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## CALL FOR PROPOSALS

### Special Initiative:

## Doctoral student exchange to the Stanford Doerr School of Sustainability

- The application should be submitted to the Knowledge Foundation before **15:00 on 23 June 2026**.
  - Funding decisions will be announced in September 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.*

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## The special initiative

This call for proposals refers to a special initiative to fund doctoral students' participation to an exchange programme to the Stanford Doerr School of Sustainability, USA. Successful candidates will for a period of 6–12 months be part of the Stanford Doerr School of Sustainability, where they will join a host faculty's research group matching their doctoral project and be integrated into both the Stanford Doerr School of Sustainability and the broader academic community.

The Stanford Doerr School of Sustainability exchange programme aims to bring talented students and researchers from universities around the world to:

- Promote global learning and the exchange of ideas
- Share best practices in research and education
- Build lasting networks across institutions and countries
- Share data and insights
- Collaborate on leading-edge research in technology, policy, and practice
- Organically promote more robust international research funding by partnering for research grant applications in many countries.

## The Stanford Doerr School of Sustainability

The Stanford Doerr School of Sustainability was established by Stanford University in 2022 in order to address challenges and opportunities of climate and sustainability. The vision is to create a future where people and nature thrive in concert and perpetuity. Achieving this vision requires a deep knowledge of Earth, climate, and society, delivery of that knowledge through education, and the use of that knowledge to create solutions. The school draws together all areas of scholarship that are together needed to understand and address sustainability. Those research areas are housed within academic departments including Civil and Environmental Engineering, Earth & Planetary Sciences, Earth System Science, Energy Science & Engineering, Environmental Social Sciences, Geophysics, and Oceans. For more information, see the website of [Stanford Doerr School of Sustainability](https://sustainability.stanford.edu/)<sup>1</sup>.

## Objective of the special initiative

The objective of this special initiative is to enable an established doctoral student<sup>2</sup> to strengthen their scientific competence, academic credentials, and international network by participating in an exchange programme and thus spending a longer, continuous period of time at the Stanford Doerr School of Sustainability, USA.

## The special initiative's purpose and contribution to development of 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 and special initiatives contribute in various ways to enabling academic 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/)<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://sustainability.stanford.edu/>

<sup>2</sup> An already registered doctoral student that has been pursuing doctoral studies on a full-time basis for at least two full years, see more information below.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.kks.se/en/funding-and-assessment/strong-research-and-educational-environments/>

The specific purpose of the special initiative in this context is to strengthen the doctoral student's home research and education environment by providing an opportunity to initiate and extend international academic collaboration and networking.

## The setup of the special initiative

Selected candidates within this special initiative will be part of an exchange programme to the Stanford Doerr School of Sustainability where they will conduct research connected to their ongoing doctoral project at a hosting faculty. A fundamental requirement in the selection process for funded candidates is therefore that a suitable matching host faculty is identified by the Stanford Doerr School of Sustainability and willing to host the doctoral student.

In addition, the Stanford Doerr School of Sustainability will also offer a programme for visiting students, preliminary including field trips, guest lectures, and social and networking activities.

The special initiative involves the following steps:

- The call for applications is open from April 2026 to 23 June 2026.
- Doctoral student applicants submit their applications to the Knowledge Foundation.
- Applications are reviewed by the secretariat of the Knowledge Foundation to ensure that the formal requirements are met.
- Applications meeting the formal requirements are passed to the Stanford Doerr School of Sustainability.
- Peers at the Stanford Doerr School of Sustainability review applications and approve the scientific level of candidates, ensure a matching host faculty, and confirm the possibility to host the doctoral student.
- The Knowledge Foundation selects successful candidates for funding and makes a final decision.
- Successful candidates are notified in early September 2026.
- Preparations for the exchange begin:
  - The host faculty, the home university, and the doctoral student align on the research topic of the exchange.
  - The Stanford Doerr School of Sustainability manages visas and administrative paperwork with support from the host faculty, the home university, and the doctoral student.
- Selected candidates begin their exchange period sometime between 1 January 2027 and 1 April 2027.

## Terms and conditions

### Applicants and participation of the university

Sweden's university colleges and newer universities<sup>4</sup> (hereafter referred to as *universities* in the call text) may apply. The Knowledge Foundation welcomes applications within all subject areas<sup>5</sup>.

At the time of application, the candidate for the exchange programme must be registered as a doctoral student at the applicant university and must have been pursuing doctoral studies on a full-time basis

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<sup>4</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.

<sup>5</sup> Should an application be within an artistic research domain, the concept *scientific* is to be replaced by *artistic* in the call text.

for at least two full years (since registering as a doctoral student). The doctoral student's supervisor must support the application, see below.

The doctoral student will operate as project manager in the application. 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 exchange, for monitoring the implementation, and the accurate use of the funding.

## Participation of the business sector and other partners

Since the orientation of this special initiative is educational, there is no requirement for co-financing from the business sector. However, projects funded by the Knowledge Foundation must always be designed so that, in addition to contributing to the current research frontier, they also contribute to the development of the business sector. To be granted funding within this special initiative, the ongoing doctoral project must therefore be relevant to and contribute to the benefit of the business sector.

## Exchange duration

The duration of the exchange stay at the Stanford Doerr School of Sustainability should be 6–12 months. The stay may start no earlier than 1 January 2027, and no later than 1 April 2027.

## Financial framework and budgeting

The amount to be requested from the Knowledge Foundation is solely dependent on the duration of the exchange stay. For the maximum period of stay (12 months), the requested sum should be SEK 1.100.000. If the period applied for is shorter, the amount should be reduced in proportion to the number of months (e.g. 6 months: SEK 550.000). The application should not include a specified budget. Instead, the requested sum should in its total be inserted as a lump sum in the application form under the budget post *Travel costs*.

Funding within this special initiative is solely intended to cover additional direct costs<sup>6</sup> associated with the doctoral student's exchange to the Stanford Doerr School of Sustainability. This implies that the doctoral student should continue their doctoral student employment and receive their regular salary from the applicant/home university during the entire exchange period. At the time of application, the doctoral student must have secured funding for his/her doctoral project from the home university, covering the entire exchange period.

The applying university will be the beneficiary of the funding and must administrate it. The financial outcome will be followed up in the final report. Any unused funds shall accrue to the Knowledge Foundation (this also applies if the doctoral student exchange is terminated prematurely).

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. This OH surcharge should be used to cover any extra costs associated with the administering of the funding from the Foundation to the doctoral student.

The Knowledge Foundation will support a total of 10 full-year equivalents (i.e., a total of 120 months). Thus, the final number of individuals receiving funding will depend on how many months each applicant is applying for.

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<sup>6</sup> These costs may for example include (but not be restricted to) the following:

- Programme fee to the Stanford Doerr School of Sustainability
- Housing
- Additional costs of living in the U.S.
- Insurances
- Travels – one return flight ticket in economy class per stay

## 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>7</sup>. Supplementing the application after the closing date of the call is not possible (unless specifically requested by the Foundation).

### Appendices to the application

The application and all appendices must be written in English. Note that all body text in Appendices 1 and 2 must follow the format font Arial, font size 11 pt, and single line spacing.

The following appendices (as PDF files) should be attached to the application in the same order as below.

#### Appendix 1. Description of the ongoing doctoral student project

Maximum 5 pages (including any references). Page numbered. To be uploaded under *Project plan*.

Describe the applying doctoral student's ongoing doctoral student project at the applicant university:

- Describe the scientific questions that are addressed in the project, and how they relate and contribute to the current research frontier.
- Describe how the project connects to challenges and opportunities of sustainability.
- Describe how the project is relevant to and benefits the business sector.
- Describe the scientific objectives of the project and the methods that are used to achieve them.
- Describe the results so far in the project.
- Describe the scientific competence of the project manager in relation to the project content.

#### Appendix 2. Description of the home research and education environment

Maximum 2 pages. To be uploaded under *Other appendices*.

This appendix should be written jointly by the head of the research and education environment and the doctoral student's main supervisor. Frame the description based on the below headings.

- Describe the research and education 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, funding, collaborations, etc.
- Describe the ambition and objectives for the further development of the research and education environment.

#### Appendix 3. Registration certificate of the doctoral student

Attach the applicant university's official registration certificate of the doctoral student.

#### Appendix 4. Qualifications of the doctoral student

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

Attach a CV for the doctoral student.

#### Appendix 5. Recommendation letter from main supervisor

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

The doctoral student's main supervisor should attach a signed recommendation letter. The letter should also include a declaration of the secured doctoral funding from the applicant university covering the entire exchange period.

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

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

#### Appendix 6. Signatures from the university

Appendix template for signatures is downloaded from [the Foundation's website](#)<sup>8</sup> (NB! Use the signature template for **Special initiatives**). To be uploaded under *Other appendices*.

The application must be signed by the project manager (i.e. the doctoral student) and the project owner. The project owner assures through his/her signature that the university approves the participation of the doctoral student in the exchange programme (see also under *Applicants and participation of the university*).

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

## Preparation, assessment, and selection process

The application will be reviewed by the secretariat of the Knowledge Foundation to ensure that the formal requirements are met. If these are met, applications will be passed to the Stanford Doerr School of Sustainability where peers will approve the scientific level of the candidates, ensure a matching host faculty and confirm the possibility to host the doctoral student.

Successful candidates are thereafter selected by the secretariat of the Foundation. Funding decisions are made by the Foundation's CEO.

### Formal requirements

The following requirements must be met for the application to be considered for evaluation. Applications that do not meet the requirements, will be rejected for formal reasons, and will not be passed to the Stanford Doerr School of Sustainability for further evaluation.

- The applicant university must belong to the Knowledge Foundation's target group.
- The project manager must be a doctoral student registered at the applicant university having pursued at least two years of doctoral studies on a full-time basis since registration.
- Covering the entire exchange period, the doctoral student must have secured funding from the applicant university and should receive their regular salary.
- The application must include appendices according to the call instructions.
- The doctoral student project must demonstrate how it connects to challenges and opportunities of sustainability.
- The doctoral student project must demonstrate relevance and contribution to business sector benefit.
- The exchange duration must be 6–12 months.
- Funds requested from the Knowledge Foundation should, depending on the period of stay, range from SEK 550.000 (6 months) to 1.100.000 (12 months). Overhead costs excluded.
- Projects may start no earlier than 1 January 2027, and no later than 1 April 2027.
- The application must be signed by the project manager (i.e. the doctoral student) and the project owner.

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.kks.se/en/documents/>