
CALL FOR PROPOSALS

Research Profiles 20

The Knowledge Foundation invites Sweden's university colleges and new universities to apply for funding for *Research Profiles*. The programme is intended to be a major tool for universities in their strategic development and further international profiling of selected areas of research. The aim of the programme is for universities to develop and strengthen internationally competitive research environments with strong relevance to the business sector, and with a potential for further development after the end of the programme.

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We require your application no
later than 3 p.m. (15:00) on
22 January 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 programme is intended to be a major tool for universities in their strategic development and further international profiling of selected areas of research.

The programme's objective is for universities to develop and strengthen internationally competitive research environments with strong relevance to the business sector, and with a potential for further development after the end of the programme.

Programme design

The Knowledge Foundation finances research profiles up to a maximum of SEK 30-40 million (excluding funding for OH) over a period of 6 to 8 years.

Research Profiles is a strategic programme aimed at the university management. An application should be preceded by an internal process where the university management has actively prioritised and selected a well-defined strategic area. A research profile should be firmly grounded in the strategy of the university.

Research environments within the *Research Profiles* programme are assumed to have come a long way in their development. Suitable environments should be cohesive, with clear scientific strengths, strong publication and an adequate research volume to take on challenging research tasks. The ability to carry out research with the business sector should be well established.

The focus of the Profile Programme is on strengthening research. However, a viable profile needs a good connection to a relevant education portfolio. A research profile should support the establishment of integrated research environments, where research and education are mutually supportive.

The personnel and recruitment plan should support the scientific ambitions and viability of the research profile. A good balance between senior and junior researchers is obviously a part of this. Senior researchers (PhD) must account for at least 50% of the total research time financed by the Knowledge Foundation. The percentage of senior researchers, however, may vary over time as the profile develops.

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 research profile should serve as a hub for continued strategic development of a strong and sustainable research environment. Therefore, the research environment should have the ability to attract further research grants from other funding sources to reinforce and complement the Knowledge Foundation's investment.

The Knowledge Foundation has over a long period of time evaluated profile proposals as well as the progress of ongoing profiles. From this work, some success factors contributing to a sustainable profile has been identified.

- The research profile is developed from a clear view of the international research position of the research environment and how this position can be strengthened.
- There is a unifying and progressive research agenda, propelled by carefully considered research objectives that are supported by the presented portfolio of sub-projects.
- The organisation of the research profile supports a clear and effective leadership throughout the entire duration of the profile.
- The business sector is actively involved in the development of the profile, with companies reaping benefits for themselves, as well as contributing to the common agenda of the profile.
- Implementation of the profile and the monitoring of progress are supported by clear objectives and indicators, driving the ambitions for increased scientific impact.
- There are clear strategies for publication, internationalisation and the scientific positioning of the environment, giving support to the ambitions for the profile.

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.

A university that plans to apply for funding must contact the programme manager as soon as possible to discuss the conditions for a research profile. Thereafter, the application can be further developed and submitted in accordance with this call.

How should the funds be used?

Funding from the Knowledge Foundation could be used to finance employees at Sweden's university colleges or new universities, as well as for direct project-related costs, such as facilities costs and materials.

Budgeting of funds must comply with the instructions in the document '*Guidelines on Approved Expenditure*' (see www.kks.se).

The budget should only present direct costs of the project. Overhead costs should not be included. Such costs will be calculated and added to the funding if the Knowledge Foundation approves the application.

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 will also have to provide adequate organisational and managerial support to the research profile. This can, for example, be in the form of active management support.

When assessing the university involvement, the specific economic and organisational conditions of the applying university will be taken into account.

Business sector involvement

Projects must be co-produced with business partners. For more information on co-production, see www.kks.se.

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.

The application must present the business partners' co-financing for the first half of the project, i.e. at least SEK 15-20 million for 3-4 years. The remaining co-financing is reported to the Knowledge Foundation prior to the second half of the project period.

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.

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. 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.

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:

- The project must be in line with the purpose and objective of the call.
- The duration of the project should be 6-8 years, and the funding applied for from the Knowledge Foundation must fall between SEK 30 and 40 million.
- The business sector partners' contribution to the project must correspond to at least the same amount requested from the Knowledge Foundation.
- The application must specify the co-financing from participating companies in accordance with requirements stated in the call.
- The companies must fall within the Knowledge Foundation's definition of 'business sector'.
- Financial or personal links must be disclosed in the application form, see above.
- Budgeting of funds must be in accordance with the instructions presented in the document *Guidelines on Approved Expenditures* (see www.kks.se).
- Salaries funded by the Knowledge Foundation must go to employees at Sweden's university colleges or new universities.
- 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 is 1st of September, 2021, and the latest 1st of November 2021.
- The application must include parts and appendices according to 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 they comply with the formal requirements. If the applications meet the formal requirements, the scientific quality will be reviewed by international experts (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 Knowledge Foundation. Funding decisions are made by the board of the Knowledge Foundation, based on the recommendations from the CEO of the foundation.

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

Evaluation criteria

Scientific quality²

- To what extent is there a coherent research agenda that has progression and provides the conditions for establishing an internationally competitive research environment?
- How well is the research agenda related to an international research context?
- How clear and realistic are the scientific objectives and are these goals supported by the proposed sub-projects?

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

- How clear and relevant are the scientific methods?
- How high is the level of scientific expertise in the project group?

Benefits to the business partners

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

Expected results and effects

- To what extent does the research profile lead to the realisation of an internationally competitive research environment?
- How well does the research profile promote the development of the business partners?
- To what extent does the research profile contribute to further development and profiling of the research at the university?
- To what extent does the research profile connect to adjoining areas of education and support integrated research and education environments?

Implementation

- How well adopted are the participant constellation (business sector and academics) and the forms of cooperation to facilitate joint production of knowledge?
- Are the organisation and management (administrative and scientific) of the research profile adequate and do they promote a clear and effective leadership?
- Is the implementation of the profile well supported by monitorable goals, suitable strategies for internationalisation, positioning and publication as well as a clear and realistic plan for recruitment/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 that support the ability to manage unforeseen events?

Application

Applications should be 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 its reporting.

The project manager is responsible for the implementation of the project. The application should also state who will be the project owner at the university. The project owner should have staff and budget responsibility at a senior level and carry the overall responsibility for ensuring proper conditions for implementing and monitoring the project. The vice-chancellor may within this programme be project owner.

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 give support according to the project description.

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

To facilitate peer recruitment, the applicant is requested to suggest two international experts qualified to evaluate the application. The suggested experts should be free from conflict of interest.

The project budget should be specified in the application form. Please note that the application should not include overhead costs (see above).

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 (may not exceed 2 pages)

To be uploaded under 'Host research and education environment'.

Describe the project host environment (both research and education), clearly outlining the current situation, future ambitions and the way forward, development needs and the strategies and ambitions with regard to research and education in collaboration.

The description should include the following headings:

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

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

To be uploaded under 'Host research and education environment'.

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

3. Project plan and description of the research profile (may not exceed 50 pages).

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

a. Objective of research profile (approx. 3 pages)

- Formulate overarching and specific objectives for the research profile and describe how these will be monitored during the project.

b. Establishment of the research profile (approx. 8 pages)

- Describe the current organisation and administrative and scientific leadership of the research environment, as well as the organisation and administrative and scientific leadership of the proposed research profile.
- Describe how the research profile fits with the strategy of the university and how it's given priority by the university management.

- Describe the co-financing of the research profile by the university, business partners, and the Knowledge Foundation over time.
- Present a recruitment and career plan for the research profile, as well as strategies for internationalisation, positioning and publication.
- Present a risk analysis regarding the research profile.

c. Research (approx. 20 pages including publication list)

- Describe how the planned research is related to relevant research areas in Sweden and internationally and how the profile will be positioned.
- Describe the main results in the research environment during the last 3-5 years and how these are connected to the planned profile.
- Present a research plan for the entire period and for specific research projects (e.g. objectives, research issues, subject areas, and methodological issues) during the first 3-4 years of the profile.
- List the publications that the research environment wishes to include. No more than three publications per researcher.

d. Co-production of knowledge by the parties involved (approx. 9 pages)

- Describe the relevance of the research environment and the profile to business partners.
- Describe the companies' involvement in the profile, their needs and benefits related to the profile, and how their participation will support the scientific ambitions of the profile.
- Describe how co-production between business partners and the research environment has evolved until now, and the planned forms of co-productions for the profile.

e. Two initial sub-projects within the Research Profile (approx. 9 pages)

- Give a thorough description of two initial research projects within the profile. Describe the scientific questions and methods, forms of co-production and how preliminary results will generate benefits to both industry and academia.
- Explain how the initial sub-projects play an important role in setting up the research profile, and how they support the scientific objectives of the profile.

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

5. Letter of intent

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

- Signed letters of intent from each co-producing business partner, covering at least the first half of the profile. The letters should briefly motivate and describe

each company's interest in the project, the expected benefits for the company, and the company's contributions to the project.

6. Signatures (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 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

Timetable and decisions

- Universities that plan to apply for funding should soon after the call contact the programme manager to discuss the conditions for an application.
- The Knowledge Foundation must receive the application no later than 3 p.m. (15:00) on January 22nd, 2021.
- All applications will be reviewed for compliance with formal requirements. Applications failing to meet the formal requirements will be rejected.
- International experts will review the scientific quality of the applications.
- An external evaluation panel will evaluate the applications in March/April 2021. Hearings will be conducted with applicants before the final evaluation meeting of the panel.
- The external evaluation panel will submit its recommendation to the CEO of the Knowledge Foundation in March/April 2021.
- The Knowledge Foundation board will render a decision in March or June 2021.
- Granted projects may after agreement signing commence between 1st of September, and 1st of November, 2021.