

Realising the global sustainable development goals

Opening Date: 11 October 2019

Application Deadline: 6 February 2020, 14.00 C.E.T.

Date of Decision: 17 June 2020



WHAT CAN YOU APPLY FOR?

Research projects that are highly relevant to the UN's global sustainable development goals in Agenda 2030.



WHO CAN APPLY?

Principal applicants must have completed their doctorate degree and be affiliated with a Swedish university, university college, research institute or governmental agency that engages in research.



HOW MUCH CAN YOU APPLY FOR?

SEK 10-20 million per project.

Revision history

Any changes to the call text are listed below.

Date	Change
January 29, 2020	<p>The text on p.9 has been changed from</p> <p>“When you state the cost of overhead in the application, do so according to the practice of the organisation that will manage the funds.”</p> <p>to</p> <p>“When you state the cost of overhead in the application, do so either according to the practice of the organisation that will manage the funds, or according to the practice of each organisation that participate in the project. If the latter is applied, the different overhead costs should declared for in the budget specification.”</p>

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Description of the call

Introduction

This call for proposals aims to create research that is highly relevant to the UN's global sustainable development goals (SDGs) in Agenda 2030. The research should offer new perspectives on the SDGs by either highlighting key synergies or conflicts between different goals or by applying humanistic or social science perspectives that could benefit the field of sustainability. In this call, Formas wants to encourage researchers to both tackle significant scientific challenges and take action to enable their research results to be used to guide society, directly or indirectly, towards realising the SDGs. You can apply for a maximum of SEK 20 million for one project. The call has a total budget of SEK 100 million.

The call consists of two focus areas: (1) Synergies and conflicts, and (2) Humanistic and social science perspectives. Applications within "Synergies and conflicts" should focus on the linkage between at least three of the SDGs. Applications within "Humanistic and social science perspectives" should focus on the challenges in one or more of the SDGs. The content of your research must be related to one or more of Formas' areas of responsibility: environment, agricultural sciences or spatial planning.

Background

The UN's [sustainable development goals](#) within Agenda 2030, provide policy-makers, researchers and beneficiaries with a shared blueprint for goal setting, planning and implementation of measures for sustainable development. In principle, the goals bring together all the major global challenges. They address society's development and people's living conditions, as well as the safeguarding of nature. Efforts to achieve these goals must be grounded in a scientific approach that is developed during the research process and is based on experiences and new insights from sustainability efforts in practice.

The SDGs are interconnected, and the potential to meet a specific goal is influenced by efforts to achieve other goals. The touchpoints between the different goals creates potential for both synergies and conflicts. One example of a complex challenge involves ensuring people's access to food, water and renewable energy while maintaining ecosystems and biodiversity. Efforts to mitigate climate change and to switch to a sustainable energy system and a bio-based economy require an increasing number of products to be made using biomass and biofuels from forests, agriculture and other land- and water-based production. At the same time, access to nutritious foods needs to be secured and biodiversity loss prevented within the context of available arable land. Climate change and societal change make the equation more complex because they impact harvests, land and entire ecosystems. The challenges also relate to poverty reduction and to sustainable consumption and production.

The SDGs are intended for all of society, and all of its sectors and stakeholders. How people and organisations perceive, relate to, value and prioritize both the goals and decisions and actions linked to them is crucial to achieving progress. The challenges posed by the SDGs require efforts

over a long period of time; during this time, circumstances and conditions will change in pace with both progress and setbacks in action measures, the advent of new knowledge, and other social developments. Broad, dynamic participation in the Agenda 2030 efforts is essential, and research is needed that highlights sustainability from many different perspectives.

In 2018, Formas implemented the call [Perspectives on the Sustainable Development Goals](#). Seventeen projects were awarded planning grants for preparatory work on leading major research projects related to the SDGs. Formas encourages project participants who were awarded planning grants to apply for funding under this call. However, you do not need to have a planning grant to apply. All applications will compete on equal terms in this call.

Purpose and focus

This call for proposals aims to create research that is highly relevant to the SDGs in Agenda 2030. The research should offer new perspectives on the SDGs by either highlighting key synergies or conflicts between different goals or by applying humanistic and social science perspectives that could benefit the field of sustainability. The size of the projects provides the means for major advances in research that can guide society towards transformative changes that will help to achieve these goals. The projects can also strengthen the position of Swedish researchers worldwide within sustainability research.

This call seeks to fund applications for conducting socially relevant research that promotes Agenda 2030 efforts, nationally or internationally, and preferably with a long-term perspective. The call consists of two focus areas:

1. **Synergies and conflicts:** Applications in this area should focus on the link between *at least three* of the SDGs, such as goals related to access to food and water, land use, bioenergy, biodiversity, ecosystem services, climate change, and related aspects of human systems. The research can, for example, involve relevant physical, biological or societal systems, processes and actors, norms and values, or research on the goals themselves.
2. **Humanistic and social science perspectives:** Applications in this area should focus on challenges that fall within *one or more* of the SDGs. Formas seeks a diversity of humanistic and social science perspectives on the SDGs including, but not limited to, economic, social, cultural, institutional, political, historical, psychological, theological, philosophical and creative perspectives.

In this call, Formas would like researchers to interact with clearly identified stakeholders who are relevant to the project. We also ask researchers to clearly describe in their applications the actions that will be implemented as part of a major advance in the transition to a society that achieves one or more of the Agenda 2030 goals. The project plan must include activities that support communication with and involve the societal stakeholder or stakeholders who represent the target group for the project results.

To further promote the relevance of the research for Agenda 2030, Formas encourages participants to design the project taking into account the targets that are included in the 17 SDGs (see also sustainabledevelopment.un.org). In addition, the application must be related to one or

more of Formas' areas of responsibility: environment, agricultural sciences or spatial planning. In projects where it is considered relevant, perspectives on digitalisation are also encouraged.

Who can apply under this call

The call is aimed at research-led consortiums, where the principal applicant must have completed a doctorate and must work for an administrating organisation that has been generally approved by Formas. Several participating researchers are expected to be included in a project. Interdisciplinary and/or international collaboration is encouraged, but is not required. In addition, Formas welcomes projects designed to promote career paths that bridge research and practical application in society, or research and higher education. Formas would also like to see applicants engaged in new collaborative initiatives.

Formas expects collaboration with beneficiaries to be part of the project, but co-funding is not required. Examples of beneficiaries are international, national, regional and local decision-makers at different levels in companies, industry associations and civil society.

Formas strives for an equitable, gender-balanced and inclusive development of society. Applicants should design the project so that its results can benefit a diverse group of people and should consider the gender distribution and different backgrounds of project members.

Before you apply

Applicant and organisation requirements

The principal applicant and other participating researchers must have obtained their doctoral degree. Others involved in the project, such as PhD students or communicators, do not need to have obtained a doctorate degree. The principal applicant and other participating researchers must have completed their doctoral degree no later than 1 February 2020.

The principal applicant must be (or, through the project must become) an employee of an administrating organisation that has been generally approved by Formas. Generally approved administrating organisations are usually Swedish universities, university colleges, research institutes or governmental agencies that engage in research. Read more about [administrating organisations](#).

The project may include participating researchers or other project participants who are employed by a foreign organisation. Any choice to include experts outside of Sweden should be justified in the project application. The administrating organisation is responsible for ensuring that transfer of funds to foreign organisations are made in accordance with rules and guidelines at the administrating organisation.

Municipalities, other public organisations and organisations that do not engage in economic activity can be included as participants in the projects. Any choice to include these experts should be justified in the project application. In this call, Formas does not grant funding to firms or other organisations engaged in economic activity. Services from such organisations can be purchased in accordance with rules and guidelines at the administrating organisation and current legislation. All

types of organisations can contribute co-funding to the project, but co-funding is not a requirement. Co-funding can consist of time, money or other resources and should be reported in the budget.

You can seek funding in this call even if you have an ongoing project that is being funded by Formas. However, total funding may not exceed 100% of your salary.

An individual is not allowed to be the principal applicant for more than one application in this call. However, there are no restrictions on how many applications an individual can be a co-applicant for.

Costs that qualify for funding

When you apply for project funding, you can apply for a grant to cover both direct and indirect costs. Direct costs include costs for salaries, equipment and travel. Indirect costs are costs that are shared with others in your organisation, such as for administration, IT and renting of premises. Indirect costs are sometimes called overhead. Read more about [the costs that qualify for funding](#).

Grant amount and project duration

The grant amount sought for a project must be at least SEK 10 million and a maximum of SEK 20 million. The project must run for a minimum of 3 years (36 months) and a maximum of four years (48 months). Applications with a requested amount or project duration that are not within the above specified ranges will be rejected by Formas in an early stage and will not proceed to review.

Projects can start on 1 August 2020 at the earliest and must start on 1 December 2020 at the latest. Funding can be requested for the years 2020–2024. The application's budget must indicate how the funds will be used in the project. For administrative reasons, Formas can apply a payout plan that differs from the application's allocation of the budget over time.

Language

We recommend that you write your application in English, since the review panel that will assess your application is international. You can write your application in Swedish, but it will then be translated into English prior to assessment. In this case, you will not be able to see the translation before it proceeds to the assessment. The budget specification will not be translated. Read more about [the language for applications to Formas](#).

Who can read the application?

Applications submitted to Formas become publicly available documents after a decision is announced. However, Formas does not disclose information about an individual's business relationships or operating conditions, inventions or research results if the disclosure would be assumed to cause the individual suffering. If applications are requested, Formas conducts a confidentiality assessment.

How to apply

You apply in Prisma

You apply for a grant in our application system, Prisma. The principal applicant needs to have a personal account in Prisma. In Prisma, you add all the information you need for your application. Participating researchers whose CV should be included in the application also need a personal account. The organisation that will be the project's administrating organisation must have an organisational account.

Please create your application in Prisma in good time so that you can get help if problems arise. The application can be saved as a draft and updated until the time the call closes.

Information your application must include

Your application must include a clear description of the project under the following sections. Note that the maximum number of characters or file size for multiple entries in the application has been expanded compared to many other Formas calls.

Basic information

- **Number of months applied for:** The number of months must not be less than 36 months or exceed 48 months.
- **Start month:** The earliest start date is 1 August 2020 and the latest start date is 1 December 2020.
- **Estimated project duration:** The project duration is calculated automatically in Prisma, based on the start date stated and the number of months stated.
- **Project title (in Swedish and English):** Maximum 200 characters per project title, including spaces.
- **Popular science description (Swedish):** A maximum of 4,500 characters, including spaces. The popular science description should be able to be used in Formas' project database, which allows the general public and the media to see which projects Formas has funded.
- **Abstract (in Swedish and English):** A maximum of 1,500 characters per abstract, including spaces.
- **Focus:** State the focus area of the application ("Synergies and conflicts" or "Humanistic and social science perspectives"). Only one focus area should be stated.

Research programme

- **Goals and objectives of the project, and a background description containing an overview of the research area.** A maximum of 10,000 characters, including spaces.

- **Project description, including structure, theory, methodology and implementation as well as a plan for publication in a scientific journal:** A maximum of 20,000 characters, including spaces.
- **References:** A maximum of 7,000 characters, including spaces.
- **Description of the potential societal benefit of the project and a plan for communication with stakeholders and end users:** A maximum of 12,000 characters, including spaces.

Budget

In Prisma, write out the total amount you are applying for in Swedish kronor. For example, 1 million kronor should be written as: 1 000 000.

- **Salaries, including social security contributions:** Salaries should be specified for each project participant. You can apply for funding to cover salaries for the project leader, participating researchers and other project participants. Social security contributions should be included. Formas does not grant funding for annual salary increases. You can therefore apply for funding for salaries that apply at the time of the application, but not for funding to cover salary increases. For any current job positions, you must state the salary in effect at the time of the application submission. This will then apply to all subsequent years in the project. For new job positions you must state the starting salary at the administrating organisation. The total amount of the salary for a single individual must not exceed 100 percent of full-time employment. This also means that someone who is already receiving full salary funding from any funder cannot receive additional funding for salary. Researchers who are full-time pensioners cannot receive funding for their own salary.
- **Activity level in the project:** Activity level refers to the percentage of full-time service a project participant contributes.
- **Operating costs:** Operating costs can include the cost of consumables, travel, conferences and publication fees for open-access journals and databases. A limited portion of the grant can be used for a sub-contractor or purchase of services from organisations that engage in economic activity. Equipment costs and depreciation costs for equipment used in the project are also considered operating costs. The total maximum amount you can be granted for equipment and equipment depreciation costs is 500,000 kronor.
- **Premises:** You can apply for funding for the cost of premises if this is not already included as overhead in the project's budget.
- **Indirect costs:** When you state the cost of overhead in the application, do so either according to the practice of the organisation that will manage the funds, or according to the practice of each organisation that participate in the project. If the latter is applied, the different overhead costs should be declared for in the budget specification. Formas does not grant funding for overhead costs that you write off for equipment or premises.

In the "Total budget" table, the above costs are automatically added together and become the total amount applied for. You can also specify whether the project will receive funding from another

source in the “Other funds” field. This indicates whether the project receives funding from a source other than Formas that is relevant for completing the project.

Budget specification: In your own words, explain how the budget will be used (maximum 9,000 characters including blank spaces). State how the grant amount you are applying for will be distributed each year, as well as the total amount per organisation if several organisations are applying. Please note that a budget specification provided in Swedish will not be translated but will be a part of the international review panel’s assessment.

Ethical considerations

You must describe the relevant ethical issues and how they should be managed. Examples include research that uses personal data, or experiments on humans or animals. Even if you do not expect your research to involve ethical concerns, you should state that this is the case in your application and explain why. The reporting of animal experiments and human trials should be described in separate fields using a maximum of 4,000 characters, including spaces, in each field. Read more about [ethical considerations](#).

Classifications

Formas uses project classifications in analyses and supporting documentation on an overall level. The classifications are made by the applicant, who states the subject area, SCB codes and at least one SDG the project can contribute to.

- **Subject area:** Select the project's subject area (Level 1) and add a sub-heading (Level 2). Select a minimum of one and a maximum of three subject areas.
- **SCB codes:** Next, select at least one SCB code with two sub-levels that together form the entire code. Up to three SCB codes can be specified.
- **The sustainable development goals:** Applications within “Synergies and conflicts” should specify three of the sustainable development goals (SDGs) that best suit the project. Applications within “Humanistic and social science perspectives” should specify at least one SDG, up to a maximum of three. Put the SDGs in priority order. If more SDGs than three are relevant, please specify the most relevant ones.
- **Keywords:** Select at least one and a maximum of five keywords describing the project. Choose what best represents your project, even if it does not entirely match the field you work in.

Administrating organisation – the organisation receiving the grant

An administrating organisation is the organisation that receives the grant money from Formas when a grant is awarded. Applicants under this call must be administrating organisations that are approved by Formas. Applying for an organisation account in Prisma means that you are applying to become an administrating organisation under this specific call. If your organisation is already an administrating organisation, you do not need to submit this application. If you are not sure whether your organisation is already approved as an administrating organisation, contact Formas (see page

15 for contact information). A registered application is automatically sent to the administrating organisation after the call is closed. The administrating organisation then has seven business days to digitally sign the application.

The administrating organisation is responsible for transferring part of the grant to any co-applicant project partners. This grant money must be transferred, not invoiced.

CVs

The project manager's CV is mandatory to include in the application. CVs from up to ten participating researchers who have received their PhD can also be added to the application, but CVs from other people working in the project should not be included. However, the skills of additional participating researchers or other project participants can be described in an appropriate section in other parts of the project application.

The project manager and other participating researchers retrieve the data for their CVs through their personal accounts in Prisma. Add the following information to the application:

- **Education:** Postgraduate, undergraduate and graduate level.
- **Professional experience:** Current employment and major relevant prior positions, postdoctoral stays, postgraduate exchanges that are relevant for the research, and any significant gaps in the research (such as parental leave, illness, military service or political duties).
- **Qualifications and merits:**
 - Lectureships
 - Number of advisor engagements: Doctoral students, postdocs, graduate theses; specify the total number for each category and name the most relevant ones (10 maximum)
 - Grants received in competition: Specify the most relevant ones (10 maximum)
 - Awards and distinctions: Specify the most relevant ones (10 maximum)
 - Other merits: Here, the main applicant and participating researchers can give a brief summary of all their publications (maximum of 800 characters including spaces), as well as other merits relevant to the application, such as documented experience of collaboration and research communication (10 maximum)
 - Intellectual property: For example, patents and open source software that you have developed (10 maximum)

List of publications

The principal applicant and participating researchers should list their most relevant publications. Up to ten publications can be specified per person. The publications should be linked from the applicants' personal profiles in Prisma.

Appendices

If you need figures, images or tables to describe your project concept, you can upload them as “Appendix J: Illustrations”. This appendix is optional. A maximum of one attachment (PDF) of 8 MB can be uploaded. CVs should not be uploaded in this appendix as this may mean that applicant information will not be included in Formas’ conflict of interest checks.

After submitting your application

First, Formas verifies that your application complies with requirements. If your application passes these checks, it continues on to a review panel for assessment. If it does not, it is rejected.

Any applications containing errors in basic requirements will be rejected. The following errors in basic requirements will result in a rejection of your application:

- The administrating organisation has not signed the application.
- The total grant amount sought is too low or too high.
- The specified project duration is too short or too long.
- The date of the doctoral degree of the principal applicant or participating researcher is later than 1 February 2020.
- The application is incomplete. Required information is missing on the application form or in the appendices.
- The application does not meet the requirements set out in the call text.
- The project does not fall within one of Formas’ areas of responsibility (environment, agricultural sciences and spatial planning).

In addition, Formas asks applicants who have received funding earlier but have not submitted their scientific or financial report on time to submit their reports before new funding is granted.

How does the assessment process work?

Applications will be assessed by an international review panel that is qualified to cover the current theme in the call. Applications are assessed based on their contents. It is therefore important to write the application as clearly as possible and include all important and relevant information. Each application is read and assessed by several members of the panel. The review panel is composed of active researchers as well as individuals outside academia with the expertise necessary to evaluate the relevance of the research. The review panel is appointed by Formas.

For this call, Formas creates a panel of reviewers who will assess the applications for both focus areas of the call. The applications are then ranked by the panel in a common ranking list. Formas will ensure that the number of projects granted within each focus area does not deviate significantly from the applicant pool in the focus areas. If two applications are very similar and

both are highly ranked by the review panel, Formas reserves the right to grant funding only to the project that was ranked highest by the review panel.

Discrimination is prohibited in the assessment of applications. The scientific quality and relevance of the proposed research take precedence over aspects of gender equality in the awarding of funding. But in cases where applications have the same assessment scores, the underrepresented sex is given preference.

Read more about Formas' [assessment process](#).

Criteria

The following table gives an overview of the criteria used to assess applications. The first three criteria relate to scientific excellence and the other two related to relevance to society. Note that the sub-criteria are different from the criteria described on the Formas website.

The application must address all the criteria, and we advise applicants to clearly relate their application to these criteria. Each criterion will be scored by the review panel on a scale of 1–7, where 1 is the lowest and 7 is the highest. All criteria are equally important

Criteria	Sub-criteria
Research topic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The challenge that the project addresses is an important one to solve. • The relevance in relation to the Agenda 2030 goals or targets is well described and argued. • The topic addresses significant scientific challenges. • Theories or hypotheses are original or innovative.
Methods and implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The scientific method is clearly described, appropriate to the topic and feasible to implement. • Any multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary approach is clearly described and fit for purpose. • Ethical considerations are described well, and the applicant's plan for managing them is appropriate. • The project addresses gender equality and diversity perspectives in a relevant way. • The coordination of the project and research group is clearly described and fit for purpose. • The timetable and budget are reasonable in relation to the project's implementation and expected results.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The work plan and timetable are well-defined and realistic. • Risks are analysed and reasonable alternatives described. • The plan for scientific publication and communication is well-defined and realistic.
Scientific excellence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The research group has the skills and experience required to complete the project. • The stated scientific publications are of high scientific quality. • The principal applicant has the ability to lead and implement major collaborations. • The research group has experience in supervising students, doctoral students or post docs. • The research group has other merits that are relevant to the application, such as proven experience of collaboration and research communication.
Potential societal benefit of the research topic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project addresses significant challenges in the implementation of Agenda 2030. • In the short or long term, the expected results have the potential to be able to guide society towards transformative changes in line with Agenda 2030, nationally or internationally. • In the project's design, relevant consideration has been given to the needs of stakeholders or users.
Communication with stakeholders or users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholders or users who will be involved are relevant to the project's objectives. • Plans for the involvement of stakeholders or users are realistic. • The project team has the skills required to carry out the activities planned for communication or interaction with stakeholders or users.

Grant award decisions

Formas' Scientific Council is expected to reach a decision on 17 June 2020 concerning which projects are granted funding. Decisions will be announced the following day at the latest on Formas' website and later sent via email from Prisma. Grant award decisions cannot be appealed. Read more about our [grant award decisions](#).

Reporting for granted projects

Each project that is awarded funding must submit a report to Formas containing a financial and a popular scientific summary in accordance with the decision. Read more about [reporting expenses and results](#).

Formas may impose requirements on how projects must be reported in terms of content and results to enable dissemination and practical application. In such cases, the award decision will contain more information about this. Formas may also require you to participate in conferences and similar events in order to create synergies and platforms for learning and knowledge sharing.

Support and shortcuts

- [Prisma](#)
- [Prisma's user support](#)
- [Ethics policy](#)

Contact information

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