

Call for applications

Interdisciplinary Thematic Groups within SLU's Interdisciplinary Academy (IDA) 2025-2026

Call opens: Thursday 5 December 2024.

Call closes: Wednesday 12 March 2025.

Decision: Decisions on the approved thematic groups will be announced on Wednesday 16 April 2025.

Who can apply: The call is aimed at all researchers at SLU holding a doctoral degree, regardless of faculty affiliation or subject focus.

Call focus: Interdisciplinary themes within the broad field of *sustainable transition*.

Size of the grant: 2 group of 5 researchers each will be funded the equivalent of 20 percent of full-time during the project period.

Project period: September 1, 2025 to April 30, 2026 including a final event at the beginning of the autumn semester 2026.

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About the call

The Interdisciplinary Academy (IDA) at SLU provides an opportunity for the university's researchers to collaborate across disciplinary boundaries on complex issues in the broad field of *sustainable transition*.

The call welcomes two groups of researchers (5 researchers/group) who are employed at SLU, regardless of faculty affiliation or subject specialisation, to submit proposals for *themes* that consist of questions about a scientific problem area of a complex nature and that need an interdisciplinary approach to be managed and develop solutions. For example, a *theme* may concern sustainable land, water and energy use; animal husbandry and its relationship with humans; land for forestry, settlement, food production, carbon sequestration, or biodiversity; food security, urban development or digitalisation for sustainable societal transformation on an increasingly urbanised planet. Applications with a Swedish, Nordic or EU perspective on sustainability challenges (environmental, economic and social), but preferably in relation to the global context, are prioritised. Each group that is awarded a grant develops its theme's issues in a joint process over eight months (1 September 2025-30 April 2026).

IDA's program manager Marie Stenseke¹ will offer support and inspiration to the groups during the project period.

The project period ends with a forward-looking activity with an emphasis on future questions and continued research in the field.

What is a Theme?

A theme in this call is shaped around a scientific problem that requires collaboration between several disciplines. The work within the theme can be about developing perspectives, definitions, concepts, models, working methods, etc. The theme's questions may preferably be exploratory and searching, and be at a stage that makes it not mature enough for ordinary research funding. The work of the thematic group can result in applications for larger projects or seed funds, or for different types of research communication, but do not need to do so. However, there should be clear goals for the work within the theme, and an idea of how these goals contribute to the development of knowledge and practice in the problem area.

Requirements

- All researchers who are part of a theme must be employed at SLU
- All researchers included in the theme must hold a doctoral degree
- All applicants must have a main position at a department at SLU that they can be free from the equivalent of 20% of full-time during the entire project period
- The groups should consist of researchers from different disciplines and at least two different science branches (natural sciences, social sciences, engineering sciences, humanities, etc.)
- As one of the purposes of IDA is to create new collaborations within SLU, only one researcher per department is allowed in a thematic group. However, two researchers belonging to the same department may be allowed in the same group if the reason is well justified in the application.
- Anyone who has participated in an IDA thematic group may not be included in an application to IDA the following IDA period.

What is the grant used for?

Researchers who are granted funding receive compensation equivalent to 20 percent of full-time (one working day/week) from the project. Salaries associated with researchers in IDA will be accounted directly on the NJ faculty's coding string (cost center 8940040 project 58940288). Fully government-funded professors are welcome to be part of the project group but do not receive any compensation. Travel and subsistence are paid for by the program for those researchers who must travel from another SLU location to participate in the working group's physical meetings (max 5000 SEK/person and occasion, against a receipt). An additional grant of a maximum of SEK 50,000/group can be applied for to support an activity that is considered valuable for the development of the group's work, or dissemination of the results, e.g. organising a seminar for other researchers and/or external actors, inviting guest speakers, recording a film, making a study visit, printing some information material, etc. This additional grant must be justified based on the project's objectives and a budget where the costs are specified must be submitted together with the rest of the application.

Assessment and decision

An assessment group consisting of representatives from different parts of SLU, and who have documented experience of interdisciplinary research, will assess the applications and suggest which themes that will be granted resources. The assessment group can also suggest changes to the problem description and to the composition of the groups. IDA's steering group, which consists of the dean and the vice dean responsible for multi- and interdisciplinary science at the NJ faculty, as well as the programme managers for SLU Future Food and SLU Urban Futures, will make the final decision on which applications to approve, following the suggestions from the

¹ Read more about Marie Stenseke: <https://www.slu.se/en/Collaborative-Centres-and-Projects/futurefood/temasidor/ida/marie-stenseke/>

assessment group. In the assessment, great emphasis is placed on the design of the theme's approach, that the composition of the competence in the group is appropriate and balanced, and whether it can be considered likely that the group will achieve the goals set. In the assessment, new collaborations are rewarded higher than established ones.

The work and the location

The group(s) set up their own work and will receive support from IDA's programme manager Marie Stenseke. Commitment and active participation of the participants is a prerequisite for success. Researchers who are granted funding undertake to devote the equivalent of 20 per cent of their working time to developing the theme together with their co-applicants during the eight consecutive months that make up the project period. All members are expected to be present and active in the work of the group. The work will take place through ten (10) mandatory physical meetings and 23 digital and hybrid meetings during the project period. With some exception, the meetings are located on Wednesdays. In order to promote the interdisciplinary work at the physical meetings, the Ullbo building on Campus Ultuna will provide the environment where creativity, discussions, group work, individual work, seminars and more can alternate and coexist.

Preliminary plan

Since the work in IDA is based on joint development within the group, it is important that everyone in the group participates in the meetings. Therefore, check already at the time of applying to this call whether you can participate in the proposed times, especially at the physical meetings. A few times and dates may possibly be changed before the start of the work in consultation between the group and IDA's program manager. Please note that the group will also devote one day at the beginning of the fall semester 2026 to organizing a closing event in the form of an out-reaching activity for other SLU colleagues in collaboration with SLU Future Food and SLU Urban Futures.

2025		2026	
Ullbo	Time	Ullbo	Time
3-4 September	(2 full days) 9-16	21 January	9-16
1 October	9-16	4 February	9-16
12 November	9-16	11-12 March	(2 full days) 9-16
3 December	9-16	22 April	9-16
Zoom	Time	Zoom	Tid (kl.)
10 Sep	13-16	14 January	13-16
17 Sep	13-16	28 January	13-16
24 Sep	13-16	11 February	13-16
8 Oct	13-16	18 February	13-16
15 Oct	13-16	25 February	13-16
22 Oct	13-16	4 March	13-16
29 Oct	13-16	18 March	13-16
5 Nov	13-16	25 March	13-16
19 Nov	13-16	1 April	13-16
26 Nov	13-16	8 April	13-16
10 Dec	13-16	15 April	13-16
		29 April	13-16
		Ultuna campus	
		Prel. 16 September 2026. Closing event and forward-looking activity	9-16

Reporting and project finalisation

After the end of the project period, the work/theme should be reported to the steering group with a brief summary of the group's results in relation to the objectives and a discussion of the interdisciplinary process that has been

developed. The project group shall also organize, in collaboration with SLU Future Food and SLU Urban Futures, an outreach activity for other SLU colleagues at the beginning of the autumn semester 2026.

Support and inspiration in the application process

As support and inspiration for the application work, webinars with time for questions and matchmaking will be held via Zoom on 15 and 29 January and 5 February 2025 ([see calendar for more information and registration](#)). IDA's program manager Marie Stenseke also offers support in the application process. Contact her by email marie.stenseke@slu.se. There is also previous material to take part of.

- [IDA has a Teams page that is open to everyone at SLU²](#) where you can invite colleagues to discuss themes and where there is also a special channel for questions and answers (Q&A).
- [Recorded webinars on interdisciplinarity can be found here.](#)
- [Here you can read about completed and ongoing IDA groups.](#)

How to apply

Send your application **no later than 12 March 2025** to futurefood@slu.se marked with "Application IDA". The application shall be written in Swedish or English and consist of 3-4 documents with the following content:

Document 1

Description of the research problem and a strategy for how the work should be carried out in a maximum of 5 pages (excl. cover page and references) containing:

- a description of a interdisciplinary research problem;
- a description of the group's scientific objectives during the project period in relation to the chosen problem area;
- a presentation of how the participating researchers' knowledge contributions are motivated by the theme;
- a plan for how the group intends to structure the work during the project period.

A cover page indicates the title of the theme and the names of participating researchers including the department affiliation.

Document 2

Relevant CV for participating researchers of a maximum of one A4 page per participant.

Document 3

A certificate from each researcher's head of department to certify that the researcher is employed at the department during the entire project period (1 September-30 April 2026) but is granted leave from the department during the same period to work the equivalent to 20% of full-time for IDA provided that the application is granted. *Use the pdf form intended for the purpose.*

Document 4 – (only if funds for activities are applied for)

A budget for extra costs shall be submitted only if funds for extra costs are applied for. See more information under the heading "What is the grant used for?" above. The budget, which may not contain any salary costs, is submitted on a separate sheet as a clear and simple list of partial costs in a table, containing also the summary of the costs.

² IDA Teams page:

https://teams.microsoft.com/l/team/19%3aODAKRaU9IURTT_ElqeuErfCoMKkRYofsF0R5D4MCTA11%40thread.tacv2/conversations?groupId=0abbd4b3-976d-49db-b6bf-b89918ed2267&tenantId=a3b5f071-0e49-47a0-a40e-9b7c9c4d647e

Background

The Interdisciplinary Academy (IDA) at SLU was established in 2022 by the NJ Faculty and SLU Future Food, with the aim of building a long-term organization for the development of interdisciplinary research at SLU. During 2025 and 2026, IDA will be run by [SLU Future Food](#) together with [SLU Urban Futures](#). Inspiration has been drawn from the Pufendorf Institute at Lund University³ and experience has also been drawn from the Futures Lab at SLU⁴. The goal is for IDA to lead to increasing interest in interdisciplinary research work at SLU, strengthen the ability to process research questions from an interdisciplinary perspective and facilitate collaboration between SLU's various departments within the framework of investments in interdisciplinarity. The development of IDA is taking place in dialogue with SLU's other future platforms and SLU Global. So far, funding has been granted for five IDA groups.

SLU Future Food is a platform that stimulates and develops cross-disciplinary research and collaboration for economically, ecologically and socially sustainable food systems.

SLU Urban Futures is a strategic platform that develops and strengthens transdisciplinary research, education and collaboration in sustainable urban development.

Links

[Aggregated information about IDA.](#)

[SLU's future platforms and interdisciplinarity.](#)

³ <https://www.pi.lu.se/en/pufendorf-ias>

⁴ Futures Lab is a project run jointly by SLU Future Food and SLU Urban Futures. In 2020, an interdisciplinary research group participated in a project where the participants immersed themselves in futures studies and developed their own projects with futures perspectives. <https://www.slu.se/en/Collaborative-Centres-and-Projects/slu-urban-future/labs/futures-lab/>