
CALL FOR PROPOSALS

SYNERGI 24

- The application should be submitted to the Knowledge Foundation before **15:00 on 4th of February 2025.**
- Funding decisions will be announced in mid-May 2025.
- After signing of agreement, approved projects may start on 1st of August 2025, at the earliest, and on 1st of December 2025, at the latest.

Yvonne Fors, Programme Manager
yvonne.fors@kks.se, 070-712 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 Synergi

The Synergi programme serves as a tool for universities and university colleges (henceforth called *universities* in the call text) with an ambition to focus on an integrating scientific orientation. From a Synergi project the university may develop a platform for continued profiling. The programme enables the university to address research questions that may require the perspective and competence from different scientific areas. Emanating from a well-defined core question, that is of relevance also for the business sector, the results from a Synergi project should contribute to the development to the state-of-the-art.

Objectives of the programme

The objective of the Synergi programme is that the higher education institute (henceforth called university) together with business partners address an integrating research question that contributes to scientific focus and development of the research and education environment, as well as creates benefits for the business partners.

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.

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

Project design

The synergy 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.

The 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 necessary and sufficient 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.

Terms and conditions

Applicants

Sweden's university colleges and newer universities¹ 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 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

Several universities within the Foundation's target group may collaborate 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. Universities planning to apply for funding are welcomed to contact the programme manager well in advance of the application to discuss the prerequisites for an application.

Participation of the university

A project manager employed at the university should be operationally responsible for the implementation of the project. The project manager of the Synergi 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 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.

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. The Synergi core question should be formulated by the academia and business sector together and address mutual challenges or needs.

At least two mutually independent business actors should co-finance each sub-project. Clarification of the criteria for co-financing business actors² can be found on the Foundations' homepage (www.kks.se).

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, 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 3–5 years.

² Criteria for co-financing business actors have been updated prior to the call 2024.

Financial framework and budgeting

The programme Synergi 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 10 million.

The funds from the Foundation should primarily be used for salary costs related to working hours within the project for project participants employed at the applicant university(-ies). In addition to salary costs, other direct costs³ arising within the project at the applying university can 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). 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. 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.

The appendices of the application must be written in English to enable international peer review (letters of intent may, however, 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 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

³ See *General terms and conditions for projects funded by the Knowledge Foundation*, found on www.kks.se.

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 25 pages)

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

- If the university previously has been rejected on a similar Synergi application, and now reapplies 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.

a) Purpose and objective – the Synergi core question

- Outline and motivate the Synergi core question.
- Describe how the individual subprojects contribute to addressing the core question of the Synergi.
- Outline the scientific objectives of the Synergi project and for the included subprojects.

b) Project plan (including list of references)

- Outline the project plan (including methods, personnel, equipment, timetable) for the implementation out of the Synergi project in relation to the subprojects.
- Outline the plan for each subproject (including research question, method, resources, time plan).
- 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).
- Describe the scientific questions to be addressed in the subprojects and the overarching Synergi project, as well as how they relate and contribute to the corresponding national and international state-of-the-art.

c) Relevance for the business sector and co-production

- Present the general business relevance of the Synergi project and the subprojects.
- Present the input, requirements and benefits of the participating business actors in each project.
- Outline the co-production between the business sector and the university and how the results will be implemented.

d) Organisation and risk analysis

- Describe the organisation and follow-up of the Synergi project (project management, steering committee, administration, and scientific leadership) Account for the competence, role, and work contribution of key individuals, including for 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).
- 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 as well as any contribution from the university. Present (preferably in tabular form) co-financing over time of both the Synergi project and the subprojects.
- Comment and motivate all parts of the budget.

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

Preparation and assessment

The application will be reviewed by the secretariat of the Knowledge Foundation to ensure that the formal requirements are met. If these are met, an assessment of the project's scientific quality will be performed by international scientific experts (peer review). Thereafter, an external assessment panel will conduct an overall assessment based on the assessment criteria below. 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 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.
- 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.
- Co-financing business actors must fulfil the criteria set by the Knowledge Foundation.⁴
- At least two business actors must co-finance each sub-project.
- 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.
- 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 requested from the Knowledge Foundation may not exceed SEK 10 million (excl. OH costs).
- The duration of the project should be 3–5 years.
- Projects may start on 1st of August 2025, at the earliest, and on 1st of December 2025, at the latest.
- The application must be signed by the vice-chancellor, project owner and the project manager.

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 research and education environment?
- To what extent is there a clear description of the current position of the research and education environment?
- To what extent is there an adequate ambition for the development of the research and education environment?

*Scientific quality*⁵

- How do the research questions relate and contribute to the state-of-the-art?

⁴ More information on www.kks.se.

⁵ When the application concerns an artistic research domain, the concept *scientific* is replaced by *artistic* in the call.

- How well-defined is the research question (the Synergi core question), and how well do the individual subprojects contribute to it?
- 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's scientific content and in the design of the project? If considered relevant, are these perspectives appropriately included?
- To what degree are the subprojects, as well as the overarching Synergi work, expected to generate results of high quality (e.g. scientific publications or documented artistic research)?

Benefits to the business partners

- How relevant is the core question in relation to needs of the participating business actors? To what extent is it relevant to a broader business sector?
- To what extent may the project be expected to contribute to the development of participating business partners and the development to of the business sector?

Implementation

Synergi

- How clear are the objectives for the Synergi project?
- How appropriate is the project's organisation, management, and staffing?
- 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 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 appropriately designed are the risk analysis and the communication plan?

Per subproject

- To what extent is each individual subproject planned and organised in order to sufficiently contribute according to expectations to the Synergi project?