

1 June 2007

Open Call for Expressions of Interest in Mistra Research Programmes, 2007

INVITATION TO SUBMIT PRE-PROPOSALS

Mistra seeks to promote sustainable development. One way is by investing in collaboration, aimed at solving major environmental problems, between researchers and users. Mistra offers grants for addressing such problems through bridge-building research. Such bridges link various research disciplines, on the one hand, and pure research and practical applications on the other. Practitioners in Swedish companies and public agencies, legislators, international negotiators and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), as well as researchers in different fields, can all be involved in research programmes funded by Mistra. Researchers and practitioners from other countries, too, can participate alongside their Swedish counterparts.

Mistra now invites submission of expressions of interest, in the form of strategic environmental research pre-proposals, i.e. summaries of proposed Mistra research programmes.

The key features of Mistra programmes are their

- potential for solving major environmental problems
- value to intended users
- world-class scientific quality
- capacity to make Sweden more competitive
- contribution to Mistra's overall programme portfolio
- creation of strong research environments
- sound management and good organization.

This call is for pre-proposals for research programmes designed to run for one or more phases, which typically last three or four years each. Each programme's annual budget may be in the range of SEK 3–18 million. Mistra endorses flexibility in terms of size and duration, with programme design appropriate for the task concerned. Mistra expects this 2007 call to generate two or three new programmes with an aggregate annual budget of some SEK 20m, and welcomes cofunding from other sources.

There are two stages in applying for Mistra grants:

- submission of a brief (max. 15-page) pre-proposal (open to all comers)
- submission of a full programme proposal (by invitation from Mistra only).

To facilitate interaction between researchers and users, Mistra can cover planning costs for the selected pre-proposals up to a maximum of SEK 300,000.

Pre-proposals for Mistra research programmes must be received by Mistra not later than 4.00 pm on 20 September 2007.

BACKGROUND

From 2007, Mistra welcomes proposals for research programmes in response to published calls only. Mistra's calls may address specific topics; alternatively, provided they are in line with Mistra's overarching objectives, they may be open. Most of Mistra's new research endeavours derive from specific calls, i.e. those in which Mistra has

- defined the topics, such as particular environmental problems
- specified the means of implementation and particular user categories.

The other route to new Mistra programmes is through external initiatives in response to open calls — a more bottom-up process. Open calls complement specific calls. The present call is open.

The range of possible programme topics and the implementation procedures in an open call are subject to Mistra's statutes and strategy. In the selection process, the prospective contribution to Mistra's overall programme portfolio is also considered.

Mistra's objective is to help solve environmental problems by investing in relevant academic research. Mistra is actively involved in the endeavours it supports at every stage, from planning to implementation. The Mistra concept is a continuous process of learning how to build bridges between researchers and practitioners, thereby contributing to sustainable development.

More information on Mistra's strategy, application procedures, design and management of research programmes may be found in Mistra's guide, *How to go about it — Applying for funds for research in support of sustainable development (Hur ska ni göra – Söka finansiering till forskning för en hållbar utveckling)*. This call provides specific further details about Mistra programmes and the application criteria and procedure outlined in the guide, which may be downloaded in English or Swedish from www.mistra.org.

PROPOSAL CRITERIA AND PROGRAMME DESIGN

Proposals must meet the following criteria.

Potential for solving important environmental problems

Research should directly or indirectly address at least one of the environmental aspects listed in Mistra's strategy:

- climate
- ecosystems and renewable natural resources
- chemicals in the environment
- marine eutrophication
- urban issues.

Environmental problems are often complex. Besides scientists' and practitioners' joint efforts, collaboration between two or more academic disciplines may be required. Mistra therefore encourages interdisciplinary research both within and among faculties. Endeavours can be interdisciplinary within, for example, natural or social sciences. But their reach may be broader still:

they may, for example, involve law, the humanities and technology, as well as both natural and social sciences.

Value to intended users

There must be a clear conception of how the research will make a significant practical contribution to solving environmental problems. A dialogue should be established with practitioners to take their views into consideration in the research endeavour. Mistra welcomes broad outlines of the organizational forms for this dialogue in the pre-proposals. Examples of user categories are

- policymakers, including e.g. national and international agencies and multilateral interest groups
- businesses, including those engaged in product and process development, systems and services, and development of business strategies
- NGOs

World-class scientific quality

The proposed research must be internationally competitive. Mistra attaches importance to collaboration and synergies with international research programmes. Research groups that apply should have well-established contacts and/or be engaged in collaboration with relevant international research groups. Researchers from countries other than Sweden are welcome as members of applicant groups. Mistra encourages the recruitment of participants characterised by excellence both in Sweden and from abroad. Initiatives for Mistra programmes from researchers outside Sweden are welcome provided they have strong working links with groups in Sweden. The research should be carried out by individuals with the relevant academic qualifications, preferably at least at postdoctoral level.

Capacity to make Sweden more competitive

Being 'competitive', here, refers both to Swedish enterprise and to competitiveness in the broader sense of Sweden being a good country to live in, given a lead in the area of sustainable development. Effective international environmental regulations should, moreover, generally boost Sweden's competitiveness.

Contribution to Mistra's overall programme portfolio

Mistra will not fund more than one programme in a single field unless each programme clearly represents added value in relation to the others. A list of current and completed research programmes can be found on Mistra's website. Mistra also issues calls for specific research programmes (see above). The main purpose of open calls is to capture innovative research ideas that are unlikely to be elicited from the specific calls. Thus, the open calls complement the specific ones. In Mistra's planning process for specific calls, applications are encouraged from those who, in the open calls, have submitted pre-proposals regarding fields and/or topics that overlap with those provided for in a specific call. It is therefore advisable to consult both Mistra's website and Mistra's staff (see below) before devoting a great deal of effort to writing a pre-proposal.

Mistra welcomes research proposals initiated by higher education institutions (HEIs) and institutes, as well from practitioners (business sector, NGOs, etc).

Creation of strong research environments

Mistra's programme investments are expected to promote the development of strong research environments. A Mistra programme can build on an existing strong research environment or foster the emergence of a new one in a field with a bearing on the solution of environmental problems and on Sweden's competitiveness. The potential of the research environment and the scientific merits of the proposal in question is assessed in a scientific peer review carried out by well qualified foreign researchers.

Sound management and good organization

Every programme must select a management team and define an organizational structure suited to its needs. A Mistra programme is often a large, complex endeavour in which many individuals need to work together towards a common goal. To achieve results, such a programme must be effectively managed and organized. Another key success factor is excellent administrative, academic and user-oriented support from the programme host. In most cases the host is a Swedish university or other HEI, but companies and institutes may also be considered. To ensure adequate support on the part of the host organization, the pre-proposal must be submitted by the Vice-Chancellor (Rector) of the HEI, director of the institute, chief executive of the company or equivalent. This person must also submit a written account of how the endeavour described in the pre-proposal relates to the existing strategic planning of the HEI (or equivalent). The programme area must be one that is given priority by the host organization.

Before embarking on a programme, the host organization must appoint a programme board in consultation with Mistra. One of this board's responsibilities is, in cooperation with the host organization, to appoint a programme manager or director.

To optimize conditions for interaction among different academic disciplines, Mistra encourages geographical concentration of the component projects of the programmes. However, networking between existing centres of scientific excellence at geographically separated but strong research environments is also encouraged. A description of, and arguments for, the chosen strategy of programme infrastructure must be provided in the application.

FLEXIBILITY IN SIZE AND DURATION

Mistra wishes to stress its flexible approach regarding programme size and duration alike. Programmes usually run in phases of three or four years, with thorough evaluations before the start of a new phase. Mistra can also consider other programme concepts, such as brief scientific syntheses. Please contact Mistra's staff to discuss programme design.

Please note that Mistra is currently also issuing calls for its 'Idea Support' (for small-scale innovative projects) and 'ProEnviro' (collaboration between small and medium-sized companies and HEIs for commercialization of products) grant applications.

TIMETABLE

Programmes ensuing from this call are expected to start on 1 January 2009. The planning schedule up till programme launch is as follows:

- 1 June 2007 — call announcement
- 20 September 2007 — deadline for pre-proposal submission
- Early November 2007 — invitations to submit full programme proposals
- 1 April 2008 — deadline for submission of full programme proposals
- April/May 2008 — evaluation of scientific value and utility
- June 2008 — funding decisions by Mistra's board
- Autumn 2008 — final arrangements and signing of contracts between Mistra, programmes and programme hosts
- 1 January 2009 — commencement of research programmes.

APPLICATION PROCEDURE

There are two stages in applying for Mistra grants:

- submission of a brief (max. 15-page) pre-proposal, open to all comers
- submission of a full programme proposal, by invitation from Mistra only.

The 15 pages pre-proposal should contain

- a description of the research field(s) in question and how the research is expected to make a concrete and significant contribution to solving environmental problems
- an account of the stakeholders and/or practitioners with whom the research group is conducting and/or plans to conduct a dialogue
- a brief description of the methods to be used
- details of the planned research group's composition and international collaboration
- a general timetable and budget for the proposed programme
- a statement from the University Vice-Chancellor (Rector), institute director, company chief executive or equivalent on how the proposed research fits in h the strategic planning and priorities at the respective university or HEI, institute, company or equivalent.

The pre-proposal must

- describe how the conditions outlined in this call are to be met
- be written in English
- include a request, and an approximate budget, for planning grants if so desired
- not exceed 15 pages (font size \geq 12 points) in length
- enclose one-page CVs (over and above the aforesaid max. 15 pages) for the key persons to be involved in the programme
- include a one page summary of the pre-proposal
- not include letters of intent – the cooperation situation must be described in the application text
- be submitted by the Vice-Chancellor of the host university or HEI, director of the host institute, chief executive of the host company or equivalent
- be submitted by e-mail to opencall@mistra.org not later than 4.00 pm on 20 September 2007. If possible bundle your proposal in one document.

Only pre-proposals that comply with the above rules will be considered.

In planning and preparing their pre-proposals, applicants are strongly advised to

- study the guide *How to go about it — Applying for funds for research in support of sustainable development*, available at www.mistra.org
- consult Mistra staff (see below) to ensure that the pre-proposal is within Mistra's area of interest and get general information about establishing and running a Mistra programme.

SELECTION AND EVALUATION

Decisions will be taken by Mistra after consultation with an international review panel, which will consider organizational aspects as well as scientific and practical value. This applies both to decisions (based on the pre-proposals) to invite submission of full programme proposals and decisions to award planning grants.

Evaluation of the pre-proposals will focus the aims and requirements stated in this call, including:

- potential for solving major environmental problems
- value to intended users
- world-class scientific quality
- capacity to make Sweden more competitive
- contribution to Mistra's overall programme portfolio
- creation of strong research environments
- sound management and good organization.

Mistra will invite submission of a larger number of full programme proposals than we expect to approve. The approval rate of full programme proposals is estimated at approximately 50%. Besides approval or rejection, based on recommendations from the evaluations, Mistra can suggest changes in proposals and invite resubmission.

Prior to the Mistra board decision in June 2008, full programme proposals invited will undergo two evaluations, focusing on scientific and practical value respectively, to be carried out during April and May 2008. Organizational aspects will be assessed in both evaluations.

CONTACT

For questions and consultation on technology and natural sciences, please contact Programmes Director **Britt Marie Bertilsson**, phone +46 8 7911021, email brittmarie.bertilsson@mistra.org.

For questions and consultation on natural and social sciences and humanities, please contact Programmes Director **Olof Olsson**, phone +46 8 7911022, email olof.olsson@mistra.org.

Staffing of Mistra's office will be sporadic between 2 July and 3 August 2007.

This call is available online at www.mistra.org.