

Challenges in working life 2024

Information about the call

The Swedish Government has tasked Forte with conducting a national research programme on working life. This programme is intended to help meet challenges in working life by developing and disseminating knowledge.

In total, SEK 39 million is reserved for the period 2024–2026.

The deadline for applications is 18 January 2024 at 14:00 CET.

Forte has identified several high-priority challenges for which the need for knowledge is great and more research is needed. The challenges and strategies for how the challenges can be met with research are described in the [strategic agenda for the national programme on working life research](#).

This call should contribute to Challenge 2: Promoting good working conditions. The applications must focus on one of the following strategies.

- Improving the prerequisites and conditions for organising and undertaking work considering different forms of employment.
- Developing organisation and management with the aim of improving working conditions and efficiency.
- The significance of digital technology to an efficient and flexible working life linked to people's conditions and needs.

Forte encourages an interdisciplinary and/or a multi-disciplinary approach in the applications. Forte also sees a strong need for and excellent opportunities for collaboration in research to increase relevance and utility. Furthermore, research should include a gender perspective when applicable. The research question in the application will determine what is relevant in each specific case.

Fortes' work should contribute to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. This call is part of that effort. Therefore, the research resulting from this call is expected to be relevant to several of the [parliamentary goals that form the core of the Swedish work on Agenda 2030, such as the occupational safety and health strategy and the gender equality policy goal](#).

Call texts, application forms and instruction texts are translated into English, but in case of ambiguity in the translation, the Swedish versions take precedence.

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Focus area of the call

Promoting good working conditions

The way workplaces are organised are influenced by trends with, for example, various forms of management and physical planning. Technological development creates new possibilities for organising and managing work. There are several different ways of organising and undertaking work, including newer ones made possible by digitalisation, which can have various consequences on working environment, terms, efficiency and competitiveness. It is a challenge to promote good conditions and terms for everyone who is involved in work.

The following is a shortened version of the strategies described in the programme's strategic agenda. The applicant is recommended to take part in the [strategic agenda](#) in full to get an overall picture of the purpose and goals of the working life programme.

Improving the prerequisites and conditions for organising and undertaking work considering different forms of employment

For a number of years, a noticeable portion of growth has been occurring in professions with low or high educational and formal competence requirements. As working conditions tend to be linked to the level of competence, this polarization can also be connected to increased inequality, differences in health, and societal divides. Therefore, more knowledge about unequal working conditions and terms is needed.

Newer forms of employment and work arrangements are on the rise, such as self-employment and digital platforms. Therefore, there is a need to study the development and investigate how work in new employment forms differs from established employment forms. Employees' opportunities for participation and influence are important issues, as well as how labour law and industrial relations function in the changing world of work.

Developing organisation and management with the aim of improving working conditions and efficiency

The way work is organised in different workplaces is changing. Work organisation is also influenced by the increased remote work. Cohesion and workplace cultures are evolving and being challenged. What are the possibilities for performance, creative processes, and innovation work with fewer in-person meetings? The current relevance lies in how remote leadership and operational control can be designed. How remote work affects health and the design of physical workplaces are other relevant questions.

The consequences of the green transition for the workforce, including changes within existing professions and how they affect work organization, leadership, and the work environment, are inadequately researched. There is a need for increased knowledge on how environmental policies and innovations can be combined with secure employment conditions and a good work environment during a rapid and extensive transition.

The significance of digital technology to an efficient and flexible working life linked to people's conditions and needs

The increased flexibility that comes with digitisation can lead to both challenges in the workplace and improved working conditions. Digitisation affects different groups of employees in various ways and alters opportunities for control and organization, with uneven development among different societal groups and sectors. Digitisation also contributes to discussions about surveillance and privacy in the workplace.

Questions about the interaction between digital aids, people, workplaces, and culture are more relevant than ever. Digitisation affects groups of workers in different ways; for some, it is blurring the boundary between working and private life, with wide ranging consequences for the work environment, working conditions and health. Technological advances may also facilitate changes to governance and organisation that have an uneven impact on societal groups and sectors. Digitisation is also linked to the discourse on surveillance and privacy in the workplace.

Important areas of knowledge include the design and utilisation of digital tools and technology, innovative ways to enhance the organisation of work, products, and services, and the impact on the work environment and cognitive load.

Grant type

One type of grant is available within this call. The terms and conditions, grant limits, and eligibility requirements can be found below.

Project grant

Project grants aim to support one or more researchers to carry out a defined research project. They are granted either for two or three years.

- **Grant limit for project grant:** Maximum SEK 5 million for three-year projects and SEK 3 million for two-year projects.
- **Eligibility requirements for project grant:** To apply for a project grant you must have obtained a doctoral degree no later than the date of the call closing.

Already being a project leader for a Forte-funded project is no obstacle to applying in this call.

The main applicant does not have to be employed by the administrating organisation at the time of application but must be employed by the administrating organisation when the project period begins and throughout the duration of the project, unless otherwise agreed upon by Forte and the administrating organisation.

Main applicant and participating researchers

As main applicant, you are project leader and scientifically responsible for the project. The time you set aside for the project (your activity level, i.e., percentage of full-time employment) must be adapted to the task and project realisation throughout the grant period. Main applicants must hold a doctoral degree.

Participating researchers are other researchers whose participation will be essential for the realisation of the planned research. These do not have to be employed at a Swedish Higher Education Institution. Participating researchers are invited by the main applicant and must then themselves provide the necessary information in the application system and transfer this to the application. Participating researchers must hold a doctoral degree.

Any other participants in the project and their roles are described in more detail in the application. They can be salaried from the project but cannot be included as participating researchers in the application with their own accounts in Prisma. For these other participants in the project, there is no requirement for a doctoral degree.

Restrictions

You may only submit one application as the main applicant in this call.

Reasons for early refusal and rejection

Forte performs checks on submitted applications before they are made available to reviewers. Listed below are the reasons why applications are refused or rejected in advance:

- The main applicant does not have an approved doctoral degree
- The main applicant has not reported previously awarded grants from Forte within the set time
- The project falls outside the focus area of the call or Forte's areas of health, working life and welfare
- The application exceeds the specified grant limit
- The application has not been signed by the administrating organisation within 7 days after the closure of the call

The application process

All applications are to be submitted via the [Prisma application and review system](#). Since applications are reviewed by international experts, your application should be written in English (except for fields where Swedish is specifically requested). If the application is

written in Swedish, the quality of the assessment may be compromised. Forte is not responsible for the quality of any translations.

Before writing your application, make sure the following conditions are met:

- You have created a personal account in Prisma
- All participating researchers have created personal accounts in Prisma
- Each participating researcher has stored personal data, CV and publications on their accounts
- Your administrating organisation has an organisational account in Prisma and has been approved as an administrating organisation at Forte. [Read more about Forte's criteria for administrating organisations »](#)

For more information on how to fill out the application, see instructions on the call's website.

The review process

Once you have submitted your application, it is handed over to Forte's review panels for assessment. The review panels are composed of researchers and Swedish community representatives. Based on their assessment, Forte's board makes the final decision on which applications will be granted.

To be eligible for funding from Forte, applications must be of high scientific quality, societal relevance and feasibility. Applications are assessed against Forte's general assessment criteria and general requirements. The assessment is an overall assessment that weighs up all the criteria and requirements and relates them to the call and its objectives. Key to the assessment is how the applicant has justified the various choices made in the application (of the research question(s), theory, method, etc.).

In cases where two or more applications are judged to be equivalent in the overall assessment, the review panel may give priority to applications from applicants of the under-represented gender. By under-represented gender, Forte refers to the gender that has a lower success rate in relation to the number of applicants. In the second instance, the review panel may give priority to applications that contribute to a greater variety of research questions and themes among the funded projects.

[Read more about Forte's processes for assessment and final decisions »](#)

General requirements and assessment criteria

General requirements

All applications must meet the following requirements in order to receive funding. The extent to which these requirements are met is part of the overall assessment by the review panel.

- The research must be relevant to Forte's areas and the focus of the call.

- The application must address and justify if a gender perspective is applicable or not to the research and how this is taken into account in the research.
- The research must be conducted ethically, and the application must address the ethical aspects of the research and how any ethical issues will be handled.

General assessment criteria

The various criteria are given equal weighting in the assessment. The extent to which these criteria are met is part of the overall assessment by the review panel.

Scientific quality

- Purpose, research questions, theoretical framework and background
How well and coherently the purpose, research questions, theoretical framework and background of the research are described, justified and grounded in previous research.
- Study design, empirical material and methods for data collection and analysis
How well and coherent the research design, methods and empirical material are described and justified, as well as the appropriateness of these in relation to the purpose of the research, research questions, and the potential for relevant results.
- Originality
The originality of the research and its potential to develop new knowledge (including novel methods, theories and/or data).
- Multidisciplinary and/or interdisciplinary approach, where applicable
The relevance of a multidisciplinary and/or interdisciplinary approach, and how this is considered and justified in the application.

Societal relevance and utilisation

- Relevance to the wider community
The societal challenges to which the research relates, how the research intends to help address these challenges, and how well the need for the research is described and justified to the research stakeholders, the general public and/or the wider community.
- Benefit for the wider community
How the research is expected to lead to short or long-term benefit for the research stakeholders, the general public and/or the wider community, and how this benefit is intended to be promoted.
- Collaboration with the wider community, where applicable
How inclusion in the research process of actors affected by the research (such as users, patients, practitioners, professions, policymakers) has been considered and justified in the application, and, where applicable, how well this has been formulated.
- Communication of research results
Whether dissemination of research results is planned for all relevant audiences, as well as the soundness of planned communication (such as in academic and/or popular science articles, books, seminars, workshops, training materials).

Feasibility

- Quality of the work plan
The clarity and reasonableness of the work plan (including the schedule) in relation to the needs for conducting the research.
- Competence of the project manager and project team
Competence and skills of the participants (based on previous experience and achievements) in relation to the needs for conducting the research.
- Staffing and budgets
Reasonableness of budgeted costs and participants' planned activity level for conducting the research.

Guiding questions

These guiding questions are based on Forte's general assessment criteria. The purpose of the questions is to provide support for applicants in preparing their applications and to assist Forte's reviewers in the assessment process.

Guiding questions for the general requirements

- Is the research within Forte's fields and the focus of the call? [Read more about Forte's fields of research »](#)
- Can a sex and gender perspective add anything important to the research, and if so, has this been appropriately included?
- Is the research described in accordance with the principles of research ethics and good research practice and have any ethical issues been appropriately addressed? [Read more in the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity \(vr.se\) »](#)

Guiding questions for scientific quality

- Is the need for the research well justified and grounded in existing research?
- Are the research questions well formulated and well substantiated?
- Are central theoretical perspectives and concepts well described and well justified?
- Are the research methods clearly described and are they best suited to answer the research questions posed?
- Have potential problems with the research methods (such as systematic errors) been taken into account as well as measures for dealing with these?
- Does the research have the potential to generate important findings and significantly advance existing knowledge in the field of research? Are theories, data, methods, etc. used in a novel way to answer the research questions?
- Would the quality of the research benefit from a multidisciplinary and/or interdisciplinary approach, and if so, is such an approach used effectively?

Guiding questions for societal relevance and utilisation

- Are the research questions, outcome measures and central perspectives relevant to actors affected by the research (such as users, patients, practitioners, professions, policymakers)? Is this relevance well described and justified?
- Is there a well-described plan for how the research will be of use in the wider community and for the actors affected by the research?

- Will actors affected by the research be involved in conducting it? Is there a well-described plan for how and in which parts of the research process collaboration will take place? Does the project budget include costs for this collaboration?
- Is there a well-described plan for how the research will be communicated, both within academia as well as to the wider community and relevant stakeholders?

Guiding questions for feasibility

- Is the work plan realistic and suitable for conducting the research and reaching the set goals?
- Is it clear from the application that the project manager and project team have the competence needed to conduct the research and reach set goals?
- Are the budget and the participants' planned activity levels realistic and suitable for conducting the research and reaching set goals?
- Have potential problems or risks associated with conducting the research been described well, and is there any plan for dealing with them?

Collaboration between research and society

Forte is commissioned by the government to increase collaboration between research and society. The aim of collaboration is to contribute to higher quality and relevance in research. Forte assesses how collaboration will be implemented with relevant stakeholders in all calls. However, collaboration may not be applicable in all research.

Collaboration can be part of one or more parts of the research process. The more parts of the research process that relevant stakeholders are involved in, the higher the level of collaboration. Collaboration may, for example, take place if the stakeholders are involved in an advisory group/reference group tied to the project or as members of the project team. However, there is no fixed model or set of tools and techniques for collaboration.

Collaboration can be divided into different levels depending on the degree of involvement in the project. Only involving stakeholders as study object and contributing with data does not meet the requirements for collaboration in research.

In the research projects where collaboration is included, the application should contain a description of the different approaches that are being considered and the process for involving stakeholders in the research project.

International research collaboration

Forte is positive towards international research collaborations. Forte's area of responsibility covers complex societal challenges in which international research collaborations can provide important contributions. [Read more about how Forte assesses applications where parts of the research are to be conducted abroad »](#)

Open Access

By accepting grants from Forte, you as a project leader also accepts Forte's guidelines for publication with Open Access. [Read more about Forte's guidelines for publishing with open access »](#)

Forte does not cover costs for Open Access publishing within the framework of individual research grants. Therefore, costs for such publications should not be applied for. In the Swedish context there are several agreements for publication which mean that no direct costs for the project should arise, if the organisation to which the article author belongs to is covered by the agreement. Such publications are prepaid by the organisations through the agreements. The universities' libraries normally provide support regarding these issues. In cases where costs for Open Access publishing are included in the application, these will be deducted from the budget.

SweCRIS

Forte transfers information of issued grants to SweCRIS, a national database on grant-funded research set up at the request of the government. [Read more about SweCRIS »](#)

Schedule

The call opens: 15 November 2023, 10.00 CET

The call closes: 18 January 2024, 14.00 CET

Funding decision: June 2024

Decisions are published: a few days after the decision

Project start: 1 July 2024

Support

Forte has compiled the most frequently asked questions and answers regarding the application process. [Questions and answers about applying for grants from Forte »](#)

If you have any questions about the call or how to fill in the application form, please contact:

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