

# digital futures

## Strategic Plan

2026

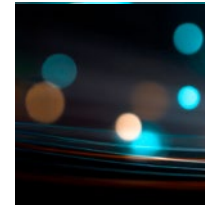
From Science to  
Societal Impact

2030



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Digital Futures brings together leading researchers and partners to shape the digital technologies that society depends on. Since 2020, the centre has grown into a strong cross-sector collaboration with long-term support from the Swedish Government as a Strategic Research Area.

Today, twelve partners from academia, industry, and the public sector work together: KTH Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm University, RISE Research Institutes of Sweden, AstraZeneca, City of Stockholm, Ericsson, Hitachi Energy, Region Stockholm, Saab, Scania/Traton, Skanska, and Xylem.

The Strategic Plan 2026–2030 sets our direction for the next phase. We sharpen our focus on impact by integrating three core pillars: research, experimental arenas, and innovation. Responsible and trustworthy AI will be a key driver in addressing societal challenges and strengthening Sweden's global position in sustainable digital transformation.

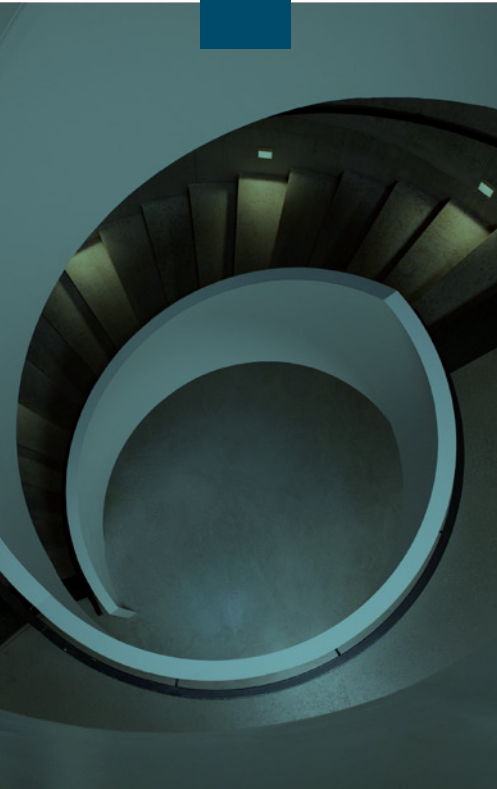
Stockholm, April 2026

Karl Henrik Johansson  
Director, Digital Futures





## Strategic Outlook



Digital technologies are transforming every sector of society – from health-care and education to industry and urban development. The pace of change is accelerating. So must our ability to guide it responsibly.

Digital Futures is a centre of excellence where fundamental research meets real-world application. Building on a strong legacy of collaboration, we connect scientific discovery with industry needs, public-sector challenges, and entrepreneurial drive.

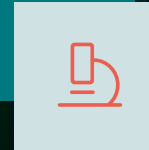
Between 2026 and 2030, we will:

- Advance world-class, cross-disciplinary research
- Expand large-scale experimental environments
- Foster innovation and entrepreneurship
- Ensure AI development is trustworthy, human-centred and sustainable

By integrating research, experimentation, and innovation, we shorten the path from discovery to societal value – strengthening Stockholm and Sweden as global leaders in digital transformation.

## Vision

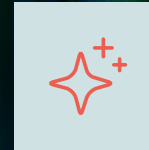
To shape a sustainable society through digital transformation.



### Mission

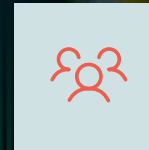
#### Excel in Research

Pursue scientific excellence through pioneering, cross-disciplinary research that addresses complex societal challenges.



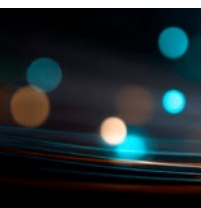
#### Empower People

Foster innovation, leadership, and education while embracing diversity, equipping individuals with the skills and mindset to drive change and shape the future.



#### Build Community

Create a strong ecosystem where academia, industry, and the public sector collaborate across disciplines.



# Research Agenda

Digital Futures advances the scientific foundations of digitalisation, while addressing real societal needs. Our research integrates technological depth with societal relevance.

## The Research Programme

Our research combines four societal contexts with three research themes.

### SOCIETAL CONTEXTS

#### Smart Society

Digital solutions for sustainable cities, public services, and resilient communities.

#### Digitalised Industry

Next-generation industrial systems enabling efficiency, flexibility, sustainability, and new business models.

#### Rich and Healthy Life

AI and digital technologies improving physical and mental health, healthcare delivery and quality of life.

#### Educational Transformation

Human-centred, AI-enhanced learning across the lifespan – strengthening autonomy, creativity and professional judgement.

### RESEARCH THEMES

#### Trust

Secure, safe, and transparent systems.

Privacy, cybersecurity, resilience, accountability, and explainable AI are vital design principles.

#### Cooperate

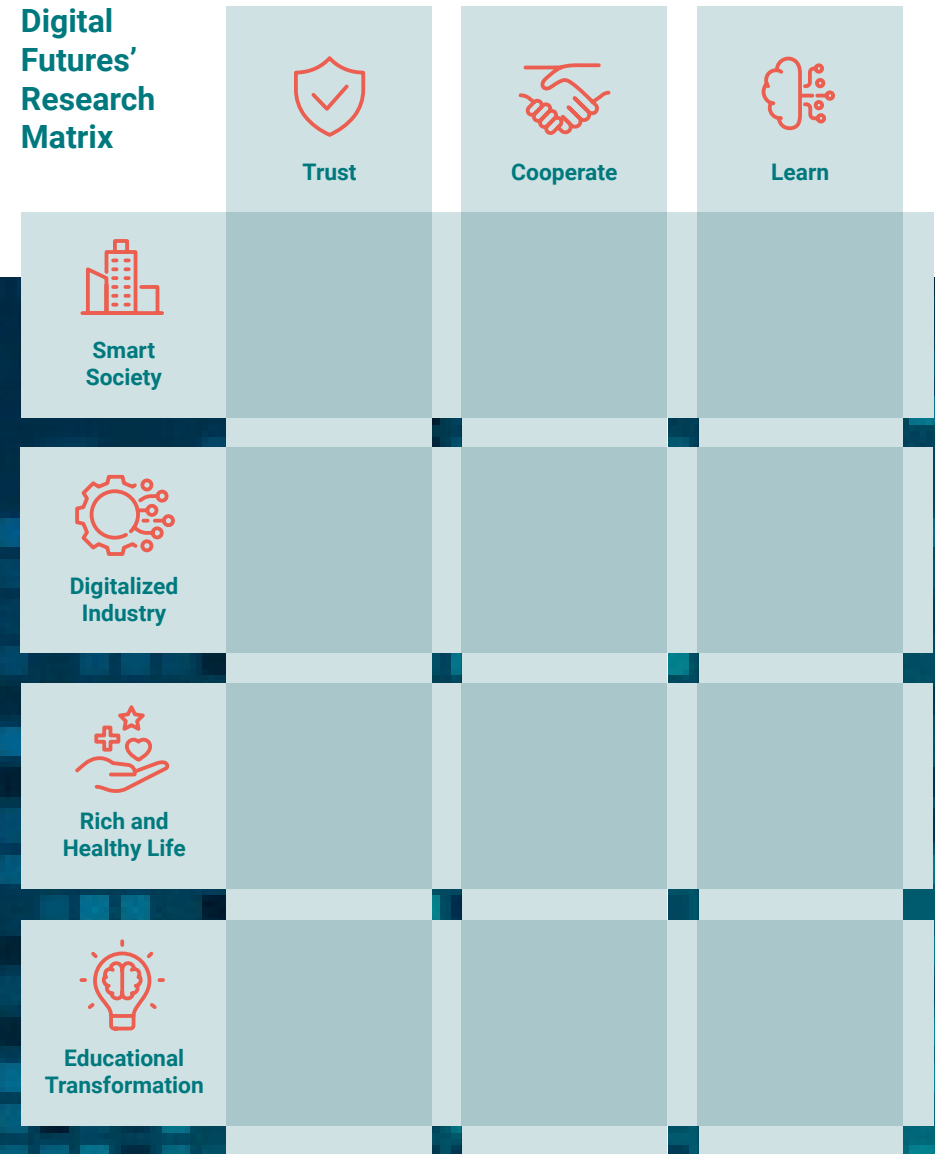
Distributed systems where humans and digital agents collaborate effectively and reliably.

#### Learn

Adaptive, data-driven systems capable of generalisation and responsible AI innovation.

At the intersection of these dimensions, new research questions emerge – and new solutions are created. AI acts as a catalyst across all areas, but always guided by ethical responsibility and human agency.

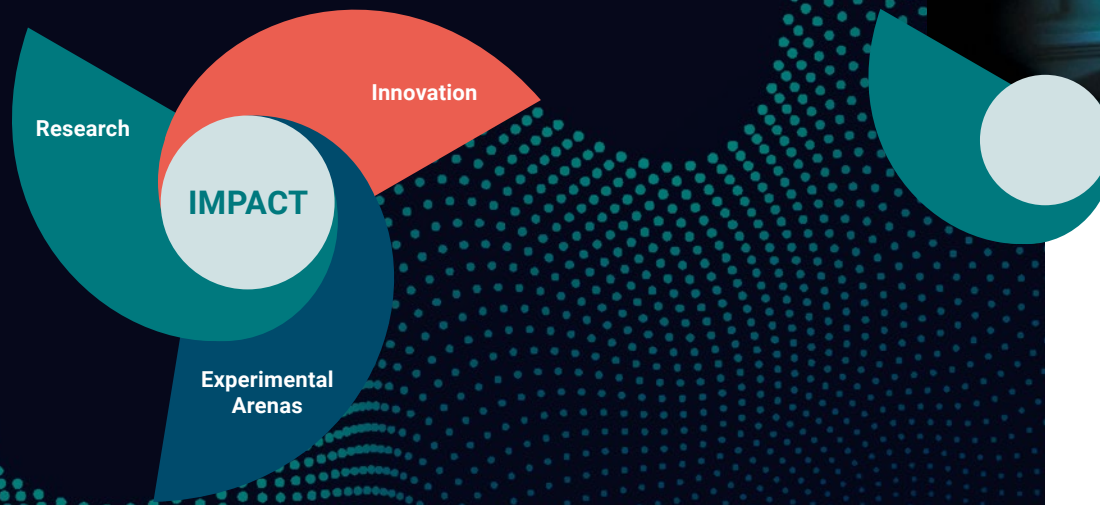
## Digital Futures' Research Matrix



# Strategic Direction 2026–2030

From Discovery to Deployment

To accelerate digital transformation and drive societal and economic impact, we will strengthen the integration of research, experimental arenas, and innovation –reinforcing Digital Futures’ position as a global leader in digital research.



## Research

Question-driven, cross-disciplinary research is our foundation. AI plays a vital role – not as an isolated field, but as an enabling technology across domains.

We prioritise:

- Trustworthy and responsible AI
- Findable, accessible, interoperable, and reusable data
- Cross-disciplinary collaboration
- Human-centric system design

**Our strength lies in combining scientific excellence with real-world relevance.**



## Experimental Arenas

Where Ideas Meet Reality

Experimental arenas are large-scale, real-world environments where research can be tested, validated and refined in collaboration with partners.

They allow us to:

- Shorten the gap between theory and application
- Address regulatory and operational complexity
- Integrate sustainability goals from the outset
- Co-create solutions with stakeholders

**Experimental arenas will serve as engines for ideation, validation and scaling, positioning Stockholm as a living laboratory for sustainable digital transformation.**

## Key Initiatives

### Stockholm Digital Sandbox

An open innovation arena for sustainable digital and AI transformation. Focus areas include secure data sharing and cross-sector collaboration.

### Stockholm Urban Innovation Lab

A city-scale platform turning research into operational improvements for urban development and public services.

### Digital Health Environment

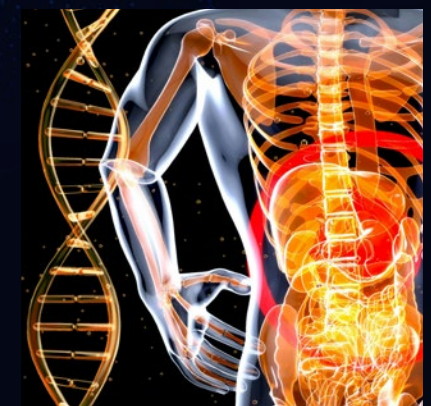
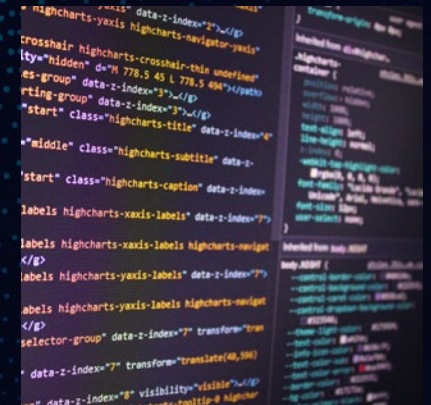
An integrative platform unlocking the potential of health data while addressing privacy, regulation, and ethical challenges. Supports AI-driven advances in diagnostics, treatment and healthcare logistics.

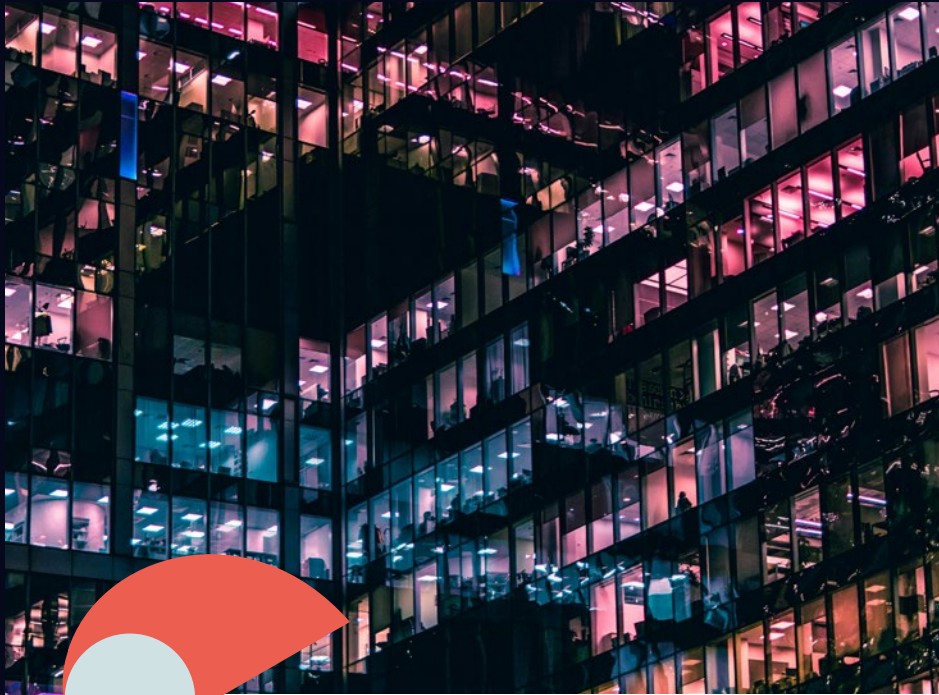
### Environmental Sensing and AI

Advanced infrastructure for earth observation, real-time data and geospatial AI — enabling evidence-based decisions for climate resilience and sustainability.

### Educational Arena

A structured environment for testing AI-enabled learning innovations. Focused on strengthening human agency, inclusion, professional judgement, and ethical data use.





## Innovation

### Scaling Impact

Innovation transforms research and experimentation into tangible societal and economic value.

Digital Futures will:

- Deepen collaboration with industry and the public sector
- Expand engagement with SMEs
- Support entrepreneurship and spin-offs
- Strengthen links to innovation actors such as KTH Innovation and Ventures

The aim is to build a culture that accelerates innovation, scales impactful solutions, and enables commercialisation and the creation of new ventures.

## Our Commitment

Digital transformation must expand human capability – not replace it

Digital Futures adopts a human-agency lens across all activities.

Through digital transformation we:

- Strengthen people's ability to act and decide
- Support lifelong learning
- Promote inclusion and diversity
- Uphold ethical responsibility

By aligning scientific excellence with societal needs, we build a digital future that is innovative, trustworthy and sustainable.

Digital Futures is a cross-disciplinary research centre that explores and develops digital technologies. We bring solutions to great societal challenges, in Sweden and globally. We generate knowledge, innovations and future leaders of high industrial relevance and strategic importance.

Digital Futures is jointly established by KTH Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm University and RISE Research Institutes of Sweden.

### **Follow us!**

Web: [digitalfutures.kth.se](http://digitalfutures.kth.se)

LinkedIn: [digitalfutures](https://www.linkedin.com/company/digitalfutures)

Youtube: [DigitalFuturesHub](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCqWz8v8v8v8v8v8v8v8v8v8)

### **Visit us!**

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### **Contact us!**

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Research.  
Experimentation.  
Innovation.  
Impact.

From Stockholm to the world.