

## Co-production for a Sustainable Working Life 2023

### Information about the call for proposals

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.

Research funded by this call must contribute knowledge co-produced by researchers and users that supports the sustainable development of working life. A total of SEK 36 million has been allocated for the period 2023–2025.

*The deadline for applications is 17 January 2023 at 14:00 CET.*

### Background

Research funded by this programme must address a number of identified challenges in the field of working life.

The principal challenges are:

- Creating a sustainable, inclusive working life.
- Promoting good working conditions.
- Achieving a health-promoting working life.

According to the Swedish Government's instructions, the working life programme shall contribute to increasing the societal impact of research results through development, knowledge building, evidence-based practice and administration.

Involving the users of the knowledge in the research process increases the likelihood that the results will be utilised and contribute to meeting the identified challenges. Co-production of research is a method by which those who will benefit from or use the results of the research are actively involved in the research process. All or some of the research, from identifying the research question to seeking solutions and disseminating results, is conducted in collaboration with or by those who will be affected in practice. Often, the intention is to solve a complex problem where additional perspectives will increase the chances of finding a solution that will actually be implemented. One point of departure is that everyone involved has experience and expertise that may generate relevant, high-quality knowledge. The project must be both beneficial to users and of general interest in terms of developing knowledge in the field in question.

Forte's work is also expected to contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda. This call is part of that work. The research funded by

this call is expected to be relevant to several of the national objectives adopted by the Riksdag as the core of Sweden's efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda.

More detailed information about the mission and focus of the programme on working life can be found in the [Strategic Agenda for the National Programme on Working Life](#).

## Focus areas

The strategic agenda includes a number of strategies for how research can meet challenges in working life in more delimited areas of research. Several of these are suited for research through co-production. While the areas described below should be viewed as suggestions for themes that your research might address, your application can also be directed at any of the other strategies in the Strategic Research Agenda for the National Programme on Working Life.

### **Adapting working life to demographic changes and creating the conditions for sustainable participation in the labour market**

Many rural areas are becoming depopulated and lack job opportunities; meanwhile, demographic patterns are being affected by urbanisation and the reindustrialisation of Norrland. Migration is also having a significant impact on population and age distribution in certain towns and cities. These demographic developments affect the distribution of jobs between sectors, regional growth and the ability of employers to access skilled labour, as well as the conditions for employees to make demands concerning employment terms and working conditions. Skills provision and increased labour market participation are therefore challenges that the scientific community and society at large must address. Related issues include how conditions can be created for different groups to participate in working life and how transition processes and the education system can be organised to facilitate continuing professional development.

### **Increased inclusion of underrepresented groups**

In Sweden, vulnerable groups include those from a migrant background, young people, people with disabilities, the long-term unemployed and those on temporary employment contracts; in fact, the same people who had a weak connection to the labour market before the pandemic. There is also every reason to consider how gender-equality in society will be affected in terms of working-life opportunities and life opportunities in general.

To this end, there is an increased need for knowledge about inclusion and underrepresented groups in working life. The question of how socioeconomic, integration and social innovation processes impact developments also demands closer study. The role played by workplaces and employers in including underrepresented groups in the labour market also need to be examined. How can the design and organisation of the labour market and work in general create jobs and workplaces that promote diversity? Reasonable adaption of the workplace, the capacity of employers to employ underrepresented groups, skills development and discrimination are therefore important areas of knowledge.

### **Developing organisations and leadership in order to improve working conditions and efficiency**

How work is organised in the workplace is changing, among other things because there are now more international companies operating in Sweden and because new management, leadership and organisational models are being introduced. Governance systems, greater demand for flexibility, the standardisation of individual room for manoeuvre and professional identity, as well as links to the work environment and skills provision are all important to study alongside organisational and leadership issues. The organisation of work is affected by the increase in remote working. Workplace cohesion and culture are challenged and develop. What effect does fewer face-to-face meetings have on performance, the creative process and innovation? How are operations remotely controlled and led?

### **Secure implementation and utilisation of work environment knowledge**

There is inadequate implementation and utilisation of knowledge about factors such as psychosocial and chemical risk factors, as well as knowledge of the benefits of work. Existing knowledge is not used to a sufficient extent. If we are to meet challenges in working life, we need more knowledge and we need to promote its use in various sectors and activities.

### **Co-production of research**

In every call, Forte asks how researchers intend to collaborate with the likely users of their research results. This may include all levels of collaboration, of which co-production is considered to be an in-depth form. In simple terms, co-production is distinguished from other types of collaboration by the level of involvement of the various stakeholders. Collaboration may involve seeking the advice of relevant stakeholders, appointing a reference group, and so on. For collaboration to be considered co-production, relevant stakeholders must participate in all or part of the process, from identifying the research question to jointly seeking solutions and disseminating the acquired knowledge.

The research to which the application relates must be planned and implemented with relevant stakeholders such as professional practitioners, interest groups, voluntary organisations, labour-market parties, municipalities, regional health authorities, government agencies or labour-market projects.

The co-production process shall be described in the application, including which stages of the research process it takes place:

- Study design
- Data collection
- Interpretation of data
- Dissemination of results
- Implementation

When analysing and interpreting data, for example, co-production may involve researchers discussing their results with co-producer stakeholders and eliciting reactions

and opinions that researchers can carry into their ongoing work. The more stages of the process stakeholders are involved in, the higher the level of co-production.

The goal of co-production is to improve the quality and relevance of the research results that emerge from the project. To fulfil the requirement for co-production, the application must demonstrate that:

- the research question is a priority of the subject of the study;
- the outcome measure is important to the stakeholder in question; and
- relevant stakeholders will be involved in the research process and that reasonable costs to cover this involvement are included in the project's budget.

Similar principles apply regardless of whether the research is being conducted with practitioners, policymakers or other relevant stakeholders. We recognise that it may be difficult to be specific about the methods and approaches to co-production in your application, as these should be developed in dialogue with those involved in the project. However, the application should describe the various approaches under consideration and the process through which the different stakeholders will be involved. [You can learn more about the principles of co-production from the National Institute for Health and Care Research \(NIHR\) »](#)

## **The 2030 Agenda and Sweden's national objectives**

Scientific knowledge is a prerequisite for achieving the SDGs of the 2030 Agenda. One overarching goal of the working life programme is that it should generate research that contributes to achieving the SDGs.

The national objectives adopted by the Riksdag reflect Sweden's conditions and opportunities for doing so. National objectives are described in the Government Offices of Sweden's report "Sveriges genomförande av Agenda 2030 för hållbar utveckling". They provide a complementary holistic perspective on already adopted objectives. The national objectives place particular emphasis on the central, transformative promise of the 2030 Agenda: leave no one behind. For example, SDG 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all, is reflected in the Swedish Government's "Arbetsmiljöstrategin".

Potentially, the research funded by the working life programme can contribute to many of the national objectives as described in the strategic agenda for the programme.

One condition for your application to be considered is that your final report has been submitted for any earlier projects for which you have received a grant. This only applies to grants where the deadline for final reporting has passed. Any deadline extension granted for previous projects, and thus for submitting the final report, will be taken into account.

For further information about writing your application, please refer to the instructions for the type of grant in question on the call website.

## Grant types

This call is for project grants. Below are the conditions, amount level and eligibility requirements

The same person can submit one application as main applicant.

! Please note that the maximum amounts below include so-called indirect costs. Applications exceeding the specified limit will be rejected

## Project grant

Project grants are grants for individual research projects. They are granted for three years.

**Budget limit:** Maximum SEK 5 million for the whole project period.

**Eligibility requirements:** To apply for a project grant you must have completed a doctoral degree no later than the date of the call closing.

## The application process

All applications are to be submitted via the [Prisma application and review system](#). 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 »](#)

In order for your application to be considered, the final reporting for any previously approved projects must have been submitted. This only applies to grants where the deadline for final reporting has passed. Any previously granted extensions of project duration, and consequently of reporting deadlines, will be taken into account.

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

## The review process

The applications are assessed by a review panel composed of international researchers and Swedish society representatives. Funding decisions are made by Forte's board.

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.

### **Forte's assessment criteria**

#### *Scientific quality:*

- Purpose, research questions, theoretical framework, background and originality
- Study design, methods for data collection and analysis
- Interdisciplinary and/or multidisciplinary approach
- Sex and gender perspectives in the content of the research

#### *Relevance:*

- Relevance in relation to societal needs, Forte's areas of responsibility and the focus area of the call
- Engagement with end users
- Utilisation and communication of research results

#### *Feasibility:*

- Work plan quality
- Research competence of project leader and research group
- Account of any previous own research in the area
- Staffing and budget, assessed on reasonableness

### **Call-specific assessment criteria**

- How well is the use of co-production motivated as a working method?
- How established is the project with practitioners and other relevant stakeholders? Are there letters of intent or other forms of documentations?
- How will co-production be incorporated into the study design, the collection, analysis and interpretation of data and the dissemination and implementation of results?
- How will the project contribute to achieving the national objectives adopted by the Riksdag for achieving the SDGs of the 2030 Agenda? Is it clear which national goals/SDGs the project contributes to and how it intends to do so?
- Which themes of the National Programme on Working Life does the project address and what solutions does it expect to provide?
- Are the costs associated with co-production reasonable and relevant?

### **Guidelines on how Forte handles applications where part of the research is to be carried out abroad**

- 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.

- Forte's grants can be used to finance research where certain parts are carried out in other countries. However, the research shall be initiated and led from Sweden or be a clear part of the collaborative research.
- Applications involving international collaborations are assessed against the same criteria as other research applications and by the same review panels.
- In assessing research applications, the reviewers in Forte's review panels shall assess if any foreign section of a project brings added value to a project or is a prerequisite for a project with, for example, a global or comparative approach.
- It is the main applicant's responsibility to: find out how his or her administrating organisation stands on financing research where certain parts are carried out in other countries; and, find suitable collaboration procedures in each specific case.
- It is the grant's administrating organisation, i.e. the main applicant's home institution in Sweden, that determines and is responsible for, if necessary, appointing foreign personnel or paying for activities or services carried out in other countries.

### **Open access**

Results from research funded by Forte shall be published with open access. [Read more about Forte's guidelines for publication with open access »](#)

### **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 »](#)

### **Time plan**

The call opens: **20 October 2022 10:00 CEST**

The call closes: **17 January 2023 14:00 CET**

Forte's board decides on funding: **May 2023**

Decisions are published: **Shortly after Forte's board decision**

Project start: **1 July 2023**