

Strategic mobility – Grant for personal mobility between academia and industry.

The Swedish Foundation for Strategic Research has allocated SEK 30 million for a strategic mobility programme covering a period of two years. Each grant within the programme covers the salary of a researcher or equivalent person during an exchange service period of four to twelve months in another sector than the one in which the person is currently active. During the exchange period the visiting researcher shall conduct research, research-based activities or technical development within one of the Foundation's spheres of responsibility.

Introduction

Personal mobility between different sectors in society is an important factor for spreading knowledge and technology, but also for spreading understanding of the activities pursued in different sectors. The term "personal mobility" can refer to many different things, for example mobility between disciplines, between different institutions of higher learning, nationally/internationally and between academia and industry. Swedish researchers generally have good international contacts and often first-hand experience of working abroad. Mobility between industry and academia is more limited, however. A number of factors contribute to this, but important inhibiting factors are probably conditions of employment and views regarding what kind of qualifications and experience are considered valuable in academia and industry. In the USA there is an established system of leaves of absence, sabbaticals, aimed at stimulating mobility. Very little funding is available in Sweden today for such purposes.

Purpose

The Foundation can be said to be thematically located somewhere between academia and industry, since its mission is to fund research of the highest quality which also contributes to Sweden's future competitiveness. Furthermore, according to its statutes, the Foundation is supposed to promote "the mobility of researchers internationally and between universities, institutes and companies". The Foundation has therefore decided to issue a call for proposals aimed at increased mobility between academia and industry (both manufacturing and the service sector). The target group comprises well established individuals in academia or industry who can be expected to return to their original activities after a limited period of exchange service in a sector in which the person is not currently active. The purpose of the programme is to increase personal mobility and cross-fertilization between academia and industry and thereby also increase knowledge of the different conditions under which people work in academia and industry.

How the programme works

The programme is aimed at individuals who wish to both acquire and contribute relevant knowledge in another sector and subsequently return to the sector in which they are employed. Both university scientists who do a stint as visiting researchers in industry and industrial researchers (or the equivalent) who do a stint as visiting researchers at a university are eligible for this type of exchange service.

During the exchange service period the visiting researcher shall conduct research, research-based activities or technical development within one of the Foundation's spheres of responsibility. Applicants shall be well established in their current work and should be individuals with tenured posts or such appointments that they are expected to be able to return to their original activities (i.e. not short-term employed researchers, persons with substitute positions in industry, etc.). The period as visiting researcher may be spent abroad and it is even possible to bring in a foreign visiting research from another sector if a clear explanation is given of how this contributes to the development of Swedish competitiveness.

The duration of the project should be equivalent to four to twelve months, full-time. The exchange service may be divided into different periods, and the grant holder may also work part-time during his/her stay.

The application shall include a project description defining what will be carried out during the exchange service, which key persons the grant holder will cooperate with and what other funding, if any, is available. At the time of application there shall also be a declaration of intent from both the academic party (department head or equivalent) and the industry party (research director or equivalent). Both of these parties shall confirm the need for the exchange and fulfil the practical requirements for the execution of the project. The application shall also state the conditions of employment for the visiting researcher during the exchange, i.e. whether he/she is on a sabbatical from his/her current post and employed for a fixed term by the exchange party, or whether another solution is envisioned. This has a bearing on which party is to administrate the grant. The parties and the visiting research are together responsible for framing agreements on how IPR matters and the like are to be handled among them.

The visiting researcher can apply for funding for all of his/her salary during the stay and a small amount for other expenses such as travel etc., but the maximum possible single grant amounts to SEK 2 million including overheads. Funds may not be used for purchasing equipment and the like. In the case of university scientists who will do exchange service in industry, part of the grant (but no more than SEK 0.5 million including overheads) can be used for repatriation upon their return to academia.

Evaluation criteria

Applications will be evaluated by an evaluation committee consisting of external experts from both academia and industry. The following criteria will be taken into account in the selection process:

- The visiting researcher's qualifications and potential for spreading and assimilating knowledge between different sectors
- The host environment's potential for meeting the needs of the visiting researcher
- Mutuality (regarding needs and engagement) in the declarations of intent from both parties
- The strategic relevance of the proposed exchange service for Sweden
- The quality of the proposed project during the visiting researcher's stay

Other positive secondary factors (considered when proposals are otherwise equivalent)

- The interdisciplinary nature of the project
- Applications from underrepresented sex

Instructions

The applicant is the visiting researcher who wishes to carry out the exchange service. The entire application, including appendices, is filled out electronically at <http://www.ssf.3ddata.se> and shall include a complete application form consisting of:

- Description of host environment and which key persons the visiting researcher will work with (1 page maximum)
- personal reasons for exchange service (1 page maximum)
- declaration of intent from academic party and industrial party describing the need for the applied-for exchange service (written by department head or equivalent at university and research director or equivalent in industry)
- applicant's CV
- budget
- project description (1 page maximum)

Deadline: 4:00 pm 23 October, 2007.

Note that all Foundation records are open to public access. For this reason, do not send material that may not be made public at the present time, for example because it might jeopardise patenting.

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