



Manual for Research Cheque

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Table of contents

The Research Cheque	2
Partners	2
The procedure.....	3
Restrictions.....	5
Advantages.....	5
Two examples	5
Contacts.....	6
Application forms	6

The Research Cheque

The Research Cheque is a model for financing development projects within SMEs in the County of Västerbotten, Sweden. The objective is to stimulate companies to take part of the research competence at the University for development initiatives within the companies. Umeå University brings companies and researchers together in joint development projects.

The Research Cheque is a joint activity between the County Administrative Board in Västerbotten and Umeå University in order to offer the business community highly qualified research competence during a limited time. Experience shows that this form of cooperation is mutually rewarding, for companies and researchers.

The SMEs have a unique possibility to develop their operations with the aid of experienced researchers. The access to research competence is good and cheques are directed towards applied research. Future business possibilities of the project are in focus.

Research Cheques can be applied for by SMEs in the county of Västerbotten. The cheque can finance up to 50 percent of the cost for the research competence. The remaining 50 percent of the cost the company stands for. The cheque can amount to 100 000 SEK. This means that projects up to 200 000 SEK can be carried out including the companies own financing.

All projects concerning Research Cheques are prepared by Umeå University.

Partners

Umeå University was inaugurated in 1965 and has since developed into one of the major universities in Sweden, with 29 000 students and 4000 employees within five faculties. The faculties are Medicine; Science and Technology; Social Science, Arts; and Teacher Education. Umeå University has particularly strong research in, among others, cell biology and molecular biology, industrial design, environment research, IT research, social welfare, and gender research. The university is one of Sweden's few complete universities – the only in northern Sweden.

External Relations is Umeå University's joint resource for improving and strengthening cooperation between the University, industry and society. We act as an intermediary between the faculties, departments and centres of our University and industry and society. External Relations provides access



to the academic competence, research and qualified project managers of Umeå University. We have valuable experience in cooperation within research, training and education, communication and student projects. We work to identify and bring together partners from the University and from small and medium-sized companies and organizations regionally, nationally and internationally.

Services

- mediating of diploma jobs and essay commission
- career guidance to students
- mediating of researchers in companies
- mediating of - courses, seminars on the basis of today's working life
- mediating of commission education
- support to researchers that apply for external research financing

Personnel from External Relations visit more than 400 companies each year in order to establish contacts between the university and the companies. At these visits, we discuss what kind of support the university can provide with in the development of the companies. We can offer, e.g. students that can do a diploma work about a problem that the company has or a shorter employment in a project. Sometimes research competence is requested.

The County Administrative Board in Västerbotten is a governmental body. Covering a wide range of social issues, the Board is a multifaceted authority. Within its areas of responsibility, it is the Board's job to ensure that the decisions taken by the government and Parliament are put into effect with maximum impact throughout the county.

The main tools used by the Board in doing this are:

- advice and information
- supervision (checking that a range of bodies observe relevant laws and guidelines)
- regulatory duties (granting of licenses, trying of appeals against municipal decisions, data collation, etc.)
- coordination of the county's resources (through facilitating a range of meetings and activities)
- financial support for various activities

Other organisations within the regional innovation system in Västerbotten are sometimes acting as advisors when preparing Research Cheques.

- Uminova Innovation AB
- ALMI

The procedure

The different steps when processing a Research Cheque can be described as;

- Inflow of ideas
- Validity check
- Development of the idea
- Check of competence area
- Contact with researcher
- Application
- Preparation and decision
- Project work
- Invoicing

The idea for a new Research Cheque often comes from a small company that looks for a solution to a problem in a process or a service. New ideas may also evolve when personnel from External Relations at Umeå University are visiting companies discussing different needs of development support.



When the coordinator at External Relations is approached with a new idea for a Research Cheque he first takes contact with the County Administrative Board's unit for business support in order to investigate the possibilities for the company to get a Research Cheque. If the company previously has got support from the community it can't get further funding in the form of a Research Cheque. This control is carried out before the company writes an application for Research Cheque to avoid unnecessary work.

If the company has not applied for or got other funding the university coordinator contacts the department with research relevant for the project. The researcher with the competence most suitable for the project is identified.

The researcher and the company are brought together for a first discussion and specification of the project. If the researcher is interested and has the possibility to work with the project the company writes an application for a Research Cheque to the County Administrative Board. The Board prepares the application and takes a decision about funding.

If there is no suitable researcher available at Umeå University the coordinator will try to find the relevant competence at another university. When the project is completed the university sends an invoice to the company covering the costs for the researcher. Then, the company can apply for 50% of the costs from the County Administrative Board.

Application

To prepare the application for a Research Cheque some information about the idea and the company need to be provided.

- Information about the company:
 - o Name of the company
 - o Owner(s)
 - o Contact person at the company
 - o Address and phone number of the company

- Short presentation of the idea:
 - o Description of background to the idea and what has been done so far
 - o Description of competence needed
 - o Description of future market, customers, size, competing products prize volume etc.
 - o Time for development and demand for resources (personnel etc)
 - o Project plan and financing plan
 - o IPR evaluation
 - o Need for confidentiality
 - o Number of employees and expansion plans
 - o Earlier applications for funding
 - o References

- Notes about the application:
 - o Project name
 - o Researcher/department – contacts
 - o Date of arrival of application – Submitted to The County Administrative Board
 - o Decision - The County Administrative Board
 - o Start of project
 - o Total sum - Invoice
 - o End of project



Restrictions

The County Administrative Board finance the Research Cheques with 50% of the total amount up to 100 000 SEK. This means that projects up to 200 000 SEK can be carried out including the companies own financing. Research Cheques can be applied for from SMEs within the county of Västerbotten.

Advantages

- for the companies

With the Research Cheque companies have a possibility to develop their business with support from experienced researchers. It is also possible to use doctoral students for the purpose. These small applied research projects have a focus on business possibilities.

- for the researcher and the university

Participating in a development project in a company will give the researcher valuable knowledge about relations in companies and the business community. The researcher will also become a better researcher and teacher since his knowledge about the surrounding society is strengthened. Also students will gain from having teachers who better understands the world outside the university.

- for the Region

Umeå University is an active partner in regional development. Outside Umeå the University is represented with permanent staff in Örnsköldsvik, Lycksele, Skellefteå and Kiruna. Hence the University can cover a vast geographic area when it comes to company contacts. The University is important for regional development. By participating in development projects, students, teachers and researchers can contribute to the companies' development and growth.

Two examples

Waldemar Nyström, Bionema Ltd, made the following statement concerning Research Cheques: "Bionema is a good example on how successful cooperation between university and business community should be. Research Cheques have been very useful in the companies that I run. Collaboration between the University and the surrounding society is the key to the development of Umeå. Umeå grows quickly because of the University, the education and research it provides and the collaboration that is taking place between the University and business community. Bionema Ltd Bionema produces and sells nematodes for biological control of harmful insects in greenhouses, plant schools and gardens. The company also carries out R&D within the area biological control.

Thomas Olofsson and Annika Moström, at the department for applied physics and electronics, about how they have experienced a Research Cheque project: "to work with Research Cheques is an interesting element when working as researchers and teachers at the University. It gives unique possibilities for a mutually valuable exchange with the local business community. From a researcher's perspective, it is particularly interesting to test ones knowledge and methods in realistic and applied situations. It is not always possible to find an answer to the problem but in most cases collaborative projects give satisfactory results for all parties. The cooperation process always gives valuable experiences."



Contacts

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Application forms

["Regionalt bidrag till företagsutveckling, ansökan" »](#)

[" Regionalt bidrag till företagsutveckling, Information »](#)