



SLU internal guidelines for research project applications to the Knut and Alice Wallenberg Foundation (KAW projects 2024)

On a regular basis, the Knut and Alice Wallenberg Foundation (KAW) grants funding to research projects with high scientific potential, primarily in the fields of natural sciences, medicine and technology. KAW project applications can be made by project groups consisting of two to five researchers who collaborate around a coherent research question. According to the foundation's guidelines, all applications submitted to KAW must undergo internal prioritization and be approved by the Vice Chancellor, or equivalent, of the university that hosts the main applicant. The Vice Chancellor must also certify that faculty resources will be made available to the researcher(s) where such resources are accounted for in the submitted budget and that indirect costs beyond those approved by KAW will be covered by the university.

The next call for KAW projects will open in 2024, with an expected submission deadline on **1 February 2024**. According to the call text, the **Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU)** is welcome to submit up to **five proposals**, of which **at least two (40%)** must be led by a researcher of the **underrepresented gender**.

This document describes the internal process for nominating research projects to KAW at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU).

Internal prioritization process for KAW project applications at SLU

- Once KAW has published a call for project grants, Grants Office prepares a document with a time plan and updated information about the KAW guidelines, as well as the internal prioritization process at SLU. The information is then disseminated via e-mail to all department heads and research officers, as well as published on the SLU staff web.
- The main applicant prepares, in agreement with the department head, a pre-proposal according to the instructions provided in **Appendix 1**, and submits it to Ansok-KAW@slu.se, latest on **15 September 2023**. The department head is responsible for ensuring that pre-proposals submitted from the department are in line with faculty strategies.
- SLU's internal prioritization group¹ evaluates and ranks all pre-proposals based on KAW's assessment criteria for research project proposals (**Appendix 2**) and recommends, with accompanying motivation, which applications should be nominated by the Vice Chancellor.
- The Vice Chancellor decides on the researchers/research groups that will be nominated to submit a complete project grant application to KAW.

¹ The prioritization group consists of internal evaluators from SLU, with an appropriate balance regarding gender, career stage and research profiles. The group is appointed by the Vice Chancellor after nomination of candidates from the faculties, please see the document "Uppdragsbeskrivning för prioriteringsgruppen" for further information.

- Grants Office contacts all main applicants prioritized within SLU to provide information on the KAW guidelines, internal deadlines at SLU and the support offered by the Grants Office. The prioritization group's motivation for not prioritizing a project is communicated to the researchers concerned.
- The main applicant, in collaboration with the head of department, prepares a draft version of the Vice-Chancellor's support letter, according to the template that is distributed together with the notification of nomination. The respective faculty research officer(s) is informed before the support letter is signed by the Vice Chancellor.
- Each nominated research project group is responsible for submitting their complete application via KAW's application portal, before the deadline on **1 February 2024**.

Guidelines for research project applications to KAW

KAW declares a mission “to benefit Sweden by supporting Swedish basic research and education”, primarily by funding fundamental research in natural sciences, medicine and technology. In the call for KAW projects, the foundation supports research projects of high scientific potential, in which they prioritise new research areas and projects of interdisciplinary nature, where Swedish researchers take a leading international position. According to the call text, the following guidelines apply to KAW projects 2024:

- KAW supports investigator-initiated **basic research projects** of the highest international standard.
- Normally, a KAW project should have a **fundamental scientific orientation** and focus on a **coherent research question**, where the complementary competencies of the participating researchers provide new opportunities to address the chosen research question.
- KAW primarily grants funding to projects in **natural sciences, medicine and technology**.
- Projects in other disciplines may receive support on the condition that they are related to research questions of relevance to natural sciences, technology or medicine.
- For subjects in which the research is generic in nature, such as mathematics, a project may focus on joint concept development.
- Project grants should not primarily constitute auxiliary funding for ongoing operations or other projects in progress.
- An application can be made by a project group consisting of **2-5 researchers**, who collaborate in a project that focuses on a coherent academic research question.
- When evaluating applications, KAW assesses the **overall competence of the research group** and prioritizes projects in which it is obvious that the complementing expertise of the researchers make it possible to tackle hypotheses and research questions that would be difficult for the individual researchers to address on their own.
- **All PIs involved in the projects must have a long-term association with a Swedish institution of higher education. Main applicants** must spend at least **70 %** of their position and working time in Sweden. **Co-investigators** must spend at least **50 %** of their position and working time in Sweden.
- **An individual researcher is only allowed to participate in two ongoing projects and act as a PI on one of these.**
- **The research must be undertaken at a Swedish institution of higher education**, but otherwise there are no limits regarding the localization of research groups in terms of organization or geography.

- A KAW project normally has a budget ranging between **SEK 15-40 million** and a duration of **three to five years**. Grants for equipment necessary for the project are approved through financing of depreciation costs.
- Grants for equipment are normally awarded as part of a project in which the cost of the equipment is directly related to the scientific operations of the project. Equipment is financed through depreciation, which must be calculated linearly across its entire economic/scientific life, not merely across the project period sought. Procurement must take place no later than 2 years after the project starts, and depreciation can thereby commence and be sought for 2 years longer than other costs.
- Research funded by KAW must be published with **open access**; i.e., published articles must be archived in open, searchable databases. Costs for ensuring open access publication can be included as a direct cost in the project applications budget.
- A **letter of support signed by the Vice Chancellor** of the university that employs the main applicant must be attached to the application.
- Grants can normally be applied for once a year, with **1 February** as the deadline.
- When an application is not approved for granting, the application cannot be submitted again based on the same scientific question within 3 years. The only exception is when an application has been rejected due to lack of funding. In this case, the proposal can be submitted again during next year's application period.

» Complete guidelines are available at the KAW website:

<https://kaw.wallenberg.org/en/calls/research-projects-high-scientific-potential>

Criteria for evaluation of KAW project applications

KAW primarily supports projects focused on a coherent research question, evaluated according to the following assessment criteria:

- i) Quality of the project and scientists
- ii) Feasibility of the research plan and proposed methods
- iii) Originality and boldness
- iv) Coherence of the research question

As of 2020, KAW has introduced a new criterion to ensure that a sufficient number of funded projects are led by female main applicants. In line with this aim, at least 40% of the nominated projects in the call for KAW projects 2024 must be led by a researcher of the underrepresented gender.

In the internal prioritization process, SLU will evaluate the pre-proposals according to KAW's assessment criteria and strive for a gender balance that meets the KAW guidelines. KAW conducts active gender equality work, which means that in addition to the gender criterion regarding main applicants, the foundation will also assess gender balance within the research groups, which will also be taken into account in the internal evaluation at SLU.

» KAW's assessment criteria can be found in Appendix 2, as well as on the KAW website:

<https://kaw.wallenberg.org/en/assessment-criteria-evaluation-project-grants>

Time plan (2023/2024)

Date	Responsible person/unit	Task
15 June (latest)	Grants Office	Updated information about KAW's guidelines for research projects of high scientific potential, SLU's internal prioritization process and time plan is sent out to all department heads and faculty research officers, as well as published on the SLU staff web.
15 September	Researcher, in agreement with Head of Department	Deadline for submission of pre-proposals for KAW projects to Ansok-KAW@slu.se . The department head is responsible for ensuring the application's compliance with current strategies. A copy of the pre-proposal should be sent to the head of the department.
18 September - 6 October	Prioritization group	Individual evaluation of submitted pre-proposals for KAW projects, based on KAW's assessment criteria.
9-13 October	Prioritization group	Panel meeting where the prioritization group prepares a recommendation to the Vice Chancellor on which research groups, with a main applicant at SLU, should be nominated to submit a project application to KAW.
16-20 October	Vice Chancellor	The Vice Chancellor decides which research groups, with main applicants at SLU, that will be nominated to apply for a KAW project.
23 October (latest)	Grants Office	Grants Office contacts all main applicants who have been prioritized within SLU to inform about KAW's guidelines, internal deadlines at SLU and the support offered by the Grants Office. A motivation for why the project has not been prioritized is communicated to the researchers concerned. The faculty research officers are informed about which projects are nominated.
23 October- 1 February	Researcher + Grants Office	The nominated research groups complete their KAW applications with support from Grants Office.
8 January	Researcher + Head of department	Proposed text for the Vice Chancellor's support letter, according to the template, is sent to Ansok-KAW@slu.se , with a copy to the appropriate faculty research officer/s.
8 January	Researcher	A complete budget proposal is submitted to frank.sterner@slu.se , for approval.
25 January	Vice Chancellor	Grants Office sends out support letters signed by the Vice Chancellor to the main applicants, from Ansok-KAW@slu.se .
1 February	Researcher	Deadline for submitting the application to KAW. The applicants are responsible for submitting their applications via the KAW application portal, and e-mail a copy of the final application to Ansok-KAW@slu.se .

Contact information

Name	Role	E-mail	Phone
Caroline Grabbe, Grants Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research coordinator with main responsibility for KAW applications • KAW's contact person at SLU* 	caroline.grabbe@slu.se	+46-72-236 56 70
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** Please do not contact KAW with your questions about the application process directly, as they have requested that all questions should be channelled via the official contact person at the university.*

Appendix 1. Instructions for pre-proposals to KAW projects 2024 at SLU

Research groups, with a main applicant at SLU and who meet KAW's criteria regarding long-term association and employment at a Swedish institution of higher education, that wish to apply to the KAW call for projects 2024, are welcome to submit a pre-proposal to Ansok-KAW@slu.se, latest on **15 September 2023**. The pre-proposal must be approved by the head of the nominating department.

The pre-proposal should be written in **English** and submitted as a **compiled PDF**, consisting of the following parts, as indicated below:

1. Template for pre-proposals to KAW projects 2024 at SLU

- The pre-proposal form can be downloaded from the SLU staff web ([here](#)).
- The form is to be used as a title page and includes basic information about the applicants and the proposed project, together with an assurance that the Head of Department, where the main applicant is employed, is aware of and supports the application.

2. Project description (max. 3 pages)

- A clear and concise overview of the proposed research project, including the central research question(s), purpose, significance and methodology/implementation.
- Use at least 2 cm margins and font size 11 (Times New Roman, Calibri or Arial).
- Figures and tables are allowed.
- Make sure to answer the following questions in your project description:
 - i) What is the overall purpose/aim of the project? Which coherent research question is the project addressing?
 - ii) In what way will the project move the frontiers of science ("beyond state-of-the-art") in the relevant research field(s)? What fundamental scientific knowledge will the project contribute?
 - iii) Why is this knowledge important?
 - iv) In what way is the project ground-breaking and bold? Define and motivate which novel research questions, concepts and/or methods that will be asked and/or developed?
 - v) How will the aims of the project be achieved (approach/methodology)?

3. Significance of the research and synergy of the team (max. 1 page)

- Provide a brief description of the significance of the proposed research, including how it may contribute to ground-breaking scientific discoveries and in what way the expected outcomes are of strategic importance for SLU, Sweden and society in an international perspective.
- In addition, provide an overview of the expertise that is contributed by each applicant and justify how the participating researchers' complementary competencies provide enhanced opportunities to attack the selected research question and break new ground in the research field(s).

4. CV for all applicants (max. 3 pages per researcher)

- The researcher's scientific/academic merits, i.e. a CV containing the person's name, full contact details, social security number, education, positions held, prizes and awards, supervision and mentorship of doctoral students (as main supervisor, including year of successful thesis defence), and post docs.
- For inspiration, please consult our separate template for how to structure a CV for KAW applications ([here](#)).

5. Bibliometric overview and list of 10 selected publications (1 page per researcher)

- Provide a bibliometric overview that highlights the total number of publications and citations for each applicant. For scientific areas to which it is applicable, include the researcher's h-index (Web of Science).
- A list of 10 selected publications that are particularly important for the proposed project and that illustrate the synergy in the project group.

Appendix 2. Assessment criteria for evaluation of KAW project grants

Assessment of scientific quality

KAW prioritizes projects focusing on a coherent research question, which together with originality and feasibility represent the cornerstones for the evaluation of KAW project proposals.

- **Evaluation of quality of the project and scientists respectively; grading**

5 = Outstanding. The project /the scientists are of international top quality. The project/the scientists can be compared to the best in the field globally.

4 = Excellent. The project/the scientists are of high international quality and are internationally recognised.

3 = Very good. The project/the scientists are of average quality internationally.

2 = Good. The project/the scientists are of low to average international quality.

1 = Insufficient

- **Feasibility of the research plan and proposed methods**

This evaluation refers to an assessment of the project regarding the proposed methodology and the researchers' expertise in the suggested methods/technologies. KAW aims at promoting projects that address new and bold research questions, with calculated risks, taken by constellations of researchers with strong track records. Assessment of feasibility is therefore focused on method and technology.

5 = It is very likely that the goals of the project can be achieved in accordance with proposed methods and presented research plans.

4 = It is likely that the goals can be achieved in accordance with proposed methods and presented research plans.

3 = It is not likely that several of the goals can be achieved in accordance with proposed methods and presented research plans.

2 = It is unlikely that the majority of the goals can be achieved in accordance with proposed methods and presented research plans.

1 = This project can most likely not achieve any of the goals presented based on the proposed methods and research plan.

- **Originality**

5 =This project is outstanding and ground-breaking in an international context

4 = This project is ground-breaking in an international context

3 = This project is novel but not ground-breaking in an international context

2 = Part of this project is novel but not ground-breaking in an international context

1 = This project lacks originality

- **Is there a coherent research question?**

5 = There is a coherent research focus for this project. Involved groups have complementary skills and are gathered around novel questions where they have potential to create ground-breaking science.

4 = There is a coherent research focus for this project. Involved groups have complementary skills and are gathered around novel questions that can generate science of international quality.

3 = There is a coherent research focus for parts of this project. Several of the involved groups have complementary skills that can generate good science.

2 = There is a coherent research focus for this project but the composition of involved groups is not sufficient to secure focus for this project.

1 = This project lacks focus and is only a way for the researchers to attract additional funding to already existing activities.