

SFI Centre for Research-based Innovation

Published 03 Jul 2019

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Application type: Research Centre

Application deadline: 25. September 2019, 13:00 CEST

Relevant thematic areas for this call: [Trade and industry](#)

Target groups: Public sector, Industry, Research organisations

Funding scale: NOK 50 000 000-96 000 000

Amount of funding presumed available for this call for proposals: NOK 960 000 000

Project duration: 60-96 months

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Purpose

A research centre is a dedicated, long-term initiative designed to strengthen and further develop elite, creative research and innovation groups or to build up research groups in strategically important areas.

The overall objective of the *Centres for Research-based Innovation (SFI)* scheme is to enhance the ability of the business sector to innovate and create value through a greater focus on long-term research.

The SFI scheme seeks to:

- Facilitate active, long-term cooperation between innovation-oriented, R&D-performing companies and prominent research groups.
- Promote the development of outstanding industry-oriented research clusters that are an integral part of dynamic international networks and that enhance the internationalisation of the Norwegian business sector.
- Encourage and enhance researcher training and the transfer of knowledge and technology in areas with major potential for future value creation.

The SFI scheme is characterised by broader objectives, a longer-term perspective and a more targeted focus than other innovation-related instruments administered by the Research Council. The scheme provides the R&D-performing component of the Norwegian business sector with the opportunity to take a longer-term perspective, enhance continuity and reduce risk in their research initiatives.

For the research groups, the scheme makes it possible to achieve long-term development of expertise through research of high international calibre conducted in close cooperation with companies. The scheme is also intended to enhance quality and efficiency in the public sector.

When selecting centres for SFI status and funding, importance will be attached to their potential to generate innovation, business development and sustainable value creation within the centre's thematic priority areas. The scientific merit of the research must be of high international calibre.

Important dates

14 Aug 2019: Date call is made active

25 Sep 2019: Application submission deadline

30 Jun 2020: The final funding decision will be announced in June 2020

01 Sep 2020: Earliest permitted project start

01 Dec 2020: Latest permitted project start

30 Nov 2028: Latest permitted project completion

[Call for proposals](#)

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About the call for proposals

Based on the mandatory outlines already submitted, the Research Council is now accepting complete applications to seek funding to establish a Centre for Research-based Innovation (SFI-IV).

The Research Council is planning to start up at least 10 new Centres for Research-based Innovation (SFI) in 2020. This will entail an annual allocation of up to NOK 120 million from the Research Council to new centres.

An SFI centre is a time-limited research centre which is not defined as a separate legal entity. The SFI centres may have a period of operation of eight years; however, an extension beyond the first five-year period will be dependent on the positive outcome of an evaluation conducted after approximately 3.5 years.

A description of the main requirements stipulated for conferral of SFI status may be found in the document [Centres for Research-based Innovation \(SFI\) – Requirements and Guidelines \(January 2019\)](#). All applicants are encouraged to familiarise themselves with these requirements and guidelines.

The Norwegian-language call for proposals is the legally binding version.

Who is eligible to apply?

Only applicants who submitted a mandatory outline by the deadline of 4 April 2019 are qualified to seek funding under this call for proposals. Applications that are not based on a submitted outline will be rejected.

The formal applicant and host institution for a Centre for Research-based Innovation (SFI) must be [an approved Norwegian research organisation](#).

Companies and public entities participate as user partners.

Multiple research organisations may take part as research partners.

Who can participate in the project?

The formal applicant and host institution for a Centre for Research-based Innovation (SFI) must be an approved Norwegian research organisation. The establishment of an SFI centre must be viewed in the context of the research strategy of the host institution.

The inclusion of companies in the centres' activities is one of the requirements of the SFI scheme. Public entities may participate alongside companies in the centres' activities. Each centre must have at least three user partners, and these must always include company partners.

All user partners are to actively participate in the governance, financing and research activities at the centres, and must conduct significant innovation activities of their own as well as be able to take advantage of the research results when developing their activities.

More details and a description of the main requirements stipulated for conferral of SFI status may be found in the document [Centres for Research-based Innovation \(SFI\) – Requirements and Guidelines \(January 2019\)](#).

What can you seek funding for?

The responsibility for SFI centre financing is shared by the Research Council, the host institution and the partners. The host institution and the partners responsible for the establishment of a centre must commit to long-term involvement in the centre's activities and financing.

Each centre will receive an annual allocation from the Research Council of NOK 10–12 million per year.

Financial contributions from private companies and other user partners must be equal to at least 50 per cent of the Research Council's annual allocation.

The host institution and other research organisations may contribute additional funding to highlight their strategic basis and commitment.

All research conducted by the centre, including research funded by the user partners, is to be long-term in nature and is expected to promote increased innovation capacity and provide a basis for greater value creation. The centre's research results are to be openly accessible.

Research Council support awarded to research organisations may only be used in connection with the organisations' non-economic activities. Companies defined as an "undertaking" in the state aid rules are not eligible to receive support to cover projects costs and may not receive indirect support through the granting of any rights to project results. Companies participating as user partners in the centre must cover their own costs. Support allocated under this call therefore does not constitute state aid.

More details and a description of the main requirements stipulated for conferral of SFI status may be found in the document Centres for Research-based Innovation (SFI) – Requirements and Guidelines (January 2019) (see link above).

Here you will find the Research Council's rules regarding [what to enter in the project budget](#), including guidelines for calculating payroll and indirect expenses in the budget.

Archiving of research data

The host institution and the partners together are responsible for selecting the archiving solution(s) to use for storing research data generated in the centre, and must specify the planned solution(s) in connection with the revised grant proposal.

Important information about this call

For further details about this call, see the document [Information for applicants for the funding announcement for Centres for Research-based Innovation \(SFI-IV\) – Final funding announcement \(June 2019\)](#).

It is absolutely essential for all applicants to read the document above very carefully.

Relevant thematic areas for this call

This funding announcement for applications for SFI status encompasses all thematic areas that may be of importance for innovation and value creation in the business sector. We would like applicants to assign one or more of the branches of trade and industry listed below to their applications:

Trade and industry

Fisheries and aquaculture, Forests and wood, Agriculture, Food industry, Oil, gas, Energy, Processing industry, Manufacturing industry, ICT industry, Building, construction and mining, Transport and communications, Finance and banking, Health industry, Travel and tourism, Media and culture, Other services, Industry-independent sector

Requirements for this application type

The complete grant application must be based on an outline submitted by the 4 April 2019 deadline.

You may revise and resubmit your grant application form multiple times up to the application submission deadline. We recommend that you submit your application as soon as you have filled in the application form and included all mandatory attachments. After the deadline, it is the most recently submitted version of the grant application that will be processed.

- The grant application, including all attachments, must be submitted in English.
- All attachments must be uploaded in PDF format.

All the templates for attachments are available for download at the end of the call for proposals.

The grant application will only be made accessible to persons who have signed a declaration of confidentiality.

Mandatory attachments

- A project description, not to exceed 20 pages including the list of references, using the designated template.
- Letter of intent from the host institution. (To be uploaded under "Other items" in the online grant application form.)
- Letters of interest from all partners.
- Up to eight CVs for key personnel, using the designated template.

Optional attachment

- A proposal for up to five referees who are presumed to be impartial and qualified to review the final grant application.

For more detailed information about the requirements stipulated for the various attachments, see the document [Information for applicants for the funding announcement for Centres for Research-based Innovation \(SFI-IV\) – Final funding announcement \(June 2019\)](#).

Grant applications that do not satisfy the above requirements will be rejected.

Links to websites and documents, as well as other attachments than those specified above, will not be included in the application review process. There is no technical validation of the content of the attachments you upload, so please make sure that you upload the correct file for the selected type of attachment.

Assessment criteria

In 2019 the Research Council has introduced new assessment criteria: Excellence, Impact and Implementation. These criteria have been designed to be applicable for assessing basic and applied research activities alike. The criteria will be assessed by international referees.

The Research Council will further assess the relevance of the grant proposals relative to the guidelines of the call, including the centre's national contribution and profile, the manner in which it reflects the scientific strategies of the host institution, the added value of organising the activities as a centre within its research area, and how the proposed centre will expand upon or complement other established centres or large-scale initiatives.

Excellence

Novelty

The extent to which:

- the objectives are beyond the state-of-the-art (e.g. novel concepts and approaches, development of novel methodology or development across disciplines).
- the proposed research and objectives are ambitious and demonstrate high innovation potential for private and/or public sector.

Solidity

The extent to which:

- the outlined scientific approach is feasible.
- the proposed research methodology is appropriate to achieve the goals of the centre.
- the use of stakeholder knowledge is appropriate.
- when relevant, the consideration of interdisciplinary approaches is appropriate.

Impact

Potential impact of the proposed research

The extent to which:

- the centre will contribute to further development of a leading research environment in Norway.
- the activity in the centre will be important for Norwegian industry and/or the Norwegian public sector.
- the centre will create an environment that attract and train research talents.
- the outputs of the project will address relevant UN Sustainable Development Goals.
- when relevant, the outputs of the project will address important present and future societal challenges.

Communication and exploitation

- Quality and scope of communication and engagement activities with different target audiences, including relevant stakeholders/users.
- Involvement of the stakeholders/users in dissemination and utilisation of the project results.

Implementation

The project manager and project group

The extent to which:

- the project manager (centre director) is qualified to lead an initiative of this size.
- the described research team is optimal for the proposed centre.
- the track records of the project manager and the project group demonstrate ability to perform high-quality research.

Project organisation and management, project plan and the allocated time and resources

- The extent to which having this centre will lead to added value.
- The extent to which the management structures and procedures, including risk and innovation management, are appropriate.
- Effectiveness of the work plan, including the extent to which resources assigned to work packages are aligned with project objectives and deliverables.
- Appropriateness of the allocation of tasks, ensuring that all project partners, including user partners, have a valid role in the project and adequate resources to fulfil that role.

The quality and extent of international cooperation

- The extent to which the level and quality of the international cooperation activities are in line with the objectives of the centre.

Gender balance in the centre's project group

- If the scientific field is characterised by a gender imbalance, are the plans to support development of research talents of the under-represented gender towards qualification for senior-level positions appropriate?

Relevance to the call for proposals

The extent to which the project satisfies the guidelines and stipulations set out in the call for proposals.

Overall assessment and selection

The starting point for the overall assessment and final selection of grant applications will be the marks assigned for the three main criteria and the relevance of the grant applications in relation to the requirements and guidelines stipulated in this call for proposals.

When assessing grant applications, and assuming that all factors relating to scientific merit and relevance are essentially equal, the Research Council will give priority to applications that:

- have a high percentage of women in leadership positions;
- can make a significant contribution towards promoting sustainable societal and business development;
- are in areas where there is a specific, unmet need for the development of knowledge, e.g. knowledge development for addressing the major societal challenges or the restructuring of Norwegian trade and industry.

When selecting centres for conferral of SFI status, consideration will also be given to the overall business-related profile of the portfolio of industry-oriented research centres receiving Research Council funding.

Administrative procedures

The Executive Board of the Research Council will take the final decisions regarding the conferral of SFI centre status and allocation of funding.

The final funding decision will be announced in June 2020.

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|  | SFI-IV Template Project Description .docx |  |
|  | CV-mal for forskere/CV template researchers (docx) |  |
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