CALL FOR PROPOSALS

Research profiles 25

- A notice of interest should be submitted to the Knowledge Foundation no later than **10 October 2025.**
- The application should be submitted to the Knowledge Foundation before **15:00 on 2 February 2026.**
- Funding decisions will be announced in May 2026.

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About the Knowledge Foundation

The Knowledge Foundation is a funder with the mission to strengthen Sweden's competitiveness. The foundation funds research and competence development at Sweden's university colleges and newer universities when it takes place in collaboration with the business sector. The Foundation's calls are open to all scientific and artistic subject areas.

Contents

The programme Research profiles

The programme supports long term research efforts, where one or more collaborating research- and education environment(s) develop their research together with the business sector within a coherent research agenda. The Knowledge Foundation's support of up to SEK 40 million over eight years together with contributions from the business sector and the university, creates substantial resources to drive a coherent development of a research area relevant to the business sector.

Objectives of the programme

The objective of the programme *Research profiles* is to support research efforts of high scientific quality that provide good benefits to the business sector and profile research and education environment(s) for a stronger national and international position.

The programme's purpose and contribution to development of strong research and education environments

The Knowledge Foundation seeks to support the building of strong research and education environments that create value for academia, business sector, and society. All the Knowledge Foundation's programmes contribute in various ways to enabling environments to establish and maintain a strong national and international scientific or artistic position in the long term, which also constitutes a profile area for the university. For more information on the Knowledge Foundation's view on strong research and education environments, go to [the Foundation's website](https://www.kks.se/en/funding-and-assessment/strong-research-and-educational-environments/)[1].

The specific purpose of the *Research profiles* programme is s to give research and education environments an opportunity for long-term profiling and positioning of their research in line with the strategy of the university.

Project design

A research profile project should consist of a coherent research agenda. The agenda should cover the whole project period, with an in-depth description for the first half of the project period.

A research profile is usually established within one single research and education environment, department, or similar unit. It is also possible that several units collaborate, provided this is compatible with a coherent and profiling agenda. For a research profile to fulfil its purpose, it should be clearly linked to the strategic ambitions of the research environment(s) concerned, as well as of the university.

A research profile may also be conducted in collaboration between environments at different universities. Here too, this must be compatible with a coherent and profiling agenda. A maximum of three universities within the Knowledge Foundation's target group of universities (see footnote 2) can collaborate within a research profile.

A profile initiative should primarily strengthen the research agenda, but to be sustainable it must also have a clear connection to relevant education.

The composition of competence among the project participants within the research profile should clearly support the scientific ambitions. There should be a good balance between senior and junior researchers involved. A plan for the project's competence supply, describing both planned recruitments and how the project contributes to qualification of researchers, should be included.

Based on previous experience with the programme, the Knowledge Foundation has identified some success factors that characterise a well-designed profile project:

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[1] https://www.kks.se/en/funding-and-assessment/strong-research-and-educational-environments/

- The research profile is developed from a clear view of the international scientific position of the research environment and how this position can be strengthened.
- There is a coherent scientific agenda that supports progression in research.
- The organisation of the research profile supports a clear and effective leadership.
- The forms of co-production provide opportunities for business actors to also contribute comprehensively to the project implementation, and to benefit from each other's participation.
- Implementation and monitoring of the profile is supported by clear objectives and indicators, driving the ambitions for increased scientific impact.
- There are well thought-out plans for the development of scientific publishing, for internationalisation and for the positioning of the environment

Terms and conditions

Applicants

Sweden's university colleges and newer universities[2] (hereafter referred to as *universities* in the call text) may apply. The Knowledge Foundation welcomes applications within all subject areas. When the application concerns an artistic research domain, the concept *scientific* is to be replaced by *artistic* in the call text.

The programme *Research profiles* is aimed at universities with well-established research and education environments who have clear ambitions for the future. It should be well-coherent environments with clear scientific strength and a high ability to collaborate with the business sector.

If several universities within the Foundation's target group collaborate in the project, one of the universities should be the main applicant and contracting party vis-à-vis the Knowledge Foundation.

If an applicant research and education environment already has an ongoing research profile, it is important to note that a new profile cannot be contracted until the final report of the ongoing project has been approved. The section *Notice of interest* (see below) also indicates some situations where the university needs to specifically motivate its planned use of the programme.

Participation of the university

The project must have a project manager who is operationally responsible for the implementation of the project. The project manager should have a doctoral degree[3] and be employed by the university at the latest at the start of the project. At the university, there must also be an appointed project owner. The project owner, who must have staff and budget authority at a senior level at the university, is responsible for ensuring proper conditions for the implementation of the project, and for monitoring the implementation. The project manager and the project owner should not be the same person.

Applicant university(ies) must co-finance the project with direct funds equivalent to at least 30 percent of the amount requested from the Foundation. The contributions of university(ies) must be clearly stated in the project plan and budget. Please note that overhead costs can not to be included in the co-financing from universities.

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[2] Blekinge Institute of Technology, Dalarna University, Halmstad University, Jönköping University, Karlstad University, Konstfack, Kristianstad University, Linnaeus University, Malmö University, Mid Sweden University, Mälardalen University, Royal College of Music in Stockholm, Royal Institute of Art, Stockholm University of the Arts, Swedish Defence University, Swedish School of Sport and Health Sciences, Södertörn University, University of Borås, University of Gävle, University of Skövde, University West, Örebro University.
[3] Doctoral degree on scientific or artistic grounds.

Participation of the business sector and other partners

The project must be conducted in co-production with the business sector. For more information on the Foundation's view on co-production, go to the Foundation's website[4].

Several mutually independent business actors should co-finance the project. Clarification of the criteria for co-financing business actors can be found on the Foundation's website[5].

The business actors' total co-financing, primarily through in-kind contributions, must correspond to at least the amount requested from the Knowledge Foundation. However, it is possible to present only half of the project's co-financing from business actors in the application, provided that this co-financing corresponds to at least half of the total amount requested from the Knowledge Foundation. In this case, the remaining co-financing must be reported and certified at the half-time follow-up of the project. Please note that the amount requested from the Foundation must always cover the whole project period.

All co-financing business actors must attach signed letters of intent describing expected results and benefits of the participation, as well as how the co-operation in the project will take place. The letters of intent must also clearly describe the organisation's financial and resource conditions for meeting the obligations described in the project plan and budget.

Swedish universities outside the Foundation's target group as well as other relevant partners, who cannot be counted as co-financing business actors, may participate in the project if they strengthen the application and the project. These partners should also attach signed letters of intent where the contributions to the project are described and motivated, but they bear their own costs in the project and these costs cannot be counted as co-financing.

Any connections, such as financial or personal links, between for example participating partners, between any partner and university, or between any partner and individual project participant(s), must be stated and clarified in the application form and the project plan. Any dual roles must be clarified. Specify, for example, company connections, share ownership, board positions, employment, or consulting activities.

Project duration

The project duration should be 8 years. Projects may start no earlier than 1 August 2026, and no later than 1 December 2026.

Half-time follow-up

Halfway through the project, the Knowledge Foundation will carry out a more extended follow-up. The main purpose of this follow-up is to support the implementation of the project by identifying possible improvements and action needs. After approval from the Knowledge Foundation the project may continue with the second phase.

Financial framework and budgeting

The programme *Research profiles* refers to the funding of a research project conducted in co-operation with the business sector. The amount to be requested from the Knowledge Foundation should fall between SEK 35 million and SEK 40 million.

The funds from the Foundation should primarily be used for salary costs related to working hours within the project for the project manager and other project participants employed by the applicant

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[4] https://www.kks.se/en/co-production/
[5] https://www.kks.se/en/co-production/what-does-the-business-sector-mean/

university(ies). In addition to salary costs, other direct costs arising within the project at the applying university(ies) can be included in the budget.

Within this programme where granted projects are expected to participate in programme-wide exchange of experiences, costs related to travels and organisation of the meetings may be included in the budget.

Information on approved costs and instructions for budgeting of funds are available in the document *General terms and conditions for projects funded by the Knowledge Foundation*, which can be found on the Foundation's website[6]. The application should not include overhead costs (OH). An OH surcharge of 20 percent will be added by the Foundation if the application is granted.

Notice of interest

Universities planning to apply for a profile project must submit a non-binding notice of interest to the Foundation's email address info@kks.se by the **10 October 2025**, at the latest. The notice of interest should be in the form of a PDF-file of no more than two pages, briefly stating the concerned research environment(s), the direction of planned research profile(s), and planned business partners. This part of the notice of interest will not be assessed by the Foundation.

The notice of interest must also state whether:

- the university wants to apply for more than one research profile
- the application is a revised version of an earlier application
- the application may lead to more than two profile projects being conducted simultaneously within a university
- the application means that a research environment wants to start a new profile project within one year after the end of a previous project within the *Research profiles* programme.

In the above situations, the university must specifically motivate why the planned use of the *Research profiles* programme is reasonable and suitable for the continued development of the environment(s) concerned. The Foundation will assess the information and decide by the 21 October 2025 whether it will accept the planned applications.

Application

The application should be submitted via the project manager's account in the Knowledge Foundation's application system *SBS Manager* via the Foundation's website[7]. Supplementing the application after the closing date of the call is not possible.

Appendices to the application

The following appendices (as PDF files) should be attached to the application in the same order as below. The structure of the appendices must follow the headings specified for each appendix. Under each heading, the main characteristics of the information that the Foundation expects are stated. However, applicants may provide supplementary information that is deemed appropriate based on the direction of the call.

Application appendices must be written in English to allow for international peer review (however, letters of intent may be written in Swedish). Note that all body text in Appendices 1 and 2 must follow the format font Arial, font size 11 pt, and single line spacing.

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[6] https://www.kks.se/en/funding-and-assessment/general-terms-and-conditions-for-projects/
[7] https://www.kks.se/en/apply-and-report/

Appendix 1. The project's contribution to the development of the research and education environment(s)

Maximum 2 pages, see instructions below if several environments apply jointly. To be uploaded under *Appendix 1. The project's contribution to the research and education environment(s).*

This appendix should be written jointly by the head of the research and education environment and the project manager. Emanate from the group or environment where the project has its closest context. Frame the description based on the below headings.

If a project is applied for jointly by several environments, all environments must be described. However, the appendix may only be extended by a maximum of half a page per additional environment.

1.1. The research and education environment(s) where the project will be conducted

- Describe the environment's current status and results of the last five years, including, for example, scope and focus of research and education, staff composition, scientific output, development of educations, funding, collaborations.
- Describe the ambition and objectives for the further development of the environment.

1.2. The project's contribution to the development of the research and education environment(s)

- Describe how the project will contribute to the development of the research and education environment and its activities. The connection to the objectives and purpose of the call must be clearly stated. It must be made clear in what way the project adds value in relation to previous and ongoing projects within the environment, especially projects with the same project manager.

Appendix 2. Project plan

Maximum 32 pages (including references). Page numbered. To be uploaded under *Appendix 2. Project plan.*

a. Purpose and objective of the research profile (approx. 2 pages)

- Describe the overall purpose and direction of the project. Summarise how the project will contribute to renewal and profiling of research, create benefits to the business sector and create synergies with related educational activities.
- Specify goals and key performance indicators (KPI) of what is to be achieved by the project. Clarify the current status and the desired target values of KPIs halfway through the project as well as at the end of the project.

b. Research agenda (approx. 17 pages, including references)

- Present a research agenda for the entire project period. Describe in more detail, in the form of subprojects, what will be carried out during the first 4 years (scientific goals and research questions, methods, involvement of various project partners, time plans, deliverables, results, etc.). Describe how the research agenda is held together and promotes progression in research.
- Clarify how the research agenda relates to the knowledge frontier and what its contribution will be.
- Account for whether sex and gender perspectives are relevant in the project's scientific content and in the design of the project, and if so, how these perspectives are included (more information on the Foundation's website[8]).
- Describe how the project is based on previous research(results) in the research environment(s) as well how it can renew and profile the research.

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[8] https://www.kks.se/en/gender-equality-perspective-an-added-value-for-research-and-innovation/

c. Co-production and benefits for the business sector (approx. 4 pages)
- Clarify the project's relevance for the participating business actors and how they will benefit from the project. Describe also to what extent the project is relevant and beneficial to a wider business sector.
- Describe the experience and ability of the environment to conduct research in cooperation with the business sector.
- Present how collaboration and mutual exchange between the university and the companies will take place in the project.

d. Supporting strategies and plans (approx. 5 pages)
- Present a strategy on how the project will strengthen the national and international position of the environment. Link to goals and indicate priorities, as well as key working methods/activities.
- Present a funding strategy including ambitions and main efforts intended to obtain complementary funding, enabling the continuation of the profile direction after the end of the project.
- Present and motivate a plan for recruitment and career development[9].
- Present a risk analysis for the project[10]

e. Organisation and management (approx. 3 pages)
- Describe and justify the project's organisation, management and staffing. Explain also how the project organisation and management relate to the line organisation of the university(ies). Account for the competence, role, and work contribution of key individuals, including individuals from participating partners. The description should relate to information provided in the budget, the appendix *Staff in the project*, and CVs. Comment specifically on any researchers having a very low level of activity in the project according to *Staff in the project*.
- Account for how gender equality aspects have been considered in the composition of the project group (more information on the Foundation's website[11]).

f. Budget comment (approx. 1 page)
- Describe and justify the costs included in the budget table so that it is clear what the budget items consist of and how they relate to the project objectives and planned activities.

g. Any connection to earlier profile (application) (approx. 1 page).
If this section is included in the application, the project plan may be extended to 33 pages.

- If the university has previously been rejected on a similar application (within the *Research profiles* programme), comment on how the assessment panel's previous remarks are being considered in the current application.
- If the university has an ongoing or in recent years completed profile project within the same research environment, it should be explained in what way the new application will bring renewal in relation to the earlier profile project.

Appendix 3. Project participants

Appendix template for project participants (*Staff in the project*) is downloaded as an Excel file from the Foundation's website[12], but must be converted and attached to the application as a PDF file (ensure that the entire Excel spreadsheet fits on one PDF page). To be uploaded under *Appendix 3. Staff in the project.*

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[9] In table form with comments in running text.
[10] In table form with the likelihood and consequences of risks assessed between 1 and 4.
[11] https://www.kks.se/en/gender-equality-perspective-an-added-value-for-research-and-innovation/
[12] https://www.kks.se/en/documents/

Enter information on all planned project participants from the university (or universities) in the table. From other participating partners, only key participants need to be entered.

Appendix 4. Qualifications

Maximum 1 page per person. To be uploaded under *Other appendices.*

Attach CVs for all individuals in the project group who are crucial for the implementation of the project.

The Foundation applies a broadened review of academic merits (more information on the Foundation's website[13]). Thus, all academically active participants should present a selection of the merits and experiences that are <u>most relevant</u> to the project and the programme form. *For example*, emanate from the following categories:

- **Degrees**
- **Positions**
- **Research output:** select at most ten (10) research results/outputs. In addition to scientific publications, this could be for example: documented artistic merits, instrumental or product development, data set, software, patent, process or policy development, as well as implementation of research results.
- **Educational activities:** pedagogical qualification including, for example, teaching, training and supervision, education development including development of open teaching resources and learning objects (learning and teaching materials).
- **Cooperation:** with academia, business sector, or other societal actors, as well as communication efforts.
- **Management:** project management, organisational development, assessment assignments, centre management, department assignments, granted funding.

Appendix 5. Letters of intent

Approximately 1 page per partner. To be uploaded under *Other appendices.*

Signed letter of intent from each of the participating partners must be attached. Each letter of intent must include

- expected results and benefits of the participation
- contributions and participation in the implementation of the project
- ability to contribute in accordance with the project plan and budget

Letters of intent should either be signed manually or electronically by, for example, GetAccept, ebox, or similar systems.

Appendix 6. Signatures from the university

Appendix template for signatures is downloaded from the Foundation's website[14]. To be uploaded under *Other appendices.*

The application must be signed by the project manager, the project owner, and the vice-chancellor. The project manager's signature implies responsibility for the described implementation. The project owner and the vice chancellor assure through their signatures that the university approves the project and will be involved according to the project description.

The signature appendix should either be signed manually or electronically by, for example, eduSign, GetAccept, ebox, or similar systems.

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[13] https://www.kks.se/en/broadened-review-of-academic-merits-and-advanced-assessment/
[14] https://www.kks.se/en/documents/

Preparation and assessment

The application will be reviewed by the secretariat of the Knowledge Foundation to ensure that the formal requirements are met. If these are met, an assessment of the project's scientific quality will be performed by international scientific experts (peer review). Thereafter, an external assessment panel will conduct an overall assessment based on the assessment criteria below. As a supplement to the written application, a hearing will be held with representatives from the project. Funding decisions are made by the Foundation's board after recommendation by the external assessment panel.

Formal requirements

The following requirements must be met for the application to be considered for evaluation by the Knowledge Foundation. Applications that do not meet the requirements, will be rejected for formal reasons.

- The applicant university(ies) must belong to the Knowledge Foundation's target group.
- Research and education environments at a maximum of three universities belonging to the Knowledge Foundation's target group of universities may be included in the project.
- The project manager must have a doctoral degree and be employed by the university at the latest at the start of the project.
- The application must include appendices according to the call instructions.
- Co-financing business actors must fulfil the criteria set by the Knowledge Foundation.[15]
- The business actors' total co-financing, primarily through in-kind contributions, must correspond to at least the amount requested from the Knowledge Foundation. If the certified co-financing in the application covers only the first four years of the project, the amount of co-financing should at least equal half of the amount requested from the Foundation for the whole project period.
- Signed letters of intent from all participating partners must be attached.
- The applicant university(ies) must co-finance the project with at least 30 percent (excl. OH costs) of the amount requested from the Foundation.
- Funds requested from the Knowledge Foundation should fall between SEK 35 million and SEK 40 million (excl. OH costs).
- The project duration must be 8 years.
- Projects may start no earlier than 1 August 2026, and no later than 1 December 2026.
- The application must be signed by the vice-chancellor, the project owner and the project manager.

Assessment criteria

Contribution to the development of the research and education environment
- To what degree is there a clear description of the current state of the research and education environment?
- To what degree is there an adequate ambition for the development of the research and education environment?
- To what extent is the project expected to contribute to the development of the research and education environment in the short and long term?

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[15] More information on the Foundation's website: https://www.kks.se/en/co-production/what-does-the-business-sector-mean/.

Scientific quality[16]

- To what extent is the research agenda reasonably well-defined and coherent and provides a clear direction and progression for the project?
- How well do the scientific questions relate and contribute to the current knowledge frontier?
- To what extent are scientific objectives, questions and methods clear and well chosen, creating conditions for research of high scientific quality?
- How appropriate is the project group's scientific competence in relation to the project content?
- To what extent is there an adequate description of whether sex and gender perspectives are relevant in the project's scientific content and in the design of the project? If so, are these perspectives adequately included?
- To what degree will the project lead to scientific profiling and a stronger national/international position of the concerned environment(s)?

Benefit to the business sector

- How relevant are the scientific questions to the needs of the participating business actors?
- To what extent is the project expected to contribute to the development of participating business actors?
- To what extent is the project expected to contribute to the benefit of a wider business sector?

Implementation

- How appropriate is the project's organisation and management?
- How well is the implementation planned and organised, and to what extent is the implementation supported by monitorable goals, key performance indicators (KPI) and adequate strategies/plans?
- How appropriate is the project's partner constellation and the chosen forms of co-operation for joint production of knowledge?
- How well do the combined merits and experiences of the project group fulfil the needs of the project implementation? How clear and adequate is the plan for recruitment and career development?
- To what extent is there an adequate description of how gender equality aspects have been considered in the composition of the project group?
- To what extent does the project contribute to synergies between research and education?
- Is there a credible risk analysis that provides the ability to manage unforeseen events?
- How well is the budget described and justified in the project plan and is the project plan realistic in relation to available resources?

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[16] When the application concerns an artistic research domain, the concept *scientific* is replaced by *artistic* in the call.