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# CALL FOR PROPOSALS

## EXPERTKOMPETENS 24

### Mini/Maxi

- The application should be submitted to the Knowledge Foundation before **15:00 on 11<sup>th</sup> of February 2025.**
  - Funding decisions will be announced in mid-May 2025.
  - After signing of agreement, approved projects may start on 1<sup>st</sup> of September 2025, at the earliest, and on 1<sup>st</sup> of February 2026, 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.*

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## The programme Expertkompetens

Sweden faces a series of complex societal challenges, at the same time as a rapid technological development leads to a comprehensive transformation of the business sector. Altogether, this contributes to changed and increasing needs for relevant knowledge and competence, needs that can no longer be solely met through the addition of newly graduated individuals. An increasingly important contribution will therefore be competence development of already working professionals and recurrent education during the working life.

In this context, Sweden's universities and university colleges (henceforth called *universities* in the call text) play an important role by being able to offer a research-related education offering within their subject areas of expertise, that meets needs in the business sector. To many universities, working students are a newly added target group that prompts adaptations of the educational activities in order to be able to meet the group's needs and conditions for education in an appropriate manner.

### Objectives of the programme

The objectives of the programme Expertkompetens are that the applicant research- and education environment together with business partners, develops and implements business-relevant educational activities at second or third cycle level for working professionals<sup>1</sup>. The objective is also to strengthen the long-term ability of universities to manage educational activities tailored to competence development of working professionals.

### The programme's purpose 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 the society. All the Knowledge Foundation's programmes contribute in different ways to establishing and maintaining environments with 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 [www.kks.se](http://www.kks.se).

The specific purpose of the Expertkompetens programme is for research and education environments to start up or renew educational collaboration with the business sector through competence-enhancing educational activities for working professionals. Through Expertkompetens, the applicant research and education environment may also strengthen its relationship with the business sector in areas related to the environment's research orientations, thus contributing to profiling.

### Programme versions

The programme Expertkompetens primarily refers to support to environments intending to start up educational activities for working professionals in collaboration with the business sector. However, the program may also provide support to environments that already have an existing educational activity for working professionals, but who need to renew or change it in a tangible way in order to strengthen the long-term ability.

In order to be able to effectively match the needs and prerequisites of the applicant research and educational environment, the program is offered in two variants – *Expertkompetens Mini* and *Expertkompetens Maxi* (further referred to as *Mini* and *Maxi* in the call text). The differences between the two versions are shown in the below table.

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<sup>1</sup> Working professionals with an undergraduate degree or equivalent level of experience from working in the business sector.

	<i>Mini</i>	<i>Maxi</i>
Project duration	2–3 years	4–5 years
Scope	10–20 credits	40–60 credits
Project funding	SEK 250 000/credit (= SEK 2.5–5 million)	SEK 200 000/credit (= SEK 8–12 million)
Co-financing partners (from project start)	5	10
Hearing part of the assessment	no	yes

Environments aiming to start up an educational activity for working professionals should choose program version based on the current level of experience of collaboration with the business sector: Environments without any prior experience of collaboration with the business sector on research or education matters should choose *Mini*, whereas environments that already have experience of collaboration may choose between *Mini* and *Maxi* depending on the prerequisites, needs and ambitions of the environment.

Those environments with already established educational activities for working professionals may choose between *Mini* and *Maxi* based on how great the needs for tangible renewal or change are.

The choice of programme version must be described and justified in the project plan.

### Project design

The project should entail that universities, business partners, and possibly other relevant partners, together and in close collaboration analyse and define competence needs, as well as jointly develop and implement relevant educational activities at second cycle level or third cycle level (research level).

For a good fulfilment of the objectives, the following aspects should be specifically taken into account in the design of the project:

**Adaptation of the educational activities:** The educational activities should be appropriately designed in order to meet the needs and conditions of working professionals. This applies both to subject content, form (for example the study form, study pace, scope, and examination methods), and pedagogical and/or didactical adaptations. To design the educational activities in close and active dialogue with the business sector is an important component in promoting both attractiveness and student throughput.

**Renewal:** The educational activities could include both (new) development and further development of the existing educational provision but must overall represent a tangible renewal or change in relation to the existing provision.

**Integration with the regular educational provision:** The educational activities should be quality assured and approved according to established routines at the university, as well as being offered free of charge as part of the of the university's overall educational provision.

**Student recruitment:** Marketing, recruitment and admission of working students are particularly important factors, that should be given great importance. Arrangements described for this work should therefore demonstrate professionalism and flexibility, as well as the ability to test new solutions.

**Repeated implementation:** Projects must be planned so that all developed educational activities can be implemented on two (2) occasions. In this way, experience gained on the first occasion will be used to develop an improved educational activity for the second occasion.

**Long-term ambitions and continued operations:** The project must be well anchored at the university and interact with long-term priorities and ambitions regarding educational activities for working professionals. The project should be implemented in such a way that learnings and gained experiences are utilised and disseminated within the university. Furthermore, the project should be planned in such

a way that the educational activities will have the possibility to live on after the project period, as far as possible still aimed at working professionals. Therefore, primary focus for the continued operations ought to be on continuing the *forms* developed and tested during the project period (such as collaboration on educational matters, internal processes and lead times, educational formats, pedagogical and/or didactical adaptations etc.), rather than maintaining a specific subject content.

## Terms and conditions

### Applicants

Sweden's university colleges and newer universities<sup>2</sup> with degree-awarding powers at master's<sup>3</sup> level or higher within the subject area of the project, 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.

### Participation of the university

In order to achieve long-term and sustainable activities, a clear engagement from the applicant university is of significant importance. This applies to, for example, the prioritisation and planning of resources (such as financial resources and staff planning), but also to the involvement of supporting functions of the university. Education-related support functions should already from the outset of the project be actively involved in order to develop ways of working and procedures that support a successful project implementation and enhance opportunities for continued operations after the project ending. For example, there may be a need to develop forms for student recruitment and admission, validation of prior learning, and internal processes in order to shorten lead times.

A project manager, holding a doctoral degree and employed at the university, should be operationally responsible for the implementation of the project. The project manager should have solid experience in developing and implementing education at the relevant level (second cycle and/or third cycle level). 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 with own funds in the form of co-financing. However, any co-financing, as well as its size, will not impact the assessment of the project application.

Each year, one of the ongoing projects within the Expertkompetens programme is expected to arrange an experience exchange meeting at their university. At these events, all granted projects have the opportunity to share experiences and good practices with each other.

### Participation of 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 [www.kks.se](http://www.kks.se).

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<sup>2</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>3</sup> Degree-awarding powers at master's level (UKÄ: *masternivå*) or higher is required to ensure that good conditions prevail for a close connection between research and education within the subject area.

Already from the outset of the project, and thus in the application, at least five (within *Mini*) and ten (within *Maxi*), mutually independent business actors should co-finance the project, but the project requires an active and extensive collaboration with additional business partners at several different levels throughout all phases of the project. Clarification of the criteria for co-financing business actors<sup>4</sup> can be found on the Foundations' homepage ([www.kks.se](http://www.kks.se)).

Participating business partners should, for example, contribute with analysis and formulation of competence needs, development of educational content and form, as well as expertise and experience from practical challenges. The involvement of the business sector, for example through workshops, reference groups, steering groups, etc., should be described in the project description. It should also be indicated whether, and if so how, business partners will contribute by co-production in the actual implementation of the educational activities (as lecturers/teachers or similar). Note that the study time of the working students cannot be counted as co-financing from the business sector (that is, lost working time when employees participate in the developed educational activities instead).

The business actors' total co-financing, primarily through in-kind contributions, must correspond to at least 10 percent of the amount requested from the Knowledge Foundation. 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, in the application, clearly demonstrate that the organisation has adequate conditions to fulfil the obligations described in the project plan and budget. Therefore, they must attach signed letters of intent where the contributions to the project are described and motivated. Specified co-financing must also be certified in the letters of intent (see also instructions for *Appendices to the application* below).

Swedish universities outside the Foundation's target group or other relevant partners, that 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.

### **Project duration**

The project duration should be 2–3 years for *Mini*, and 4–5 years for *Maxi*.

### **Financial framework and budgeting**

The programme Expertkompetens refers to the funding of an educational project conducted in cooperation with the business sector. The amount to be requested from the Knowledge Foundation is for *Mini* SEK 250 000/credit, meaning SEK 2.5–5 million, and for *Maxi* SEK 200 000/credit, meaning 8–12 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 at the applicant university. In addition to salary costs, other direct costs<sup>5</sup> arising within the project at the applying university can be included in the budget. Within Expertkompetens the funds from the Knowledge Foundation may be used for the development, and for the implementation of the developed

<sup>4</sup> Criteria for co-financing business actors have been updated prior to the call 2024.

<sup>5</sup> See *General terms and conditions for projects funded by the Knowledge Foundation*, found on [www.kks.se](http://www.kks.se).

educational activities on (minimum and maximum) two occasions. Within this programme where granted projects are expected to participate in programme-wide exchange of experiences, costs related to travels and organisation of the meetings may be included in the budget.

Budgeting of funds must follow the instructions presented in the document *General terms and conditions for projects funded by the Knowledge Foundation* (found on [www.kks.se](http://www.kks.se)). The application should not include overhead costs (OH). An OH surcharge of 20 percent will be added and included in the agreement proposal if the application is granted by the Foundation.

## Application

The application should be submitted via the project manager's account in the Knowledge Foundation's application system *SBS Manager* ([www.kks.se](http://www.kks.se)). Supplementing the application after the closing date of the call is not possible.

In the application form, the project title should be preceded by the programme version applied for, that is: '*Expertkompetens Mini*: [Project Title]' or '*Expertkompetens Maxi*: [Project Title]'.

### 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.

The application may be written in Swedish or 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.

**Appendix 1. The project's contribution to the research and education environment(s)** (may not exceed 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. 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. Emanate from the group or environment where the project has its closest context. Frame the description based on the below headings.

#### **1.1. 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.

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

Describe the environment's current status and ambition.

**a) Current status** and results over the past five years (area of activity and direction for related research and education within the environment, staff 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 10 pages for *Mini*, and 15 pages for *Maxi*)

To be uploaded under *Appendix 2. Project plan*. The project plan must be page numbered. Any references (in legible font size) must be included within the page limit.

- Briefly describe the objectives and purpose of the project.
- Describe the scientific expertise of the applicant research and education environment and indicate how it matches the corresponding field of competence in the business sector.
- Report whether there are any other subject-wise similar initiatives for competence development of working professionals in Sweden, and if so, relate to them.
- 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 will be included (more information on [www.kks.se](http://www.kks.se)).
- Describe overall the research and education environment's current level of experience of collaboration with the business sector in research and/or educational matters. Justify the choice of program version based on this.
- Present an overall analysis of the competence needs to be addressed and in what way they are of strategic importance to the business sector. Estimate the student volumes from the business sector in the short and long term.
- Describe how the business sector will be involved in the various phases of the project and how the project continuously will maintain a high level of business relevance.
- Describe the implementation of the project and report how it will contribute to appropriate educational activities at second or third level for working professionals. If the applicant environment already has an established educational activity for working professionals, experiences and results from this should be included, as well as an account for the needs for tangible renewal or change that prompts the application.
- Specify how monitoring, learning and continuous adaptation of the activities during the project period will take place, and how the implementation will contribute to sustainable educational activities for working professionals in the longer term.
- 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 [www.kks.se](http://www.kks.se)).
- Describe and justify the costs included in the budget so it is clear what the costs consist of, why they are relevant for the project, and which partner will cover the costs.
- Include an activity plan and a timetable.
- If the university has previously been rejected on a similar Expertkompetens application, and now reapplies, this must be stated along with comments on how the assessment panel's previous remarks are being considered in the current application.

**Appendix 3. Staff in the project** (appendix template)

To be uploaded under *Appendix 3. Staff in the project*.

Attach a table of planned project participants. From co-producing partners, only key participants need to be entered. Appendix template for project participants (*Staff in the project*) is downloaded as an



Excel file from [www.kks.se](http://www.kks.se), but must be converted and attached as a PDF file (make sure that the entire Excel spreadsheet fits on one PDF page).

**Appendix 4. Qualifications** (may not exceed 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 merits and advanced assessment of research and researchers (more information on [www.kks.se](http://www.kks.se)). All academically active participants should therefore present a selection of the merits and experiences that are the 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, the business sector, or other societal actors, as well as communication efforts.
- **Management:** project management, activity 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:

- needs and motives for participation,
- contributions and participation in the implementation of the project,
- expected results and benefits of participation, and
- total contribution (primarily through in-kind contributions). In projects where co-financing is required, the total amount must be stated.

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)

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.

Appendix template for signatures is downloaded from the Foundation's website, [www.kks.se](http://www.kks.se). 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 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 within *Maxi*. Funding decisions are made by the Foundation's CEO (*Mini*) and the Foundation's board (*Maxi*), after recommendation by the external assessment panel.

### Formal requirements

The application must meet the following requirements before the Knowledge Foundation will consider it for evaluation. 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 and have degree-awarding powers at master's level or higher for the subject area (must be described in Appendix 1).
- The project manager must have a doctoral degree and be employed at the applicant university at the starting date of the project.
- The application must include appendices according to the call instructions.
- At least five (within *Mini*) and ten (within *Maxi*) business actors must co-finance the project from the start.
- Co-financing business actors must fulfil the criteria set by the Knowledge Foundation.<sup>6</sup>
- The business actors' total co-financing, primarily through in-kind contributions, must correspond to at least 10 percent of the amount requested from the Knowledge Foundation.
- Signed letters of intent from all participating partners should be attached. Specified co-financing should be certified in the letters of intent from co-financing partners.
- Funds that may be requested from the Knowledge Foundation should be SEK 2.5–5million (for *Mini*), and SEK 8–12 million (for *Maxi*) (excl. OH costs).
- The duration of the project should be 2–3 years (*Mini*), and 4–5 years (*Maxi*).
- Projects may start on 1<sup>st</sup> of September 2025, at the earliest, and on 1<sup>st</sup> of February 2026, at the latest.
- The application must be signed by the vice-chancellor, the project owner and the project manager.

### Assessment criteria

#### *Strong research and education environment*

- Considering the choice of programme version, to what extent is the project expected to contribute to the short- and long-term development of the research and education environment?
- To what extent is there a clear description of the research and education environment's current status?
- To what extent is there an adequate ambition for the development of the research and education environment?

#### *Scientific quality*<sup>7</sup>

- How well does the scientific expertise of the applicant environment match the corresponding field of competence in the business sector?

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<sup>6</sup> More information on [www.kks.se](http://www.kks.se).

<sup>7</sup> When the application concerns an artistic research domain, the concept *scientific* is replaced by *artistic* in the call.

- How well do the educational activities relate to any other subject-wise similar initiatives for competence development of working professionals in Sweden?
- 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 considered relevant, are these perspectives appropriately included?

#### *Benefits to the business partners*

- Does the environment have an adequate level of experience of collaboration with the business sector for the chosen programme version?
- To what extent is there a well-founded analysis of the business sector's competence needs, including estimated student volumes?
- To what extent is the involvement of the business sector in the various phases of the project adequate and sufficiently comprehensive?

#### *Implementation*

- How well is the implementation of the project described, and to what extent does it provide the opportunity for appropriate educational activities at second or third level for working professionals? If the applicant environment already has an established educational activity for working professionals – to what extent is experiences and results from this considered, and to what extent are the needs for renewal or change tangible?
- To what extent does the implementation allow for monitoring, learning and continuous adaptation during the project period, and to what extent does it contribute to sustainable educational activities for working professionals in the longer term?
- How appropriate is the project's organisation, management, and staffing?
- How well on an aggregated level are the merits and experiences of the project group fulfilling the requirements for an adequate project implementation according to the project plan?
- To what extent is there an adequate description of how gender equality aspects have been considered in the composition of the project group?
- How well is the budget described and justified in the project plan and is the project plan realistic in relation to available resources?
- How appropriate and realistic is the activity and timetable?