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## CALL FOR PROPOSALS

# SYNERGY PROJECTS 26

- The application should be submitted to the Knowledge Foundation before **15:00 on 27 January 2027**.
  - Funding decisions will be announced in May 2027.
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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.*

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## The programme Synergy projects

Many of the challenges faced by industry and society today may require insights and solutions from several different fields of knowledge. The programme Synergy projects creates conditions for researchers to collaboratively with industry address joint research questions from different perspectives. In doing so, the programme Synergy projects serves as a tool for one or more research and education environment(s) to coordinate their research for continued scientific profiling.

### Objectives and purpose of the programme

The objective of the programme is for universities and university colleges (henceforth called universities in the call text), together with business actors, to address a jointly formulated research question (“the research question”) that significantly contributes to continued development of the research and education environment, while also generating benefits for the business sector. The results from a synergy project are also expected to contribute to the development of the knowledge frontier.

The purpose of the programme is to enable one or more research and education environment(s) to coordinate and develop their research for continued scientific profiling through collaboration in new constellations and, together with business actors, address industry-relevant research questions.

### Project design

Academia and the business sector should jointly formulate the project’s research question, which should address mutual challenges or needs. The research question must be addressed in the project by combining at least three scientifically grounded subprojects, which may cover several subject areas. The subprojects should be complementary and closely coordinated around the research question, which thereby guides the design and objectives of the subprojects. The application should clearly describe the subprojects content and implementation in relation to each other and the research question. It should also be clearly described what synergies that are expected by combining the different subprojects within the project. The aim is for the subprojects to collectively achieve something greater than they could achieve separately.

## Terms and conditions

### Applicants

Sweden’s university colleges and newer universities<sup>1</sup> 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.

Several universities within the Foundation’s target group may collaborate in the project if this strengthens the application and the project, but only one university may be the main applicant and contracting party vis-à-vis the Knowledge Foundation.

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

## Participation of the university

In the project there must be a project manager who is operationally responsible for the implementation. The project manager should have a doctoral degree<sup>2</sup> and be employed by the main applicant university at the latest at the start of the project. The project manager of the synergy project may also be project manager of one of the subprojects. 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.

## 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](#)<sup>3</sup>.

At least two mutually independent business actors should co-finance each subproject. Clarification of the criteria for co-financing business actors can be found on [the Foundation's website](#)<sup>4</sup>.

The business actors' total co-financing, primarily through in-kind contributions, must correspond to at least the same amount as requested from the Knowledge Foundation. However, each separate subproject must not meet this requirement. For an appropriate balance in the co-production, a single business actor may not account for more than 70 percent of the total co-financing.

All co-financing business actors must attach signed letters of intent describing expected results and benefits of the participation, as well as how the collaboration 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 and will be reviewed by the Knowledge Foundation. Specify, for example, company connections, share ownership, board positions, employment, or consulting activities.

## Project duration

The project duration should be 3–6 years. Projects may start no earlier than 1 September 2027, and no later than 1 December 2027.

## Financial framework and budgeting

The programme refers to the funding of a research project conducted in collaboration with the business sector. The amount to be requested from the Knowledge Foundation may not exceed the sum of SEK 15 million.

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<sup>2</sup> Doctoral degree on scientific or artistic grounds, alternatively employment as a senior lecturer, associate senior lecturer, or professor.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.kks.se/en/co-production/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.kks.se/en/co-production/what-does-the-business-sector-mean/>

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

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](#)<sup>5</sup>. 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.

## 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](#)<sup>6</sup>. 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, single line spacing and normal margins (2,5 cm for all margins).

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

Maximum 2 pages. If a project is applied for jointly by several research and education environments, all environments must be described according to the instructions below (the appendix may be extended by a maximum of half a page per additional environment). To be uploaded under *Appendix 1. The project's contribution to the research and education environment(s)*.

All the Knowledge Foundation's programmes contribute in different ways to supporting the development of strong research and education environments that create value for academia, the business sector, and society. Therefore, all projects applied for must be situated within a context in which they contribute to strengthening the development and profile of the research and education environment. In this way, the environment can also become a long-term and valuable partner for the business sector. For more information on what the Knowledge Foundation means by strong research and education environments, and how such an environment can be defined, go to [the Foundation's website](#)<sup>7</sup>.

This appendix should be based on the group (research and education environment) within which the project will be conducted and should be prepared jointly by the management of the research and education environment and the project manager.

#### 1.1. The research and education environment where the project will be conducted

Briefly describe the research and education environment in which the project will be conducted. Tailor the description to what is most relevant in relation to the programme and the project.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.kks.se/en/funding-and-assessment/general-terms-and-conditions-for-projects/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.kks.se/en/apply-and-report/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.kks.se/en/funding-and-assessment/strong-research-and-educational-environments/>

### 1.2. *The project's contribution to the development of the research and education environment*

Describe the ambitions and objectives of the research and education environment for becoming a stronger environment. Justify how the project will contribute to the environment's desired development in the short and long term. Also describe in what way the project adds value in relation to previous and ongoing projects within the environment.

## **Appendix 2. Project plan**

Maximum 20 pages (excluding references). Page numbered. To be uploaded under *Appendix 2. Project plan*.

### *Research question and expected synergies*

- Outline and justify the research question.
- Describe how the subprojects address and contribute to answering the research question, and what synergies are expected in the project.
- Include a schematic illustration that clarifies the project structure including the research question, subprojects and participating partners in each subproject.

### *Scientific quality*

- Describe the current knowledge frontier.
- Describe how the project relates, and is expected to contribute, to the current knowledge frontier.
- Outline the scientific objectives of the project and the included subprojects.
- Describe and justify the scientific methods that will be used.
- 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](#)<sup>8</sup>).

### *Benefits for the business sector*

- Describe how the project relates to the needs of the participating business actors.
- Describe the contributions, requisites and benefits of the participating business actors in the project (and in each subproject).
- Describe how the co-production between the business sector and the university(ies) will work.
- Describe the expected project results and effects and how these are expected to benefit the participating business actors and a wider business sector.

### *Implementation*

- Outline a project description including equipment and timeline for the implementation of the project. Also clearly describe the content and execution of the subprojects in relation to each other.
- Outline an overall risk analysis for the project and a communication plan for the different expected results from the project.
- Describe and justify the project's organisation, management, and staffing including the composition of the steering group. 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.

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

- Account for how gender equality aspects have been considered in the composition of the project group (more information on [the Foundation's website](#)<sup>9</sup>).
- Describe and justify the costs included in the budget so it is clear what the costs consist of, why they are relevant to the project, and which partner will cover the costs.
- If the university has previously been rejected on a similar application within the programme Synergy projects, this must be stated along with comments on how the assessment panel's previous remarks are being considered in the current application. This should be included within the page limit of the project plan and should not be longer than about half a page.

### Appendix 3. Project participants

Appendix template for project participants (*Staff in the project*) is downloaded as an Excel file from [the Foundation's website](#)<sup>10</sup> 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*.

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 (with the exception of the project manager, whose CV must not exceed 2 pages). 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](#)<sup>11</sup>). Thus, all academically active participants should present a selection of the merits and experiences that are most relevant to the project and the programme form. *For example*, emanate from the following categories:

- **Education and degrees**
- **Employment and assignments**
- **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.
- **Teaching:** 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

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.kks.se/en/gender-equality-perspective-an-added-value-for-research-and-innovation/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.kks.se/en/documents/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.kks.se/en/broadened-review-of-academic-merits-and-advanced-assessment/>

- 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](#)<sup>12</sup>. 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.

## 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. 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 must belong to the Knowledge Foundation's target group.
- The project manager must have a doctoral degree<sup>13</sup> 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.
- At least two mutually independent business actors must co-finance each subproject.
- Co-financing business actors must fulfil the criteria set by the Knowledge Foundation.<sup>14</sup>
- The business actors' total co-financing, primarily through in-kind contributions, must correspond to at least the same amount as requested from the Knowledge Foundation.
- Signed letters of intent from all participating partners must be attached.
- Funds requested from the Knowledge Foundation may not exceed SEK 15 million (excl. OH costs).
- The project duration must be 3–6 years.
- Projects may start no earlier than 1 September 2027, and no later than 1 December 2027.
- The application must be signed by the vice-chancellor, the project owner and the project manager.

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.kks.se/en/documents/>

<sup>13</sup> Doctoral degree on scientific or artistic grounds, alternatively employment as a senior lecturer, associate senior lecturer, or professor.

<sup>14</sup> More information on the Foundation's website: <https://www.kks.se/en/co-production/what-does-the-business-sector-mean/>

## Assessment criteria

### Contribution to the development of the research and education environment<sup>15</sup>

- To what extent are there clear and relevant descriptions of the current state of the research and education environment, as well as its ambitions and objectives for strengthening the environment?
- How well justified is the project's contribution to the desired development of the research and education environment in the short and long term?

### Scientific quality<sup>16</sup>

- How well-defined is the research question?
- How well do the individual subprojects (including the expected synergies) address and contribute to answering the research question?
- How well does the project relate, and is expected to contribute, to the current knowledge frontier and to what degree is the project expected to generate scientific results of high quality?
- How clear and realistic are the scientific objectives?
- How clear and relevant are the scientific methods?
- 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?

### Benefit to the business sector

- How relevant is the project 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 do the combined merits and experiences of the project group fulfil the needs of the project implementation?
- 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 is each individual subproject planned and organised to sufficiently contribute to the research question according to expectations?
- How well is the budget described and justified in the project plan and is the project plan realistic in relation to available resources?
- How appropriately designed are the risk analysis and the communication plan?

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<sup>15</sup> In cases where several research and education environments submit a joint application, the assessment criterion applies to each of the environments.

<sup>16</sup> When the application concerns an artistic research domain, the concept *scientific* is replaced by *artistic* in the call.