



June 1st, 2007

Call for pre-proposals for Idea Support Grants 2007

Mistra's Idea Support Grants are intended to help realize innovative research projects with considerable potential to bring about a better environment. The research shall have a focus on discovery, innovative thinking or reappraisal of existing knowledge. A project funded under the scheme must involve significant elements of boldness, originality and creativity. Pre-proposals from all research areas, including social sciences and the humanities, are invited.

The closing date for pre-proposals is 13 September 2007. The Mistra Board will reach its decision on the award of grants in March 2008.

THE AIM OF THE IDEA SUPPORT SCHEME

Mistra's Idea Support Grants are intended to help realize innovative research projects with considerable potential to bring about a better environment. The research shall have a focus on discovery, innovative thinking or reappraisal of existing knowledge. A project funded under the scheme must involve significant elements of boldness, originality and creativity. Support can also be given to research that expressly challenges or questions established ways of thinking.

Research ideas of innovative value are associated with great uncertainty and a larger element of risk taking than normal on the part of the funder. Mistra accepts a high degree of uncertainty, provided that the proposed research is considered capable of producing major environmental benefits in the long term. Innovative research often goes against the flow; it steps aside from the beaten track, or beats a new track of its own. Mistra feels it is important to create funding opportunities for research of this kind.

A project funded with an Idea Support Grant should be based on a clearly defined and demarcated question, which researchers are then given the opportunity to investigate in depth. The scheme thus complements the funding provided for the much broader and larger-scale Mistra programmes.

WHAT TYPES OF PROJECT ARE ELIGIBLE FOR FUNDING?

Funding under the Idea Support Scheme is not restricted to any particular fields of research. Pre-proposals from all research areas, including social sciences and the humanities, are invited. The only requirements are that the research must be innovative and have considerable potential to bring about a better environment, and that it must be compatible with Mistra's Statutes.

Under its Statutes, Mistra is to fund research that is of significance in solving important environmental problems and promoting the sustainable development of society. It seeks to

encourage the development of strong research environments of the highest international class and of importance for Sweden's future competitiveness.

HOW MUCH FUNDING IS INVOLVED?

Idea Support Grants are awarded for one-, two-, three- or at most four-year projects. The largest sum that can be applied for under the scheme is a total of SEK 6 million and the smallest a total of SEK 1 million.

WHO CAN APPLY FOR AN IDEA SUPPORT GRANT?

An Idea Support Grant may be applied for by anyone who is able to present a research idea that meets Mistra's criteria of innovativeness. Proposals from all fields of research are welcome, and researchers working in any academic field or discipline may apply. We are happy to see researchers from other countries involved in projects, but an established research environment in Sweden must provide the focal point for the work.

APPLICATION AND ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Applications for Idea Support Grants are submitted in two stages. In the first stage, only a brief application (pre-proposal) is required. The second stage is confined to projects that have been short listed in the first and given the opportunity to be developed in a full application. An international panel is set up to assess the proposals. Therefore, all applications have to be written in English.

The criteria by which applications are assessed are:

1. Potential to bring about a better environment?

If successful, to what extent can the project contribute to a better environment? Is the expected progress presented in a convincing way? Will the proposed research generate new knowledge?

2. How innovative is the project?

Does the project involve significant elements of boldness, originality and creativity? Does it focus on discovery, innovative thinking or reappraisal? Does the project challenge or question established ways of thinking?

3. How does the project compare to other possible approaches?

Does the project present the best approach to the problem? Do the applicants demonstrate awareness of other possible approaches? How do they justify their own way of addressing the problem in relation to other possible ways?

4. Feasibility of the project and chances for success?

How likely is it that the project will be carried out successfully? How do the applicants assess the uncertainty and risk factors involved? Is the project capable of being undertaken within the proposed time and budget? Does the project have access to the equipment required, etc.?

5. The capabilities of the chief investigators and the organizations involved?

Does the project involve appropriate leadership, research competences and a reasonable organizational structure? Does it have the necessary resources for management and coordination? Is the chief investigator's international experience and network well developed?

The Mistra Board will reach its decision on the award of grants in March 2008.

Stage 1 of the application

In stage 1, the focus is on the research idea as such, and only a brief application is required. Applications are assessed on the basis of how innovative the proposed research is, how clearly formulated the research question is, and how clearly stated the purpose of the research is.

All applications have to be made via Mistra's electronic grant application system (www.mistra.org) no later than September 13, 2007 (4 p.m.). The application system opens on August 28, 2007. NB: Mistra does not accept pre-proposals sent to Mistra in other ways (for example via e-mail or post).

In the electronic grant application system, you will be asked to give the following information:

- * Information on the applicant team, a short summary of the project, and preliminary budget.
- * A description of the research project (maximum 18 000 characters; approx. four A4 pages).
- * CV for main applicant (maximum 4 500 characters; approx. one A4 page).

Stage 2 of the application

A fully developed research proposal is to be submitted. Detailed instructions will be given to applicant groups that are invited to proceed to stage 2.

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

It is important that the research idea underpinning the project is presented in a cogent manner in the application. The basic features of the idea must be comprehensible in broad terms to a lay person. Explain why the idea deserves to be developed and set out the most important reasons why it should be given the chance to be developed into a Mistra Idea Support Grant project.

ENQUIRIES

General enquiries about Mistra's Idea Support Grants may be made to:
Johan Edman, johan.edman@mistra.org, tel +46 70 425 07 63

Frequently Asked Questions

Can I apply for an Idea Support Grant for any type of research project?

No. Idea Support Grants are intended to help realize innovative research projects with considerable potential to bring about a better environment. A project funded under the scheme must involve significant elements of boldness, originality and creativity.

Can researchers in the social sciences or humanities apply for an Idea Support Grant?

Yes. Environmentally sustainable development calls for an in-depth understanding of decision making, socio-economic structures, political institutions and human behaviour. What is more, the complexity of many environmental problems tends to require a concerted effort by natural scientists/engineers and social scientists/economists/humanities researchers.

Can a Swedish company apply for an Idea Support Grant?

Yes. The business community has a key part to play in achieving progress towards sustainable development. Companies can apply for Idea Support Grants in collaboration with researchers working in an established research environment.

Can foreign researchers and practitioners participate in Mistra projects?

Yes. Researchers and practitioners from countries other than Sweden can participate alongside their Swedish counterparts. However, projects always have their centre of gravity in Sweden.

Does Mistra's aim of promoting a better environment mean that we needn't worry too much about scientific quality?

No. All research funded by Mistra must be of the highest scientific quality by international standards. Every project is subjected to scientific peer review before a funding decision is taken.