

SciLifeLab-KAW program on Covid-19 research, phase II - Evaluation process and discussions

The [SciLifeLab-KAW national COVID-19 research program](#) (SciLifeLab-KAW COVID-19 program in the text below) was first established in the spring of 2020. The first awarded grants established a broad COVID-19 research program, including 67 different research projects in nine research areas. We are now launching the second phase of the SciLifeLab-KAW COVID-19 program, which builds on these team science efforts and adds new collaborations and novel scientific angles.

In total, the calls received 76 applications that were sent out for review by 13 international evaluators and the SciLifeLab management group. Evaluation was primarily based on scientific quality, but also on synergistic and complementary aspects between applications. Based on the scores from external review, and with emphasis on the most burning global challenges of 2021, 24 projects now receive funding. As the requested funding exceeded the available funds by a factor of four, the funding levels had to be cut, in many cases significantly.

The following priorities were emphasized:

First, generation of comprehensive, deep data on virus and host in a longitudinal fashion in human patients.

Second, development and application of new technologies, capabilities and strategies towards pandemic preparedness.

Third, the increased spread of the Covid-19 variants (VOCs) needs to be considered and several funded projects have aimed at this.

It is important that applicants devote their efforts also to the acquisition of new samples during 2021 in order to adjust to the new situation with VOCs causing the disease.

Post Acute Sequelae of Sars-Cov-2 (PASC, Long Covid) remains a significant public health concern. The funding of the projects targeting PASC were here restricted to allow for rapid initiation of sample collections, as [Vetenskapsrådet](#) (The Swedish Research Council) will soon launch a call devoted to this topic.

To continue the successful team science approach from the spring of 2020, all funded projects should consider collaboration opportunities both within and across the research areas. The funded projects focusing on human clinical materials should consider collaborations and sharing of samples, and as all data eventually should be deposited to the national Covid-19 portal, patient consents should allow this to happen. Also, the funded projects should consider if they can provide added value to the separately funded projects on vaccination effects.

Vaccination will have a dramatic efficacy in preventing advanced disease, and hence the clinical challenge with advanced disease may gradually diminish.

Thus, projects aiming at studying severe disease complications, as well drug discovery were deemphasized. After 2021, Covid-19 drug discovery projects should be continued as regular DDD service projects. In addition, based on reviewers' concern, we also scale down funding levels to some of the cell (systems) biology studies of virus infections.