

# Evaluation of the research programme Tandem Forest Values

On behalf of the Royal Swedish Academy of Agriculture and Forestry

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# Summary

The evaluation of Tandem Forest Values has two purposes: **1) To investigate the value of continued research cooperation between Sweden and Finland in the forestry sector, and 2) To advise on the design of research initiatives with the aim of long-term cooperation between universities and other research environments in Sweden and Finland in the forestry sector.**

The evaluation is based on existing written documentation such as applications and interim reports from beneficiaries, as well as interviews with funding bodies, participants in the preparatory groups and beneficiaries. Reflections on the programme reveal that it has a number of strengths and challenges and the evaluators present those that were particularly highlighted in the interviews.

The data collected show **clear support for continuing the bilateral commitment in the forestry sector.** Both funding bodies and beneficiaries see added value in this type of research programme, arguing that it complements other initiatives and is an effective way to develop knowledge about forests in the region and to build stronger relationships between researchers and universities in Sweden and Finland.

A number of lessons have been learned in relation to the design of this type of research initiative. These lessons constitute the basis for the twelve recommendations put forward by the evaluators.

## Strengths

- Common vision for the programme
- Effective cooperation at all levels
- Focused research programme and cooperation with the forestry industry helps to strengthen the region's competitiveness

## Challenges

- Heterogeneous group of funding bodies
- Practical aspects of moving researchers between countries
- The programme's framework for filling post-doctoral positions

## Recommendations for future calls for applications and programmes

1. Maintain bilateral cooperation
2. Appoint a coordinator who takes overall responsibility and is perceived as a neutral party
3. Formulate a clear common vision for the programme early in the process
4. Create a clear structure for the different parts of the programme early in the process
5. Pay particular attention to the composition of programme committees and preparatory groups
6. Focus on research projects rather than funding individual post-doctoral positions
7. Establish a clear interface with the forestry industry and other societal stakeholders in the forest sector
8. Extend the project duration beyond two years
9. Pay attention to both quantitative and qualitative values
10. Facilitate the application process
11. Expand and facilitate interaction within the programme
12. Organise learning seminars to facilitate the dissemination of best practice



# Content



- **Background to the programme and purpose of the evaluation**
- Method for data collection and analysis
- Analysis of the program logic
- Strengths and challenges of the programme
- Recommendations for future calls for applications and programmes
- Conclusion

# The bilateral research programme Tandem Forest Values aims to extend Swedish/Finnish cooperation in forestry and forestry industry research

The Tandem Forest Values (TFV) bilateral research programme is based on the extensive knowledge of, and dependence on, forests in Sweden and Finland and aims to extend Swedish-Finnish cooperation in forestry and forestry industry research. As demands on forests increase, more complex trade-offs arise in how to exploit forest resources and what new forest-based products and processes need to be developed. The programme aims to address these challenges by funding interdisciplinary cooperation initiatives where Sweden and Finland can join forces to drive cutting-edge forest research.

TFV was established in 2017 as a gift from Sweden to Finland in connection with Finland's 100th anniversary as an independent state. As the name suggests, the programme envisages the countries working together as a team, in tandem, to contribute to new knowledge about forests. The Swedish-Finnish Cultural Foundation initiated the gift, which was financed by both state and private funds. The Swedish government, through the research council Formas, contributed half of the funding and the private funding bodies the Marianne and Marcus Wallenberg Foundation, the Kempe Foundations, the Swedish Forest Industry Research Foundation, and the Royal Swedish Academy of Agriculture and Forestry (KSLA) contributed the remaining funds. The gift included the funding of twelve two-year research positions at SEK 2 million each.

The high level of interest in the call for applications\*, combined with the continued commitment of the funding bodies to the initiative, contributed to the decision to continue the programme. A second call for applications (TFV II) of SEK 40 million was then opened in 2019. The focus was again on funding researchers early in their careers, but this time not in the form of funding for a specific post-doctoral position but as a contribution to a research project.

The second call for applications is funded by both Swedish and Finnish funding bodies, including the Swedish Research Council, Formas, the Swedish private funding bodies the Marianne and Marcus Wallenberg Foundation and the Kempe Foundations, the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry in Finland, and the Research Council for Natural Sciences and Engineering at the Academy of Finland.

The first call for applications (TFV I) closed in December 2020 and final reporting is expected before summer 2021. The projects from the second call for applications will run until 2022 and final reports are expected in spring 2023.

In 2020, a third call for applications (TFV III) was secured, with a total of SEK 30 million for research projects. Funding is shared between the countries and consists of funds from the Swedish Research Council Formas, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and the Ministry of the Environment in Finland, the Academy of Finland and the Walter Ahlström Foundation in Finland. In the third call for applications, the bilateral element is further strengthened as the implementation will be jointly managed by Formas and the Academy of Finland.

In total, the Tandem Forest Values initiative has allocated SEK 94 million to bilateral forest research between 2017 and 2020.

\*There were 72 applications for the twelve research positions.



# The evaluation of Tandem Forest Values aims to facilitate the assessment of the value of the programme and to provide advice on the design of similar initiatives

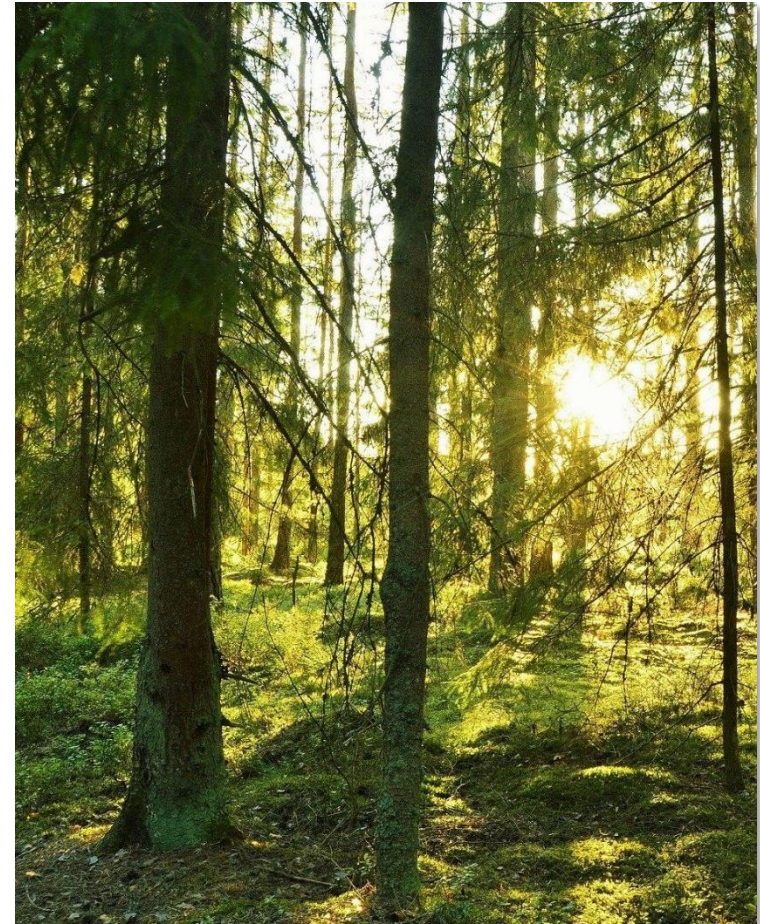
The evaluation of Tandem Forest Values will:

- Help determine the value of continued research cooperation between Sweden and Finland in the forestry sector
- Advise on the design of research initiatives with the aim of long-term cooperation between universities and other research environments in Sweden and Finland in the forestry sector.

The Royal Swedish Academy of Agriculture and Forestry (KSLA) commissioned Dr Maria Tunberg at Analysys Mason to carry out the evaluation.

The evaluation was initiated in the end of October 2020 and completed in the beginning of March 2021. Most of the interviews used as a basis for the evaluation were conducted between November 2020 and January 2021.

The evaluation covers the first two calls for applications (TFV I and II). The third call for applications (TFV III) is not included.



# The evaluation is structured around four chapters and a conclusion

## Method for data collection and analysis

Utvärderingsmodellen programlogik används för att kartlägga och analysera de olika byggdelarna i Tandem Forest Values

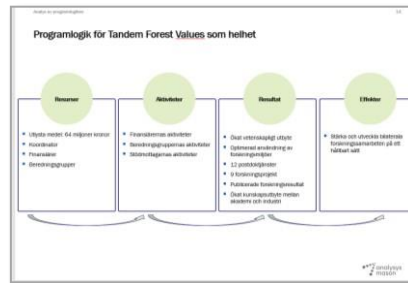
Använda Metoden används programlogik som utvärderingsmodell för att följa upp genomförda resultat och effekter av förvaltningsprogrammet.

Metoderna används för att kartlägga och analysera de olika byggdelarna i Tandem Forest Values. Metoderna används för att följa upp genomförda resultat och effekter av förvaltningsprogrammet.

Tillgänglighet, Kommunikation, Partnerskap, Resultat, Effekt

The evaluation model used is the program logic combined with the collaboration ladder. Data were collected from documentation on the programme and interviews.

## Analysis of the program logic



The results of the two calls for applications are presented and analysed separately using the program logic model.

## Strengths and challenges of the programme

Sammanfattning av de styrkor och utmaningar med Tandem Forest Values som respondenterna betonat under intervjuerna

**Styrkor**

**Utmaningar**

Strengths and challenges of the programme are presented and the impact of the programme on collaboration between countries is commented on.

## Recommendations for future calls for applications and programmes

Utvärderarna lyfter fram två rekommendationer för beaktande vid utformningen av kommande utlysningar och program

1. Att öka tillgången till information om programmet
2. Att utvärdera och kommentera på de rekommendationer som ges
3. Att utvärdera och kommentera på de rekommendationer som ges
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12. Att utvärdera och kommentera på de rekommendationer som ges

The evaluators make recommendations for future calls for applications and programmes.





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# The program logic evaluation model is used to map and analyse the different building blocks of Tandem Forest Values

Analysys Mason uses program logic as an evaluation model to monitor the implementation, results and impacts of the research programme.

The model is used to evaluate the logical link between a programme's purpose, resources, planned and/or implemented activities, planned and/or achieved results and impacts.

- **Purpose** describes the reason for the initiative/goal of the programme
- **Resources** describes available resources
- **Activities** describe what has actually been done or is planned to be done
- **Results** describe the direct outcome of the action carried out
- **Impacts** describe the long-term impact of the programme on the surrounding community

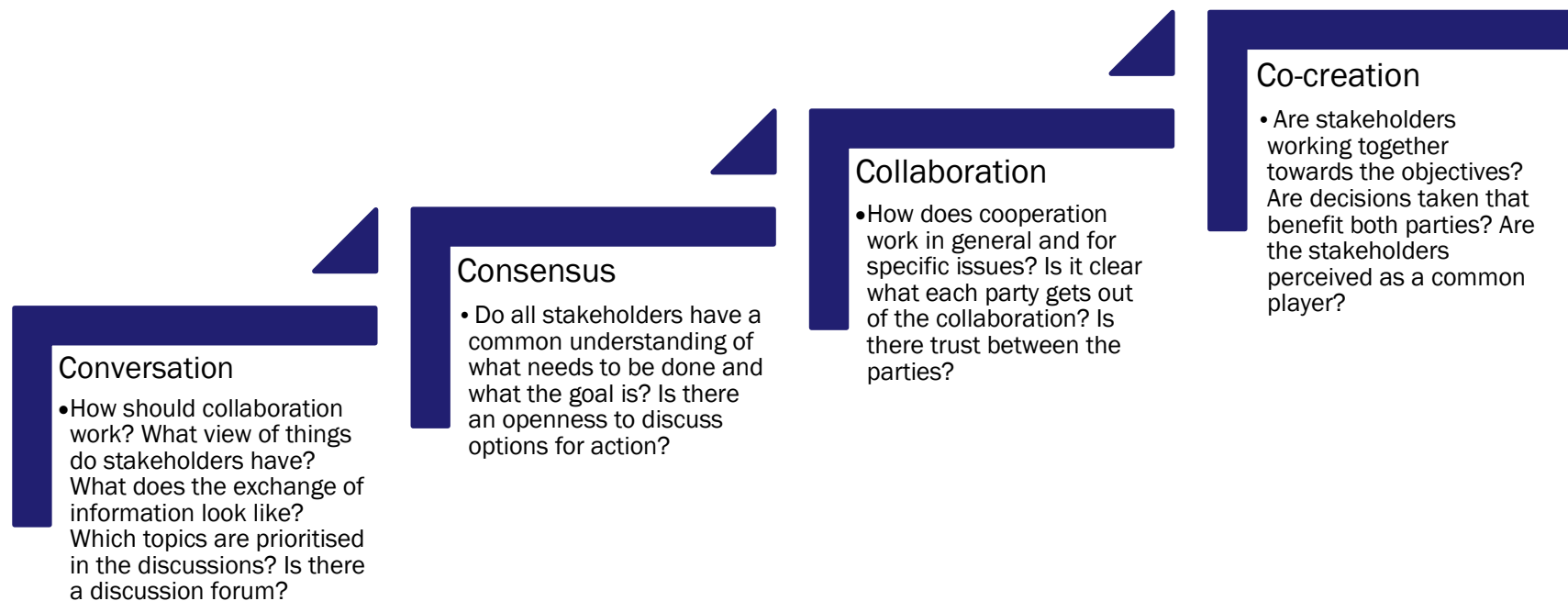




# The "collaboration ladder" model is used to assess the degree of collaboration between the beneficiaries of Tandem Forest Values

The collaboration ladder is an analytical tool used to assess the degree of collaboration between stakeholders. The model is based on four levels that illustrate the different stages of collaboration; from conversation to interaction.

Analysys Mason uses the model to investigate what the initial position was in respect of collaboration between the supporting stakeholders before the call for applications and how it changed during the period the stakeholders received funding through the programme. By identifying which activities increase collaboration, research funding bodies can optimise the design of future calls for applications and programmes.



## Data collection methods and questions

Material for the evaluation has been collected through document studies and interviews. The written material analysed is the beneficiaries' applications, TFV I's interim reports, material from the calls for applications and information on KSLA's website.

Interviews were conducted with beneficiaries from universities and research environments, all funding bodies, representatives from the preparatory groups and a potential funding body. A total of 29 interviews were conducted.

The interviews were conducted via video calls in Teams and were semi-structured with pre-formulated main questions.

For the funding bodies in the respective call for applications, the main questions have been:

- Why have you chosen to contribute funding to TFV?
- What value do you want the programme to create?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of the different funding instruments?
- What lessons would you like to highlight for future programmes?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of different types of funding body?

For beneficiaries of each call for applications, the main questions have been:

- Have the research initiatives led to new/extended bilateral cooperation?
- What conditions are needed and what obstacles exist for bilateral cooperation in this area to make a difference?
- Is the cooperation internationally recognised and is it unique in any way in the field of forestry?
- What are the possible by-products of the cooperation?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of bilateral forest research cooperation between Sweden and Finland compared with broader cooperation initiatives involving several countries?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of the different funding instruments?



# The evaluation includes interviews with 29 respondents and involves funding bodies and representatives of the beneficiaries and the preparation groups

## Funding bodies

- Alice and Carl Kempe (The Kempe Foundations)
- Eva Pettersson (KSLA)
- Göran Sandberg (Marianne and Marcus Wallenberg Foundation)
- Karin Perhans (Formas)
- Liisa Saarenmaa (Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry)
- Petri Heino (Ministry of the Environment)
- Torgny Persson (Swedish Forest Industries)
- Ulrika Jakobsson (Academy of Finland)

## Potential funding body

- Karin Fällman (Skogssällskapet)

## Beneficiaries TFV I

- Chunlin Xu (Åbo Academy)
- Emma Master (Aalto University)
- Fredrik Lundell (KTH)
- Gun Lidestav (SLU)
- Jyri-Pekka Mikkola (Umeå University)
- Katri Kärkkäinen (LUKE)
- Kirsi Mikkonen (University of Helsinki)
- Kristiina Oksman (Luleå University of Technology)
- Torbjörn Pettersson (KTH)
- Åke Olson (SLU)

## Beneficiaries TFV II

- Antero Kukko (Finnish Geospatial Research Institute)
- Jaana Vapaavuori (Aalto University)
- Kirsi Jarnerö (RISE)
- Lasse Tarvainen (University of Gothenburg)
- Lassi Roininen (LUT)
- Ritva Toivonen (University of Helsinki)
- Saija Huuskonen (LUKE)
- Yvonne Nygård (Chalmers)

## Preparatory groups

- Erik Dahl Kjær (University of Copenhagen)
- Patricia Harvey (University of Greenwich)



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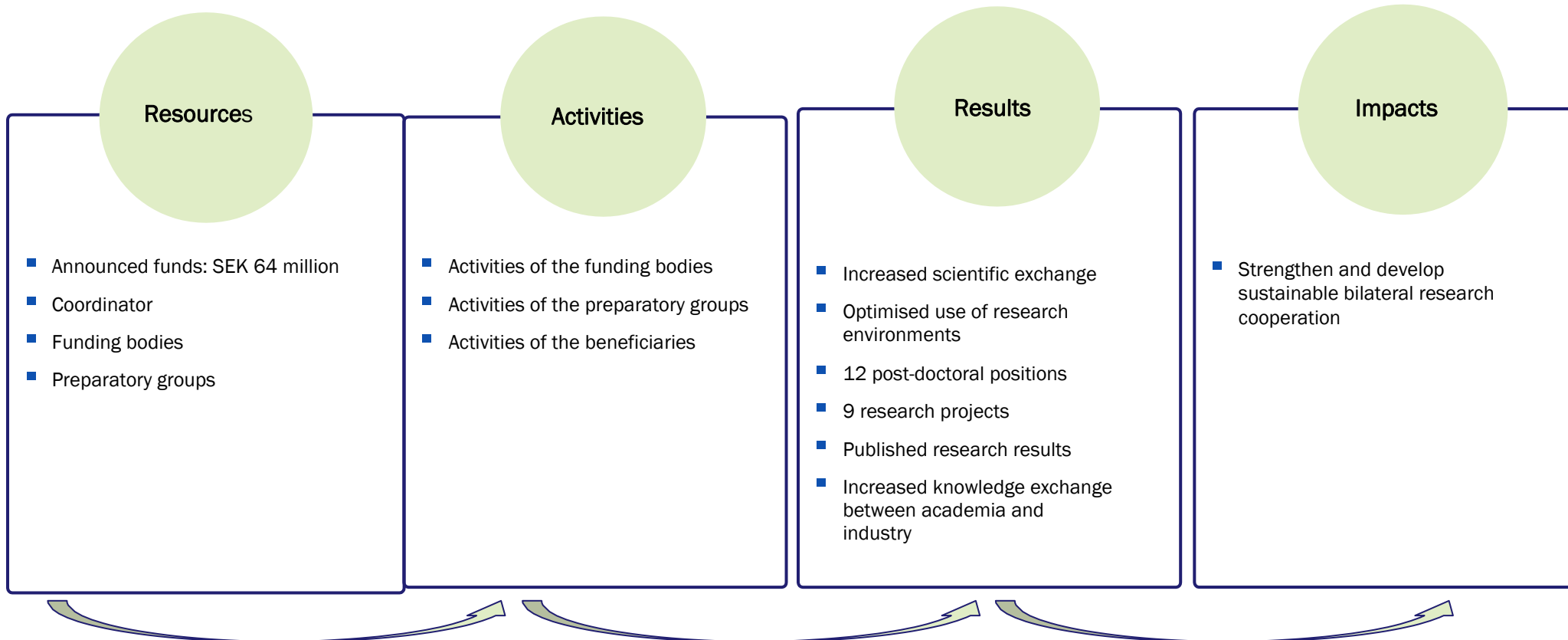


## Introduction to the program logic analysis of Tandem Forest Values

TFV has been analysed using the program logic model. Two calls for applications have been carried out within the framework of the programme, TFV I (2018-2020) and TFV II (2020-2022), which are analysed separately. The program logic model clarifies the programme's (and the calls') resources, activities, expected results and impacts, and the links between these elements. Based on the program logic, TFV can be described as follows:

- **Purpose/goal:** To strengthen and develop sustainable bilateral research cooperation between universities and other research environments in Sweden and Finland in the forestry sector.
- **Resources:** The funding of SEK 64 million and the expertise and work of the coordinator, funding bodies and preparatory groups.
- **Activities:** The actual activities carried out/intended to be carried out by the funding bodies, preparatory groups, and beneficiaries.
- **Results:** Describes the direct outcome of an implemented action, i.e. results achieved within or at the end of a funding period. These are therefore aspects that stakeholders have a major opportunity to influence through the activities they carry out. The outcome of the program logic is based primarily on what the beneficiaries have indicated as "benefits of the bilateral collaboration" in the project application.
- **Impacts:** Describes the indirect effect on the affected area and the surrounding community. The impacts often occur in the long term, after the end of the funding period. This makes it difficult for stakeholders to directly influence the impacts or take responsibility for their realisation. However, a well-developed program logic strengthens the likelihood that the effects will be realised. The expected impacts in the program logic are based on the impacts the funding bodies have expressed interest in seeing.

## Program logic for Tandem Forest Values as a whole





# Program logic for the first call: Tandem Forest Values I

## Resources

- Announced funds: SEK 24 million
- Coordinator: KSLA
- Funding bodies
  - Formas
  - Marianne and Marcus Wallenberg Foundation
  - The Kempe Foundations
  - Swedish Forest Industries
  - KSLA
- Preparatory group

## Activities

### From the funding bodies' perspective:

- Call for applications
- Preparatory group established
- Administration and coordination (including payments)

### From the preparatory group's perspective:

- Preparatory group meetings
- Assessment criteria are compiled and assessments made

### From the beneficiaries' perspective:

- Administration and coordination of the call
- Cooperation between universities/research environments
- Interim and final report
- Research

## Results

- Increased scientific exchange
- Optimised use of research environments
- 12 implemented post-doctoral positions
- Published research results
- Increased knowledge exchange between academia and industry

## Reflections on resources in Tandem Forest Values I

- KSLA is perceived as a neutral and competent party that both private and public funding bodies and beneficiaries believe has done a good job in administering and coordinating the programme. KSLA is considered to have taken a holistic approach and overall responsibility, which has been appreciated by all stakeholders.
- The composition of the TFV I Committee is considered to have worked well. It is highlighted as positive that participants had the mandate to speak for their organisation, which created good conditions for effective and clear decisions.
- The composition of the preparatory group is also considered to have been good. The importance of having a knowledgeable preparatory group that can critically assess the feasibility and benefits of projects is highlighted.





## Reflections on Tandem Forest Values I activities

### From the financiers' perspective:

- Coordinating a research programme is not one of KSLA's usual tasks and is described as a challenging but enjoyable and instructive task.
- There were significantly more applications for post-doctoral positions than expected.
- KSLA had overall responsibility for the funding and made the payments to the beneficiaries after all funding bodies had made transfers to KSLA.
- Funding bodies found it to be a quick and simple process.
- The fact that the programme was communicated in a comprehensive way gave a consistent impression which was perceived positively by both funding bodies and beneficiaries.

### From the preparatory group's perspective:

- The evaluation team found the process of evaluating the applications to be smooth and stated that the clearly formulated criteria facilitated the assessment.

### From the beneficiaries' perspective:

- Applicants perceived the administration as simpler and less bureaucratic compared to research programmes at EU level.
- Hiring post-doctoral researchers was successful for the majority of projects. However, several beneficiaries found the process challenging and time-consuming.
- Paying a salary from a Swedish university for a Finnish post-doctoral researcher was perceived as administratively difficult.
- Several practical challenges with the post-doctoral positions have been raised, such as finding accommodation for the researcher.
- The Corona pandemic meant that planned exchanges became difficult to implement in 2020.
- Beneficiaries feel that they needed more flexibility around start dates or a longer timeframe for hiring a post-doctoral researcher.
- When the post-doctoral positions were filled, these researchers were invited to a meeting. The beneficiaries felt that it would have been useful if the two supervisors had also been invited.
- A number of beneficiaries requested more interaction within the programme, for example in the form of a series of presentations or workshops.

## Reflections on the results of Tandem Forest Values I

- Of the 72 applications received in the call, 44 belonged to the theme "New Products and Processes" and 28 to "Sustainable Forest Management". Of the twelve funded, eight were in the "New Products and Processes" theme and four in "Sustainable Forest Management."
- The funding bodies feel that the programme has created a close and good dialogue between public and private funding bodies and has established an important level of trust that is valuable going forward.
- Both new and enhanced cooperation initiatives have emerged between Swedish and Finnish universities and research institutes. The majority of those who applied for funding together knew each other before but had not cooperated before. Funding has been highlighted as the factor enabling these cooperation initiatives.
- Lasting research cooperation and opportunities for continued joint projects have been created as new applications for future projects have already been submitted.
- Complementary knowledge, expertise and equipment from different universities and research institutes are said to have enabled research that would not have been feasible without the cooperation.
- Some beneficiaries point out that, although the post-doctoral researcher does not always stay at the university after his/her posting, the supervisors at the different universities have often established a good contact and basis for further cooperation initiatives.
- Several articles related to the projects have been published both during and after the projects.

## Program logic for the second call: Tandem Forest Values II

### Resources

- Announced funds: SEK 40 million
- Coordinator: KSLA
- Funding bodies
  - Formas
  - The Wallenberg Foundation
  - The Kempe Foundations
  - Ministry of the Environment
  - Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
  - Academy of Finland
- Preparatory group

### Activities

#### From the funding bodies' perspective:

- Call for applications
- Preparatory group established
- Administration and coordination (including payments)

#### From the preparatory group's perspective:

- Preparatory group meetings
- Assessment criteria are compiled and assessments made

#### From the beneficiaries' perspective:

- Administration and coordination of the call
- Universities and research environments cooperate in the project
- Reporting to financiers
- Research

### Results

- Increased scientific exchange
- Optimised use of research environments
- 9 research projects
- Published research results
- Increased knowledge exchange between academia and industry



## Reflections on resources in Tandem Forest Values II

- Just like during the first call, KSLA is perceived as a good, neutral and competent partner that is considered to have taken a holistic approach and overall responsibility in its role as coordinator.
- The structure of the second call for applications is considered to have worked well as the partners took lessons learned from TFV I and had a common picture at the start of how they wanted to structure and implement the call.
- As in the first call, both the new committee and the preparatory group are considered to have had a well-functioning composition of people who have performed their work according to expectations.



## Reflections on Tandem Forest Values II activities

### From the funding bodies' perspective:

- Several funding bodies stress the importance of the call text containing all essential information as this minimises the number of applications that do not match the criteria.
- Funding bodies argue that the longer a research programme has been in existence, the easier it is for applicants seeking funding to understand what kind of project the programme wants and what value it intends to create.
- The funding bodies feel that they had a good preparatory group. The participation of all the funding bodies in proposing experts for the panel enabled them to work together to identify contacts with a wide range of knowledge for the preparatory group.
- TFV II had a "common virtual pot" which means that KSLA administered the private funding bodies' funds but not the government funds. This was easier for KSLA but caused some additional work/uncertainty for applicants.

### From the preparatory group's perspective:

- The members of the preparatory group were given a number of applications to read in advance and assess according to defined criteria. This facilitated the joint assessment during the meeting.

### From the beneficiaries' perspective:

- The fact that there have been separate funding bodies in Finland and Sweden is perceived as flexible by some beneficiaries and is believed to have lowered the threshold for cooperation. However, others find it difficult because in Sweden they received funding for both years directly, while in Finland they received funding for one year at a time. There are also different levels of coverage of overhead costs between funding bodies, which creates difficulties for applicants in budgeting and financial monitoring.
- Several beneficiaries say that an important aspect of cooperation initiatives is the ability to visit each other. They would therefore like to see more of the funding go towards longer exchanges and networking activities.
- The digital format forced on communication during the corona pandemic has in some cases led to increased contact as accessibility has increased. However, some processes have taken longer as it would have been easier, for example, to demonstrate activities on site rather than digitally. Reduced travel opportunities have also limited access to, for example, lab equipment that is only available from one party.
- Two years is considered by some beneficiaries to be enough time to start up a project while maintaining the tempo and working efficiently. Others argue that a longer period allows for deeper relationships and better quality research.



## Reflections on the results of Tandem Forest Values II

- There were 45 applications in the second call, of which nine were selected and received funding.
- New contacts have been established between KSLA and the Finnish funding bodies, which is considered very valuable. There is now an established contact for future cross-border research.
- The funding has enabled cooperation between universities and research institutes and has allowed researchers to benefit from knowledge not previously available to them. This knowledge and expertise is perceived to have been crucial to the implementation of the projects.
- Although the projects are still in their early stages, discussions have already begun on continued cooperation initiatives and further projects.
- The programme has enabled researchers to work more closely with industry, and both funding bodies and beneficiaries see great value in a clear link to industry and other societal stakeholders.

### Expected results

- The funding bodies hope that this call for applications will encourage young researchers in the field and enable them to pursue a research career. The call for applications will give the consortium leader the opportunity to lead a group, make contacts in the other country, develop ideas and gain mentoring experience.



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# Summary of the strengths and challenges of Tandem Forest Values highlighted by respondents during the interviews

## Strengths

**Common vision:** The common endeavour of the funding bodies facilitated the design of the programme and the clear vision that was formulated is perceived as having created favourable conditions for cooperation and communication in relation to TFV.

**Effective cooperation at all levels:** Funding bodies, preparatory groups and beneficiaries all indicate that they find the cooperation within the programme effective. According to the funding bodies and the preparatory group, a common vision, a clear structure, well-functioning coordination and administration have contributed to the efficiency. The beneficiaries suggest that researchers in both countries are familiar with the same concept and that there are significant similarities in terms of working methods. This means that research conducted in a Swedish/Finnish context becomes concrete and that results can be more easily implemented in the sector. Furthermore, respondents argue that the small scale of the programme (compared to, for example, larger EU programmes) and a simple application process, combined with similar values and working methods between the two countries, help to create effective cooperation.

**Focused research programme and cooperation with industry help to strengthen the region's competitiveness:** There are several aspects of the programme that contribute to its role in strengthening the competitiveness of the Swedish/Finnish forest sector. The effective cooperation and the more concrete issues provided by the regional focus, as well as the link to industry, are highlighted by respondents as particularly important.

## Challenges

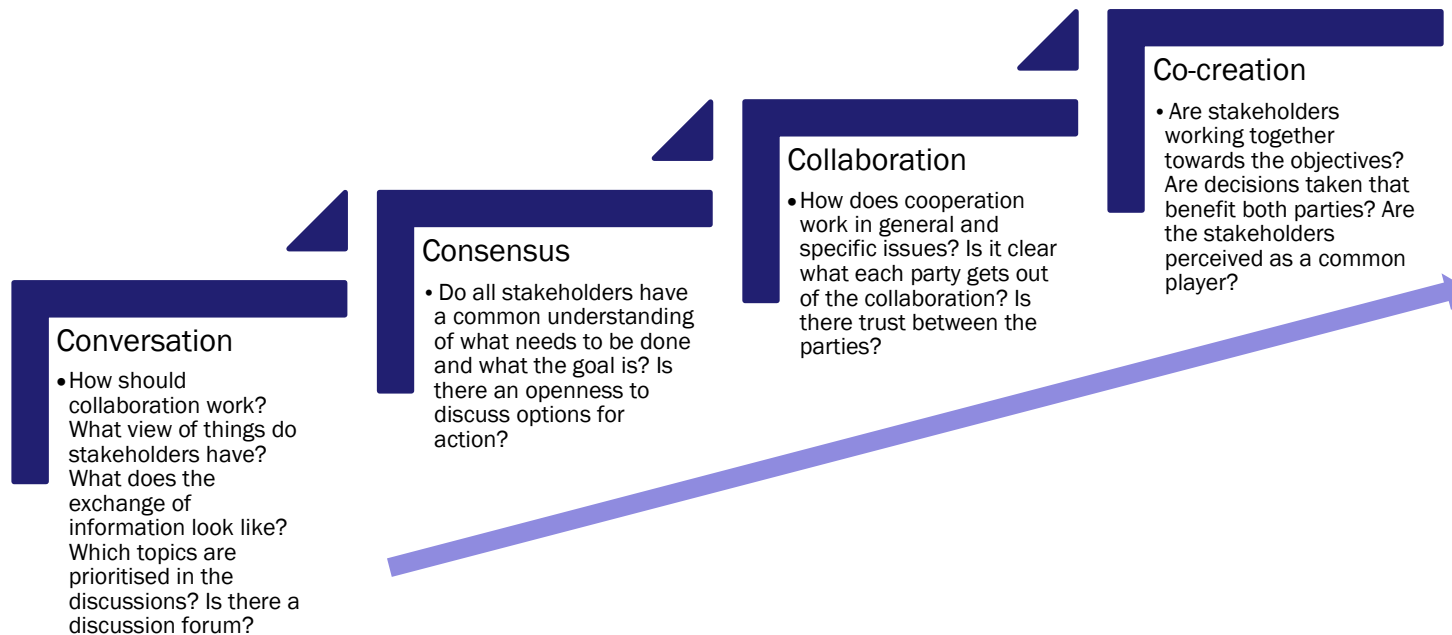
**Heterogeneous group of funding bodies:** The mix of private and public, Finnish and Swedish funding bodies has several important advantages, such as highlighting different perspectives on the structure of the programme and the focus of the research. However, heterogeneity amongst funding bodies has also been highlighted as a challenge by both the funding bodies and the beneficiaries. The challenge is to effectively reconcile the different perspectives of the funding bodies and the need for beneficiaries to deal with different funding structures and rules.

**Practical aspects of moving researchers between countries:** Several beneficiaries mention challenges related to practical aspects of the post-doctoral positions in TFV I, such as dealing with the Swedish Migration Agency, finding accommodation, and payment of salary between countries. The practical challenges in TFV II appear milder, but difficulties related to the fact that researchers did not know in advance who would fund their projects are highlighted. This meant that they did not have information about all the conditions in advance, such as what percentage they could expect for overheads. Furthermore, the Swedish and Finnish funding bodies in TFV II worked in different ways, with Swedish funding bodies providing funding for both years directly while the Finnish funding bodies provided funding for one year at a time, which made planning difficult for the beneficiaries.

**The programme's framework for filling post-doctoral positions:** The beneficiaries found it challenging to find and install the right candidate for the post-doctoral position within the timeframe of the programme.

# Tandem Forest Values has enhanced the level of collaboration between beneficiaries

The majority of beneficiaries consider that they have climbed at least two rungs up the collaboration ladder. At the time of the first contact, *conversations* were held and, in most cases, *consensus* was developed during the writing of the project application. In the course of the projects, cooperation has in several cases developed into *collaboration* or *co-creation*. One of the interviewees states that *co-creation* was never the aim of the project, but that the main purpose of the cooperation was to achieve *collaboration*. Some of the beneficiaries consider that the corona pandemic has caused difficulties in achieving *co-creation* as face-to-face meetings have not been possible. Some respondents argue that complete *co-creation* is difficult to achieve even within the same university and that it is even more challenging to achieve in bilateral cooperation as there are both geographical barriers and cultural differences to deal with.







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# The evaluators highlight twelve recommendations for consideration in the design of future calls and programmes

The recommendations aim to serve as advice on the design of research initiatives with the aim of long-term cooperation between universities and other research environments in Sweden and Finland in the forestry sector. The intention is thereby that the recommendations will contribute to the development and refinement of future TFV calls. The evaluators also hope that the recommendations will be useful in the design of other programmes, and that the lessons learned from TFV will benefit other research initiatives.

The twelve recommendations are based on the data collected (interviews and documentation) and the evaluators' previous experience and knowledge in the field.

Recommendations 1 to 5 are based on the positive experience of TFV I and II and aim to underline the importance of continuing this successful practice in the future. Recommendation 6 is based on the lessons learned from the research instruments used in TFV I and II respectively and reflects the respondents' belief that research projects are more clearly aligned with the programme's vision. Recommendations 7-12 build on insights from TFV I and II, as well as other programmes, and aim to develop and refine future calls for applications.

The recommendations are presented in more detail in the following pages.

1. Maintain bilateral cooperation
2. Appoint a coordinator who takes overall responsibility and is perceived as a neutral party
3. Formulate a clear common vision for the programme early in the process
4. Create a clear structure for the different parts of the programme early in the process
5. Pay particular attention to the composition of programme committees and preparatory groups
6. Focus on research projects rather than funding individual post-doctoral positions
7. Establish a clear interface with the forestry industry and other societal stakeholders in the forest sector
8. Extend the project duration beyond two years
9. Pay attention to both quantitative and qualitative values
10. Facilitate the application process
11. Expand and facilitate interaction within the programme
12. Organise learning seminars to facilitate dissemination of 'best practice'

# Recommendations for future calls for applications and programmes 1 (5)

## 1. Maintain bilateral cooperation

There is a consensus among the respondents that the advantages of the bilateral approach outweigh the disadvantages and the value of cooperation between Sweden and Finland in forest research is emphasised. Funding bodies also consider the bilateral cooperation between Sweden and Finland to be of great benefit to the region, as this approach ensures that it is researchers in Sweden or Finland who receive the funding and that it is local issues that are being researched. Other benefits highlighted include:

- The bilateral approach is an important complement to other major programmes (e.g. at EU level).
- The closeness between Finnish and Swedish cultures facilitates cooperation.
- Having only two participating countries creates flexible, efficient and unbureaucratic cooperation. In programmes with several participating countries, the common denominator can be quite low, which can lead to inefficient projects.
- There are great similarities between Sweden and Finland in terms of the type of forest, forest management and the role of forests in society, which creates a good basis for consensus and efficiency in the choice of research questions, the research process, and the application of research results.

However, respondents do highlight some disadvantages of a bilateral approach. These include a potential lack of diversity in perspective and knowledge and a risk of homogenisation. To mitigate these risks, it is proposed that the programme facilitates exchanges with other research programmes, e.g. through joint conferences, seminars or workshops.

All interviewed beneficiaries were asked the following hypothetical question: "if cooperation were to include one more country, which country would it be?". In response, the following countries/regions were highlighted as relevant to consider: Germany, Canada, the Baltic States, Norway, Austria.

The evaluators would like to stress that the bilateral approach should be related to the vision for future calls for applications. Depending on the expected results, the bilateral approach should be reviewed.

## 2. Appointing a coordinator who takes overall responsibility and is perceived as a neutral party

All respondents seem to be very satisfied with the work of the KSLA as coordinator of the TFV. The aspects highlighted as particularly important are that the coordinator is perceived as a neutral party and takes overall responsibility for the programme.



## Recommendations for future calls for applications and programmes 2 (5)

### 3. Formulate a clear common vision for the programme early in the process

The clear vision of the TFV is highlighted by respondents as an advantage of the programme. The vision is perceived to have facilitated both the cooperation of the funding bodies and the communication of the programme to the applicants and other stakeholders. Some of the aspects related to the TFV vision highlighted during the interviews with respondents are that the programme intends to:

- Create long-term relationships between Sweden and Finland, amongst funding bodies and amongst researchers
- Promote the Nordic forest industry and other societal stakeholders in the forest sector
- Create a stronger Swedish/Finnish voice in international contexts
- Facilitate for young researchers to establish networks and gain merit in their field of research
- Build consensus on the role of forests as carbon sinks

### 4. Create a clear structure for the different parts of the programme early in the process

The structure of the TFV and the first two calls is perceived as very good and respondents believe that this has been an important aspect of the success of the programme. The importance of creating a clear structure for all parts of the programme early in the process, including, for example, rules on funding, meetings and reconciliations of the funding bodies, the appointment and work of the preparatory group, coordination and administration of the call and payments, is highlighted as central. This structure needs to take into account the different approaches and internal rules of the stakeholders (which is particularly important when there are multiple funding bodies). The structure should also be as simple as possible to facilitate for all parties and to avoid misunderstandings and inefficiencies. From the applicants' perspective, it is also important to have a clear structure, and the researchers want clear rules, for example regarding the requirements for the application and what costs are allowed.

### 5. Pay particular attention to the composition of programme committees and preparatory groups

Several respondents stressed that they were very satisfied with the composition of the programme committees and the preparatory groups for both calls, and that this composition contributed positively to the success of the programme. Individuals in the programme committees and preparatory groups are perceived as competent, committed, cooperative and having a good understanding of the programme's vision. The evaluators therefore recommend that the lessons learnt from TFV I and II regarding the composition of individuals in these groups should be central to the development of the programme.

## Recommendations for future calls and programmes 3 (5)

### 6. Focus on research projects rather than funding individual post-doctoral positions

The vast majority of respondents have contributed thoughts and reflections on the advantages and disadvantages of different research instruments. Although there is no consensus on which instrument is best, slightly more respondents suggest that any future TFV cooperation should focus on research projects rather than post-doctoral positions. Below is a brief summary of the reflections on the various research instruments that emerged during the interviews.

#### Post-doctoral positions

- Several respondents stress the importance of finding the right person for the post-doctoral position. The person needs to be able to contribute to, and move between, the two universities. Several respondents said that moving between countries may seem simple in theory, but that it can be a challenge both to make the individual want to change environment and to arrange practical aspects such as accommodation and visas. There are also several respondents who mention that it was very valuable that the call for applications stated that the post-doctoral researcher had to move between countries. In order to have time to find the right person, several respondents state that it is important either that the applicant already has a person in mind for the position or that the start date of the position is adjusted to the fact that it may take time to find the right person.
- The advantages of a post-doctoral position that are highlighted are, above all, that a post-doctoral researcher is already experienced and thus ready to deliver from the start, and that the researcher can add valuable expertise to the group with which he/she is associated. One respondent believes that two post-doctoral researchers, one at each university, would further contribute to building long-term relationships between the countries. Respondents also highlight the disadvantages of post-doctoral positions as a research instrument. The risk of investing in a single individual and the fact that this individual may leave the region after the posting is mentioned several times and is highlighted as a main challenge of post-doctoral positions, alongside the practical difficulties.

#### Research project

- Several respondents believe that the funding of research projects is more clearly linked than post-doctoral positions to the TFV's vision of long-term relationships between countries. These projects are considered to contribute to a group rather than an individual, leading to a broader base of knowledge development and thus a lower risk of knowledge leaving the region and of relationships being short-lived. Research projects can also open up funding to both young and more senior researchers, which is seen as an advantage by some respondents.

#### Doctoral exchanges

- One respondent raised the idea of identifying one or more doctoral student(s) in the final stages of their doctoral project and sending them on exchange to a cooperation partner in the other country.

## Recommendations for future calls and programmes 4 (5)

### 7. Establish a clear interface with the forestry industry and other societal stakeholders in the forest sector

Several respondents believe that it would be positive to get the forest industry and other stakeholders in the forest sector more involved in TFV. Linking industry and other forest stakeholders more closely to research projects would help identify relevant research questions and facilitate testing and implementation of results. The Swedish Energy Agency is highlighted as an example of a research funding body that requires a clear link between research and industry. The respondents also highlight several potential challenges associated with a close link to industry. These include issues around intellectual property rights and access to data and technology. To create effective cooperation, it is stressed that it is important to clarify early in the research project what the cooperation will entail, what data will be shared, who will contribute what and who has rights to the results.

### 8. Extend the project duration beyond two years

Several views have emerged on the optimal timeframe for this type of research cooperation. There are those respondents who believe that a two-year timeframe provides enough time to get a project up and running, but at the same time is short enough to maintain the tempo and effectiveness of the cooperation. However, a larger number of respondents would like to see a longer period than two years. One of the funding bodies mentions that the standard for their other research funding is a five-year framework, as it allows researchers to really invest in the project. Others highlight that longer projects are preferable as it reduces the proportion of time spent writing proposals compared to time spent on research. Still others highlight the importance of long-term stability and longer timeframes for conducting high-quality research. One respondent argues that the timeframe should not be predetermined but should be left to the applicant to propose timeframes based on the needs of the specific project. The evaluators recommend that the possibility of extending the duration of the project is reviewed and, in particular, that a two plus two year model is considered. In such a model, researchers would apply for funding for two years with the possibility of renewal for a further two years provided that pre-defined criteria are met. Such a model combines the advantages of a shorter and a longer timeframe. It is important to point out that a longer timeframe places greater demands on the work of the preparatory group and the evaluation of the applications.

### 9. Pay attention to both quantitative and qualitative values

There are several standardised measures to value research. These include the number of publications, citations and patents. TVF aims at, and has resulted in, several such quantitative outcomes. However, the programmes also convey many other important values, such as new contacts, deeper relationships and a better understanding of the context of the other nation. These values are more difficult to measure but are very important for the programme's vision. The evaluators therefore recommend a clearer and more structured approach to capturing and communicating all the values created by TFV.

## Recommendations for future calls and programmes 5 (5)

### 10. Facilitate the application process

Some respondents have suggested facilitating the application process for applicants. Such a procedure could be designed in different ways, e.g. through a pre-selection where applicants submit a short application which they develop after a first acceptance into a full application. Furthermore, templates for the application, maximum number of pages, and digital signature are requested. The importance of a well-formulated text for the call for applications is also highlighted by the funding bodies, the preparatory group and the applicants, as a clear and complete call text, in line with the vision of the programme, reduces the risk of receiving applications that are deemed irrelevant, and of generating false expectations on the part of the applicants. Several respondents also believe that some form of match-making event prior to a call would help researchers to find new potential cooperation partners and to re-establish or formalise previously established contacts.

### 11. Expand and facilitate interaction within the programme

More interaction between the post-doctoral researchers and between research projects is highlighted as an effective way to create new contacts, disseminate knowledge between countries and between researchers, and catalyse more cooperation initiatives. There is also a call for more support to increase interaction between applicants and the wider community. Joint conferences, workshops, study visits and seminars are highlighted as possible tools.

### 12. Organise learning seminars to facilitate the dissemination of best practice

Some of the funding bodies have suggested a structured session to reflect on the lessons learned from the programme. Such a learning seminar is common at the end of major publicly funded projects and the evaluators have positive experience of this type of activity. It provides an opportunity to share lessons and formulate best practice which can then be used to positively influence future initiatives. Furthermore, a learning seminar amongst the beneficiaries is requested. The purpose of such an event is to provide researchers with the opportunity to share experiences and 'best practice', partly in relation to the practical aspects of the research instrument in question, and partly to share experiences on the structure and strategy of applications and the organisation of research. Learning seminars can be organised in different ways, e.g. through a physical or virtual workshop. The results of the seminar could be summarised in a short and concise report for dissemination to interested stakeholders.





# Content



- Background to the programme and purpose of the evaluation
- Methodology for data collection and analysis
- Analysis of the program logic
- Strengths and challenges of the programme
- Recommendations for future calls for applications and programmes
- **Conclusion**

## Tandem Forest Values delivers effective outcomes in relation to expected results and the identified vision

It is clear that all respondents are very satisfied with TFV I and II and the overall assessment of the evaluators is that the programme is delivering well in relation to the expected results and the identified vision.

The evaluation also shows that the bilateral approach has several advantages and that there is great value in continued research cooperation between Sweden and Finland in the forestry sector. Regarding the design of future research initiatives, the evaluators propose to build on the good foundations laid by TFV I and II and to consider the recommendations made for the development of the programme.

The impacts that the evaluators perceive that the programme intends to create in the long term are difficult to measure at present, but the evaluators deem that the results already in place clearly indicate that the programme supports the desire to strengthen and develop bilateral research cooperation in a sustainable way.

The evaluators would like to conclude this report with some quotes from the interviews (quotes in Swedish are translated into English by the evaluators):

"The programme has been a door opener"

"I'm very positive about the quick and simple process"

"This type of funding is needed and appreciated"

"TFV is connecting Swedish and Finnish actors in ways that have not existed before"

"We are super happy"