
CALL FOR PROPOSALS

Synergy 20 - Research Projects

The Knowledge Foundation invites Sweden's university colleges and new universities to apply for research funding. The research project is to be carried out in collaboration with the business sector and is supposed to contribute to renewal within academia and development of participating business partners. The synergy programme aims to provide a tool to support the universities in their ambition to focus the orientation of research, and thus develop strong research environments that strengthen the profiling of the university.

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We require your application no
later than 3 p.m (15:00) on
January 27th 2021

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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 research and education 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.

Purpose and objective

The synergy programme aims to serve as a tool for universities that wish to focus on research based on a defined core question, that would contribute to a research front. The Synergy programme opens the possibility to address research questions that may require the competence from different scientific areas.

The objective of the programme is to offer universities a possibility to carry out research activities addressing a well-defined research question, which is of relevance also for the business sector. A synergy project should facilitate the higher education institution to develop a platform to serve as base for continuing profiling activities.

Programme design

The *Synergy* as a programme is supposed to involve a number of subprojects as well as an overarching synergy project. The subprojects should complement each other and together address a complex research question, which in this call is denoted "core question". Thus, with the core question as starting point and driving force, the subprojects should be designed. The subprojects themselves should together be sufficient and necessary to answer the core question. The overarching synergy work to answer the core question should be designed as an individual project. The programme enables, but does not obligate, addressing research questions that may require the competence from several different scientific disciplines.

The application must therefore include a description of the overarching synergy work as an individual project as well as the, at least three, defined subprojects. The content, execution and comprehension of the projects in relation to one another should be clearly stated in the application.

The Synergy programme in short

- In a Synergy project, the core question is the coordinating factor that navigates the design and objectives of the subprojects with the overarching synergy work in focus.

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, 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.

- The subprojects should together be sufficient and necessary to answer the core question.
- The overarching synergy work to address the core question is to be designed as a project in addition to the, at least three, specified subprojects.
- A Synergy project may cover several scientific disciplines.

A Synergy project should span over 3 to 4 years, and the maximum grant is 10 million SEK. Total funding requested from the Knowledge Foundation must, at least, be matched by business sector contributions. However, each individual subproject in the Synergy project must not meet this requirement.

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.

Universities planning to apply are welcomed to get in contact with the programme manager, preferably at an early stage in the application process, to discuss the prerequisites for an application.

How should the funds be used?

Funding from the Knowledge Foundation should be used to pay for researchers employed at Sweden's university colleges or new universities, and direct project-related costs, e.g. cost of facilities and material.

The application must present a budget that encompasses the entire project. This includes reporting on funding from the Knowledge Foundation, company resources used in the project, and any contributions from the university. The budget should present the direct costs of the project. In its funding decision, the Knowledge Foundation can reduce the budget. Costs accrued before the approved project period cannot be accepted.

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 be in accordance with the instructions presented in the document *Guidelines on Approved Expenditures* (see www.kks.se).

University involvement

The Knowledge Foundation welcomes, but does not formally require, co-financing from the university.

The project manager is responsible for the implementation of the project. The coordinating role of the project leader is important in a Synergy project. Therefore, particular focus will be directed to assessing the suitability of proposed project leader. The project leader of the Synergy project may also be project leader for one of the subprojects.

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. The project owner has the formal responsibility for the conducting and follow-up of the project on a superior level.

Business sector involvement

The business partners' contribution to the project, through in-kind initiatives and/or direct financing must correspond to at least the same amount requested from the Knowledge Foundation in the application.

Projects must be co-produced with business partners. Co-production means that the academic and business sectors, from their respective perspectives, together formulate and address a scientific question/problem. The question presented in the application should be based on a problem that, if solved, will benefit the company – and, from an academic perspective, the solution to the question/problem should contribute to the advancement of scientific knowledge. For more information on co-production, see www.kks.se.

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. The organizations must primarily produce goods or services and may not be solely administrative enterprises. The organizations must have operations in Sweden to the extent that their engagement will generate value for the collaboration and have possibilities to integrate the results from the collaborations into their operations.

The business partners input in the project must be described and justified in the application. In companies with fewer than 10 employees and/or less than SEK 10 million in annual turnover (based on the most recent annual report), the conditions for co-production in the project must be very clearly described.

If any economic or personal links exist between the involved companies, between any company and university, or between any company and individual researcher(s), this must be disclosed. The project plan must clearly indicate any personal conflicts of interest, and the individual's various roles in the company or university must be fully described. For example, ownership of shares, board memberships, employment/consultant work should be specified.

Formal requirements

The 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.
- The application should include parts and appendices according to the call instructions.
- Maximum funding from the Knowledge Foundation is 10 million SEK.
- Maximum project time is 4 years.
- The project must include participation from business sector partners, and the project plan and budget must describe the involvement of all partners.
- The business sector's total commitments of in-kind contributions and/or direct financing must match or exceed the sum contributed by the Knowledge Foundation.
- The application should include a signed letter of intent from the participating companies, which describes their individual reasons for participating and their planned contributions.
- The companies must fall within the Knowledge Foundation's definition of "business group".
- 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 or similar artistic merits) must account for at least 50% of the research time financed by the Knowledge Foundation.
- The earliest starting date for the project is 2021-09-01 and the latest starting date for the project is 2021-11-01.
- The vice-chancellor, project owner and the project manager must sign the application.

Evaluation

The secretariat of the Knowledge Foundation will review the applications concerning the formal requirements. If the formal requirements are met international experts will thereafter conduct a peer-review on the scientific or artistic quality of the project.

The applications are also assessed by an external evaluation panel based on the criteria below. At a formal hearing key personal in the project are given the opportunity to answer complementary question from the evaluation panel. The external evaluation panel are thereafter making an overall assessment and offer a recommendation.

Funding decisions are made by the CEO of the Knowledge Foundation, based on recommendations from the external evaluation panel.

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

Evaluation criteria

Scientific quality²

The Synergy

- How (and why) is the core question address relevant, cutting-edge research? How well does the scientific question connect to the subprojects and address the objective of the Synergy core question?

Per subproject

- How well does each subproject and its scientific question relate to relevant research?
- How clear and realistic are the scientific objectives?
- How clear and realistic are the scientific methods?
- What is the level of scientific expertise in the project group?

Benefits to the business partners

The synergy

- How well does the relevance of the core question meets the demands of the participating business partners?

Per subproject

- How do business partners benefit from their participation in the individual subprojects?

Expected results and effects

- To what extent is the Synergy project expected to contribute towards renewal and profiling of concerned research areas?
- To what extent is the subprojects as well as the overarching synergy project expected to generate results of high academic quality (e.g. scientific publications/documentated artistic research)?
- To what degree is the Synergy project expected to contribute to the development and positioning of an integrated research and education environment?
- To what extent is the project expected to contribute to development of participating companies?

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

Implementation

The Synergy

- How well is the core question defined, and how well are the subprojects contribute to the synergy of the core question?
- How clear are the objectives of the Synergy project?
- Competence and capacity of the project management to apprehend the synergy evolving from the project?
- Is the overall project plan realistic?

The subprojects

- How clear is each individual subproject formulated on the basis of being necessary and sufficient to answer the core question?
- How well planned and organised is the work of the subprojects, with particular focus on the expected contributions of the different subprojects?
- How well does the budget reflect the project plan?

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.

Signatures from the project manager, the project owner and the vice chancellor are required. The project manager's signature implies responsibility for the described implementation. The project owner and the vice chancellor assure through their respective signatures that the university approves the project and will be involved according to the project description. Abstract, the project plan and CV's for project staff from the university should be written in English to enable international peer review.

To facilitate peer recruitment, the applicant is requested to suggest three scientific experts qualified to evaluate the application. Of the three experts, one should be affiliated in Sweden and two outside of Sweden. The applicant must assert that suggested experts are free from conflict of interest.

The project budget is filled out in the application form. Note that the application should not cover overhead costs.

The appendices (as pdf-files) of the application are the following and should be allocated in the following order:

1. **Description of project host research and education environment** (not exceeding 2 pages)
To be uploaded under 'Host research and education environment'.

Describe the Project host environment, including both research and education, clearly

outlining its current situation, its aspirations and the way forward. Describe the need of development, strategies and aspirations in relation to research, education and collaboration.

- Present position and need of development
- Aspirations and strategy
- Main results of last years
- Personnel composition
- Funding
- Collaboration partners (academic and non-academic)
- Development needs and challenges

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

To be uploaded under "Host research and education environment"

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

3. **Project plan** (not exceeding 30 pages)

To be uploaded under "Attachments in accordance with the call and in the same order as stated in the call".

3.1. *Synergy project's core question (approx. 2 pages)*

- Describe the Synergy core question and its relevance to business partners.
- Explain and justify the contribution of the different subprojects towards answering the core question. Describe how the individual projects are necessary in order to address the core question. Also, describe how the individual projects put together are sufficient to answer the core question.

3.2. *Overall project plan (max 3 pages)*

- Present the project plan (incl. timetable) for the whole of the Synergy project and describe how the implementation of the various subprojects relate to the whole and the answering of the core question.

3.3. *Objectives (max 1 page)*

- Present the objectives of the Synergy project.
- Present the objectives of the subprojects and how these objectives relate to and support the objective of the Synergy project.

3.4. *Organisation, strategy, risk analysis (approx. 5 pages)*

- Describe the organisation of the Synergy project (project management, steering committee, administration, and scientific leadership).
- Describe the organisation and scientific management of relevant research environments. If the Synergy project involves more than one (1) research environment, these should also be described.
- Describe how the Synergy application fits in with the strategy of the university.
- Describe the co-financing, over time, of the Synergy project and subprojects by the university, business partners, and the Knowledge Foundation.
- Present a risk analysis.

3.5. *Presentation of subprojects (max 18 pages, approx. 6 pages per subproject, incl. list of publications)*

- Describe the research in the respective projects in relation to corresponding research in Sweden and abroad.
- Present project plans for the individual projects (question/problem, methods, resources, timetable, etc.).
- List the publications that the applicant wishes to refer to. Maximum of 3 publications per researcher.
- Describe the relevance of the subprojects to the business sector(s). Describe the companies' inputs, needs, and benefits.
- Describe how co-production between the companies and university will take place.

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

To be uploaded under "Attachments in accordance with the call and in the same order as stated in the call."

Include CVs from key individuals in the project, from both the university and the business partners (max 2 pages per person, including relevant publications in the area).

Note that the Synergy project manager's previous experience from assignments as project manager must be made clear.

5. **Letter of intent from participating companies**

To be uploaded 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, which briefly justifies the company's interest in the project which describes their individual reasons for participating and their planned contributions.

6. **Signatures from the university** (use template from www.kks.se).

To be uploaded under "Attachments in accordance with the call and in the same order as stated in the call."

The application should be signed by the vice-chancellor, the project owner and the project manager. Applications without signatures can unfortunately not be considered for assessment.

Timetable and decision

- The Knowledge Foundation must receive your application no later than January 27, 2021 at 3 p.m. (15:00).
- The applications will be reviewed for compliance with formal requirements.
- International experts will review the scientific quality of applications during February and March 2021.
- The external evaluation panel will submit its final recommendation to the CEO of the Knowledge Foundation in May 2021.
- The Knowledge Foundation's board will render a decision in June, and the applicant is informed thereafter.
- Granted projects may commence after agreement signing, earliest 2021-09-01 and latest at 2021-11-01.