

SLU internal guidelines for research project applications to the Knut and Alice Wallenberg Foundation (KAW projects 2026)

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 of two to five researchers who collaborate in a project that focuses on a coherent research question. According to the foundation's guidelines, all applications submitted to KAW must undergo internal prioritisation and be approved by the Vice Chancellor, or equivalent, of the university that hosts the main applicant (PI). The Vice Chancellor must also certify that faculty resources will be made available to the researcher(s) in cases 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 2026, with an expected submission deadline on **1 February 2026**. 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**.¹

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

Internal prioritisation process for KAW project applications at SLU

- Once KAW has published a call for project grants, the SLU Grants Office prepares a document with a timeline, updated information about the KAW guidelines, and the internal prioritisation process at SLU. The information is then sent via e-mail to all department heads and research officers, and is published on the SLU staff web.
- In agreement with the department head, the main applicant prepares a pre-proposal according to the instructions provided in **Appendix 1**, and submits it to Ansok-KAW@slu.se, by **15 September 2025**, at the latest. The head of department is responsible for ensuring that pre-proposals submitted from the department are in line with faculty strategies.
- SLU's internal prioritisation group² evaluates and ranks all pre-proposals based on KAW's assessment criteria for research project proposals (**Appendix 2**). The group makes

¹ Information on the number of nominations per university can be found on KAW's website: <https://kaw.wallenberg.org/en/calls/2026-research-projects-high-scientific-potential>

² The prioritisation 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. Please see the document "Uppdrags-beskrivning för prioriteringsgrupp för forskningsansökningar och karriärbidrag" for further information (SLU ID: SLU.ua.2025.1.1-1343).

a recommendation, with accompanying motivation, concerning which applications should be nominated by the Vice Chancellor.

- The Vice Chancellor decides which researchers/research groups will be nominated by SLU to submit a complete project grant application to KAW.
- The Grants Office contacts all main applicants prioritised within SLU. Information is provided on the KAW guidelines, internal deadlines at SLU, and the support offered by the Grants Office.
- The prioritisation group's motivation for not prioritising a project is communicated to the researchers concerned.
- In collaboration with the head of department, the main applicant prepares a draft version of the Vice-Chancellor's support letter, according to a provided template. The Grants Office finalises the letter and informs the faculty's research officer when the document is complete, after which 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 of **13.00 on 1 February 2026**.

Guidelines for research project applications to KAW

KAW has the mission “to benefit Sweden by supporting Swedish basic research and education” and strives to achieve this mission by funding fundamental research projects of high scientific potential in natural sciences, medicine and technology. High-priority projects include new research areas and research that is interdisciplinary in nature, where Swedish researchers take a leading international position. According to the call text, the following guidelines apply to KAW projects 2026:

- 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 open new possibilities to attack 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 current 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.
- The **overall competence of the research group** will be evaluated by the Foundation. Priority will be given to projects where it is obvious that the complementing competences of the researchers make it possible to address hypotheses and research questions that would be difficult for the individual researchers to address on their own.
- Both the main applicant (PI) and co-applicants must have a **long-term association with a Swedish institution of higher education**. The PI 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 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 two years after the project starts, and depreciation can thereby commence and be sought for two years longer than other costs.
- Up to 20% of the awarded amount can be used for indirect costs (OH) and rent.
- Research funded by KAW must be published **open access**; i.e., published articles must be archived in open, searchable databases. The respective university's rules apply to open access. Costs for ensuring open access publication can be included as a direct cost in the project application's budget.
- A **letter of support signed by the Vice Chancellor** of the university that employs the PI must be attached to the application.
- Grants can normally be applied every other year, with **1 February** as the deadline.
- When an application is not funded, 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/2026-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, respectively
- ii) Feasibility of the research plan and proposed methods
- iii) Originality and boldness
- iv) Coherence of the research question

In the internal prioritisation process, SLU will evaluate the pre-proposals according to KAW's assessment criteria. The evaluation will be made by an internal prioritisation group assigned with making a recommendation about which projects should be nominated by the Vice Chancellor. In the KAW project 2026 call, SLU is allowed to nominate a maximum of five proposals, of which two must be headed by a main PI of the underrepresented gender.

KAW conducts active gender equality work and advocates for an equal gender balance in the research groups. Gender balance within the team will be taken into account during SLU's internal evaluation.

» 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>

Timeline (2025/2026)

Date	Responsible person/unit	Task
15 June (latest)	Grants Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sends updated information about KAW's guidelines for research projects of high scientific potential, SLU's internal prioritisation process, and timeline to all department heads and faculty research officers. Publishes this information on the SLU staff web.
15 September	Researcher, in agreement with Head of Department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deadline for applicants to submit pre-proposals for KAW projects to Ansok-KAW@slu.se, with the head of department in cc. The department head is responsible for ensuring the applications comply with current faculty strategies.
18 September - 8 October	Prioritisation group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prioritisation group members individually evaluate the pre-proposals submitted for KAW projects based on KAW's assessment criteria.
13 October	Prioritisation group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Panel meeting where the prioritisation 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 the KAW project 2026 call.
13-22 October	Vice Chancellor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Vice Chancellor decides which research groups, with main applicants at SLU, will be nominated to apply for a KAW project.
23 October (latest)	Grants Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contacts all main applicants who have been prioritised within SLU, with the relevant head of department and research officer/s in cc. Provides information about KAW's guidelines, internal deadlines at SLU, and the support offered by the Grants Office. Communicates decisions and rationales to candidates whose applications were not prioritised.
23 October- 1 February	Researcher + Grants Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The nominated research groups complete their KAW applications with support from Grants Office and the nominating department/faculty.
7 January	Researcher + Head of department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate on a proposed text for the Vice Chancellor's support letter, according to a provided template. Send the letter to Ansok-KAW@slu.se, with the appropriate faculty research officer/s in cc.

7 January	Researcher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submits a complete budget proposal to frank.sterner@slu.se for approval.
28 January (latest)	Vice Chancellor + Grants Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Grants Office sends out support letters signed by the Vice Chancellor to the main applicants (from Ansok-KAW@slu.se), with the appropriate faculty research officer/s in cc.
1 February by 13.00	Researcher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deadline to submit the final application to KAW. The applicants are responsible for submitting their applications via the KAW application portal. E-mails a copy of the final application to Ansok-KAW@slu.se, with the research officer of the nominating faculty in cc.

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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** Do not contact KAW with your questions about the application process directly. 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 2026 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 2026, are welcome to submit a pre-proposal to Ansok-KAW@slu.se by **15 September 2025** at the latest. 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 2026 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 main applicant's head of department is aware of and supports the application.

2. Project description (max. 3 pages, excluding references)

- Provide a clear and concise overview that describes the proposed research project, including the central research question(s), purpose, significance and methodology/implementation.
- Make sure to answer the following questions in your project description:
 - i) What are the overall aims and objectives of the project? Which coherent research question does the project address?
 - ii) In what way will the project move the frontiers of science forward in the relevant research field(s) (go beyond state of the art)?
 - iii) What basic scientific knowledge will the project contribute? 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 will be asked and/or developed.
 - v) How will the aim and objectives of the project be achieved (approach/methodology)?
- Use at least 2 cm margins and font size 11 (Times New Roman, Calibri or Arial).
- Figures and tables are allowed.
- References do not count towards the three-page project description. However, they cannot exceed one page.

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

- Describe the significance of the proposed research, including how it may contribute to ground-breaking scientific discoveries.
- Describe how the expected outcomes and the research group are of strategic importance for SLU, Sweden, and society from an international perspective.

- Provide an overview of the expertise 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)

- For each researcher, list their scientific/academic merits (i.e. a CV) including 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 of postdocs.
- 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)

- For each researcher, provide a bibliometric overview that highlights the total number of publications and citations. For scientific areas to which it is applicable, include the researcher's h-index (Web of Science).
- For each researcher, provide 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 prioritises projects focusing on a coherent research question, which together with originality and feasibility represent the cornerstones for the evaluation of KAW project proposals³.

- **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. The 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 and groundbreaking potential (boldness)**

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

³ The assessment criteria can be found on KAW's website: <https://kaw.wallenberg.org/en/assessment-criteria-evaluation-project-grants>.

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 group 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 group 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.