and profile?
- How and to what extent does the proposed research profile lead to the realisation of integrated research and education environments?

Implementation:
- To what extent does the participant constellation (business group and academics) of the research profile facilitate the joint production of knowledge?
- To what extent is the organisation and management (administrative and scientific) of the research profile aligned with the focus on academic legitimacy and practical implementation?
- To what extent is there a clear and realistic plan for future recruiting and career planning?
- Can the objectives of the research profile be implemented in pace with the proposed resources?
- To what extent is there a credible risk analysis in the application regarding the ability to manage unforeseen events?

The objectives of the research profile initiative cannot be achieved without a research group of sufficient size and a balance between different staff categories where researchers and postgraduate students have reached
different stages in their careers. Size is one of the prerequisites that must be met to create a strong research environment. In many instances, a problem-orientated and focused scientific approach relevant to the business partners and connected to education should provide favourable conditions for developing a dynamic research profile.

Investment in senior positions is important to long-term survival and development. Hence, the Knowledge Foundation aims to achieve a higher percentage of postdoctoral and senior fellowships in relation to doctoral students. This can be balanced during the funding period so that in the final phase the research profile has a higher percentage of senior fellowships than when it started.

Application

Applications are submitted via the Knowledge Foundation’s website, www.kks.se by the project manager. This is important as the applicant’s account is connected to the project and reporting

The application should state who will be project manager. The project manager is responsible for the implementation of the project. The application should also state who within the university is project owner. The project owner, who should have staff and budget responsibility at a senior level, has the overall responsibility for ensuring proper conditions for implementing and monitoring the project. The project owner may be a department head or another appropriate person, in accordance with the institution's internal organization and delegation. In this case, the vice-chancellor may be project owner.

Project budget is to be filled in the application form. Please note that the application should not include overhead costs (see above).

Signatures from the project manager, the project owner and the vice-chancellor are required. The project manager's signature means that she or he is prepared to take responsibility for the described implementation according to stated project plan. The project owner and the vice-chancellor assure through their signatures that the university approves the project and will be involved according to the project description.

Applications should be written in English to enable international peer review.

The appendices should be organised as follow:

1. Project host environment (1-2 pages)
Describe the project host environment, including both research and education, clearly outlining its current situation, its aspirations and the way forward, your development needs, strategies and ambitions with regard to research and education in collaboration.

The description should include the following headings (each heading entails both education and research)

- Current situation, development needs and challenges
- Aspirations and strategy
- Main results of the past few years
- Personnel composition (number within each employment category)
- Funding (internal, external and from industry)
- Collaboration partners (academic and non-academic).

2. The Project’s contribution to the research and education environment (0.5-1 page)

Describe the strategic value of the proposed enterprise by demonstrating how the project will support the development of the host environment, in relation to your aspirations within collaborative education and research.

3. Description of the research profile (max 50 pages)

3.1 Objective of research profile (approx 3 pages)
- Formulate overarching and specific objectives for the research profile.

3.2 Establishment of the research profile (approx 8 pages)
- Describe the current organisation and administrative and scientific leadership of the research environment, followed by a description of the organisation and administrative and scientific leadership of the proposed research profile.
- Describe how the research profile fits in with the strategy of the university.
- Describe the co-financing of the research profile by the university, business partners, and the Knowledge Foundation over time.
- Present a risk analysis regarding the establishment of the research profile.
- Present a recruitment and career plan for the research profile.

3.3 Research (approx 20 pages including publication list)
- Describe the research in relation to the research area in Sweden and internationally.
• Describe the research environment’s main results during the past 3 to 5 years.
• Present a research plan for the entire period and the specific research projects (e.g. objectives, issues, subject areas, and methodology questions) during the first 3 to 4 years of the research profile.
• List the publications that the research environment wishes to include. No more than three publications per researcher.

3.4 Co-production of knowledge by the parties involved (approx 10 pages)
• Describe the relevance of the business partners to the research environment. Describe the companies’ involvement, needs, and benefits regarding the research environment.
• Describe how co-production between companies and the university has taken place in the research environment and the projected nature of future collaboration.

3.5 Two initial projects within the Research Profile (approx. 10 pages)
• Give a thorough description of two initial research projects within the research profile. Describe the scientific questions, co-production, methods and preliminary results that generates usefulness for both industry and academia. Give a final description of on how the scientific projects plays an important role in setting up the research profile at the university.

4. Qualifications, CVs (not exceeding 2 pages per person)
• Include the CVs of key individuals in the project, both university and business partners (CVs exceeding 2 pages will not be taken into account).

5. Letters of Intent
• For at least the first half of the project; signed letters of intent from each of the co-producing companies that briefly justifies the company's interest in the project and expresses the intention to participate in funding granted from the Knowledge Foundation.

6. Peer reviewers

7. Signatures (appendix form)
• Template is to be downloaded from www.kks.se.
• The application must be signed by the project manager, project owner and principal. Applications that do not have signatures are not processed.
Timetable and decisions

- Universities that plan to apply for funding must as soon as possible during early autumn contact the programme manager.
- The Knowledge Foundation must receive the application no later than 3 p.m. (15:00) on 2020-01-21.
- As soon as the Knowledge Foundation receives the applications, the forms will be reviewed. During February the General Manager will render a decision on whether an application meets the formal requirements, or will be rejected without further review.
- International experts will review the scientific quality of the applications during the spring of 2020.
- Hearings with applicants will be conducted during the spring 2020.
- After the hearing and evaluation meeting, the external evaluation panel will submit its final recommendation to the General Manager of the Knowledge Foundation.
- The Knowledge Foundation board will render a decision in late June 2020.