SSF announces 2nd Call for

Research Infrastructure Fellows – RIF

The Swedish Foundation for Strategic Research (SSF) announces the availability of a total of SEK 105 million in grants in a national call for proposals directed towards individual Fellows that are devoted to building and operating research infrastructure that meet the highest international scientific standards and strengthen present or future Swedish-based industry and society. This initiative is open for all SSF's purpose areas, i.e., Natural Sciences, Engineering and Medicine.

The selected Research Infrastructure Fellows will be supported by grants of SEK 15 million for a period of 5 years (incl. overheads) to be used for salary, research infrastructure tools, and running costs. After two and a half years, a mid-term evaluation will take place, which may affect funding for granted projects during their remaining period.

Background

Research infrastructure resources such as large research facilities, centres for expensive/specialized equipment and instruments, coordinated labs, test-beds, knowledge collections, cloud-based resources, e-infrastructures etc have ever ever-increasing importance for research and are a prerequisite for top-notch performance in many fields. Research infrastructures tend to get larger, more complex, and are inherently including several research groups and university departments. Long-term, multi-disciplinary approach, and large investments as well as demanding operations and leadership are characteristic of many infrastructures.

Sweden has impressive research infrastructures, where easy access and efficient use are vital to national competitiveness in research and development. Key persons - often outside a classic academic path - play a critical role for the successful development and use of research infrastructures. The present five-year SSF programme is intended to contribute to the development of research infrastructures and to its support, and national and international user-accessibility, as well as to enhance strategic career paths for specialists within academia.

The 1st RIF program with 15 Fellows that started in 2015 was positively evaluated at half time during 2018.

Scope of the Present Call

The objective of this Call is to promote the career and output for key persons committed to research infrastructures, large and medium scale exclusively. These persons are essential to the operation and methodological development of the infrastructures, but also to the training and supervision of users at the infrastructures. The Call is aimed at persons who have chosen another career path than the classic academic tenure track and are of instrumental importance for the research community, such as machine directors, beam-line scientists or laboratory/centre directors, all of whom develop important new research infrastructure tools.

According to the statutes of the Foundation, research infrastructure of concern for the present call should support the natural sciences, engineering and medicine, promote the development of strong research environments of the highest international standards, and enhance Sweden's future competitiveness.

Research infrastructure often includes multidisciplinary combinations of different areas, and co-operation between universities, a condition which is central to the scope.

Eligibility

The research infrastructure must be hosted, or co-hosted to a dominant part, by a Swedish university and must be prioritised by the vice-chancellor at the university, involving long-term scientific goals, funding, and use. It must be of broad national interest and provide a basis for world- leading research. It is a requirement that the infrastructure is or will become an open-access facility, i.e. open to researchers from all universities and research institutes, and preferably also be accessible to users from industry and other countries. This open access may, however, be combined with quality screening of user project proposals. It is regarded as a merit if the infrastructure offers e-access to users. Any charge for user access should be limited to actual cost.

The proposal must be submitted by a main applicant who is the key operative person (Fellow) of the infrastructure in question. This Research Infrastructure Fellow must be employed at least 50 percent by a Swedish university or a university college.

Each application must be co-signed by the vice-chancellor of the university and by the head of the host's infrastructure unit/department/centre/facility who underwrites the applicant's employment. Each university may be represented in a *maximum of two (2)* applications, as a host university, in this call. Furthermore, each key person may only be represented in one (1) application as main applicant.

According to the terms of SSF,10 percent of the grant can be used for heavy equipment. In this program an additional 20 percentage points (i.e. up to 30 percent, in total) can be used for heavy equipment if the university co-funds with the equal amount of the additional cost (i.e. co-funding is required for the additional 20 percentage points).

Please note that *Professors* (i.e. Full/tenured Professors or Chaired Professors) *are not* eligible to apply in this call. However, the call encourages the faculty staff to be involved

as infrastructure team experts in a proposal, and to identify specific strategic persons and topics for this call.

The grantees from the Research Infrastructure Fellows Call 2014 are not eligible to apply in this call.

Applications that fail to comply with these conditions will not be considered. It is the responsibility of the main applicant to check the proposal for compliance with the rules before submission.

Eligible costs:

1. Salaries, primarily to RIF and secondarily to technical staff. If a doctoral student (maximum one) is linked to RIF, the doctoral student project must be about infrastructure development. Salaries for others (senior researchers, postdocs, and the like) are not allowed.
2. Infrastructure development
3. Materials
4. Travel
5. Information/communication
6. Maximum 35 percent overhead on the direct costs above
7. Heavy equipment / investment in the concerned infrastructure (no overhead allowed).

Proposal and submission

A complete application must contain, among other data specified in the portal:

- Description of the research infrastructure and its national and international role, connectivity, and competitiveness
- Description of the national and international state of the art within the area concerned
- Description of technical and/or method development that the applicant will be engaged with at the infrastructure during the SSF grant period
- Details of the relevant expertise of the main applicant (and CV) and description of the overall infrastructure team expertise.
- Description of how the infrastructure fits in with the host university's strategy for research infrastructure and how/if it relates to the Swedish Research Council's Guide to Research Infrastructures", and equivalent
- Description of the organisation of the infrastructure and the intended role, career plan, and competence development plan of the Fellow within the infrastructure, beyond the support period of SSF
- Description of the accessibility of the infrastructure and the number of potential users from different sectors and areas, including e-access. This includes, for instance, increased accessibility and building of critical mass during the project period and after.
- A budget section including as primary items the salary cost of the applicant (up to 100%), running costs and instrument/module add-ons, refurbishing or method development related to the project

- Detailed account of the expected strategic significance of the project, presenting a vision of utilisation or commercial exploitation of the results in Sweden during the project's lifetime and up to 10-15 years after completion of the SSF project
- A Letter of Intent (LoI) signed by the vice chancellor of the university and by the head of the infrastructure unit/department/center/facility. Additional LoIs may be required if the key person is employed by a different organisation (deployment for work off-site at the infrastructure - "secondment"). The LoI from vice chancellor must include long term strategic intentions for the infrastructure beyond the SSF project.

The proposal must be written in English and submitted via the web portal of the Foundation at: http://apply.strategiska.se. Note that it is necessary to consult the portal to get a complete picture of all particulars required for submission. Please log on to the portal well in advance of the deadline. Please also submit the application in good time before the deadline. When the application has been submitted, the system will indicate whether any data fields are missing. As long as this is done before the application deadline, it is possible to submit and re-submit as many times as necessary.

All applications must be submitted by 14:00 hours (2:00 pm CET) on 15 February 2022. No additional material will be considered after this deadline.

Please note that the Foundation is subject to the Principle of Public Access to Official Records (Offentlighetsprincipen). Thus, applicants should avoid submitting material that they do not wish to be made public, for example information that could prevent patenting.

Evaluation

Applications will be assessed by an evaluation committee including experts from academia, industry, and from international research infrastructure resources.

The applications will be reviewed according to the following criteria:

- Conformity to scope and eligibility as outlined above, including: definition of infrastructure, university priorities, accessibility (by different type of users), and e-access
- Scientific quality: originality, strengths, weaknesses, level of technical advancement and method development, degree of interdisciplinarity, and feasibility of the research infrastructure project
- Strategic relevance to Swedish academia, industry and/or society, and impact of the proposed project
- Qualifications of the applicant (key person), previous technical or scientific achievements, international experience and networks, and leadership/management of research infrastructure teams.

Proposals that offer coordination of research infrastructure in given technical fields are prioritised over competing local ones.

The evaluation committee might decide to interview some of the applicants during the evaluation period. If so, SSF will contact applicants in due time before the interview.

Time schedule

October 2021: Programme announcement

15 February 2022, 2:00 pm CET: Deadline for submission of full proposal

16 February 2022 – November 2022. Evaluation of applications. This might include interviews with applicants. If so, this will be announced to applicants in due time before the interview.

November 2022: Final decision by Governing Board

January 2023: Project start

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