

SSF Sabbaticals

Expanding Horizons by Strategic Research Expeditions

The Swedish Foundation for Strategic Research (SSF) announces SEK 44 million in this Call for proposals for a strategic sabbatical leave, during 2026-2029. The grant provides funding for research expeditions of 6 to 24 months abroad for a total maximum of SEK 3 million.

Background

This Call complements other mobility programs at SSF, including Strategic Mobility, Industrial PhD, Research Institute PhD, Industrial postdoc, and Adjunct Professor. In accordance with its statutes, SSF incentivizes interdisciplinarity, mobility of researchers, and internationalization, as a vehicle to increase the future competitiveness of Sweden.

The Foundation considers that Swedish higher educational institutes (HEI) lack in incentivizing internationalization and mobility of scholars, and that the merit given for such activities is insufficient.

Aim and Scope

The purpose of the program is to promote excellent research through internationalization and mobility of scholars. The program is aimed at promoting strategic initiatives from individuals. Research expeditions of 6-24 months should be made to an organization abroad, with preference given to a university, industry, hospital clinic, major research infrastructure or research institute. The Call covers all disciplines within natural science, engineering and medicine. Sabbaticals may be made at host institutions within the applicant's own discipline.

The aim is to stimulate applicants' research during the stint and for leverage upon repatriation. The host environment should be new to the applicant, not representing current or previous collaboration. The program is open to scholars employed full-time (tenured) as lecturer or professor at a Swedish HEI.

The grant may be used to cover the scholar's own salary, travel, accommodation, insurance, and running (operational) expenses, but not cover other persons' salaries or investments in equipment.

Eligibility

- SSF research areas are Natural sciences, Engineering, and Medicine.
- Applicants must hold full-time (at least 80%) tenured employment with a Swedish university or university college as full lecturer (not junior or assistant) or professor (including associate, but excluding emeritus). In Swedish: *Sökande måste ha en anställning i Sverige som Lektor, Biträdande professor eller Professor*. The sabbatical should be completed before the applicant reaches the government-decided LAS-retirement age.
- Applicants will not be allowed to hold grants from other Swedish funding agencies for the same purpose. Additional support from the foreign host is welcome.
- The research expedition should be continuous and full time with only brief interruptions for vacation or touch-home base.
- The sabbatical must begin during 2026.
- Grant holders of the SSF Sabbatical Calls 2019 and 2023 cannot apply again.

The grant is issued to the home organization (HEI), who is administering the grant and typically an “URA” (*avtal för utlandsstationering*) is recommended to be established between the applicant and the HEI.

Evaluation procedure

The proposals will be reviewed by an evaluation committee, consisting of experts from academia and industry with experience in mobility, interdisciplinarity, and cross-sectorial work. Selected proposals must meet the eligibility criteria, represent excellent scientific quality, meet a greater research challenge, and be of strategic value to Sweden.

Evaluation criteria

The following criteria will be applied in the selection process:

- Scientific quality of the research plan, including originality and feasibility of the exchange project, as well as added academic value upon repatriation.
- Qualification and potential of the applicant.
- Strategic relevance and potential impact for industry and/or society.
- Commitment of the host environment and how it promotes the applicant's research.

Shorter sabbaticals will be given lower priority than longer ones. The foundation strives for equal gender distribution of the awarded grants. Underrepresented gender will be applied as a boundary condition when applications are of otherwise equivalent quality.

Submission of proposals

The proposal shall be written in English and submitted via the Foundation's electronic application portal: <https://strategiska.se/apply>, by no later than **2 pm on March 5, 2026**.

The proposal shall, among other information specified in the portal, include:

- Research plan
- Strategic relevance
- Description of the host environment, including an explanation of why it is considered a new collaboration (i.e. not part of current or previous partnerships), and a clarification of the added value it will bring to the applicant's scientific career.
- Curriculum vitae
- List of selected publications
- Budget, maximum SEK 3 million, including all extra costs for foreign employment (*utlandstjänstgöring*) and overheads (maximum 25% on the direct costs)
- Invitation letter(s) from the receiving organization(s)
- Letter of Intent from the head of the home department confirming tenured employment and that the university will manage the grant during the foreign placement abroad.

No additional material will be accepted after application deadline. Note that this also includes letters of recommendation – and the condition that these shall not be provided separately from the recommender, but make up part of the application itself.

Time schedule

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| • 10 November, 2025 | Call opens |
| • 5 March, 2026 | Application deadline |
| • April-May | Evaluation panel review |
| • June | Decision |
| • 1 July, 2026 | Earliest project start |
| • 31 December, 2026 | Latest project start |

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Please note that the Foundation is subject to the Principle of Public Access to Official Records (Offentlighetsprincipen). Thus, applicants should avoid submitting material that they do not wish to be made public, e.g. information that could prevent patenting.

