Innovation Project for the Public Sector

Published 19 May 2020

Application type: Innovation Project
Application deadline: 16 September 2020, 13:00 CEST
Relevant thematic areas for this call: Energy, transport and low emissions, Democracy, administration and renewal, Health, Enabling technologies, Land-based food, the environment and bioresources
Target groups: Public sector, Research organisations

Funding scale: NOK 3 000 000-7 000 000
Amount of funding presumed available for this call for proposals:
NOK 200 000 000. This amount covers both this call for proposals and the announcement of Funding for Pre-commercial Procurement. This amount may be adjusted.
Project duration: 24-48 months

Purpose

An Innovation Project for the Public Sector is intended to promote sustainable, systematic and effective innovation in public-sector services, infrastructure and administration. Innovation projects must be based on needs and challenges and be part of the public entity's plans for development. The project is to be executed through effective collaboration between the Project Owner (public sector body), R&D groups and other relevant stakeholders.

When developing your project we recommend using the Project Canvas tool (available in Norwegian only).

Innovations in this context are defined as new or significantly improved goods, services, processes, organisational and governance forms or models that are introduced to enhance value creation and for the benefit of society.

Important dates

05 Aug 2020: Date call is made active
16 Sep 2020: Application submission deadline
By 4 January 2021: Notification of final funding decision
01 Mar 2021: Earliest permitted project start
01 Oct 2021: Latest permitted project start
About the call for proposals

The Research Council of Norway is announcing up to NOK 200 million in R&D support for Innovation Projects for the Public Sector. This funding is for projects in which public sector bodies are in need of research in connection with innovation activities. The projects are to be designed to generate sustainable value creation. It will be possible to apply for support for projects in a range of different thematic areas, and many sectors and service areas will find this to be an appropriate funding instrument for their needs. Funding will also be available for projects that extend across sectors and service areas. More information about each thematic area is provided below.

Funding is available for two different types of projects that promote innovation in the public sector: Innovation Projects for the Public Sector and Pre-commercial Procurement. Applications submitted in response to these two calls will be competing for the same funding.

The call for proposals has been approved as an aid scheme by The EFTA Surveillance Authority (ESA) with the reference: GBER31/2020/R&D&I. The Norwegian-language call for proposals is the legally binding version.

Who is eligible to apply?

Public sector bodies, (cf. Definition Public Body), are eligible to apply. Applicants under some of the thematic areas must also satisfy additional special requirements. Such requirements will be stipulated in the description of the relevant thematic area.

Companies and research organisations may not apply.

Who can participate in the project?

Requirements relating to the Project Owner
The Project Owner must be a Norwegian public sector body as defined in the link above. The organisation listed as the Project Owner in the application form must have authorised the submission of the grant application.

Requirements relating to partners
One or more approved research organisations must participate as a partner in the project. A list of approved research organisations is available here. Any additional requirements related to collaboration will be stipulated in the information relating to the individual thematic areas.

Expectations concerning other forms of collaboration
The Research Council also encourages collaboration between public entities, as well as between such entities and companies, special interest organisations and other actors that are relevant for the project.

User participation is encouraged
In many contexts, user involvement and knowledge about users will be essential if innovation efforts are to succeed. The term “user” in this context refers to those who are to be the recipients of the service, professional users/user organisations and/or those who are to be the service providers (employees). Projects where this is relevant should incorporate user participation and have a clear user-oriented perspective.

What can you seek funding for?

The Research Council’s support for innovation in the public sector applies only to R&D activities. Other activities and measures that are necessary to realising the innovation must be presented in the project description as well, although these costs will not be funded by the Research Council. Relevant project expenses include payroll expenses, any grants/fellowships and direct project expenses.
In the grant application form, the Research Council requires you to break down the project budget into the following cost categories:

- **Payroll and indirect expenses**: costs incurred by the Project Owner and other task-performing partners in the public sector, trade and industry and research organisations in Norway.
- **Other operating expenses**: costs related to other activities that are necessary in order to perform R&D activities under the project. All costs entered as “other operating expenses” must be specified in the grant application and such costs will be revised if the project is granted funding.
- **Procurement of R&D services**: costs of contracting R&D suppliers to perform R&D activities for the project.
- **Equipment**: costs related to the operation and depreciation of scientific equipment necessary for the execution of the project.

For projects with a Project Owner from the municipal sector, the maximum amount of project support from the Research Council is 75 per cent of the total approved project costs. For projects where the Project Owner is from state institutions, the maximum amount of project support is 50 per cent of the overall project costs.

**Conditions for funding**

The Research Council’s requirements relating to the allocation are set out in the General Terms and Conditions for R&D Projects. For projects awarded funding under this call, this entails, among other things, a requirement to submit an annual project account report documenting incurred project costs and their financing.

If the project is awarded funding, the Project Owner must submit a revised grant application in accordance with the conditions of the allocation decision. The revised grant application will incorporate updated and supplementary information about the project and participating partners.

Support to research organisations participating as partners in the project must go to the organisation’s non-economic activity, as R&D activity carried out in effective collaboration with others is defined as part of the research organisation’s non-economic activity under the EFTA Surveillance Authority’s guidelines on state aid for research and development and innovation. The Research Council requires a clear separation of accounts for the organisation’s economic and non-economic activities.

According to the state aid rules, support to an undertaking constitutes state aid. An “undertaking” in this context is defined as any actor that carries out an economic activity consisting of offering products or services on a given market. When an undertaking receives support to cover a portion of its project costs as a partner in the project, this support must be awarded in accordance with Article 25 of the General Block Exemption Regulation for state aid (Commission Regulation (EU) No 651/2014).

The state aid rules set clear limitations on the aid intensity that may be granted to these companies, depending on enterprise size and the type of activity to be carried out. The project is to be implemented by means of effective collaboration between all partners as defined in the state aid rules:

> “collaboration between at least two independent parties to exchange knowledge or technology, or to achieve a common objective based on the division of labour where the parties jointly define the scope of the collaborative project, contribute to its implementation and share its risks, as well as its results. One or several parties may bear the full costs of the project and thus relieve other parties of its financial risks. Contract research and provision of research services are not considered forms of collaboration.”

If the project is awarded funding, the Project Owner must enter into collaboration agreements with all project partners.

**Relevant thematic areas for this call**

This call covers a wide range of different thematic areas, and many sectors and service areas will find this to be an appropriate funding instrument for their needs. Funding will also be available for projects that extend across sectors and service areas.

Funding for projects comes from a variety of Research Council budget items.

The relevant focus areas for funding are specified under each thematic area below (use the arrows to expand the thematic area). A brief description is provided of the objectives, areas of emphasis and prioritisations for each thematic area. For more information about priorities under the individual thematic areas, see the respective Research Council programme funding documents (links provided on the right).

Applicants are encouraged to read these documents to understand the basis for the Council’s qualitative assessment and prioritisation of grant proposals. The amounts listed under each thematic area indicate how much funding has been budgeted. Budget amounts may be changed during the period the call remains open.

All the thematic areas below are of relevance under this call. Under some of the thematic areas there are specific requirements and guidelines that will be given special weight.

Please remember to select the topics most relevant to your project proposal in the grant application form. The chosen topics are merely for guidance to help the Research Council in planning the application review process.

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**Energy, transport and low emissions**

**Transport and mobility**

**NOK 30–50 million for innovative solutions for transport and mobility**

Public sector entities that administer and/or provide services within the transport sector are eligible to apply for funding for projects that promote...
renewal and innovation of the Norwegian transport sector. Funding will be directed towards projects that promote long-term, effective, safe and sustainable transport solutions for the future. The Research Council is also seeking projects that will contribute to more efficient use of resources in the planning, building and maintenance of infrastructure and transport services.

1. Funding is available for new projects within all the thematic priority areas as defined in the Transport 2025 work programme. These are: an innovative transport system that makes use of new technology and business models;
2. a sustainable transport system that helps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and pollution of the local environment;
3. a transport system for future-oriented urban and regional development.

This call is open to both commercial and passenger transport within all four modes of transport – road, rail, air and sea. The call is not open to activities related to offshore operations, fisheries or the development of technology for the maritime sector with no direct connection to commercial or passenger transport. Projects involving the development of battery technology, hydrogen and biofuels are not eligible to receive funding under this call.

Priority will be given as follows:

- When assessing the relevance criterion, importance will be attached to:
  - projects designed to promote better mobility, improved safety and security and sustainable transport and mobility, as well as projects that will contribute to more efficient use or resources in the planning, building and maintenance of infrastructure and transport services;
  - projects with specific plans for realising the innovation.
- Assuming all factors relating to project quality are essentially equal, priority will be given to projects:
  - involving master's students. Grant applications must describe how the students will be involved and their roles in the project.
- Assuming all factors relating to project quality are essentially equal, priority will be given to applications for Innovation Projects for the Public Sector over applications for Pre-commercial Procurement

When prioritising projects for funding, importance will be attached to the assessments of scientific merit and of the relevance criterion for each individual grant application, and to achieving a thematically and scientifically balanced, broad-based project portfolio within the priority areas of the Transport 2025 work programme.

TRANSPORT work programme

The work programme provides an overview of
- challenges, objectives and priorities
- anticipated results, impacts and societal outcomes
- available resources and budget

See: TRANSPORT work programme (pdf).

Contacts

Lise Johansen
lj@forskningsradet.no

Mette Brest Jonassen
mbjo@forskningsradet.no

Svein Erik Moen
sem@forskningsradet.no

Wenche Finanger
wfi@forskningsradet.no

Democracy, administration and renewal
NOK 38 million for innovation projects in municipalities and counties

Funding is available for projects that promote innovation in municipalities or counties. Projects are to generate innovation in municipal services, infrastructure and/or administration, and must be based on needs and challenges relating to the municipal sector.

Challenges and needs pertinent to this topic under the call include water and sewerage, climate and the environment, planning and the construction industry, waste management and societal security and preparedness. We will also provide support for Innovation Projects involving governance and organisation in all municipal sectors. Within the educational sector support will only be provided for projects addressing governance and organisation, not for innovations related to objectives, content, or teaching and learning methodology and practices.

Requirements relating to participation and financing in the projects

Projects are required to involve at least one other municipality as a partner.

Priority will be given to projects that:

- involve partnerships between three or more municipalities;
- are carried out in a binding partnership with other municipalities;
- include other municipalities in the target group for communication and dissemination activities;
- incorporate specific measures related to communicating and sharing results with municipalities outside the constellation of project participants.

Applications targeting this topic are to select “Renewal and innovation in the public sector” in the grant application form.

FORKOMMUNE work programme

The work programme provides an overview of:

- challenges, objectives and priorities;
- anticipated results, impacts and societal outcomes;
- available resources and budget.

See: FORKOMMUNE work programme (pdf in Norwegian).

Contacts

Marte-Eline Stryken
mes@forskningsradet.no

Jørgen Aas
joa@forskningsradet.no

Erna Wenche Østrem
ewo@forskningsradet.no

Idun Lyngstad
ily@forskningsradet.no

NOK 18 million for innovation projects for city planning and safe cities

Cities and urban areas hold the potential for, and represent arenas for solving, the transition to a sustainable society. In this context, an urban area is understood to be a functional, connected geographic area that surrounds one or more urban centres, and that may encompass large areas, including built-up areas. Cities play an important role in economic development and growth, new knowledge, creativity and innovation.

At the same time, cities face a number of challenges in an increasingly complex, globalised world, and they must respond to restructuring needs that extend across different sectors and service levels. Restructuring in cities can lead to major conflicts of interest and contention. A more complex system presents governance challenges, and urban growth and densification increase pressure on infrastructure. Moreover, cities are intended to be a good place for all to live based on values such as social engagement, inclusion and diversity.

Cities have the potential to develop and implement new solutions. Urbanisation and the expansion of urban areas represent key challenges and offer a good basis for developing innovative solutions for society as a whole. Addressing these challenges requires coordination and more integrated decision-making and comprehensive solutions with regard to governance, democracy and societal security.
Innovation projects must be based on the needs and challenges facing cities and lead to innovations within one or both of the following areas:

- City planning: innovations of significance in enabling city planning to promote inclusive, attractive and active cities and urban areas.
- Safe cities: innovations of significance in enabling planning and societal security efforts, including preparedness and risk and vulnerability management, to create safe cities.

The formal applicant must be a Norwegian municipality.

**Requirements relating to participation and financing in the projects**

Projects are required to involve at least one other city as a partner.

**Priority will be given to projects that:**

- involve partnerships between two or more cities;
- are carried out in a binding partnership with other cities;
- include other cities in addition to the partners in the target group for communication and dissemination activities;
- incorporate specific measures related to communicating and sharing results with cities outside the constellation of project participants.

**DEMOS work programme**

The work programme provides an overview of

- challenges, objectives and priorities
- anticipated results, impacts and societal outcomes
- available resources and budget

See: DEMOS work programme (pdf).

**Contacts**

- **Berit Berg Tjørhom**
  bbt@forskningsradet.no
- **Janike Harsheim**
  jh@forskningsradet.no
- **Anne Winsnes Rødland**
  awr@forskningsradet.no

**Health**

**Health, care and welfare services**

NOK 50 million for innovation projects for health and welfare services

Health and welfare services in this context refer to health and care services, labour and welfare services, and child and family welfare.

Innovation projects must be based on needs and challenges relating to health and welfare services, must be part of the entity's plans and strategies for development and must build on effective collaboration between the entities and R&D groups. Public sector entities that administer and/or provide services within the health and welfare services are eligible to apply for funding.

Of particular relevance are projects that:

- lead to more effective use of resources in health and welfare services;
- enhance synergies in service provision and lead to more effective utilisation of existing systems.

**Requirements relating to participation and financing in the projects**

Projects are required to involve at least one other city as a partner.
The project must accommodate user needs and user involvement must be clearly described.

**Priority will be given to projects that (in the following order):**

1. cover all three service areas described above, provided that the grant applications have received a mark of 5 or higher;
2. involve innovations that will help to strengthen collaboration across service areas;
3. have transfer value to other entities in the sector;
4. involve technological solutions based on outcome studies of digital solutions;
5. involve innovations that have clear potential for scalability at the national/Nordic level.

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**HELSEVEL work programme**

The work programme provides an overview of

- challenges, objectives and priorities
- anticipated results, impacts and societal outcomes
- available resources and budget


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**Contact**

- **Anila Nauni**  
  ann@forskningsradet.no

- **Kristin Andersen**  
  kran@forskningsradet.no

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**Enabling technologies**

*Digitalisation and use of ICT*

**NOK 30 million for ICT-based innovation through digitalisation**

Today ICT can be seen as the basis for an innovative, far-reaching system that is transforming the content of work as well as the dynamics within business and industry, the public sector and society as a whole. Digitalisation is the most significant driver of social transformation of our time and is rapidly changing functions, work, production and services in the private and public sectors alike.

Funding is available to promote research in priority areas within ICT and ensure that the research results are applied in practice and form a constructive foundation for enhanced efficiency and innovation in the public sector and/or for its users.

**Priority will be given to projects that:**

- involve research in one or more of the topics of Big Data, artificial intelligence, digital security, robotics and the Internet of things;

are based on the needs of users of public sector services and public administration and/or that lead to higher quality and efficiency in the public administration.

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**IKTPLUSS work programme**

The work programme provides an overview of

- challenges, objectives and priorities
- anticipated results, impacts and societal outcomes
- available resources and budget

Approximately NOK 35 million for public-sector innovation to promote a circular, bio-based economy

A circular, bio-based economy – the bioeconomy – is to lead to green growth and a low-emission society with effective use and reuse of resources. The Government’s bioeconomy strategy, “Familiar resources– undreamt of possibilities”, (2016) sets out the guidelines for national efforts to strengthen bio-based trade and industry. The public sector, together with the business sector, plays a key role in activities promoting the transition towards more sustainable society through, for example, governance and organisation, innovative procurements, service development and administrative tasks.

Innovation projects awarded funding are to help to achieve the three main objectives described in the Government’s bioeconomy strategy:

- increased value creation and employment;
- reduced emission of greenhouse gases;
- more efficient and sustainable use of renewable biological resources.

It is also crucial to collaborate across sectors, industries and disciplines to ensure more circular, sustainable use of renewable bioresources. The funding awarded is therefore to promote exploitation of synergies across established sectors, structures and patterns of interaction. This encompasses socioeconomic, cultural, technological and legislative factors. Funding may also contribute to the development of new technology, as well as related, non bio-based business areas through closer collaboration with bio-based industries.

Priority will be given to:

- projects that help to achieve the three main objectives described in the Government’s bioeconomy strategy;
- when prioritising projects for funding, importance will be attached to funding projects that, together, cover the full breadth of thematic scope described above with regard to various research issues and stakeholders.

Increased allocations from the Ministry of Climate and Environment in connection with the Government’s third package of financial measures to address the impacts of the coronavirus outbreak (Prop. 127 S (2019-2020))

The Research Council is increasing the funding amount available under calls for proposals in 2020 with an additional NOK 75 million for projects that promote research-driven innovation for low-emissions solutions, and/or research on and business development of new solutions and technology to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases and safeguard biodiversity. Projects under this thematic area may be of interest for funding in keeping with the supplementary allocations.
Requirements for this application type

The grant application form must be created and submitted via “My RCN Web”. The grant application, including all attachments, may be submitted in Norwegian or English. 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.

- All attachments must be in PDF format and uploaded as an attachment to the grant application form. The designated templates are found at the end of the call for proposals.
- The project description must be written using the designated template. All items must be completed.
- If the applicant has submitted the same or similar grant proposals to other Research Council calls for proposals, this must be stated in the grant application.
- The earliest permitted project start date is 1 March 2021.
- The latest permitted project start date for projects is 1 October 2021. Projects approved for funding that have not started by this date may lose their allocation.

Mandatory attachments

- A project description of maximum 10 pages using the designated template. All items must be completed.
- CVs for the project manager and other key project participants (e.g. individuals responsible for the project’s work packages) using the designated templates. CVs are to be uploaded as attachment type “Curriculum vitae (CV)”.
- Information about all participating partners in the project, including the Project Owner, must be provided in accordance with the template available at the end of the call for proposals. This is to be uploaded as attachment type “Partner information”.

All requirements stipulated in this call for proposals must be satisfied. Grant applications that do not satisfy the requirements relating to the application type, to the Project Owner or to collaboration and roles in the project 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.

Optional attachments

Applicants are free to propose up to three referees who are presumed to be impartial and qualified to review the grant proposal. The Research Council is not under any obligation to use the proposed referees, but may use them as needed.

Assessment criteria

Grant proposals will be assessed on the basis of the following criteria:

Excellence

To what extent does the project represent an ambitious innovation that is supported by relevant R&D activities of high quality?

- To what extent does the innovation represent something new?
- To what extent will the innovation help to resolve a challenge and/or meet a recognised need?
- To what extent does the project have the potential to generate new knowledge that can lead to innovation?
- To what extent are the R&D activities essential for the success of the innovation?
- To what extent does the project build on relevant and updated knowledge?
- To what extent does the project employ relevant and recognised R&D methods?

Impact

To what extent does the project pave the way for value creation in the public sector entities as well as lay a foundation for benefits to other segments of the public sector?

Value creation and utilisation of results

- To what extent are the potential impacts of the project clearly formulated and plausible?
- To what extent will the results of the project facilitate value creation for the applicant and partners in the public sector?
- To what extent is the plan for realising the innovation relevant and appropriate, including risk assessments, plans and resource needs, partners, strategic priorities and roles?

Dissemination, knowledge sharing and distribution and other societal outcomes

- To what extent are dissemination and communication activities clearly formulated and directed towards relevant target groups?
- To what extent is the potential for knowledge sharing and distribution through dissemination, cooperation and networks clearly and adequately specified?
- To what extent can the project lead to other positive societal outcomes, such as:
  - facilitating utilisation of results by other segments of the public sector, the business sector or other stakeholders;
  - leading to an innovation that can address UN Sustainable Development Goals or solve other important societal challenges.
Implementation

To what extent does the work plan provide a good basis for implementing the R&D activities and realising the potential for value creation?

Quality of the project’s organisation and management

• To what extent is the project work plan satisfactory, including whether the resources for the various work packages are adequate and reflect the individual work package’s objectives, timetable and deliverables?
• To what extent are the partners well suited for carrying out the R&D activities, and is the distribution of the budget, roles and responsibilities clearly-defined and relevant?
• To what extent is the leadership and administration of the project appropriately organised?

Quality of the project manager and project group

• To what extent does the project manager have the appropriate expertise and experience to lead an R&D project targeted towards innovation and value creation in the public sector?
• To what extent does the project group have the competence and expertise needed to implement the project efficiently?

Relevance to the call for proposals

To what extent is the project in keeping with the objectives and the structural and thematic guidelines set out in the call for proposals?

Administrative procedures

Once the grant applications have been received, the Research Council will review them to ensure that they satisfy all the formal requirements relating to the call and attachments. Grant applications that do not comply with the requirements will be rejected.

Grant applications that satisfy the formal requirements will be distributed to referee panels comprised of external specialists with expertise in the relevant thematic areas and disciplines.

For each grant application, we check to ensure that the panel meets requirements relating to impartiality and has sufficient expertise to review the application’s research topic. The panel will assess the three criteria Excellence, Impact and Implementation, and will assign a consensus-based mark for each of these criteria.

The panel’s assessment plays a crucial role in determining whether a project merits funding.

Grant applications assigned a mark of 4 or higher for each of the criteria (on a scale from 1-7, where 7 is the highest mark) will subsequently be assessed by Research Council case officers in relation to a fourth criterion, “Relevance to the call for proposals”. The assessment of all four criteria will be consolidated into a single, overall mark that indicates the merit of the project proposal.

The Research Council administration will present the project proposals and their respective marks to the relevant Research Council portfolio boards for the final funding decision. The portfolio boards will attach importance to achieving a balanced project portfolio in the areas under their purview and in light of ongoing projects and grant applications submitted under other calls for proposals. The boards’ assessments will be based on the budgetary framework, the text of the call for proposals and documents referred to in the description of the respective thematic areas.

Each portfolio board will also act in accordance with the Research Council’s general policy for allocation of funding, i.e. will assess grant proposals in relation to:

• research ethics perspectives;
• prioritisation of projects led by women project managers, assuming all other quality-related factors are essentially equal.

Prioritisation of projects based on the impact on sustainability and the environment, assuming all other quality-related factors are essentially equal. The final funding decision will be announced by the first week of January at the latest.

State aid

This call for proposals constitutes a funding scheme that is notified to the EFTA Surveillance Authority. Funding awarded under this scheme is granted in accordance with Article 25 of the General Block Exemption Regulation for state aid (Commission Regulation (EU) No 651/2014 of 17 June 2014). This funding scheme is to be practised in compliance with the EEA state aid rules. This means that conditions and concepts are to be interpreted in keeping with corresponding conditions and concepts in the state aid rules. In the event of conflict between the text of the call and the state aid rules, the latter will have precedence. The text of the call may be adjusted for this same reason. This call is approved as a funding scheme by the EFTA Surveillance Authority (ESA) in aid reference xx/R&D&I under the General Block Exemption Regulation. (reference coming soon).

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Innovation Project for the Public Sector


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