

Guidelines for reviewers of the 2020 Swedish Environmental Protection Agency research calls

We welcome you as a reviewer of the research applications submitted to the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (Swedish EPA)!

These guidelines include basic information on the evaluation procedure and important dates for the evaluation process. Please read this carefully and remember that you are always welcome to contact your research officers in charge of the panel if you have further questions. With your support we hope to allocate the Swedish EPA's research funds to applications with the highest scientific quality and practical relevance.

The task of the review panel

The Swedish EPA relies on a review panel of scientific and relevance experts. The scientific experts evaluate the grade of scientific quality and the relevance experts review the relevance to the Swedish EPA and the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management (SwAM) for achieving Sweden's Environmental Objectives.

The Prisma system

The evaluation is supported by our web-based system Prisma:

<https://prisma.research.se/>. At the Prisma website you will find all the applications assigned to your panel, the review forms and all relevant information you need. **You need to create an account to be able to log into the system.** For more information about our review system Prisma there are general instructions available within Prisma.

Timetable for the process

Date	Activity	Involves
As soon as possible	Create personal account in the Prisma system	Panel members and chair
7 September	Call closure	
seven days after call closure September	Indicate competence and conflict of interest for all applications (Prisma)	Panel members and chair
mid-September late October	Individual assessments/reviews (Prisma)	Panel members (one-step process)
Late October	Assessments and preliminary statements visible to the panel (Prisma)	SEPAs secretariat, panel members
X - Y November	Two-day panel meeting at Swedish EPA in Virtual communication tool	Panel members, Chair and SEPAs secretariat
Last day of panel meeting	Deadline to finalise the written statements	Panel members
	Written statements approved by chair	Chair

Funding decision made by Swedish EPAs
Director General

SEPA's secretariat (no
board members)

Prior to the panel meeting

Indicate conflict of interest and your competence

From September 8 you can see all applications allocated to your panel listed on the Prisma website under the tab "REVIEW". Choose "call X" and click on "Review tasks". Here you find information on name and affiliation of the applicants and the project title. Under "Details" you will find an abstract and the full application.

All panel members and chair, please indicate any conflicts of interest (see below *Principles for conflict of interest*; if realized later, conflict of interest can be declared at any point of the evaluation procedure).

PLEASE NOTE! Conflict of interest must be declared towards *all participants* of the proposal that will receive parts of the funding. All participants are not listed in the abstract, thus reviewers must open the full application and read the budget section to see all participants and the CV section to find their affiliations.

You also need to indicate your competence to review the application (3 = higher competence; 2 = medium competence; 1 = lower competence).

Deadline: Seven days after call closure (for later recruitments asap)

Principles for conflict of interest

In case of conflict of interest for a certain proposal, you cannot evaluate it or be present whenever the proposal is discussed. Possible conflicts of interest may be any situation that compromises impartiality, i.e., involvement in preparation of proposal, benefitting directly from the project, close research collaboration with the applicants, superior, subordinate or instructor of the applicant, having close family relationships, etc. etc. See further: [Guidelines for the Swedish EPA conflict of interest](#). An appropriate time limit for when a research collaboration should no longer be considered to affect the objectivity is 5 years after the collaboration has been concluded.

In cases where only few panel members have enough competence, external reviewers¹ are called upon. The application should, in this case, still be assessed by panel members, but the external reviewer's assessment(s) should be used as a guide. The principles for conflicts of interest also apply to external reviewers.

¹ An external reviewer will be used in cases where an application is listed low competence and/or conflict of interest over the entire panel. The external reviewer will contribute with a written statement that will support the panel on the review of the application but will not participate in the panel meeting.

The review process

Directly after the call deadline, you will get access to all applications. Around mid-September “your” applications will be assigned to you at the Prisma website. Each panel member will be assigned as rapporteur for a set of proposals they will evaluate.

The Swedish EPA differentiates between scientific and relevance panel members in the evaluation panel. All applications will be reviewed by both scientific and relevance reviewers based on the Swedish EPA criteria.

Individual assessment and scoring

In your individual assessments you should consider each proposal separately, the basis for the assessments should be the call text, and the main criteria for review, and in some cases [the instructions for applicants](#) may be taken into consideration. Reviewers do not rank proposals during the individual assessment and applications should not be compared with one another. Ranking of proposals will be done during the panel meeting.

For all your assigned applications, you should:

- Use the evaluation form available in Prisma by clicking “Write”. Use the one corresponding to your role: scientific or relevance. First develop your comments on each criterion, then select scores accordingly.
- Give short informative comments on the strengths and/or weaknesses in relation to each criterion (in English). The **comments are mandatory** and aim to facilitate the discussion at the panel meeting and to help the rapporteur to compose, and the chair to check, the final statements.
- Give scores (1-5) on each of the five evaluation criteria (read more about the criteria in section: ***Main criteria for quality***) corresponding to the explanatory comments.
- Set the overall score as your all-embracing judgement on the application, **not** a sum or average of the individual scores. In the review panel meeting, a joint score for scientific and relevance quality respectively for each proposal will be agreed upon by the panel.

The scores and the comments are the panel’s working material and should not under any circumstances be communicated to the applicant. This material should not be copied outside of Prisma.

When all individual scores are reported the secretariat and the chair will conclude which proposals will be discussed at the panel meeting.

The panel meeting

The review panel meeting is hosted by the Swedish EPA in Stockholm or arranged in a virtual communication tool. During the meeting scientific and relevance experts should discuss the applications and score them based on a five-grade scale (See section ***Scoring of proposals***). The scientific and relevance reviewers will together (in consensus at the panel meeting) propose a priority and provide a ranking list of the applications. An approval- and rejection list is produced. The ranking of the applications will be agreed upon at the panel meeting.

The final decision on financing will be made by the Swedish EPA general director based on the ranking list included in the final evaluation report.

Final written statements

Applications that are not discussed at the panel meeting will receive a standardised written statement. Applications discussed individually at the panel meeting will receive a final statement that should reflect the final grade and the key points on each application as agreed upon by the whole review panel based on the discussion at the panel meeting. The comments should be short, polite and to the point. Rapporteurs will compile the final statements for their set of applications assisted by the entire panel. The final written statement is comprised of:

- An overall score for scientific quality
- An overall score for relevance
- Short written overall comment

The final written statements will be composed by panel members and chair and registered in Prisma during the panel meeting.

How to review in Prisma

In the Prisma system you will find [users manuals](#) specifically for each different role or task you may have. There is also FAQs and [technical support](#) available if you cannot find your answer in the user manuals.

Main criteria for quality

There are two different sets of criteria corresponding to the different roles of panel members. Each set of criteria is listed under a separate tab in Prisma – Scientific quality and Practical relevance. You are only obliged to score and comment within your role in the panel, however it is possible for all panel member to score in all criteria sets. Thus, please try to be observant that you score under the appropriate tab.

Main criteria for review of scientific quality:

Criteria 1. Research questions and theory

- 1.1. Purpose and questions raised
- 1.2. Theories and hypothesis
- 1.3. Novelty
- 1.4. Knowledge of the research area

Criteria 2. Methods

- 2.1. Methodology
- 2.2. Work plan

Criteria 3. Management

- 3.1. Organisation and management
- 3.2. Justified budget and allocation of resources
- 3.3. Scientific competence of the applicants (CV)

Criteria 4. Communication

4.1. Communication and dissemination activities

Main criteria for review of practical relevance:

Criteria 1. Relevance

- 1.1. Purpose and questions raised
- 1.2. Relevance to the call
- 1.3. Relevance to Swedish EPA/SwAM

Criteria 2: Management

- 2.1. Organisation, management and work plan
- 2.2. Justified budget and allocation of the resources

Criteria 3. Communication

- 4.1. Planned communication activities
- 4.2. Stakeholders and target groups identified
- 4.3. Use of the project results

Scoring of proposals

Each criterion is scored 1-5 based on the following interpretation:

- 5** Very high: the proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion in question. Any shortcomings are minor.
- 4** High: the proposal addresses the criterion very well although certain improvements are still possible.
- 3** Acceptable: the proposal addresses the criterion well, although improvements would be necessary.
- 2** Low: while the proposal broadly addresses the criterion, there are significant weaknesses.
- 1** Poor: the criterion is addressed in an inadequate manner, or there are serious inherent weaknesses.

Based on the recommendation by the Swedish EPA's Scientific Advisory Board only proposals with overall scores of 4 and 5 will be funded. The relevance takes precedence in the ranking priority. The priority order is: 5R+5S, 5R+4S, 4R+5S, 4R+4S (R = relevance, S = Science).

According to the Swedish EPA's governmental appropriation the funds must be distributed so that equality between women and men is considered.

Finally, thank you for supporting the Swedish EPA reviewing applications. Good luck in your work!