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## CALL FOR PROPOSALS

### Research Profiles 21

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 important 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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Mattias Jarl, Programme Manager  
[mattias.jarl@kks.se](mailto:mattias.jarl@kks.se), 073-712 81 30

The Knowledge Foundation  
requires the application no later  
than 3 p.m. (15:00)  
on 21 January 2022

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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 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.

## Strong research and education environments

The Knowledge Foundation seeks to support the development of strong research and education environments that create value for academia, the business sector and society. In different ways, all of the Knowledge Foundation's programmes are aimed at enabling environments to establish and maintain a strong, long-term, national and international scientific or artistic position which also contributes to the profiling of the university. In the view of the Knowledge Foundation, a strong research and education environment is one that has the capacity to develop its research and education in partnership with the business sector and takes a long-term, strategic approach to its development. For more information, see [www.kks.se](http://www.kks.se).

## Objective and purpose

The objective of the Research Profiles programme is for the university to develop and consolidate a research profile of international excellence and high business relevance and with the capacity to continue to develop once the profile funding has ended.

The purpose of the programme is to be an important tool for universities in their strategic development and further international profiling of selected areas of research.

## 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

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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.

clear scientific strengths, strong publication and an adequate research volume. 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 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.

The research profile should serve as a hub for continued strategic development of a sustainable research environment. Therefore, the research environment should have the ability to attract further research grants from other funding sources.

The Knowledge Foundation has identified some success factors contributing to a sustainable profile.

- 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 sub-projects.
- The organisation of the research profile supports a clear and effective leadership.
- The business sector is actively involved, 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 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 '*General Terms and Conditions*' (see [www.kks.se](http://www.kks.se)).

The budget should only present direct costs of the project. Overhead costs will be calculated and added to the funding if the application is approved.

### **University involvement**

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.

The Knowledge Foundation requires universities to provide direct co-funding for research profiles. The university will also have to provide adequate organisational and managerial support. When assessing 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](http://www.kks.se).

The business partners' contribution to the project, through in-kind and/or direct funding, must correspond to at least the same amount requested from the Knowledge Foundation in the application. The business partners' co-funding must be presented for the first half of the project, i.e. at least SEK 15-20 million for 3-4 years. The remaining co-funding is reported to the Knowledge Foundation prior to the second half of the project.

The business partners input in the project must be described and justified in the application. For 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.

Any economic or personal links between the involved companies, between any company and university, or between any company and individual researcher(s), must be disclosed. 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-funding 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.
- Budgeting of funds must be in accordance with the instructions presented in the document *General Terms and Conditions* (see [www.kks.se](http://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 2022, and the latest 1st of November 2022.
- 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 they do, 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

### Strong research and education environments

- To what extent is there a clear description of the research and education environment's current situation, as well as its challenges?

- To what extent is there an adequate ambition and plan for the development of the research and education environment?
- What is the added value of the project for the short-term and long-term development of the research and education environment?

#### Scientific quality<sup>2</sup>

- To what extent is there a coherent and well-defined research agenda with good progression?
- 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?
- How clear and relevant are the scientific methods?
- How well is the scientific expertise of the project group aligned with the research agenda?
- Does the research profile create the conditions for internationally competitive research and further profiling of the environment and the university?

#### Benefits to the business partners

- How relevant are the research agenda and the scientific goals in relation to the needs of the business partners?
- How well does the research profile as a whole promote the development of the business partners?

#### Implementation

- How well adopted are the participant constellation and the forms of cooperation to 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?
- To what extent does the research profile connect to adjoining areas of education and support integrated research and education environments?
- 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?

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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.

## Application

Applications should be submitted via the Knowledge Foundation's website, [www.kks.se](http://www.kks.se) by the project manager. This is important as the applicant's account is connected to the project and its reporting.

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.

In the application form, the applicant will be asked for the city and postcode for the location where each co-funding partner will conduct the main part of their co-production (not necessarily the business headquarter).

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

### Appendices to the application

The following appendices (as pdf-files) should be attached to the application and in the same order as below. The structure of the appendices must follow the headings specified for each appendix.

#### **Appendix 1. Description of host research and education environment and project contribution** (max 3 pages)

*To be uploaded under 'Description of host research and education environment and project contribution'.*

This appendix should be written jointly by the head of the research and education environment and the project manager.

##### **1.1. The research and education environment (or environments) in which the project will be run**

Describe the environment in terms of the parameters that best illustrate the ambition, current situation, challenges and plan.

**a) Ambition** (what is to be achieved in the ongoing development of the environment, objectives?)

**b) Current situation** (area of activity, research groups, research focus, education focus, staff composition, funding, collaborative and business partners, etc.) and results for the last five years (scientific output, development of courses, capacity building, funding, etc.)



**c) Challenges** (what are the most important development needs that must be addressed for the development of the environment? Take into account education, research and collaboration with the business sector.)

**d) Plan** (How is the ambition to be achieved, strategy?)

### **1.2. Added value of the project for the research and education environment**

Describe how the proposed project adds value for the research and education environment and enhances its development in line with the stated ambition and plan. Indicate in particular how the project will help to strengthen and/or develop the research and/or education concerned, and the cooperation with the business sector. Also describe how the project will add value given previous and ongoing projects, especially projects with the same project manager.

### **Appendix 2. Project plan and description of the research profile** (max 50 pages).

*To be uploaded under 'Project plan'*

#### *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 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-funding of the research profile by the university, business partners, and the Knowledge Foundation over time. Relate university funding to the general economic conditions for the university.
- Present a recruitment and career plan for the research profile, as well as strategies for internationalisation, positioning and publication.
- Describe how the profile is connected to and benefits the university's education.
- 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 (please note that an in-depth description of two initial sub-projects should be given in section e.)

- 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 environment and the profile to business partners.
- Describe the companies' involvement in the profile, their needs and benefits, and how their participation will support the scientific ambitions of the profile.
- Describe how co-production between business partners and the 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.

*f. Budget comments (approx. 1 page)*

- Briefly comment on and motivate the project budget in relation to the project plan, particularly costs concerning material, equipment and consults. Describe how the need for personnel funded by the Knowledge Foundation has been estimated and to what extent salary costs are related to personnel not yet hired by the university.

**Appendix 3. Qualifications (CVs)** (max 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).

**Appendix 4. 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.

**Appendix 5. Signatures** (use template from [www.kks.se](http://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](http://www.kks.se)

## **Timetable and decisions**

- Universities that plan to apply for funding should no later than November 1 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 21st, 2022.
- 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 2022. Hearings will be conducted with applicants before the final evaluation.
- The external evaluation panel will submit its recommendation to the CEO of the Knowledge Foundation in April 2022.
- The Knowledge Foundation board will render a decision in May 2022.
- Granted projects may after agreement signing commence between 1st of September and 1st of November 2022.