
CALL FOR PROPOSALS

SYNERGY PROJECTS 25

- The application should be submitted to the Knowledge Foundation before **15:00 on 27 January 2026**.
 - Funding decisions will be announced in May 2026.
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Yvonne Fors, Programme Manager
yvonne.fors@kks.se, +46 (0)70-712 81 58

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

The programme *Synergy projects* replaces the former programme *Synergi* as of this year's call.

The *Synergy projects* programme serves as a tool for universities and university colleges (henceforth called universities in the call text) with an ambition to focus their research and education and develop a foundation for continued academic profiling. The programme enables the university to address research questions that may require perspective and competence from different scientific areas. Emanating from a well-defined research question, which is of relevance also for the business sector, the results from a synergy project should contribute to the development of the knowledge frontier.

Objectives of the programme

The objective of the *Synergy projects* programme is that the university together with business partners address a joint research question that significantly contributes to continued scientific progress and development of the research and education environment, as well as creates benefits for the business sector.

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 *Synergy projects* programme is for one or more research and education environments to coordinate and develop its research towards scientific profiling.

Project design

Academia and the business sector together should formulate the project's research question, which will address mutual challenges or needs. The synergy project should emanate from the joint research question and be approached by combining at least three scientifically based subprojects, which may cover several research areas. The subprojects should be complementary and closely coordinated from the joint research question, which thereby navigates the design and objectives of the subprojects. In the application the subprojects content and execution should be clearly described in relation to each other and the joint research question.

Terms and conditions

Applicants

Sweden's university colleges and newer universities² 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.

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

² Blekinge Institute of Technology, Dalarna University, Halmstad University, Jönköping University, Karlstad University, Konstfack, Kristianstad University, Linnaeus University, Malmö University, Mid Sweden University, Mälardalen

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.

Participation of the university

In the synergy project there must be a project manager who is operationally responsible for the implementation. The project manager should have a doctoral degree³ and be employed by the 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.

The university may strengthen the project by contributing its own funds in the form of co-financing. However, any co-financing, and its amount, does not in itself form part of the assessment of the project application.

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.

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](#)⁵.

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 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.

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.

⁴ <https://www.kks.se/en/co-production/>

⁵ <https://www.kks.se/en/co-production/what-does-the-business-sector-mean/>

Project duration

The project duration should be 3–6 years. Projects may start no earlier than 1 September 2026, and no later than 1 December 2026.

Financial framework and budgeting

The programme *Synergy projects* 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 may not exceed the sum of SEK 11 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 university(-ies). In addition to salary costs, other direct costs arising within the project at the applying university 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](#)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.

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.

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.

⁶ <https://www.kks.se/en/funding-and-assessment/general-terms-and-conditions-for-projects/>

⁷ <https://www.kks.se/en/apply-and-report/>

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

If the university previously has been rejected on a similar application (within the programme *Synergi*), it should be stated how the project plan has been developed in the current application and how the how the assessment panel's previous remarks has been considered in the new application.

a. *Joint research question and objectives of the subprojects*

- Outline and motivate the joint, coordinating research question of the synergy project.
- Describe how the subprojects contribute to address the joint research question.
- Outline the scientific objectives of the synergy project and the included subprojects.
- Describe how the scientific question relates and contribute to the relevant knowledge frontier.

b. *Project plan (including list of references)*

- Outline a project description including methods, equipment and timetable for the implementation of the project. Also clearly describe the content and execution of the subprojects in relation to each other.
- 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](https://www.kks.se/en/gender-equality-perspective-an-added-value-for-research-and-innovation/)⁸).

c. *Relevance for the business sector and co-production*

- Present the general business relevance of the synergy project on an overarching level.
- Describe the contributions requisites and benefits of the participating business actors in each subproject.
- Outline how the co-production between the business sector and the university will work and how the results will be implemented.

d) *Organisation and risk analysis*

- Describe and justify the project's organisation, management, and staffing. 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.
- Account for how gender equality aspects have been considered in the composition of the project group (more information on [the Foundation's website](https://www.kks.se/en/gender-equality-perspective-an-added-value-for-research-and-innovation/)⁹).

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

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

- 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.
- Outline an overall risk analysis for the project.
- Outline a communication plan for the different expected results of the project/-s.

Appendix 3. Project participants

Appendix template for project participants (*Staff in the project*) is downloaded as an Excel file from [the Foundation's website](#)¹⁰ 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. 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](#)¹¹). 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:

- **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.

¹⁰ <https://www.kks.se/en/documents/>

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

Appendix 6. Signatures from the university

Appendix template for signatures is downloaded from [the Foundation's website](#)¹². 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 reviewers). 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 must belong to the Knowledge Foundation's target group.
- 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.
- At least two business actors must co-finance each sub-project.
- Co-financing business actors must fulfil the criteria set by the Knowledge Foundation.¹³
- 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 11 million (excl. OH costs).
- The project duration must be 3–6 years.
- Projects may start no earlier than 1 September 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?

¹² <https://www.kks.se/en/documents/>

¹³ More information on the Foundation's website: <https://www.kks.se/en/co-production/what-does-the-business-sector-mean/>

- To what extent is the project expected to contribute to the development of the research and education environment in the short and long term?

Scientific quality¹⁴

- How well-defined is the joint research question and how well do the individual subprojects contribute to it?
- How well does the scientific research question relate and contribute to the current knowledge frontier?
- 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?
- To what degree are the individual subprojects and the synergy project as a whole expected to generate results of high quality (e.g. scientific publications or documented artistic research)?

Benefit to the business sector

- How relevant are the scientific questions to meet the requisites 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 joint 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 is the risk analysis and the communication plan?

¹⁴ When the application concerns an artistic research domain, the concept *scientific* is replaced by *artistic* in the call.