KAW Proof of Concept Grants in AI, Quantum technologies or ICT

The purpose of the Knut and Alice Wallenberg Foundation Proof of Concept Grant is to bridge the gap between academic research and innovations in Autonomous Systems and AI, Quantum Technologies or Information and Communications Technology (ICT). The grant gives researchers the opportunity to develop their early-stage discoveries towards validated methods, products, or processes and provides the opportunity to carry out activities that validate and accelerate the development of the project and prepare for innovation and commercialization.

The Proof of Concept grant gives the proposing scientist(s) the opportunity to answer remaining scientific questions to enable a successful advancement of a research idea or discovery towards commercialization.

The Proof of Concept grant is meant to support a specific goal-oriented project to develop a pre-existing academic discovery towards an innovation and a product. Hence, the grant can support translational research with a clear product-oriented thinking and/or a defined goal at the end of a maximum two-year period. The grant cannot be used for covering the costs of patent applications/patents.

The approved funding for each project is suggested to be between 1 and 4 million SEK, over a project period of a maximum of two years. The grant will be paid directly to the researcher's university and the use of the grant must comply with the university's regulations and the specific terms and conditions of the grant, as stated by Knut and Alice Wallenberg Foundation (KAW).

The Proof of Concept grant is tied to the Wallenberg Launch Pad (WALP) mechanism (see below) that provides support for academic scientists to develop innovations that make an impact in society.

Application period 2026

Call opens: January 19, 2026
Call closes: March 25, 2026, at 13:00

This is a yearly call.

Who can apply?

Eligible to apply are scientists that are employed at a Swedish University and have or have had grants from the Wallenberg Foundations under the following instruments:

- o Wallenberg Academy Fellows
- o Wallenberg Scholars
- o Wallenberg Clinical Scholars
- o PI and Co PIs in KAW projects

Or are part of KAWs strategic initiatives:

- o   Wallenberg AI, Autonomous Systems and Software Program (WASP)
- o   Wallenberg Centre for Quantum Technology (WACQT)*
- o   Wallenberg Initiative Material Science for Sustainability (WISE)
- o   Wallenberg Wood Science Center (WWSC)
- o   Wallenberg Centers for Molecular Medicine (WCMM)
- o   Data Driven Life Science (DDLS)
- o   SciLifeLab, including Fellows, group leaders, and infrastructure platform personnel

Or Marianne and Marcus Wallenberg Foundation and Marcus and Amalia Wallenberg Foundation's strategic initiative:

- o   Wallenberg AI, Autonomous Systems and Software Program – Humanities and Society (WASP-HS)

The main applicant has to be employed in Sweden at an academic institution. The co-PIs can be international, but not recipients of the funding/salary support. In the case of international situations, please always explain the benefit to Sweden and the protection/preservation of the IP in Sweden. KAW, WASP and WACQT strive for excellence in research, and are committed to the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Thus, applications are encouraged from all eligible individuals who wish to further translate their research findings into society.

*See Q&A for information about who is eligible to apply from WACQT.

Application instructions

General information

The application must contain a project title, funding applied for and purpose. It shall describe the applicant's affiliation and eligibility, as well as a project description. The project shall have a sound scientific basis in the applicant's field of research within Autonomous Systems and AI, Quantum Technologies or ICT.

The project description (see format below) must state i) the academic research finding that is being proposed as an innovation, including the aims to be achieved by the Proof of Concept grant, ii) the applicant's experience and the potential to develop breakthrough innovations in the field, and iii) the project's position in a global perspective It shall be explained what the end product will look like and what specific problem the solution addresses.. It shall be made clear how this Proof of Concept funding will help to bridge the academic discovery towards making an impact in society and its value as an innovation. The project application must include a clear motivation, stating how the research impacts sustainability in a long perspective.

Special emphasis must be placed on describing how the scientist intends to verify the usability and suitability of a new method, product or process developed from research, as well as activities that prepare this for innovation or commercialization. The proposed project shall be described in a work package format, including the purpose, clear milestones/deliverables and how it adds innovation/commercial value, e.g. if the technology readiness level (TRL) is increased during the course of the project or how technical development risks are decreased The applicant should also reflect on the possible future outcome after the project and ideas on how to take the next steps, to commercialize the research idea.

If the applicant(s) is engaged in a company that is relevant in the field of the innovation, this must clearly be stated. The grant cannot be paid to a company and is not intended for supporting research and innovation activities in an already funded company. The applicant may, however, be eligible to receive support for other innovations in the academia, outside the scope of an existing company, if any conflicts are clarified and disclosed.

Only one application per Principal Investigator will be considered. If the project (innovation) was not approved in the previous round, it is possible to reapply only once with the same project.

Application documents are treated confidentially.

The research area(s) of the application shall be specified as follows:

- Autonomous Systems and AI
    - Software for and in Autonomous Systems
    - Autonomous Systems and Robotics
    - Machine Learning
    - Mathematics for AI
- Quantum Technologies
    - Quantum Computing and Simulation
    - Quantum Communication
    - Quantum Sensing
- Information and Communications Technology (ICT)

Application details

Application shall be submitted through the KAW-portal, which will be available when the call opens.

Project description and plan shall be maximum 10 pages, including pictures and references and written with Times 12 with one and a half line spacing. The number of pages in parenthesis after each section is a recommendation, most important is that the total number of pages do not exceed 10 pages. The topics must be addressed in the following order:

Title page including applicant's name and eligibility/relationship to KAW (1 page)

Describe the need: Which problem does your solution address? Who needs the solution? Who (potential commercial partner, investor, end user) has shown interest in your solution, and what do they find is still missing for them to fully engage? (2 pages)

Describe the benefit: What is the benefit and commercial value of your solution? How would this PoC project validate, further develop, and mature your solution? (1 page)

What is the competition: are you aware of similar research, potential competitors or next-best solutions which could change the market predictions? What is your first estimate of potential and addressable markets worldwide and in Europe, based on desktop research? (1 page)

What is your approach: Research background and current status of the idea (maximum 5 publications to be used as references). (5 pages) Please, make sure to describe the following topics;

- Description of the project, highlighting the novelty.

- Detailed description of the proof of concept, e.g. the demonstrator, SW or HW system, service, platform you would like to build, how to validate it and the work packages needed. For each WP, state the purpose, aim, and how it adds innovation/commercial value.

- How will your final product be applied in a market setting?

- Where in the value chain will the outcome of your research be placed (e.g. SW or HW stack, service, production, product)?

- How have you or how will you plan to protect your intellectual property (patents, trade secrets, agreements?), secure ownership and right to exploit.

- Which regulatory requirements, if any, will apply to your project and how will you address them?

- Please provide an overall time plan indicating milestones and WP deliverables incl. cost and the team required.

- In case of a reapplication, specify the major differences from the application in the previous round.

The following parts are mandatory and must be uploaded in the portal:

- **Project description and plan** (see above)

- **One-page project pitch** (Need/Benefit/Competition/Approach) incl WPs (in bullets), time and budget plan. Please use the last paragraph to describe the desired outcome after PoC project completion in relation to where you are today (i.e. how will the PoC project mature your solution) and the future steps towards commercialization (maximum 1 page)

- **Complete budget** (university) based on the template at https://kaw.wallenberg.org/anslagsguide/blankettarkiv (Please note that IP protection or market analysis cannot be covered by the grant)

- **CV** containing education, positions, awards, patents and other IPR (if any), entrepreneurial merits (if any), bibliometric data, e.g. link to google scholar, as well as a list of the ten most significant publications published in peer-reviewed journals and/or conference papers. If there is more than one person applying include all in the same CV file (maximum 2 pages)

- **Certificate** from the head of department to verify that they will accept the donation and accept that a maximum of 20% of the amount can be used for indirect costs and rent

- **Verification of interest** from external party(ies)

Evaluation

Process

All applications are kept confidential throughout the process. The evaluation of submitted applications takes place in two stages. First, the applications are evaluated by a panel of experts appointed by WASP/ WACQT and KAW who will score and prioritize the top applications. The second stage will later take place in the KAW foundation's innovation tool, the Wallenberg Launch Pad (WALP). The WALP phase 1 is centred around personalized innovation coaching, where the researcher further deepens the scope of the project in preparation for the WALP pitch. The final decision on approval of the grant is taken after the applicant's WALP pitch has been accepted by KAW representatives. Hence, some applicants who are invited to the WALP coaching process, may not eventually get the Proof of Concept financial support.

Project proposals are submitted to KAW and funded by KAW. WASP/ WACQT-chosen experts provide advice and support in the evaluation process. No government funds are used for the Proof of Concept grants.

Evaluation criteria

- Does the proposed innovation solve a persistent and important problem?
- Is the potential solution well defined?
- Is the potential solution novel and unique?
- Is there interest from external partners?
- Is the intellectual property (IP) protected and/or is there a plan for protection?
- Is the Proof of Concept project and its purpose and milestones well defined and relevant?
- Is the proposed team adequate?
- Is the time plan and budget realistic?

Important dates

January 19, 2026	Call opens
January 23, 2026	Webinar and Q&A
March 25, 13:00	Call closes
May	Expert Review panel decision
May-September 2026	WALP Phase 1 and WALP pitch opportunities
September-October 2026	PoC grant decision

Questions

Learn more about the call at the upcoming webinar, January 23, 10:00-11:00. More information and registration will be available shortly.

For questions or feedback regarding the call, please contact calls@wasp-sweden.org.

IMPORTANT: Do not send any information that is sensitive or confidential or contains details about the content of the application.

Useful links

- KAW application portal
- KAW budget template
- KAW Proof of Concept
- Privacy policy
- Information webinar
- Q&A

Further Information

General information about WASP

General information about WACQT