SciLifeLab research community programs (RCPs)

Background
SciLifeLab operates a national research infrastructure to enable Swedish researchers to make life science discoveries. More than 3000 individual projects are performed annually across a vast range of life science questions, illustrating the importance of SciLifeLab to a large group of researchers. SciLifeLab also has the ambition to enable collaborative research at a scale, depth and complexity that is otherwise difficult to achieve by individual research groups, departments or even within one University.

Objective
SciLifeLab wishes to leverage its infrastructure to initiate a number of Research Community Programs (RCPs) to facilitate internationally competitive, cutting-edge collaborative research across Sweden. The RCPs will include community building, scientific symposia, training events and joint research initiatives as well as sharing of expertise, materials, methods, data analysis tools and data. At the same time, as SciLifeLab aims to be an internationally recognized research hub, the RCPs are meant to strengthen the profile and brand of SciLifeLab and its partners, particularly in certain areas of molecular life science. The researchers participating in the RCPs will gain a closer link and understanding of the possibilities offered by the SciLifeLab infrastructure.

Approach
Through an open call for expressions of interest, followed by an evaluation process, SciLifeLab aims to launch a number of RCPs to increase interactions between individual projects, launch entirely new initiatives and profile existing research better.

The aims of the RCPs are:
  i)   to bring together a critical mass of scientific expertise across several departments and universities in Sweden on a particular theme or topic,
  ii)   to form new enabling links between the SciLifeLab infrastructure and researchers, and
  iii)   to engage established and young PIs to combine forces and work together in multidisciplinary and national collaborations.

In this first call of its kind, we anticipate to launch 4-6 RCPs, where each RCP could cover anything from 5 to 30 research groups and facilities. The aim is to have future rounds of RCP calls, where experience from previous rounds will be used to adjust the process.

Below is a summary of the desired features for potential RCPs:

1. Broad programs at the highest international level, leveraging synergies and adding value arising from collaborations among the best scientists in their fields in Sweden.

2. Participation from at least two, preferably more, universities across Sweden. Scientists from both SciLifeLab host and non-host universities are welcome to join. Young PIs, including the SciLifeLab fellows, are encouraged to join as key members of the programs.

3. Involvement of one or more SciLifeLab facilities/platforms and their staff members. Ideally, the SciLifeLab facilities should be critical to the RCP, and the RCP should be of value to the future development of the infrastructure.

4. PIs participating in the RCPs should have secured substantial external funding for their research, supporting scientific and collaborative opportunities for several years. For new multidisciplinary initiatives, less stringent requirements are applied.

5. Some of the RCPs may focus on new multidisciplinary links and/or have the potential for significant impact on society. Participants from other sectors of society, such as industry and health care may also be included.

6. Applications from all fields of molecular life science are welcome. Members from other scientific disciplines are also encouraged to join a RCP. Any PI affiliated with a University in Sweden can participate in a suggested RCP.

7. SciLifeLab is particularly welcoming new collaborative efforts from currently under-represented areas at SciLifeLab, such as non-biomedical science (e.g. biodiversity, evolution, environment, agriculture, forestry etc.) as well as clinical research.

Financial contribution from SciLifeLab, participating universities and elsewhere

The primary role of the RCPs is the following:
- bring the community of interested scientists and SciLifeLab infrastructure together
- arrange regular meetings, workshops, and training events
- share expertise, methods and data
- undertake discussions to increase the level of life science research

The actual research support is expected to come from the member PI's grants and the from the host universities. The RCPs should employ a part-time coordinator in order to plan and arrange the activities. A budget of about 1 MSEK is planned annually for coordination and networking activities of each RCP as long as the RCP is active. The above funding of 1 MSEK can come from SciLifeLab national infrastructure funding, and the participating universities are encouraged to add SFO funding or other funding to strengthen the RCPs. Funding commitments from the universities are not needed at the time of application. In the long run, the RCPs should have a strong ambition to jointly seek major strategic national and international funding, with the help of the critical mass of multidisciplinary expertise acquired.

Selection process and time-plan

The SciLifeLab board approved the principle for RCPs at its November 7 meeting, and a call will be open from January 12, 2018 until February 26, 2018. The suggested RCPs should nominate a coordinating PI who will submit the RCP application. The university of the coordinating PI will be the primary host university of the RCP.

A short letter of intent proposal (using the enclosed template) is submitted according to instructions. The SciLifeLab Management Group will consult external evaluators to prioritize the proposals. Proposals may then be suggested to be combined with each other and/or presented to the SciLifeLab community for inclusion of additional relevant members, such as

young PIs. After considering the scientific ranking, host university and SciLifeLab priorities and commitments, the board will make the final evaluation and approval of the RCPs. Each RCP is typically approved for three years at a time, with a start planned in the summer/fall of 2018.

Links to SciLifeLab infrastructure

The process to launch RCPs will not change the founding principle of SciLifeLab in operating a molecular life science infrastructure open to all qualified scientists in Sweden. The approved RCPs are, however, expected to closely collaborate and make use of the SciLifeLab infrastructure for mutual future developments. If the RCPs require routine infrastructure service access, they will apply and will be prioritized in the same manner as all researchers. SciLifeLab facilities and platforms are encouraged to actively engage in the RCP calls, both as participants but also as initiators of the networks.

Recognition and expectations

The RCPs will be highlighted on the SciLifeLab web page, at annual meetings and events. Their national profile and international visibility will be promoted as a key part in the branding of SciLifeLab. RCPs will be a visible part of the SciLifeLab research agenda and community building, and hence existing faculty at SciLifeLab are also encouraged to apply. The call is, however, open to all scientists in Sweden, regardless of previous SciLifeLab association. Participants in the RCPs are expected to affiliate their publications with SciLifeLab and promote SciLifeLab in their press releases. RCPs should promote open science principles and deposit the gathered data via collaborations with the SciLifeLab Data Centre.

If successful, the RCPs may eventually also influence other strategic directions of SciLifeLab, such as funding of pilot/technology projects, postdocs, fellows, meeting support, infrastructure, equipment, the research environment etc.

Follow-up and economy

The progress of each RCP is monitored by a short annual report focussing on activities and outputs, such as networking events, publication records and success of joint funding. This will also help to highlight research progress of the RCPs, and to share best practices between RCPs. The national funding provided by SciLifeLab will be distributed to the coordinating PIs university. Costs for activities at other member universities may be invoiced to the coordinating university.

For questions and comments, please email to: rcps@scilifelab.se

Appendix:

Letter of intent proposal for application as a SciLifeLab Research Community Program (RCP): *(web-based forms and template)*

1. Name of the proposed SciLifeLab Research Community Program (RCP)

2. Coordinating PI

3. Affiliation of coordinating PI

4. Email to the coordinating PI

5. URL for the PI and/or the research program (if applicable)

6. Name and affiliations of key participants.

7. Specify SciLifeLab infrastructure platforms and facilities that will be members, and key contact persons and email at the facilities and their email addresses

8. A. Total no. of persons in the proposed RCP from the national SciLifeLab infrastructure.
   B. Specify no. of PIs from the SciLifeLab infrastructure.
   C. Specify no. of other persons involved from the SciLifeLab infrastructure.

9. A. Total no. of persons in the proposed RCP (SciLifeLab infrastructure and others).
   B. Specify no. of young PIs (ERC starting grant criteria)/researchers
   C. Post-docs
   D. PhD-students
   E. others

10. Estimated total no. of full time equivalents (FTEs) involved in the proposed RCP (including people from the SciLifeLab infrastructure and all others).

11. Main application form and proposed budget. (Max 3 A4 pages)

12. Appendix: CV, publication lists and members.

Enclosures:

- 1-2 page CV of the coordinating PI, plus top 10 publications from the past 10 years
- Names, emails and affiliations of all PIs and facility staff
- Top 20 publications from the entire consortium from the past 10 years

Submission:

No later than Feb 26, 2018 at https://www.scilifelab.se/research-community-programs/rcp-registration-page/