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# Staff exchange for applied AI

A call within Vinnova's Artificial Intelligence programme

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## Revision history

Date	Changes made
201103	Update
210224	Eligible costs updated (section 4.2)

## 1 The call in brief

This call aims to strengthen the Swedish workforce's competence in artificial intelligence by establishing a staff exchange between Sweden and either Brazil, Canada, France, Germany or USA.

The funding is aimed at projects working with either industrial research or experimental development<sup>1</sup>.

The staff exchange can last between one to six months.

We fund two types of staff exchanges:

1. A Swedish organisation can apply for funding for an employee to work in an organisation abroad to enhance their AI competence in a certain field.
2. A Swedish organisation can apply for funding to invite an AI expert from Brazil, Canada, France, Germany or USA to participate in their AI activities.

The budget for this call is SEK 6,000,000 where each project can be financed with up to SEK 500,000. Grants are funded with a maximum of 50% of the total eligible costs. The call is open to Swedish companies, public organisations and research organisations.

### **The following dates apply**

Call closes: 30 September 2021 at 14:00

Evaluation will be performed on a monthly basis.

Projects must start during 2021.

### **Call queries**

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For the latest information about the call and link to Vinnova's eServices portal please visit [vinnova.se](http://vinnova.se)

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<sup>1</sup> According to the definition in Commission Regulation (EU) No 651/2014 of 17 June 2014, see also appendix 1.

## 2 What we want to achieve with this call

There is no clear-cut definition or generally accepted demarcation of artificial intelligence (AI). In this call, artificial intelligence includes the ability of a machine to imitate intelligent human behaviour and the common techniques used in the domain – for example, machine learning and deep learning. Artificial intelligence also denotes the area of science and technology that aims to study, understand and develop computers and software with intelligent behaviour.

Applications of AI have already been vital in developing internet platforms, information retrieval, image recognition and automated translation. But the practical impact of AI has been limited in large parts of business and public activities in Sweden. However, during the last decade, access to data in electronic form and computing power has increased very quickly. This has considerably improved the conditions for AI applications in various activities.

Increased AI usage places significantly higher demands on individuals and organisations to continuously update their competence. Successful AI development in different areas will depend on both specialist and broad competence within AI, as well as domain and organisational competence for different AI applications.

The purpose of this call is therefore to:

- increase competence in Sweden within applied AI
- establish collaboration between organisations in Sweden and either Brazil, Canada, France, Germany or USA.

Vinnova's mission is to promote sustainable growth by improving the conditions for innovation. Improved conditions for innovation could strengthen the capacity to achieve the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. Through our efforts, we contribute to the global commitment to achieve these goals.<sup>1</sup> We also want to highlight the relevance of the project's contribution to strengthening the four strategic collaborative orientations that the Swedish government has identified: Business's digital structural transformation, Business's climate change, Skills supply and lifelong learning and Life science.

Gender equality is a prerequisite for sustainable growth. It is also an important component of Agenda 2030 as a goal and a perspective that should permeate the work on all objectives. The call should therefore contribute to equal social development linked to two main aspects.

One aspect is that both women and men have equal opportunities to take part in the grant, as well as participate in and be able to influence the project. Another

important aspect is considering whether gender aspects are relevant in the problem area of the solution or deployment.<sup>2</sup>

### 3 Target audience of the call

This call is open for applications from Swedish companies, public bodies and research organisations.

If the grant is funding a Swedish employee visiting an organisation in either Brazil, Canada, France, Germany or USA:

The employee should have completed formal training in AI or have the experience that enables them to gain expert knowledge within the area.

If the grant is covering costs for inviting a person from either Brazil, Canada, France, Germany or USA:

The person must have expertise knowledge in AI, for example a PhD degree in AI or other expert knowledge that is vital to the project.

For the projects granted, we may need academic transcripts, certificates or references that corroborate data on the key person's expertise.

## 4 What we fund

### 4.1 Activities

The funding may cover a staff exchange for a minimum period of one month and a maximum period of six months. The exchange can be spread over a 12-month period.

The funded individual must work within the area of applied AI. We also welcome work on non-technical aspects like ethics or other required expert knowledge. However, our funding is aimed at projects working within either industrial research or experimental development, according to the definition in Commission Regulation (EU) No 651/2014 of 17 June 2014, see appendix 1.

Under the current Covid-19 situation, we would like to remind you of Vinnova's general terms and conditions:

#### **§ 4 Changed conditions:**

The beneficiary may not carry out the project without Vinnova's approval if the conditions for using the project result have been reduced to a significant extent. This also applies if technical, financial or other circumstances arise that have a significant impact on the implementation of the project.

We would like you to describe in the project application how you plan for the feasibility of the project and how to manage risks.

#### 4.2 Eligible costs

Our funding is in the form of a grant. Our grants follow EU's state aid rules and can differ depending on whether the project is within "industrial research" or "experimental development".

However, in this call we cannot fund any more than 50% of the total cost (salary + eligible cost for grants, see below). Depending on the size of the company and the type of work, this may be less. For more information, see state aid levels according to the GBER.<sup>2</sup>

For information about the types of costs we may fund, see the information of eligible costs in [Terms and conditions for our funding](#)<sup>3</sup>.

Common eligible costs include:

1. A round-trip ticket, accommodation costs and salary for the employee or invited expert.
2. Additional costs for hosting and managing the staff exchange.
3. Other direct costs at the hosting organisation, like mentoring, knowledge transfer, office space.

### 5 Size of grants

The maximum amount we may fund is 500 000 SEK. The organisation receiving the funding will have to contribute at least the same amount as the received grant. This co-financing may be salary costs for the employee or expert.

The total budget of the call is 6 000 000 SEK. We anticipate that it will cover about 12-15 grants.

### 6 Requirements the application must meet to be considered

We will only consider applications which have been submitted using Vinnova's eServices portal before the call is closed.

They must also meet the following requirements:

- The application includes a project description, using the template found on the call's web page and following the instructions about content and size.
- No other documents are attached other than the project description.
- The duration of the exchange is at least one month

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.vinnova.se/en/apply-for-funding/rules-for-our-funding/state-aid-to-companies/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.vinnova.se/en/apply-for-funding/rules-for-our-funding/terms-and-conditions-for-our-funding/>

- The staff exchange includes an organisation in Sweden, see chapter 3.
- The person or partner organisation is from Germany, France, Brazil, USA or Canada.
- The Swedish organisation has applied for the grant and acts as the coordinator of the exchange.
- The application is written in Swedish or English.
- The grant applied for is maximum SEK 500,000, and the grant is maximum 50 percent of the total eligible costs.

## **7 Assessment of applications**

### **7.1 What we assess**

Applications will be assessed by the following main criteria: potential, stakeholders or actors, and project plan. These are detailed below.

#### **7.1.1 Potential**

- The value of the knowledge transfer for the applying organisation
- The potential that the exchange will lead to a long-term collaboration between the countries and the organisations
- The potential for knowledge transfer outside the organisation.

#### **7.1.2 Stakeholders or actors**

- The actors' ability to contribute to knowledge transfer
- Relevant AI expertise in the project team and the person taking part in the staff exchange
- How well the team is composed with respect to gender balance, as well as distribution of power and influence between women and men.

#### **7.1.3 Project plan**

- A sound plan and budget for the staff exchange and the cooperation
- How well gender aspects have been integrated into the project plan
- Plan for knowledge transfer both inside and outside the organisation

## **8 The process of assessment**

Applications which meet the requirements in chapter 6 will be assessed in competition with each other according to assessment criteria in chapter 7. The applications will be assessed by Vinnova. Our decision if the application will be funded or not will be sent by email to all applicants.

## 9 Decision and terms

### 9.1 About our decisions

Grants are made in accordance with Vinnova's regulations [SFS 2015:208 R&D](#)<sup>4</sup> ([GBER § 9 / Art. 25](#)). The applicable EU state aid rules that govern the eligible costs are divided into industrial research or experimental development<sup>5</sup>. However, in this call the maximum funding will be 50% of the total costs, that is eligible costs ([see chapter 4.2](#)) plus salary.

Our decision to grant or reject proposals cannot be appealed.

### 9.2 Terms for granted funds

For approved grants, our general conditions apply<sup>6</sup>. The terms include rules about project agreements, conditions for payment, follow-up, reporting and benefiting from results.

We may also apply additional special conditions for individual projects.

If you do not comply with our conditions, you may be liable for repayment. This also applies if you have received a grant incorrectly or too high an amount.

## 10 How to apply

To apply for a grant, use the web-based forms on Vinnova's eServices Portal, which is accessed via [vinnova.se](http://vinnova.se). This is also where you upload the following attachment:

1. Project description with a maximum of 6 A4 pages, written according to the template on the call web page.

No other attachments are permitted.

Once the call has closed, you cannot change or add to an application, unless we ask you to.

## 11 Who may read applications?

Applications submitted to us become official documents. However, we do not disclose information about an individual's business or operational conditions,

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<sup>4</sup> For more information <https://www.vinnova.se/en/apply-for-funding/rules-for-our-funding/state-aid-to-companies/>

<sup>5</sup> For definitions, see attachment 1, or Commission Regulation (EU) No 651/2014 of 17 June 2014.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.vinnova.se/en/apply-for-funding/rules-for-our-funding/terms-and-conditions-for-our-funding>





inventions and research results if it can be assumed that someone will suffer economic damage if the information is presented.

This means that we must disclose the documents if someone requests them. However, we are obliged to remove any information that can cause economic harm to the applicant company or another party if it is disclosed.

## 12 Appendix 1 – Definitions of Industrial research and Experimental development

In COMMISSION REGULATION (EU) No 651/2014 of 17 June 2014 you can find the following definitions:

**Industrial research** means the planned research or critical investigation aimed at the acquisition of new knowledge and skills for developing new products, processes or services or for bringing about a significant improvement in existing products, processes or services. It comprises the creation of components parts of complex systems, and may include the construction of prototypes in a laboratory environment or in an environment with simulated interfaces to existing systems as well as of pilot lines, when necessary for the industrial research and notably for generic technology validation;

**Experimental development** means acquiring, combining, shaping and using existing scientific, technological, business and other relevant knowledge and skills with the aim of developing new or improved products, processes or services. This may also include, for example, activities aiming at the conceptual definition, planning and documentation of new products, processes or services;

Experimental development may comprise prototyping, demonstrating, piloting, testing and validation of new or improved products, processes or services in environments representative of real-life operating conditions where the primary objective is to make further technical improvements on products, processes or services that are not substantially set. This may include the development of a commercially usable prototype or pilot which is necessarily the final commercial product, and which is too expensive to produce for it to be used only for demonstration and validation purposes.

Experimental development does not include routine or periodic changes made to existing products, production lines, manufacturing processes, services and other operations in progress, even if those changes may represent improvements;