Knowledge Foundation ✕

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

FORSKNINGSPROFILER 24

- A notice of interest should be submitted to the Knowledge Foundation no later than **15th October 2024.**
- The application should be submitted to the Knowledge Foundation before **15:00 on 3rd 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.

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About the Knowledge Foundation

The Knowledge Foundation is a funder with the mission to strengthen Sweden's competitiveness. The foundation funds research and competence development at Sweden's university colleges and newer universities when it takes place in collaboration with the business sector. The Foundation's calls are open to all scientific and artistic subject areas.

Contents

The programme Forskningsprofiler

The programme provides support for long term research efforts with the potential to profile research environment(s) and deepen cooperation with the business sector. The Knowledge Foundation's support of up to SEK 40 million over 8 years creates, along with contributions from the business sector and the university, substantial resources to engage in a coherent development of a research area relevant to the business sector.

Objectives of the programme

The objectives of the programme Forskningsprofiler is to support research agendas of high scientific quality and business relevance that give research environment(s) a stronger national and international position in line with the profiling of the university.

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 programme Forskningsprofiler is to give research environments an opportunity for long-term profiling and positioning of their research in line with the strategy of the university.

Project design

A research profile project should be guided by a coherent research agenda. The agenda should cover the whole duration of the project, being more detailed for the first half of the project.

A research profile is usually established within one single research and education environment, department, or similar unit. It is also possible that several units collaborate, provided this is compatible with a coherent and profiling agenda. For a research profile to fulfil its purpose, it should be clearly linked to the strategic ambitions of the research environment(s) concerned, as well as of the university.

The primary focus of a profile project is on strengthening the research agenda, but a sustainable profile should also have a clear connection to relevant education.

The composition of competence among the project participants within the research profile should clearly support the scientific ambitions. There should be a good balance between senior and junior researchers involved. A plan for the project's competence supply, which describes both planned recruitments and how the project contributes to qualification of researchers, should be included.

Based on previous experience with the programme, the Knowledge Foundation has identified some success factors that characterise a well-designed profile project:

- The research profile is developed from a clear view of the international scientific position of the research environment and how this position can be strengthened.
- There is a unifying scientific agenda, supporting progression in research.
- The organisation of the research profile supports a clear and effective leadership.
- The forms of co-production provide opportunities for business actors to also contribute comprehensively to the project implementation, and to benefit from each other's participation.

- Implementation and monitoring of the profile is supported by clear objectives and indicators, driving the ambitions for increased scientific impact.
- There are clear strategies for the development of scientific publication, for internationalisation and for the positioning of the environment.

Terms and conditions

Applicants

Sweden's university colleges and newer universities[1] (henceforth called *universities* in the call text) 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.

The programme Forskningsprofiler is aimed at universities with well-established research and education environments who have clear ambitions for the future. Suitable environments should be cohesive, with clear scientific strength and a high ability to collaborate with the business sector.

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

A project manager employed at the university should be operationally responsible for the implementation of the project. 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 must co-finance the project with direct funds equivalent to at least 30 percent of the amount requested from the Foundation. A higher degree of co-financing is possible, but will not impact the assessment of the application. The university's contributions must be clearly stated in the project plan and budget. Please note that overhead costs are not to be included in the co-financing from the university.

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.

Several mutually independent business actors should co-finance the project Clarification of the criteria for co-financing business actors[2] can be found on the Foundations' homepage (www.kks.se).

The business actors' total co-financing to the project, primarily through in-kind contributions, must correspond to at least the same amount as requested from the Knowledge Foundation. However, it is possible to include in the application only half of the project's co-financing from business actors, provided that this co-financing corresponds to at least half of the total amount requested from the Knowledge Foundation. The co-financing for the second half of the project will, in this case, be

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[1] Blekinge Institute of Technology, Dalarna University, Halmstad University, Jönköping University, Karlstad University, Konstfack, Kristianstad University, Linnaeus University, Malmö University, Mid Sweden University, Mälardalen University, Royal College of Music in Stockholm, Royal Institute of Art, Stockholm University of the Arts, Swedish Defence University, Swedish School of Sport and Health Sciences, Södertörn University, University of Borås, University of Gävle, University of Skövde, University West, Örebro University

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

reported and certified in connection to the half-time follow-up of the project. Please note that the amount requested from the Knowledge Foundation in the application must always refer to the whole duration of the project.

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 6–8years.

Half-time follow-up

Halfway through the project, the Knowledge Foundation will carry out a more extended follow-up. The main purpose of this follow-up is to support the implementation of the project by identifying possible needs of improvement. After approval from the Foundation the project may continue with the second phase.

Financial framework and budgeting

The programme Forskningsprofiler 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 should fall between SEK 30 million and SEK 40 million. Applications should clearly indicate the ambition and ability to add further research grants from other funding sources in order to strengthen and extend the research profile.

The funds from the Foundation should primarily be used for salary costs related to working hours within the project for the project manager and project participants employed at the applicant university(-ies). In addition to salary costs, other direct costs[3] arising within the project at the applying university(-ies) can be included in the budget.

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). 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.

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

Notice of interest

Universities planning to apply for a profile project must submit a non-binding notice of interest to the email address info@kks.se by the **15th of October 2024,** at the latest. The notice of interest should be in the form of a pdf-file of no more than two pages, briefly stating the concerned research environment(s), the direction of planned profile(s) and planned business partners. This information is not assessed by the Foundation.

The notice of interest must also state whether:
- The university simultaneously wants to apply for two or more research profiles,
- The application may lead to more than two profile projects being conducted at the same time within a university, or more than one profile being conducted at the same time within the same research environment,
- The application may lead to a research environment starting a new profile project within one year after the end of a previous project within the Forskningsprofiler programme.

In the above situations, the university must specifically justify why the planned use of the Forskningsprofiler programme is reasonable and suitable for the continued development of the environment(s) concerned. The foundation will evaluate this information and will inform applicants whether the Foundation is willing to accept planned applications by the **21st of October 2024** at the latest.

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

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 32 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.

a. Purpose and objective of the research profile (approx. 2 pages)

- Describe the overall purpose and direction of the project and briefly motivate its connection and significance to the environment(s), to the university and to the business sector. Also describe how the project will create synergies with related educational activities.
- Describe by means of goals and key performance indicators (KPI) what is to be achieved by the project. Clarify the current status and the desired target values KPI:s to be reached halfway through the project as well as at the end of the project.

b. Research agenda (approx. 17 pages, including references)

- Present a research agenda for the entire project period and give a more detailed description of the subprojects to be conducted during the first 3-4 years (scientific goals and research questions, methods, participation from the university and business actors, time plans, expected results etc.). Describe how the different parts of the research agenda are connected over time and how the agenda is held together.
- Clarify how the research agenda relates to state-of-the-art and what its contribution will be.
- Describe how the project is connected to previous research(results) in the research environment(s) as well as its contribution to the renewal and positioning of research.
- 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).

c. Co-production with the business sector (approx. 4 pages)

- Clarify how the project is related to the needs of the participating business actors and how business actors will benefit from the project. Describe also to what extent the project is relevant and beneficial to a wider business sector.
- Describe the experience and ability of the environment to conduct research in cooperation with the business sector.
- Present how business actors will be involved in the project and how the cooperation between university and companies will be performed.

d. Supporting strategies and plans *(approx. 5 pages)*

- Present a strategy for how the project will result in a stronger national and international position for the environment within the chosen research domain (profiling and positioning of research, publication, development of national/international cooperation etc.). Connect to goals and indicate priorities, as well as key activities and working methods.
- Present a funding strategy explaining ambitions and main efforts intended to obtain complementary funding, enabling the continuation of the profile direction after the end of the project.
- Present and motivate a plan for recruitment and career development[4].
- Present a risk analysis for the project[5].

e. Organisation and management *(approx. 3 pages)*

- Describe and justify the project's organisation, management and staffing. Explain also how the project organisation and management relate to the line organisation of the university. 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).

f. Budget comments *(approx. 1 page)*

- 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.

g. Any connection to earlier profile (application) *(approx. 1 page – only if applicable. If this section is included in the application, the project plan may be extended to 33 pages.*

- If the university has previously been rejected on a similar Forskningsprofiler 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.
- If the university has an ongoing or in recent years completed profile project within the same research environment, it should be explained in what way the new application will bring substantial renewal in relation to the earlier profile project(s).

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

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[4] In tabular form with comments in running text.

[5] In tabular form. Risk assessments for both probability and consequences should be specified on a scale 1-4 (4 highest value). Risk values for the two factors are multiplied to provide an aggregated risk value for each risk.

present a selection of the merits and experiences that are the most <u>relevant</u> 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. 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.[6]
- The business actors' total co-financing, primarily through in-kind contributions, must correspond to at least half the amount requested from the Knowledge Foundation (if the certified co-financing at the time of application covers the entire project duration, the co-financing should correspond to the full amount requested from the 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.
- The applicant university must co-finance the project with at least 30 percent (excl. OH costs) of the amount requested from the Foundation.
- Funds requested from the Knowledge Foundation should fall between SEK 30 million and SEK 40 million (excl. OH costs).
- The duration of the project should be 6–8 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, the 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 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[7]

- To what extent is there a well-defined and coherent research agenda that provides adequate direction and progression to the project?
- How well does the research agenda relate and contribute to the state-of-the-art?
- To what extent are scientific objectives, questions and methods clear and well chosen, creating conditions for research of high scientific quality?
- To what degree will the project entail scientific excellence and a stronger national and international position of the environment(s)?
- 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?

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[6] More information on www.kks.se.

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

Benefits to the business partners

- How relevant is the project to the needs of participating business actors, and to what extent is it relevant to a wider business sector?
- To what extent may the project be expected to contribute to the development of participating business actors, and to possible development of a wider business sector?

Implementation

- How appropriate is the project's organisation and management, and staffing?
- How well is the implementation of the project supported by monitorable goals and indicators as well as suitable strategies and plans?
- How well adopted is the project's participant constellation and the chosen forms of cooperation for joint production of knowledge?
- 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? How clear and adequate is the plan for recruitment and career development?
- 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 does the project contribute to the development of synergies between research and education?
- To what extent is there a credible risk analysis that supports the ability to manage unforeseen events?
- How well is the budget described and justified in the project plan and is the project plan realistic in relation to available resources?