STIFTELSEN
HÄSTFORSKNING

Handbook
2024

STIFTELSEN
HÄSTFORSKNING

Introduction

This handbook is for applicants applying for funding from Stiftelsen Hästforskning (The Swedish-Norwegian Foundation for Equine Research, from this point on re-ferred to as the Foundation), as well as for members of the Foundation's reviewing panels. The Foundation supports research of the highest scientific quality that has a high practical value for the horse industry.

This handbook contains guidelines about the process from application to completed project and describes what is expected of the applicant and the reviewer. It is designed to provide guidance for those applying for funding from the Foundation. The call texts may also describe specific application procedures that complement those described in this handbook. The handbook is divided into two sections:

• Instructions for applicants
• Instructions for reviewers

The handbook is intended to provide support when writing applications and during the review procedure. Contact the Foundation's secretariat if you require further assistance.

Important notes:
The applicant should clearly state which of the Foundation specified research program and focus area(s) the project relate to, who the recipient of the results is, and how the results will be spread and expectably applied in the practical horse sector, with support from the "knowledge wheels".

• The Foundation encourages Swedish-Norwegian applications and cooperation between departments/organisations.
• The main applicant must be the account holder in the application system, must hold a doctorate degree or equivalent, and be connected to a research institution.
• If a project plans to use experimental horses, the application needs to address already in stage 1 why these need to be used, and how the application align with the three Rs (Reduce, Refine, Replace).
• All applicants needs to declare degree of activity in the project in the budget section, regardless if applying for salary or working in kind
• Applied budget between stage 1 and 2 should not differ

Research program areas

The Foundation has two research programme areas: "Veterinary medicine, animal science, and technology science" with five focus areas closely connected to the horse, and "Social science and humanities", where four areas relating to the relationsship between the horse and humans, society and environment and the welfare of the horse in these situations (Figure 1). The Foundation has two review panels, one per research program area. The same review panel assesses the concept overview in stage 1 as well as the full research application in stage 2.

Veterinary medicine, animal science, and technology science
Focus areas

- Health
- Breeding and reproduction
- Feeding, housing, and management
- Technical development
- Welfare in the use of- and communication with the horse

Social science and humanities
Focus areas

- Relationship between:
- Horse and human
- Horse and society
- Horse and environment and
- Welfare in the use of- and communication with the horse

The focus areas under each research programme area can be visualized as overlapping circles, where the areas sometimes overlap each other (Figure 1). Each focus area is described in more detail in the Foundation's "Research Programme": available (in Swedish) at hastforskning.se
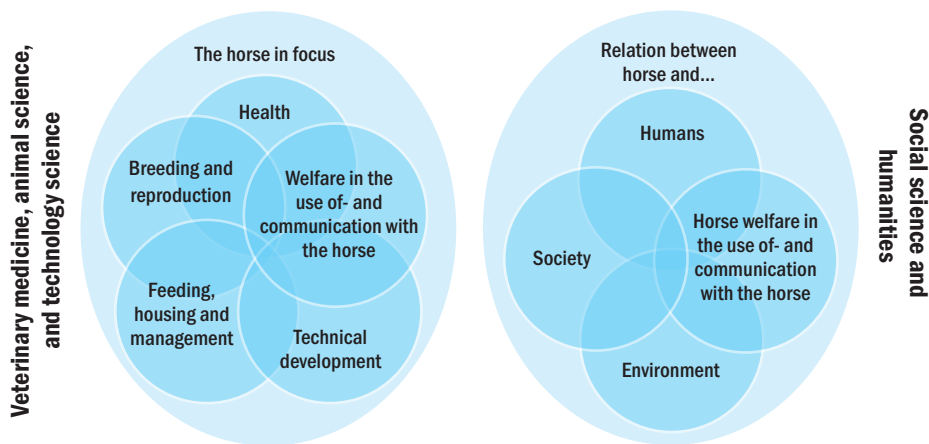

Figure 1. The Foundation's two research program areas "Veterinary medicine, animal science, and technology science" where the horse is in focus, and "Social science and humanities", where the relationship between horse and humans/society/environment is explored.

Research model – "The Knowledge Wheels"

A good functioning of the entire knowledge chain is important to assure benefit for the practical horse sector. Thus, a holistic approach is presented in the research program, for simultaneous increase in knowledge within and between projects in different areas of expertise (Figure 2). The Foundation encourages interdisciplinary and collaborative research between departments, countries, subject areas and/or disciplines, although not mandatory.
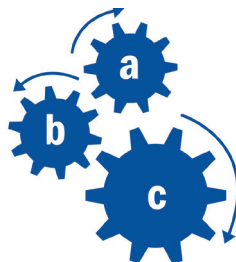

Figure 2. Synergy effects of interdisciplinary cooperation and simultaneous knowledge increase in separate areas generates highest overall knowledge progress.

The Foundation further strive for a constant knowledge improvement through close contact between research and practice in a cyclic process (Figure 3) where; 1) knowledge gaps are identified through close contact with the horse sector, 2) Research program and focus areas are specified, 3) Proposals within the focus areas are prioritized, 4) New knowledge is generated, 5) Results are communicated in a wide range of forums to both practical- and scientific representatives in the horse sector, for 6) Implementation of the results in practice. After practical implementation a new evaluation of knowledge gaps may be performed to close the cyclic process.

Figure 3. The cyclic process of the Foundation research model through close contact between research and practice.

The Foundation aims at financing projects where results can be practically applicable in the horse sector within stated areas of the research program. Project applications must therefore clearly describe how the results are expected to be practically implemented in the horse sector, and how knowledge will be disseminated to practical, as well as scientific representatives of the horse sector.

Ethical guidelines

The ethical guidelines are intended as a guide for everyone participating in operations from and with the Foundation. The Foundation endeavours to work in a way that creates trust, on behalf of both the fund providers and the grant recipients. A reviewer in situation of conflict of interest must be regarded as non-participatory in the discussion and must leave the meeting room. Personal considerations or preferences must not result in biased reviews of applications, award of research grant, or research priorities. For further ethical guidelines for reviewers and occasion where conflict of interest is considered to occur, see separate section in "Instructions for reviewers".

Applicants of a research project must themselves evaluate and openly declare any associations that may be of importance to impartial review of their research grant applications. A high personal integrity is expected. The applications submitted to the Foundation are not a matter of public disclosure and must be handled accordingly. The reviewers have a responsibility to their respective groups which means that all information and discussions is not further communicated to any outside party. The decisions taken by the review panels are the collective decision of all meeting participants. The reviewers have the right to object to decisions taken at the review meetings.

All information provided by researchers via submission of applications or equivalent cannot be used to benefit the research of the reviewers or provide scientific advantage personally or for colleagues, to the detriment of the operations of others. The Swedish/Norwegian legislation and European regulations must be considered and followed during the review process. This applies to research and professional ethical regulations as well as legislation that have been established by other organisations (such as animal welfare regulations, regulations concerning the spread
of infection etc).

If a project plans to use experimental horses, the application needs to address already in stage 1 why experimental horses need to be used, accompanied with description of how the application align to the 3 Rs (Reduce, Refine, Replace). This should also be elaborated in stage 2 applications. It must be particularly stressed that for applications containing elements that require evaluation by an ethical review board, the application must certify that the relevant ethical applications have been, or will be, submitted. Approval must be issued by the relevant ethical board and presented

to the Foundation secretariat before the project can begin. Corresponding policy applies to the participation of eg. persons from underprivileged groups that needs to be justified in the application, assessed in the appropriate ethical committee, and presented to the Foundation before the project start. If experimental horses for any reason will be located outside Sweden or Norway, this must be carefully described and motivated in the form "Declaration form, foreign activities" found at the Foundation website.

Application process overview

After the call for applications, the application process is carried out in two stages. In stage 1 a short concept overview is submitted over the suggested project, with fo-cus on project relevance and practical benefit for the horse sector. For applications moving on to stage 2, a full-scale application is submitted with focus both on the practical relevance and the scientific methodology of the project. For projects ap-proved for funding, contracts will be written and payment for the first year will be confirmed. Each year ongoing projects submit an application for continued funding for the approved project, which has to be approved by the Foundation prior to con-tinued funding. At the end of the project a final report is submitted and approved in order to obtain the last payment from the Foundation. Dissemination of results is an important part of the project which should take place continuously through-out the project time, and which will be part of the evaluation of the final report.
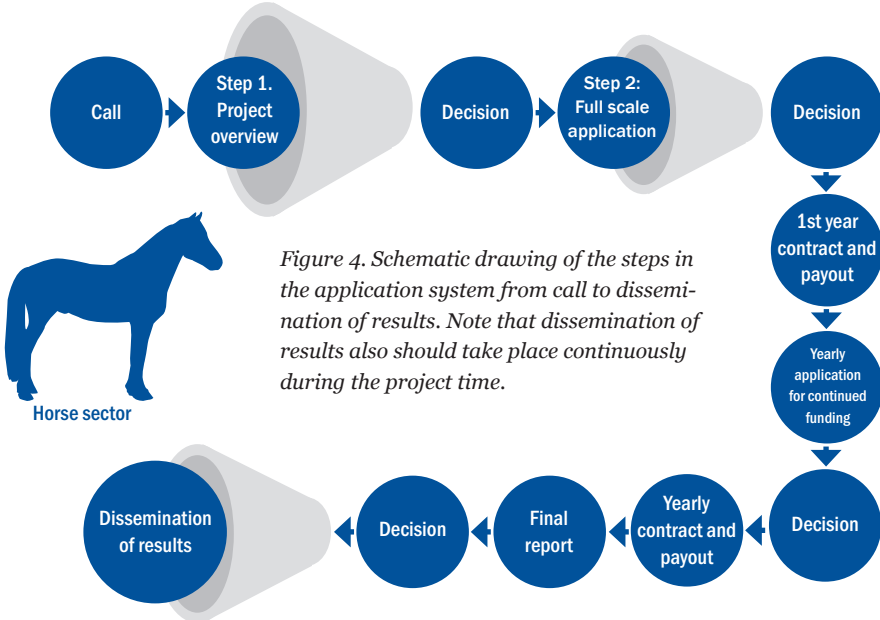

Figure 4. Schematic drawing of the steps in the application system from call to dissemination of results. Note that dissemination of results also should take place continuously during the project time.

1. Instructions for applicants

1.1 Application system and project requirements

The Foundation's online application system opens at least one month before the closing date for application, which is notified on the website. The steps described below need to be followed for an application to be considered valid. Before an application can be written, a login account must be created in the Foundation's application system by the main applicant. The applicant can invite a third person to work on the application (eg. co-applicant or controller) by clicking the arrow to the right of the edit bottom, on the right hand side of a created application, choose contributor and follow given instructions.

Project applications must clearly state which of the Foundation's research program area and specified focus area(s) the project relate to. The applicant must also specify who the recipient of the results is, and how the results will be disseminated to practical- as well as scientific representatives, and expectably be implemented in the practical horse sector, with support from the "knowledge wheels". The Foundation encourages Swedish-Norwegian applications and connection to the practical horse sector through participation in the reference group to the project but does not require applicants from multiple organisations. Pure Norwegian projects are also welcome to apply, as well as pure Swedish projects. Applying projects cannot includ co-financing with other insurance companies than Agria, if not agreed upon with Agria before submission.

1.2 Type of applications

In stage 1 the Foundation requires a concept overview, and in stage 2 a full scale application is required:

Stage 1. Concept overview

In Stage 1, the application consists of a concept overview: an online form and a short project description using the template with instructions found here that may not exceed three pages and must be written in English. The concept overview should be written in English with a summary in Swedish or Norwegian. The project description should focus on the project relevance and its practical benefits for the horse sector and/or horse impact on human society. It should briefly describe the project's current knowledge position, its group members, the plan for result dissemination, as well as the budget frame-work. The application should be submitted electronically using the Foundation's online application system. Applications are assessed by the review panel for each research program area.

Stage 2. Full-scale application

If the stage 1 application is approved to Stage 2 , a full-scale application must be submitted. It consists of an online form, a detailed project description in English (Appendix 1) using the template with instructions found here, together with handbook instructions, the applicants' CV (Appendix 2), and a letter of assurance from the main applicant's organisation that any granted funding will be administered (Appendix 3). Statement if ethical approval is required should be given, and if experimental horses for any reason will be located outside Sweden or Norway, this must be carefully described and motivated in the form "Declaration form, foreign activities" found at the Foundation website (Appendix 4). The project description should focus both on the project relevance and practical benefits for the horse sector and/or horse impact on human society, and scientific methodology, as well as current knowledge position. It should detail the plan for result dissemination, the project group members, reference group, and budget. The detailed project description may not exceed ten pages, including references, excluding structural abstract. The full-scale application should be submitted electronically using the Foundation's online application system. Applications are assessed by the same review panel in both stage 1 and 2.

1.3. Web form

The web form for new applications consists of one page with several section tabs in the main menu bar. All the section fields must be completed and saved before the application can be submitted. When the page is saved correctly the respective section tab in the main form menu bar will be displayed in green. It is possible to make changes to the application during the entire application period, up until the application is submitted. If information is lacking or not corresponding to some of the foundation limitations a red warning message will appear. An application cannot be submitted before the content has been completed.

1.3.1 Information about the applicants

This page is used to state the main applicant and co-applicant(s) for the project. Make sure to enter complete applicant information from the start by typing manually (do not use autofill), as applicant information will be forwarded to the budget section. The main applicant must hold a doctorate degree or equivalent well-documented research competence, and be connected to a Swedish or Norwegian research institution. The main applicant must be the account holder in the Foundation application system as all communication between applicants and the secretariat is done via email to the account holder. One main applicant per country is required for Swedish-Norwegian projects, one of these are account holder in the application system. The main applicant may submit one application per call as account holder in the system. Researchers affiliated to a Swedish or Norwegian research institution may apply as main- or co-applicant for salary from the foundation, other international co-applicants are welcomed in

submitted applications on the prerequisit of participating in-kind. For doctoral students projects, the main applicant must be the supervisor of the doctoral student. The doctoral candidate is indicated as co-applicant even if the position is not yet appointed. Please state if a doctorate thesis will result from the project. All applicants needs to declare degree of activity in the project in the budget section, regardless if salary is applied for or the applicant is participating in kind (see budget instructions). Reference group participants are not counted as co-applicants.

1.3.2 Project information

The project title should be stated both in English and Swedish/Norwegian. It should be brief and concise and may be a maximum of 100 characters, including blank spaces. The year and month of the planned project start and completion must also be entered here. The date for submission of the final report is automatically set six months after the stated completion date for the project. The main applicant also selects which of the two research programs areas their project appli-cation should be processed under, and the relevant focus area(s) of the project.

1.3.3 Economics

This is an overview of how the project is intended to be financed. All amounts must be stated in Swedish crowns/Norwegian crowns. A statement should be made here if the project has been awarded funding by other grant awarding bodies. This applies also to any personal resources that will be invested in the project. If additional funding applications have been made for funding of the same costs as those applied for from the Foundation, this must also be stated here. The budget must be justified in the project description. In the concept overview (Stage 1), a budget framework which provides an indication of the level of the final annual budget for the project must be stated. The budget framework does not need to specify details of financial posts, however, the budget in stage 2 should not differ significantly than the budget framework. The full-scale application must include the entire budget of the project and specify the part of the budget intended to be funded by the Foundation and the funds granted/applied to from other financiers. All posts should be filled in English. All applicants needs to declare degree of activity in the project, regardless if salary is applied for or the applicant participates in kind. Otherwise an error message will appear and the application cannot be submitted. For each person, state the amounts in percent of a full-time position and then the monthly salary. State the number of months that each applicant will work on the project during a specific year. Salaries for applicants who get funding throughout in kinds should be filled as usual under Salaries ('Löner'), with 0 kronor in Applied from the Foundation ('Sökes från Stiftelsen'). In kinds contribution should be included under Own Funds ('Egna medel'). Remember to be specific and clear about the specification of materials, travel and

additional costs. Posts stated as "other materials" or "miscellaneous costs" will not be accepted. Salaries for positions other than those of the main applicant or co-applicants are stated under 'Additional costs', unless beeing an inhouse competence, then add another line in the salary section. The name of the position must always be stated. Keep in mind that the amount stated in Applied from the Foundation ('Sökt belopp från Stiftelsen') should not exceed the amount Left to be Financed ('Kvar att finansiera'). In such case, an error message will appear and the application cannot be submitted. For that, the project's total budget should be filled in ALL posts. Funds granted from other financiers and own funds are deducted at the end, whereas funds applied from other financiers will not intervene with the budget. **Observe that a maximum for Swedish Overhead (OH) costs is applied at max 25 % OH surcharge on salary- and material costs.** There is no longer an upper limit for overhead (OH) costs for Swedish projects or the Swedish part of Swedish-Norwegian projects, but the sum applied for must not exceed the actual OH costs. It may include faculty, department and university overhead costs as well as costs for premises. Contact the secretariat if you have any questions. For the Norwegian part we refer to The Research Council of Norway: trhg@forskningsradet.no

1.3.4 Project summary

The objectives and focus of the project must be summarised here in both Swedish/ Norwegian and English. Each summary must not exceed 1 000 characters, includ- ing blank spaces. Project summary must include, in short, material and methods. The text will be published automatically in the Foundation's project bank if funded

1.3.5 Appendix for the concept overview

The project description may not exceed three pages, incl key references and must be written in English using the template found here, written in Times New Roman, 12 points. The project description will be assessed based on four criteria in stage 1 and should thus accordingly focus on:

- **Potential**
- **Relevance for the horse sector**
- **Direct benefit of the proposed project**
- **Communication and dissemination of results**
    See section 2.5.1 for detailed evaluation criteria description

The concept overview should, according to the template, include the following sections:

- Background and relevance
- Project aims, method, and expected results
- Expected results direct benefit to the horse sector
- Competences connected to the project
- Key references (max. 2000 characters incl spaces)

NB! *For required content and character limitations of each section, see template.*

1.3.6 Appendices for the full-scale application

Appendix 1: The project description may not exceed 10 pages, including references, excluding structural abstract, and must be written in English, using the template found here, written in Times New Roman, 12 points. The application will be evaluated based on all seven evaluation criteria (*see 2.5 Evaluation of criteria*).

The full scale application should, according to the template, include the following sections:

- A structural abstract
- Background and relevance
- Study design
- Expected results and direct application in and dissemination to the horse sector
- Competences connected to the project
- References

- NB! *For required content and character limitations of each section, see template.*

Appendix 2: The CV of the applicants may not exceed two pages per applicant, including publication list. Each CV must include a brief description of the merits of the applicant, together with a list of the most recent relevant publications, indicating the applicant name in bold in the reference list. The CV must be written in English. Only information relevant to the project should be mentioned.

Appendix 3: The assurance that the grant funding will be administered by the applicant's organisation must be signed by the head of department or immediate superior from the administrative organisation. The form template is available via the link in the online application system. It must be completed, scanned, and enclosed to the application.

Appendix 4: If experimental horses for any reason will be located outside Sweden or Norway, this must be carefully described and motivated in the form "Declaration form, foreign activities" found at the Foundation website.

1.4 Submit the application

When all application pages have been saved and each section tab in the main menu bar of the application form displays green, the main applicant can submit the application by clicking the command "Submit the application". Do not forget to read through the General application requirements and accept the terms by clicking the appropriate box. An application cannot be submitted without complete and correctly filled web forms. All reviews will be performed electronically via the system, which means that the reviewers only have access to the material that is submitted electronically.

1.5 Decision

1.5.1 Stage 1
In stage 1, applications are assessed with focus on relevance by the review panel for the chosen research program area. The committee includes both scientific representatives and relevance persons elected from the horse sector. Based on the review panel assessments, applications accepted for stage 2 is determined. All main applicants will be notified by e-mail. The main applicants of the projects rejected in stage 1 will receive the project's average point score given by the review panel without any additional comments.

1.5.2 Stage 2
In stage 2, the Foundation's board makes the decision on which projects are awarded funding, based on the recommendations of the review panel. The main applicant will be notified by email if the proposal is awarded funding or not after the Foundation board meeting in December. Applications are only approved according to the entire applied project, and cannot be partly approved for separate work packages/sections of an application. Information regarding all awarded projects will be published on the Foundation's website. Within a month after the board's decision, a funding contract or letter of rejection will be sent to all main applicants informing of the justification for the decision. Decisions may not be appealed.

1.6 Contract for projects awarded funding

If the project has been awarded funding, the main applicant will receive a

project contract. In certain circumstances, a project granted funding may require to be supplemented by the provision of further information before the first grant payment can be made. This will be clearly stated in the contract and means that h˙Ya˙U˙jb˙applicant must submit the requested supplementary information before payment.The contract also specifies the obligations of the main applicants and grant administrating organisation, as well as the conditions for reporting of the project. The contract also details a payment and publication plan for the project. The Foundation grants funding for one year at a time after the approval of a yearly application for continued funding including description of the project´s progress and economy. Payments are generally done in May each year, with exception for final reports that are handled on basis of arrival to the Foundation. The contract is sent by the secretariat to the main applicabhk˙jh˙jb˙Ua˙cbh˙UZhˆ˙XYWˆjcb"Cb`mPlusgiro/Bankgiro number given in the application can be used for payment transactions of approved funding. The project number will be the reference for payments.

For the Norwegian part of Swedish-Norwegian projects the Research Council of Norway should be contacted for registration of the approved project. From 2023 all norwegian projects and norwegian parts of collaboration projects can use the stage 2 application template (link) to submission to both the Foundation and for registration after approval at the Research council of Norway. For full Norwegian projects, the contract is handled by the Research Council of Norway: trhg@forskningsradet.no

1.7 Ongoing projects

1.7.1 Application for continued funding

During a multi-year project the Foundation grants funding for one year at the time. An application for continued funding must be submitted annually through the on-line application system. Applicants can log into the application system at any time and view the deadline for submission. Submission should include a PDF-file with the status of the project and project economy, according to instructions in the Application for continued funding template, found on the Foundation website. Use Times New Roman, font 12 (headings 14) according to the template. Use single line spacing and 2.5 cm top, bottom, left and right margins. The document should be written in English. The web form consists of four sections that must be completed in the stated order: Section 1 first, then Section 2 etc. The financial report (section 4) must always be completed last. In case of major deviations, such as the change of the main applicant or any major setback in the project, the secretariat should always be contacted immediately! The report ensures that the research funds from the industry and government are used properly and that research is of high standard. The applications for continued funding are approved by the Foundation board after recommendation from the review panel.

1.7.2 Main applicant

The main applicant is the person responsible for ensuring that the project proceeds according to plan, and that the applications for continued funding, the final report, and the follow-up report 4 years after end of the project are submitted at the appointed time. The main applicant is also responsible for ensuring the accuracy of all financial reporting to the Foundation. The main applicant should ensure that their account information is always accurate, as their contact information is obtained directly from the account via the web form. A change of main applicant means an administrative cost of 1500 SEK and needs to be applied for, incl. CV of new main applicant, signed by current and new main applicant, and head of department or equvalent.

1.7.3 Deferral

If the main applicant is not able to submit project reports at the appointed time, an application for deferral should be submitted to the Foundation's research secretariat. It must clearly explain the reasons for the delay, contain a new time schedule, and be signed by the main applicant and immediate superior or head of department. Deferral will be processed on a case-by-case basis and will be granted only in case of exceptional circumstances. Such circumstances could be e.g. illness, parental leave, unforeseen delays, or unexpected restructurings of the project group. Note that the deferral application does not replace the description of deviations in the application for continued funding. The main applicant must submit the final reports for all ongoing projects according to the defined time schedule in order to apply for new project funding from the Foundation.

1.7.4 Final report

A final report must be submitted for all projects funded by the Foundation and is to be approved by the main reviewer in the review panel and the research secretary. Swedish-Norwegian projects must be presented in their entirety in the final report. The final reports can be used as a basis for dissemination of the results to the horse sector. Applicants can log into the application system at any time and view the deadline for submitting the final report. If the final report is not received by the Foundation following reminders, the project will be annulled, and any remaining granted funds must be paid back to the Foundation. Annulled project will not be published in the project bank on the Foundation's website.
A final report must be submitted for all projects funded by the Foundation using the template for final report, and is to be approved by the main reviewer in the review panel and the research secretary.

1.7.5 Follow-up report

Four years after project end, a follow-up report should be submitted to the foundation, based on the template for follow-up reports, found on the home page. In this report publications and advances made from the entire project are described, including those produed after the final report submission. The report issubmitted through the same reporting system as previous reports in the project. **15**

1.7.6 Publication

When a final report has been approved, it will be published in the Foundation's project bank together with the contact details of the main applicant. The main applicant should therefore be prepared for questions that may arise following publication. There is a possibility to request a deferral for the publication of the final report in the project bank if such publication is likely to obstruct the planned publication of a scientific article, or patent application. Contact the Foundation's research secretari-at in such instances. For all communication and publication of project results, funding from The Swedish-Norwegian foundation for Equine Research should always been acknowledged together with the project identification number. This is also the case in contacts with media. The main applicant should ensure that their research results are made available through Open Access within six months of publication. The secretariat can answer questions about how this should be complied with.

1.8 The final report

The final report is submitted using the web form of the Foundation's application system, no later than the date stated on the grant funding contract. The web form consists of four sections that must be completed in the stated order: Section 1 first, then Section 2 etc. **The financial report (section 4) must always be completed last.** The fields that are not permitted to be changed, for example the project's title, are displayed in grey and cannot be accessed. The four sections of the web form are the following:

Summary

The project must be summarised here in both Swedish/Norwegian and English. Each summary should be clear and concise. It should state the purpose of the study, the methods used, the main results and the main conclusions. Neither of the project summaries may exceed 1 000 characters, including blank spaces. Both summaries will be automatically published in the project bank when the project is approved.

Popular scientific report

The popular scientific report should describe:
* The purpose and benefits of the research project
* The most important results obtained and how the results can come to practical use
* The methods used
* The main conclusions

The target audience of the popular science report will be persons in the horse sector, journalists, or other parties interested in the subject matter, but who most probably lacks the scientific expertise and specialist knowledge of the project main applicant.

Therefore, a simple and clear language should be used. This is an excellent opportunity for main applicants to disseminate knowledge about a subject they are passionate about. The popular science report may not exceed 4 000 characters, including blank spaces.

Final report
The final report should be written in the Final report template, found on the Foundation website and uploaded in the system as a PDF-file. For Swedish-Norwegian projects the same PDF-file should be used in the report to the Research Council of Norway. Use Times New Roman, font 12 (headings 14) according to the template. Use single line spacing and 2.5 cm top, bottom, left and right margins. The final report should not exceed a size of 10 pages (excluding the first page and the dissemination of result section) and 3 MB upload size. The final report should be written in English with a detailed summary in Swedish/Norwegian. The first page should include the title of the project and project number, the authors of the report and their affiliation, as well as a detailed summary of the project in Swedish/Norwegian.

The report must then include the following sections:
• Detailed summary (*for requested subheadings, see template*), part 1
• Introduction (background and aim of the project)
• Materials and methods, including statistical analysis
• Results and discussion
• Conclusions (with regard to benefits and advice for the horse sector)
• Relevance for the practical horse sector, incl. recommendations
• References cited in the report
• Dissemination of project results both scientifically and to the practical horse sector, eg. publications, presentations (according to final report template Part 3)

In the dissemination of result section, titles and reference to any existing publications, ongoing manuscript, or other popular science reports that have been written within the project should be provided according to the template. The links to publications and to any websites where the project is described should also be provided. The publications that only exist in paper format must be submitted if the secretariat requests them. Publications from the project that are published after the final report has been submitted to the Foundation, should be sent to the secretariat separately as a complement to the final report.

In the financial report, the main applicant provides details on all the incurred project costs. This report must be in accordance to the budget that was stated in the original application. All individual posts should be specified, so that costs are not reported as a lump sum (see 1.3.3 Economics). Overhead expenses should be recognized in the appropriate place and not under Other. Note that only digits and no other characters are accepted by the system!

2. Instructions for reviewers

The Foundation has two research program areas (Figure 5) represented by two separate review panels. The applications are reviewed and evaluated in their existing state by the same review panel in stage 1, and stage 2.
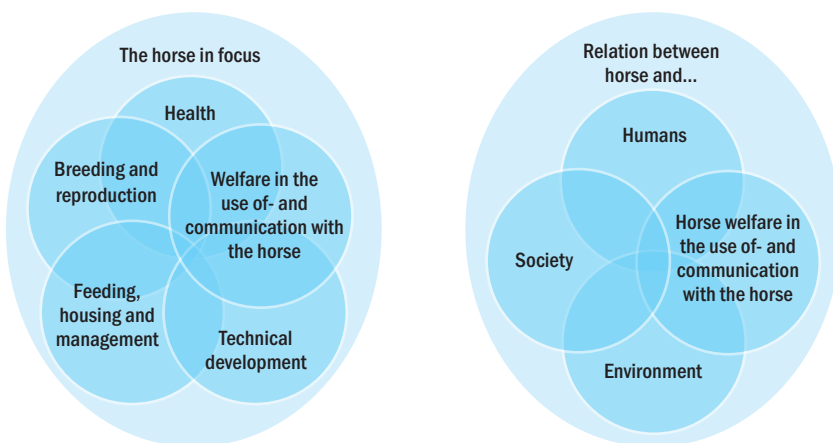

Figure 5. The Foundation's two reseach program areas "Veterinary medicine, animal science, and technology science" where the horse is in focus, and "Social science and humanities", where the relationship between horse and humans/society/environment is explored.

2.1 Review panels

Each review panel consists of approximately half scientific reviewers and half relevance reviewers from the horse sector or with other relevant practical wide spectrum experience of significance, preferably with understanding of research. Most relevance reviewers are recruited by the founder organisations of the Foundation. Scientific reviewers and a few relevance reviewers are recruited by the Foundation´s board after suggestion from the nomination committee. The Foundation strives to achieve a mix of national and international scientific reviewers, partly because of conflict of interest (for example since a reviewer cannot apply for funding

to the Foundation), and partly to broaden the scientific competence of the panel. All members of the review panels assess and score all incoming applications in that research program area in stage 1 and stage 2. The review panel is responsible for evaluating and ranking the applications based on all scoring criteria. It forms the basis for a decision proposal to the Foundation's board of which projects should be granted funding.

2.2 Appointment of reviewers and chairpersons

The Foundation's board has the strategic responsibility for ensuring:
- The appointment of reviewers for the review panels. The reviewers are nominated by the nomination committee and the founder organisations of the Foundation.
- The appointment of a chairperson for each review panel nominated by the nomination committee.
- That the review procedure is efficient, and the relevant sectors and academia are well represented.
- All reviewers are appointed according to competence and have the task of representing all sectors in question, regardless of any wishes of the company or organisation they belong to (see Ethical guidelines).

2.3 Ethical guidelines (reviewers)

The ethical guidelines are intended as a guide for everyone participating in operations from and with the Foundation, both external (e.g. horse sector representatives and review panel members) and internal (e.g. secretariat and board). Personal considerations or preferences must not result in biased reviews of applications, award of research grant, or research priorities.

The Swedish/Norwegian legislation and European regulations must be considered and followed during the review process. This applies to research and professional ethical regulations as well as legislation that have been established by other organisations (such as animal welfare regulations, regulations concerning the spread of infection etc).

During the review process the scientific credibility must be supported by a factual assessment of the application. In the opinion statement, the assessment of the application must be formulated factually and fairly, and must, as objectively as possi-

ble, state the strengths and weaknesses of the applicants and their application.

Conflict of interest is considered to occur in the following instances (as in the Swedish Code of Statutes Administrative Procedure Act [§§ 11 and 12, 1986:23]):

- The matter concerns the panel member or a person close to the panel member, or the outcome of the matter can be expected to result in significant advantage or disadvantage for the panel member or a person close to the panel member.
- The panel member or a person close to the panel member is a representative of, or works at, the same department or company as the applicant, or is a representative of another party for whom the outcome of the matter may result in significant advantage or disadvantage.
- The panel member has an ongoing or recently completed collaboration with the applicant. There is also conflict of interest if any other circumstance exists that may influence the credibility that a panel member is impartial in the matter. Examples of such circumstances are friendship, rivalry or financial dependence.
- The panel member must personally consider if there is a conflict of interest and also give notice about any conflict of interest that may exist. If conflict of interest exists, the panel member must abstain from the administration and processing of the application and leave the meeting room during discussions concerning the application.

If a reviewer recognises a conflict of interest during the review process, this is recorded in the review system. A similar process is followed if a reviewer is appointed as a rapporteur and a conflict of interest arises. A corresponding entry is recorded in the review system and the Foundation's secretariat must be notified immediately. If a conflict of interest is discovered during a meeting in progress, this must be reported without delay. The reviewer has a personal liability in a case of conflict of interest. The Foundation endeavours to work in a way that creates trust, on behalf of both the fund providers and the grant recipients. A reviewer in situation of conflict of interest must be regarded as non-participatory in the discussion and must leave the meeting room.

All information provided by researchers via submission of applications or equivalent cannot be used to benefit the research of the reviewers or provide scientific advantage personally or for colleagues, to the detriment of the operations of others. The applications submitted to the Foundation are not a matter of public disclosure and must be handled accordingly. The reviewers have a responsibility to their respective groups which means that all information and discussions is not further communicated to any outside party. The decisions taken by the review panels are the collective decision of all meeting participants. The reviewers have the right to object to decisions taken at the review meetings.

2.4 Evaluation procedure

Stage 1
The Foundation's secretariat invites the respective review panel members to report possible conflict of interest of incoming applications in the Foundation's online evaluation system, before given deadline, which should be confirmed by email to the sectritariate once finnished. Thereafter, the concept overviews are assigned to reviewers and can be evaluated. For each application, the Research Secretary assigns a rapporteur (principal reviewer and a second rapporteur, all other members of the review panel are then referred to as co-reviewers. All reviewers must submit an individual evaluation for all applications in the online evaluation system with focus on "2.5.1 Benefit to the horse sector" criteria using the point scoring system described in section "2.6 Point and grade score". All reviewers must also submit an individual evaluation for all applications of overall grade score (A-D and of motivating comments in the online evaluation system. Each review panel then holds a digital meeting, chaired by the chairperson, where all the applications are briefly presented by their respective rapporteur, who describes the general opinion of the panel. All applications are then discussed and evaluated by the entire panel group. Based on the review panel assessments, applications accepted for stage 2 is determined. The secretariat communicates the decision to the main applicant. If the application is rejected, the final score of the project is provided with no further comments.

Stage 2
In Stage 2 the secretariat invites the respective review panel to review the full-scale applications. Rapporteur and second rapporteur, assigned to each application in stage 1 remains the same in stage 2 and onwards. All other members of the review panel are referred to as co-reviewers. Each application is evaluated in the online evaluation system by the entire review panel according to the criteria "2.5.1 Benefit to the horse sector" and "2.5.2 Scientific quality" using the point scoring system described in section "2.6 Point and grade score". All reviewers must also submit an individual evaluation for all applications of overall grade score (A-D) and of motivating comments. Each review panel then holds a physical meeting, chaired by the chairperson, where all the applications are briefly presented by their respective rapporteur, who describes the general opinion of the panel. All applications are then discussed and evaluated by the entire panel. The panel then compiles a proposal for the Foundation's board of the projects that should be awarded funding. The decision proposal is communicated to the board through the secretariat, and the board makes the final decision. For each application, the rapporteur compiles an opinion statement in the evaluation system with a justification to the decision proposal based on the comments raised at the review panel meeting. The final decision and its justification are later communicated by the secretariat to the main applicants.

The justification must therefore be worded so that the applicant clearly understands the reasons behind the decision and should not exceed 10 sentences. Positive feedback may also be given in case of rejection. A rejection of an application must be based on the criteria stated in section "2.5 Evaluation criteria". During the evaluation procedure, a notification of eventual conflict of interest by a reviewer must be entered in the system, in which case the reviewer in situation of conflict of inter-est will not evaluate the application nor participate to the group discussion (see Ethical guidelines).

2.5 Evaluation criteria

2.5.1 Benefit for the horse sector

- **Potential**
  Research potential and competence building potential of the project for enabling long-term positive impact in the horse sector.
- **Relevance for the horse sector**
  Relevance for the horse sector to find a solution of project topic. Relevance to solve needs and tangible problems for the defined target.
- **Direct benefit of the proposed project**
  Capability of the proposed project to fill unmet needs and tangible problems for a defined target. Evaluation of the novelty value of the project for the horse sector.
- **Communication and dissemination of results**
  Description of relevant stakeholders and end-users. There must be a tangible and realistic plan stating how the results obtained will be communicated further to the next stage, to be of benefit at the end of the project. Suggestions about what should be taken further after the conclusion of the project.

2.5.2 Scientific quality

- **Hypothesis and questions addressed**
  Originality and novelty value of the proposed project. The scientific importance of the project objectives and the possibilities of significant results.
- **Methods and performance, including budget**
  Feasibility and suitability of the scientific methods. Tangible and realistic work schedule connected to a reasonable budget.
- **Competence of the main applicant and project group**
  Ability of the main applicant and project group to carry out the project according to the project plan, sufficient experience of project management, and to commu-nicate research results. Strengths and competitiveness of the project group, both within the horse sector and academia.

2.6 Point and grade score

All evaluations are made using the Foundation's evaluation system. Point scoring and opinions for each project are entered no later than the final date stated on the invitation to the reviewers. After the system is closed for review no further information can be added. A summary of the evaluations is sent out by the secretariat to the reviewers prior to the meetings. The applications are ranked according to average points scored and overall grade awarded.

2.6.1 Point scoring scale
When reviewing, the members of the review panels use the following point scale:
- **6 points: excellent.** The application successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion. No shortcomings.
- **5 points: very good.** The application addresses the criterion very well. Shortcomings are minor.
- **4 points: good.** The application addresses the criterion well, but with some notable shortcomings.
- **3 points: satisfactory.** The application broadly addresses the criterion, but with several notable shortcomings.
- **2 points: needs improvement.** The application addresses the criterion in an inadequate manner, or there are considerable weaknesses.
- **1 point: rejected.** The application fails to address the criterion under examination or cannot be judged due to missing or incomplete information.

All criteria must be scored by all reviewers. When all necessary fields have been filled out, indicated for each section as green, click on "save and mark as done" for completing and sending the review.

2.6.2 Grade scoring scale
When reviewing, the members of the review panels also award an overall grade score for each application.
- A = Excellent application equivalent to average grade >5
- B = good application corresponding to average grade 3.5-5
- C = Unsatisfactory application equivalent to average grade 2.5-3.5
- D = Weak application equivalent to average grade <2.5

2.7 Ongoing projects

During a multi-year project the Foundation grants funding for one year at the time. For continued funding an Application for continued funding needs to be submitted by the applicant, to ensure that the research funds from the industry and government are used properly and that the research is of high standard. The applications for continued funding are approved by the Foundation board after recommendation from the review panel. The application for continued funding should be written in English using the template for Application for continued funding and according to its instructions and applicant instructions in the handbook. It should be evaluated on status of the project and project economy compared to what was written in the original application.

2.8 Final report

For a project to be completed, a final report needs to be submitted by the main applicant, to ensure that the research funds from the industry and government have been properly used and that the research is of high standard. The final report is approved by the main reviewer in the review panel and the research secretary. It should be written in English using the template for Final reports and according to its instructions and applicant instructions in the handbook. It should be evaluated on project content, project results, result dissemination and project economy compared to what was written in the original application.

STIFTELSEN HÄSTFORSKNING