Knowledge Foundation ><

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

SYNERGI 23

- Deadline for application is **15:00** on **1 February 2024.**
- Decisions will be communicated to applicants in May-June 2024.
- After signing the agreement, approved projects may start on 1 August 2024 at the earliest and 1 December 2024 at the latest.

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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 Synergi

The Synergi programme serves as a tool for higher education institutions (HEIs) with an ambition to focus on an integrating scientific orientation. From a Synergi 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. A well-defined Synergi core question, that is of relevance also for the business sector, will lead to Synergi project outputs that contributes to the research front.

Objective of the programme

The objective of the Synergi programme is that the HEI together with business partners address an integrating research question that contributes to scientific focus and development of the environment as well as creates benefits for the business partners.

The purpose of the programme and contribution to 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 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. For more information on the Knowledge Foundation's view on strong research and education environments, go to www.kks.se.

The specific purpose of the Synergi programme is for the environment to integrate and develop its research and education towards scientific profiling.

Project design

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

A Synergi 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 Synergi project contents and execution in relation to each other.

Who may apply?

Sweden's university colleges and newer universities[1] may apply. The Knowledge Foundation welcomes applications within all scientific and artistic fields. When the application concerns an artistic field, the concept *scientific* is to be replaced by *artistic* in the call text.

Several HEIs may collaborate in the project if this strengthens the project, but only one HEI may be the main applicant and contracting party vis-à-vis the Knowledge Foundation. HEIs planning to apply for a

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[1] 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

Synergi 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.

How should the funds be used?

Budgeting of funds must be in accordance with the instructions presented in the document *General terms and conditions for projects funded by the Knowledge Foundation*, go to www.kks.se.

The application should not include overhead costs. Such costs (20 percent) will be calculated and included in the proposed contract if the foundation approves the application.

University involvement

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

A project manager employed by the HEI should be responsible for the implementation of the project. The application should also state who will be the project owner at the HEI. The coordinating role of the Synergi project leader is of importance and the qualifications of the proposed project leader will be part of the assessment. The Synergi project leader may also be leader for one of the subprojects.

The project owner, who should have staff and budget authority at a senior level at the university, has responsibility for ensuring sufficient 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 Synergi project should benefit the companies/business sector as well as contribute to the research front. For more information on co-production, go to www.kks.se.

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 for more details). The applicant should contact the programme manager well in advance if there is any uncertainty regarding the definition.

The business partners' contribution to the project, primarily through in-kind contributions, must in total correspond to at least the same amount requested from the Knowledge Foundation in the application. However, each separate subproject must not meet this requirement. At least two non-affiliated companies should co-finance each sub-project. The business partners must declare and verify their input in the project.

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 motivation and prerequisites for co-financing the project according to project plan and budget must be clearly stated.

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, and employment or 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 objective and purpose of the call.
- The application must include parts and appendices according to the call.
- All body text in Appendices 1 and 2 must follow the format font Arial, font size 11 pt, single line spacing.
- Co-funding companies must fall within the scope of the Knowledge Foundation's definition of 'business sector'.
- Signed letters of intent, with detailed co-financing, from each of the co-producing companies should be attached. Please include the commitment, contribution and role of each company in the project, including their individual objectives for participating.
- 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, which should be clear from the budget. However, each separate subproject must not meet this requirement.
- At least two non-affiliated companies should co-finance each sub-project.
- The funds requested from the Knowledge Foundation may not exceed SEK 10 million.
- The start date of the project is 1 July 2024 at the earliest and 1 December 2024 at the latest.
- The duration of the project should be 3 to 4 years.
- Any financial or personal links must be clearly stated in the application.
- Budgeting of funds must be in accordance with the instructions presented in the document *General terms and conditions for projects funded by the Knowledge Foundation*, go to 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).
- The vice-chancellor, project owner and the project manager must sign the application.

Assessment

The application will be reviewed by the secretariat of the Knowledge Foundation to ensure that they comply with the formal requirements. If these are met, an assessment of the project's scientific and artistic 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 is held with representatives from the project. Funding decisions are made by the Foundation's board after recommendation by the external assessment panel.

Assessment criteria

Strong research and education environment
- To what extent is the project expected to contribute 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[2]
- How is the Synergi core question contributing to development within relevant research front?
- How well-defined is the scientific question (Synergi core question), and how well does the subprojects contribute to the Synergi core question?

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

- How clear and realistic are the scientific objectives?
- How clear and relevant are the scientific methods?
- To what extent is there an adequate description of whether sex and gender perspectives are relevant in the project? If considered relevant, are the perspectives appropriately included in the project design and content?
- To what degree are the subprojects, as well as the overarching Synergi 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 to meet the needs of the participating business partners?
- To what extent is the overall project expected to contribute to the development of the participating business partners?

Implementation

Synergi

- How clear is the Synergi project plan in relation to the project objective?
- How realistic is the project plan in relation to available resources?
- How well on an aggregated level are the merits and experiences of the project group fulfilling the requirements for an adequate 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?

Per subproject

- To what extent are each subproject clearly formulated in order to address the core question in a sufficient and necessary way?
- How well planned and organised is the work of the subprojects, with particular focus on the expected contribution of each subproject?

Application

The application should be submitted via the project manager's account in the Knowledge Foundation's application system (www.kks.se). Supplementation of the application after the closing date of the call is not possible. Applications should be written in English to enable international peer review.

Applications 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, the project's main subject focus is stated based on the *Standard for Swedish Classification of Research Subjects*. For projects of an interdisciplinary nature, a maximum of three (3) different subjects can be selected.

The project budget should be entered directly in the application form and should not include overhead costs (OH).

In the application form, state the city and postal code for the place where the unit within the company that will conduct the main part of the co-production is located.

A table of planned project participants is to be attached to the application form. From participating companies (and potentially other partners), only key participants need to be entered. Attachment template for project participants (*Staff in the project*) is downloaded as an Excel file from www.kks.se. The file must be converted and attached as a PDF file (make sure that the entire Excel spreadsheet fits on one PDF page).

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. Under each heading, the main characteristics of the information that the foundation expects are stated, however applicants can provide supplementary information that is deemed appropriate based on the direction of the proposal.

NOTICE: All body text in Appendices 1 and 2 must follow the format font Arial, font size 11 pt, single line spacing.

Appendix 1. The project's contribution to the research and education environment (may not exceed 2 pages, see below for more information if the project is planned in collaboration between several environments)

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. When a project is planned in collaboration between several environments, all environments shall be included, however, the appendix may only be extended by half a page per additional environment. Start from the group or environment where the project has closest context. Design the description based on the following headings:

1.1. The project's contribution to the development of the research and education environment

Describe how the project will contribute to the development of the research and education environment. Connect to the purpose and the goals of the call. It must be made clear 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 situation and ambition.

a) Current situation with results from the past five years (area of activity and direction of research and education within the environment, personnel composition, scientific production, development of educations, funding, collaborative and business partners etc.)

b) Ambition and objectives for the further development of the environment.

Appendix 2. Project plan (may not exceed 30 numbered pages)

To be uploaded under *Project plan.*

If the university has been previously rejected on a similar Synergi project application, and reapplies, it should be clearly stated how the project plan has been developed since prior application.

Account for whether sex and gender perspectives are relevant in the project design and content, and if so, how these will be included (more information on www.kks.se).

Account for how gender equality aspects have been considered in the composition of the project group (more information on www.kks.se).

a) Purpose and objective - Synergi core question

- Outline the Synergi core question and how it was developed.
- Describe the contribution of each subproject towards addressing the core question.
- Outline the objectives for the Synergi project and for the included subprojects.
- Motivate how the Synergi project adds to the research and education environment as well as to the long-term strategy for the university.

b) Project plan (including list of references)

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

c) Relevance for the business sector and coproduction

- Present the general business relevance of the Synergi project and subprojects.
- Present the input, requirements and benefits of the contributing companies 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 Synergi project (project management, steering committee, administration, and scientific leadership).
- Outline an overall risk analysis for the project.
- Outline a communication plan for the different expected outcomes of the project.

e) 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 Synergi project and the subprojects.
- Comment and motivate the budget, in particular costs for material, equipment, and consults.

Appendix 3. Qualifications (may not exceed 1 pages per person)

To be uploaded under *Attachment in accordance with the call and in the same order as stated in the call.*

Attach CVs for individuals crucial for the implementation of the project. Include merits **of relevance** in relation to the project using the following selection of headings (more information on www.kks.se):

- **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 contributions, and implementation of research results.
- **Teaching:** the full diversity of academic teaching, training and supervision activities, education development including open teaching resources.
- **Cooperation:** with academia, business and other societal actors including communication efforts
- **Leadership:** project management, activity development, assessment assignments, center management, department assignments, etc.

Please describe earlier experiences of project management or project coordination of suggested project manager.

Appendix 4. Letters 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 must be attached. Each letter of intent must include the company's:

- needs and motives for participation,

- contributions and participation in the implementation of the project,

- expected results and benefits of participation,

- co-financing (total amount must be stated)

The letters of intent should either be signed manually or electronically by for example, GetAccept, ebox or similar systems. Applications without correct signatures will not be considered.

Appendix 5. Signatures (template)

To be uploaded under *Attachment in accordance with the call and in the same order as stated in the call.*

The application must be signed by the vice-chancellor, the project owner, and the project manager. The 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.

Appendix template is downloaded from the Foundation's website, www.kks.se.

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