
CALL FOR PROPOSALS

Synergy 21 - 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 research and higher education as well as development for all participants. The Synergy programme aims to provide a tool to support the universities in their ambition to focus on an integrated research orientation, and thus the long-term development towards a strong research and education environment that strengthen the profiling of the university.

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The Knowledge Foundation
requires the application no later
than 3 p.m (15:00) on
January 27th, 2022

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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. Funding is provided when research and higher 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 higher education with the business sector. The Knowledge Foundation calls are open for all scientific and artistic research areas.

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. An environment might start out as a group of researchers, and later develop into a larger entity such as a research environment, an institution, a center or similar. For more information, see www.kks.se.

Synergy

The synergy programme serves as a tool for universities that wish to focus on a scientific orientation based on a defined core question of relevance also for the business sector, and that will contribute to the research front. A Synergy project enables the university to develop a platform for continued profiling. The programme opens for research questions that may require the perspective and competence from different scientific areas.

Purpose and objective

The objective of the Synergy programme is that researchers at the university together with business partners address an integrated research question that contributes to scientific development, focuses the research in the environment and creates benefits for the business partners.

The purpose of all the Knowledge Foundation's programmes is to build strong, business-relevant research and education environments. The specific purpose of the Synergy programme is for the environment to integrate and develop its research towards a scientific profile.

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.

Programme design

The *Synergy* as a programme is supposed to involve a number of subprojects as well as an integrating synergy project. The subprojects should complement each other and together address an integrating well-defined research question, which in this call is denoted “core question”. Thus, with the core question as starting point and driving force, the sufficient and necessary subprojects should be designed. The programme enables the university to address research questions that may require the competence from several different disciplinary research domains.

The application should include a description of the individual subprojects, as well as the overarching synergy project. The content, execution and comprehension of the subprojects in relation to one another and the synergy project 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.
- The subprojects should together be sufficient and necessary to address 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 (see section Business sector Involvement). However, each individual subproject 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. costs of facilities and material.

Budgeting of funds must be in accordance with the instructions presented in the document *General Terms and Conditions*, see www.kks.se.

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.

University involvement

The Knowledge Foundation welcomes, but does not formally require, co-funding 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, 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, have responsibility for ensuring proper conditions for implementing and monitoring the project. The project owner may be a head of department or another person with relevant responsibility, in accordance with the internal organization and delegation of the university. The project manager and the project owner should not do be the same person.

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 entails 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 business sector's total commitments of in-kind contributions and/or direct financing must match or exceed the sum contributed by the Knowledge Foundation, which should be apparent from the budget.
- Participating companies must fall within the Knowledge Foundation's definition of "business sector".
- The application should include a signed letter of intent from the participating companies, which describes their individual reasons and objectives for participating and their planned contributions.
- Any economic or personal links between the participants 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.
- 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 2022-09-01 and the latest starting date for the project is 2022-11-01.
- The application must be signed by the vice-chancellor, project owner and the project manager.

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 thereafter carry out an overall evaluation and offer a recommendation for decision to the board of the Knowledge Foundation.

Funding decisions are made by the CEO of the Knowledge Foundation.

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

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 quality²

- How is the synergy core question contributing to development within relevant, state-of-the-art research?
- How well-defined is the scientific question (synergy core question), and how well does the subprojects contribute the synergy core question?
- How clear and realistic are the scientific objectives of the subprojects?
- How clear and realistic are the scientific methods of the subprojects?
- To what degree are the subprojects, as well as the overarching synergy work, expected to generate results of high academic or artistic quality (e.g. scientific publications or documented artistic research)?
- Is the level of scientific expertise of the project group adequate to address the scientific questions?

Benefits to the business partners

- How relevant is the core question with regard to the needs of the participating business partners?
- To what extent is the project expected to contribute to the development of the participating business partners?

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

Implementation

Synergy

- How clear is the synergy project plan in relation to the project objective?
- How realistic is the project plan in relation to available resources?

Per subproject

- How clear is each subproject formulated in order to be sufficient and necessary to address the core question?
- How well planned and organised is the work of the subprojects, with particular focus on the expected contribution of each subproject?
- 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 university project staff 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.

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 company headquarters).

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

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 (may not exceed 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. The nature and scope of the description and the development plan will vary depending on the stage the environment has reached in its development journey. For example, new or early-stage environments do not need to report results going back five years if this is not feasible. Instead, these should describe the results relevant to the current situation of the environment in question.

1.1. The host research and education environment for the project

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 (disposition and headings as follows (may not exceed 30 pages)

To be uploaded under 'Project plan'

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

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

b) Overall project plan (max 3 pages)

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

c) 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.

d) 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 research environment, these should also be described.
- Describe how the Synergy application fits in with the long-term strategy of the university.
- Describe the co-funding over time, of both the Synergy project and subprojects by the university, business partners, and the Knowledge Foundation.
- Present a risk analysis.

e) 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 internationally.
- Present project plans for the individual projects (research question, methods, resources, timetable, etc.).
- List the publications/works that the applicant wishes to refer to. Maximum of 3 publications/works 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 the university will take place.

f) Budget (supplementary to budget template)

- Present and motivate a budget for the project as whole. This implicates a presentation of both funding from the Knowledge foundation as well as resources from the business partners and any contribution from the university. Describe (preferably in form of a table) and motivate the costs in relation to which sub-project/synergy project it belongs to, and how the costs have been calculated.

Appendix 3. Qualifications (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".

CV with relevant information for relevant project staff, including experts from companies. CV's exceeding 2 pages will not be considered in the evaluation.

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 letter 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 the project if funds are granted from the Knowledge Foundation.

Appendix 5. 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 project manager, the project owner and the vice-chancellor. Applications without signatures will not be considered.

Timetable and decision

- The Knowledge Foundation must receive your application no later than January 27, 2022 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 May or June, and the applicant is informed thereafter.
- Granted projects may commence after agreement signing, earliest 2022-09-01 and latest at 2022-11-01.