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## CALL FOR PROPOSALS

### **Synergy 22 – Research Projects**

The Knowledge Foundation invites Sweden's university colleges and newer universities to apply for funding for Synergy projects. The programme provides a tool for the higher education institutions in their ambition to focus on an integrated research orientation with business sector relevance, and that may contribute to the scientific profiling of the university.

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The Knowledge Foundation requires the application no later than 3 p.m. (15:00) on January 27<sup>th</sup>, 2023.

#### **About the Knowledge Foundation**

*The Knowledge Foundation finances research and competence development at Sweden's university colleges and newer universities with the purpose of strengthening Sweden's competitiveness. The foundation provides funding when research and education activities are conducted in collaboration between academia and business partners. The Knowledge Foundation does not identify specific research areas, and calls are open for all scientific and artistic fields.*

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## **The role of the Synergy programme**

The Synergy programme serves as a tool for higher education institutions (HEIs) with an ambition to focus on an integrated scientific orientation. From a Synergy project the HEI may develop a platform for continued profiling. The programme enables the HEI to address research questions that may require the perspective and competence from different scientific areas. Based on a well-defined synergy core question of relevance also for the business sector, the output of a synergy project will contribute to the research front.

## **Strong research and education environments**

The Knowledge Foundation 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 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 Higher education institution. For more information the Foundation's view on developing strong research and education environments, go to [www.kks.se](http://www.kks.se).

## **Objective and purpose of the programme**

The objective of the Synergy programme is that the higher education institution together with business partners address an integrated research question that contributes to scientific focus and development of the environment as well as 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 and education towards scientific profiling.

## **The design of a Synergy project**

The synergy should emerge by combining at least three scientifically self-contained subprojects, which may cover several scientific disciplines. On top of that an overarching synergy project is to be designed based on a coordinating and integrating research question – the synergy core question.

A Synergy project should span over 3 to 4 years, and the maximum grant from the Knowledge Foundation is 10 million SEK (without OH). The chosen scientific subprojects should complement each other and together address the well-defined, integrating core question that navigates the design and objectives of the subprojects. The scientific self-contained subprojects should together be sufficient and necessary to address the core question. This should be motivated in the application by clearly describing both the subprojects and the synergy project contents and execution in relation to each other.

## **Who may apply?**

Sweden's university colleges and newer universities<sup>1</sup> 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. HEIs planning to apply for a synergy project 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.

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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.

## How should the funds be used?

Funding from the Knowledge Foundation should be used to cover salary and premises costs at Sweden's university colleges or newer universities, and direct project-related costs, e.g. for facilities and material.

The application should not include overhead costs (OH). An OH supplement of 20 percent will be included as part of the proposed agreement following an approved application. Budgeting of funds must be in accordance with the instructions presented in the document General Terms and Conditions, go to [www.kks.se](http://www.kks.se).

## University involvement

The Knowledge Foundation welcomes, but does not formally require, co-funding from the higher education institution.

The application should state a name for project manager at the HEI as responsible for the implementation of the project. The coordinating role of the synergy project leader is of importance and the qualifications of the proposed project leader will be part of the assessment. The synergy project leader may also be leader for one of the subprojects.

The application should also state project owner at the HEI with overall staff and budget authority on a senior/superior level and will be responsible for ensuring proper conditions for implementing and monitoring the project. The project manager and the project owner should not be the same person.

## Business sector involvement

The project must be co-produced with business partners. Co-production entails that the academic and business sectors, from their respective perspectives, together formulate and address the scientific question (s). The academic research question may originate from a challenge or need from the business sector. The outcome of the synergy project should benefit the companies/business sector as well as contribute to the scientific research front. For more information on co-production, go to [www.kks.se](http://www.kks.se).

The business partners' co-funding of the project (primarily through in-kind) must correspond to at least the same amount requested from the Knowledge Foundation. However, each separate subproject must not meet this requirement. The business partners input in the project must be declared and verified in the application. At least two non-affiliated companies should co-finance each sub-project.

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 motivation and prerequisites for co-financing the project according to project plan and budget must be clearly stated. Please note that co-funding companies must fall within the scope of the Knowledge Foundation's definition of business sector (go to [www.kks.se](http://www.kks.se) for more details).

If any financial or personal associations exist between the involved partners, such as between the companies, between a company and a university or individual researcher(s), this information 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 clearly described. Specify, for example, shareholdings, board positions, employment, or consulting.

## Formal requirements

The following requirements must be met before the Knowledge Foundation secretariat will consider an application for evaluation. The application will otherwise be rejected without further evaluation.

- The project must be in line with the purpose and objective of the call.

- The application should include information and appendices according to the call instructions.
- Synergy project should span from 3 to 4 years.
- The earliest starting date for the project is 2023-06-30 and the latest 2023-12-31.
- Maximum funding for a synergy project from the Knowledge Foundation is 10 million SEK (without OH).
- Co-funding companies must fall within the scope of the Knowledge Foundation's definition of "business sector".
- Any financial or personal links between the participants must be clarified/disclosed in the application form (see above).
- At least two non-affiliated companies should co-finance each sub-project.
- A signed letter of intent should be included from each co-producing company. The letter should state the commitment, contributions, and role of the company, including the reasons and objectives for participating.
- Budgeting of funds must be in accordance with the instructions presented in the document Guidelines on Approved Expenditures, go to [www.kks.se](http://www.kks.se).
- At least 50% of the time financed by the Knowledge Foundation should intend staff with a PhD degree (or similar artistic merits).
- Time funded by the Knowledge Foundation must be devoted to research and/or teaching at second cycle level or higher.

## Evaluation

The secretariat of the Knowledge Foundation will review the applications according to the formal requirements.

If the formal requirements are met, international peers will thereafter conduct a peer-review on the scientific or artistic qualities of the project. An external assessment panel are thereafter carrying out an overall assessment after hearing with the concerned HEIs. The assessment panel then offers a recommendation for decision. Decisions on funding are made by the board of the Knowledge Foundation.

## Evaluation criteria

### Strong research and education environment

- Explain how the project contributes to the short and long-term development of the environment.
- To what extent is there a clear description of the current position for the research and education environment?
- To what extent is there an adequate ambition for the development of the environment?

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

- How is the synergy core question contributing to development within relevant, state-of-the-art research/research front?
- 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 relevant are the scientific methods of the subprojects?

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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.

- 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 regarding the needs of the participating business partners?
- To what extent is the project expected to contribute to the development of the participating business partners?

#### 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 from the project manager's personal account in the Knowledge Foundation's digital portal ([www.kks.se](http://www.kks.se)). No modifications to the application will be approved after submission.

The application should be written in English to enable international peer review. To facilitate recruitment of peer reviewers, the applicant is requested to suggest three international scientific experts well-qualified to evaluate the scientific qualities of the application research areas. The applicant must assert that suggested experts are free from conflict of interest.

In the application form state the city and postal code where the unit within the company involved will conduct the main part of the co-production.

The application should state the main subject area based on *Standard för svensk indelning av forskningsämnen*. For interdisciplinary projects maximum three different subject areas can be chosen.

A table of planned project participants is to be attached to the application form. From participating companies (and other potential parties), only key individuals need to be entered. Excel template for the attachment ("Staff in the project") can be downloaded from [www.kks.se](http://www.kks.se). The file must be converted and attached as a PDF file (1 page).

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

The application must be signed by the project manager, the project owner and the vice chancellor. The project manager's signature implies responsibility for 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.

## Application appendices

Following appendices is to be attached (as pdf-files) to the application according to the order and content as below. The body text in Appendices 1 and 2 must follow the format font Arial, font size 11 pt, single line spacing.

### **Appendix 1. Project contribution to host research and education environment and** (max 2 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. Start from the group or environment where the project has its closest context.

#### **1.1. The project's contribution to the development of the environment**

Describe how the project will contribute to the development of the host research and education environment and its activities. Make sure to connect to purpose and aim of the call. Also describe in what way the project entails added value in relation to previous and ongoing projects within the environment, especially projects with the same project manager.

#### **1.2. The research and education environment(-s) in which the project will be conducted.**

Describe the environment's current position and ambition.

**a) Current position** and results for the past five years (research domain and activities of research and education within the environment, personnel composition, scientific output, development of education, funding, collaborative, and business partners, etc.).

**b) Ambition:** goals for the continued development of the environment.

### **Appendix 2. Project plan** (max 30 pages)

*To be uploaded under 'Project plan'*

If the applicant has been previously rejected in an earlier Synergy application for a similar project, it should be clarified how the project plan has been developed since the last rejection.

#### *a) Purpose and objective - Synergy core question*

- Outline the Synergy core question and how it was developed.
- Describe the contribution of each subproject towards addressing the core question.
- Outline the objectives for the synergy project and for the included subprojects.
- Motivate how the synergy project fits the long-term strategy for the university.

#### *b) Project plan (including list of publications)*

- Outline the project plan (including timetable, personnel, equipment) for carrying out the Synergy project in relation to the subprojects.
- Outline the plan for the individual subprojects (including research question, method, resources, time plan).
- Describe the research in each project in relation to the national and international state of the art.
- List three publications/work per researcher with project relevance including a short motivation.

#### *c) Relevance for the business sector and coproduction*

- Present the business relevance of the synergy project and subprojects.
- Present the input, requirements and benefits of the business sector in each project.

- Outline the operational plan for coproduction between the companies and the academia as well as implementation of the results.

*d) Organisation and risk analysis*

- Describe the organisation and follow-up of the Synergy project (project management, steering committee, administration, and scientific leadership).
- Outline an overall risk and consequence analysis for the project.

*f) Budget template with supplementary comments*

- Present the overall funding from the business sector, the Knowledge Foundation and any contribution from the higher education institution. Present (preferably in a table) financing over time for both the synergy project and the subprojects.
- Comment and motivate the budget, in particular costs for material, equipment, and consults.

**Appendix 3. Qualifications** (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”.*

- CV with relevant information for key personnel in the project from the higher education institution as well as from the business sector.
- Describe in particular earlier experiences of project managing of suggested project manager.

**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 should be submitted. It should briefly motivate the company’s commitment, contribution and role interest in the project, as well as intention and expected outcome. Letters of intents will be signed either physically or by an e-signature using eg. GetAccept, ebox or similar services. Letters of intent without correct signatures will not be considered.

**Appendix 5. Signatures** (template)

*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. 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. The template will be downloaded from [www.kks.se](http://www.kks.se). The template will be signed either physically or by an e-signature, using e.g. eduSign, GetAccept, ebox or similar services. Applications without correct signatures will not be considered.

**Timetable and decisions**

- The Knowledge Foundation must receive the application no later than January 27, 2023 at 3 p.m. (15:00).
- The applications will be reviewed by the secretariat for compliance with formal requirements.
- International peers will review the scientific quality of applications during February and March 2023.
- The external evaluation panel will after hearings and internal meeting submit its final recommendation to the Knowledge Foundation in March-May 2023.
- The Knowledge Foundation’s board render in a decision and the applicant is informed in May or June 2023.
- Granted projects may commence after agreement signing, earliest 2023-08-01 and latest at 2023-12-01.