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CALL FOR PROPOSALS

# Prospekt 20

## Research projects for early career researchers

The Knowledge Foundation invites Sweden's university colleges and new universities to join with the business sector in applying for funding of research projects for early career researchers. The research projects must be conducted in co-production with the business sector. The projects will strengthen early career researchers in their development towards becoming independent researchers and will contribute towards development and innovation at the university or university college and among participating companies.

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If you have questions, please contact:

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We require your application  
no later than 3 p.m. (15:00)  
on August 28, 2020

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## About the Knowledge Foundation

The Knowledge Foundation finances research and competence development at Sweden's university colleges and new universities<sup>1</sup> with the purpose of strengthening Sweden's competitiveness. We provide funding when research activities are conducted in collaboration between academia and business partners. The aim is to build strong and profiled knowledge environments that co-produce research and education with the business sector. The Knowledge Foundation does not identify specific research areas and calls are open for all scientific and artistic research fields.

## Background of the programme

In a competitive system for research funding where much focus is on the applicant's previous research experience, early career researchers are often unsuccessful. At the same time, promising early career researchers need the opportunity to manage their own research projects that also benefit to their professional career.

## Purpose and objective

The Prospekt programme provides opportunity for early career researchers to independently manage a research project in co-production with business partners. The partners in the project should together investigate a clearly defined question which is appropriate to the scope of the project and the competences of the partners. The objective is to enable early career researchers to develop into independent researchers and at the same time contribute towards development and innovation among participating partner companies. Prospekt is also a possibility for renewal of research groups by recruiting promising early career researchers which may contribute to the development of the research and education environment.

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<sup>1</sup> 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, Karlstad 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.

## Who may apply?

Sweden's university colleges and new universities may apply. The Knowledge Foundation welcomes applications within all scientific and artistic research fields. When the application concerns an artistic field of research, the concept *scientific* is replaced by *artistic* in the call.

The project manager must be an early career researcher, which means that from the date which is stipulated on the doctoral degree certificate until the closing date for applications (August 28, 2020) he or she should have been academically active for a maximum of 3 years. Time during which the project manager has not been academically active, for example employment in business sector or parental leave, will not be counted.

The Knowledge Foundation encourages mobility and especially welcomes applications from researchers who received their doctorate from a university other than the one applying to host the project. Early career researchers may also apply for funding even if they are currently employed at another university, in the business sector or by industrial research institutes. When the project begins, however, the researcher must be employed by the proposed host university (within the target group of the Knowledge Foundation, see footnote 1).

The project must be co-produced with business partners (see definition under *Business sector involvement*). Other collaborating partners (e.g. public agencies, research institutes, other universities) may participate in the project, but their input does not count as co-financing.

## How should the funds be used?

Applications for funding from the Knowledge Foundation should not exceed 2 million SEK, excluding overhead costs (see below).

Funding from the Knowledge Foundation should primarily be used to finance the salary of the project manager, i.e. the early career researcher. We encourage the project manager to engage outside the research project in teaching, other research projects or other duties at the department that can contribute to the career development. However, this cannot be included in the Prospekt project in which the project manager should spend approximately 70-80 % of full time.

In addition to salary costs, expenses directly related to the project e.g. costs for facilities and materials, can be included in the budget. The Knowledge Foundation encourages the early career researcher to include appropriate leadership training during the project, which can also be included in the budget. Salary costs covering additional resource/s may be included given it is a limited activity, such as for example collection of material or tests (note that PhD students cannot be financed through Prospekt). Salary costs covering this additional resource/s cannot exceed 1/3 of the salary costs for the early career researcher. The activities of additional resources should be clearly described and motivated in the project plan.

The application must present a budget that covers the entire project. This includes funding from the Knowledge Foundation, business partner resources in the project and contributions from the university. Costs accrued before or after the approved project period cannot be accepted.

The budget should present the direct costs of the project. Overhead costs should not be included. Such costs will be calculated and included in the proposed contract if the Knowledge Foundation approves the application.

Budgeting of funds must comply with the instructions presented in the document '*Guidelines on Approved Expenditure*' (see [www.kks.se](http://www.kks.se)).

## University involvement

The university must contribute resources to the project corresponding to at least 20 % of the amount requested from the Knowledge Foundation. If 1,000,000 SEK is requested from the Knowledge Foundation then the university must contribute resources corresponding to 200,000 SEK.

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

A reference group must be tied to the project. This group should include at least two researchers (at least one of whom is a 'docent') which are connected to the research environment where the project manager will work, but also one researcher from another university. If the external researcher is active at a university which is not part of the foundation's target group (se footnote 1), the university hosting the project must cover the costs for this person. The project manager's doctoral supervisor may not be included in the reference group. The reference group provides the researcher with advice and recommendations concerning the project and the researcher's professional development.

## Business sector involvement

The business partners' contribution to the project must correspond to at least the same amount as that requested from the Knowledge Foundation.

By *business sector*, the Knowledge Foundation refers primarily to the private business sector. 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 companies in the private business sector. Hence, public subsidies or fees may not constitute a significant portion of the company's revenues. None of the organizations may be solely administrative enterprises. Primarily they must produce goods or services.

Projects must be *co-produced* with business partners, which means that the academic and business actors, from their different perspectives, together must formulate and address a scientific question<sup>2</sup>. The question presented in the application should be based on a relevant problem that, if solved, will benefit the company. From an academic perspective, the solution to the question should contribute to the advancement of scientific knowledge.

The companies must operate in Sweden to the extent that their input provides value for co-production and they have the potential to integrate the results from co-production into their organizations here. For companies with fewer than 10 employees and/or less than 10 million SEK in annual turnover (based on the most recent annual

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<sup>2</sup> When the application concerns an artistic field of research, the concept *scientific* is replaced by *artistic* in the call.

report), the conditions for co-production in the project must be very clearly described.

To achieve an adequate level of co-production, the participation of 2 to 4 companies is recommended for the project. In exceptional cases co-production may involve only a single company in the project. In such cases it is particularly important to clearly describe the project's scientific relevance.

If economic or personal links exist between the companies involved, between any company and the university, or between any company and an individual researcher, this must be disclosed. The project plan must clearly indicate any personal conflicts of interest, and the individuals' various roles in the company or university must be clearly described.

## Formal requirements

The application must meet the following requirements before the Knowledge Foundation will consider it for evaluation:

- The project must be in line with the purpose and objective of the call.
- The project must include the participation of business partners, and the project plan and budget must describe the involvement of all partners.
- The project should run for 1 to 2 years.
- Funds requested from the Knowledge Foundation should not exceed 2 million SEK. If funding is awarded, an additional 20 % will be added to cover overhead costs.
- The earliest starting date is 2021-01-01, and the latest is 2021-04-01.
- The project manager may not have been academically active for more than 3 years, which must be shown in the CV.
- The project manager must at the starting date of the project be employed by the host university.
- The university must contribute resources to the project corresponding to at least 20 % of the amount requested from the Knowledge Foundation. This must be presented in the budget.

- The project manager should be supported by a reference group (see above).
- The contribution to the project by business partners must correspond to at least the same amount as that requested from the Knowledge Foundation. This must be presented in the budget.
- Any economic or personal conflicts of interest among the partners in the project must be disclosed (see above).
- Business partners who are co-financers must fall within the Knowledge Foundation's definition of *business sector*.
- The costs presented in the budget must be in compliance with the document 'Guidelines on Approved Expenditures' (see [www.kks.se](http://www.kks.se)).
- The vice-chancellor, project owner and project manager must sign the application.

## Evaluation

The secretariat of the Knowledge Foundation reviews the applications to determine if they comply with the formal requirements. The scientific part of the project is then evaluated by international peers (peer review). Using the peer review as a base, an external evaluation panel for the programme conducts a comprehensive evaluation and makes a recommendation for decision. The evaluation process is based on the aspects and criteria presented below. In evaluating Prospekt applications, the criterion concerning the project manager's professional development is given a great weight in the evaluation (underlined below).

### Evaluation criteria

#### **Scientific<sup>3</sup> quality**

- How well does the application relate to the state-of -the-art within the research field? How well does the scientific question/problem address this?
- How clear and realistic are the scientific objectives?

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- How clear and relevant are the scientific methods?
- How strong are the project manager's scientific qualifications for implementing the project?

#### **Benefits to the business partners**

- How relevant is the scientific question/problem in relation to the needs of participating companies?

#### **Expected results and effects**

- To what extent is the project and the personal development plan expected to contribute to the professional development of the project manager and the possibility to become an independent researcher?
- To what degree will the project generate results of good quality (e.g. scientific publications)?
- To what extent is the project expected to contribute to the development of participating companies?
- How, and to what extent, is the project expected to contribute towards advancement of the research and education environment?

#### **Implementation**

- How well planned and organized is the work of the project, particularly regarding work distribution and co-operation among the partners?
- How well is the reference group composed?
- How well does the budget reflect funding needs outlined in the project plan?

The evaluation process does not allow for additional material to be submitted after the deadline for application submissions (but see below about PhD-certificates).

## Application

Applications are submitted via the Foundation's website, [www.kks.se](http://www.kks.se).

The application should be signed by the project manager, the project owner and the vice-chancellor. The signature of the project manager means that he or she is prepared to take responsibility for the implementation of the project according to the application. The project owner and the vice-chancellor confirm by their signatures that the university supports the project and will participate according to the project description.

At least the project abstract, project plan and the CV:s for university personnel should be written in English to enable international peers to review and evaluate the project.

To facilitate the search for the most relevant peers, one international and one Swedish reviewer with extensive knowledge within the research field, and without known conflicts of interest, should be suggested.

The project budget is filled in directly in the application form, excluding overhead costs.

*The following appendixes (as pdf-files) should be attached to the application and in the same order as below:*

- 1. The project's host academic environment** (not exceeding 2 pages).

*Upload under 'Host research and education environment'*

Describe the academic environment and its research and education activities so the current position and future plans are shown. What is the environment's development needs, strategies and ambitions regarding research and education in collaboration?

The description should include the following headings (each heading refers to both education and research):

- current position and development needs,
- strategies and ambitions,
- main results of the past few years,
- staff composition,

- funding,
- collaboration partners (academic and non-academic).

**2. The project's expected contribution to the research and education environment** (not exceeding 1 page).

*Upload under 'Host research and education environment'*

Describe the strategic value of the proposed project by demonstrating how the project will support the development of the academic environment in line with the university's aspirations for collaborative research and education.

**3. Project plan** (not exceeding 10 pages) including:

*Upload under 'Attachments in accordance with the call and in the same order as stated in the call'.*

- The scientific questions/problems that will be dealt with in the project, how they relate to the research front and their relevance to the business sector.
- The expected results and effects of the project that address the needs of the applicant, the research area, and the participating business partners.
- The implementation of the project, e.g. describing the contributions of the respective partners and how they complement each other's expertise. The work of the key persons covered by the budget, including those from the business partners, must be described.
- Description of and rationale for costs presented in the budget, indicating e.g. what equipment or material is included, why it is relevant to the project, and how the costs have been calculated. This also applies co-financing from business partners.

**4. Plan for professional development** (not exceeding 2 pages)

*Upload under 'Attachments in accordance with the call and in the same order as stated in the call'.*

Describing how the project, and other related activities, contribute to the project manager's professional development and possibilities to become an independent researcher. Additional activities could be other tasks within research and education, networking, internationalization, leadership training etc. The plan should also

describe how the reference group will support the professional development of the project manager.

**5. Qualifications** (not exceeding 2 pages per person)

*Upload under 'Attachments in accordance with the call and in the same order as stated in the call'.*

CVs containing relevant information about key participants in the project, including key business participants (CVs exceeding 2 pages per person will not be considered in the evaluation).

**6. Copy of the projects manager's PhD certificate**

*Upload under 'Attachments in accordance with the call and in the same order as stated in the call'.*

If the applicant at the time of the application has not yet received a PhD-certificate but will do so in a short time, the PhD certificate may be added later. In that case, this should be clearly stated in the application.

**7. Letter of intent from each of the companies participating in the project**

*Upload under 'Attachments in accordance with the call and in the same order as stated in the call'.*

Signed letter of intent from each of the co-producing companies should be added. The letters should briefly describe the company's commitment, role and contribution, as well as the company's motives and value for participation in the project.

**8. Signatures** (use template from [www.kks.se](http://www.kks.se))

*Upload under 'Attachments in accordance with the call and in the same order as stated in the call'.*

The application must be signed by the vice-chancellor, the project owner and the project manager. The form for signatures can be downloaded from [www.kks.se](http://www.kks.se)

Applications without signatures will not be considered.

## Timetable and decisions

- Your application including appendixes must be completed no later than 3 p.m. (15:00) on August 28, 2020.
- The Knowledge Foundation's secretariat will review all applications for compliance with formal requirements. The CEO of the foundation may decide to reject applications failing to comply with the formal requirements.
- International peers will review the scientific quality of applications during September.
- The external evaluation panel will submit its final recommendation to the CEO in October.
- The CEO will render a decision on financing and applicants will be notified no later than November 30, 2020.
- After the signing of agreements with the Knowledge Foundation, projects may start between January 1 and April 1, 2021.