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# Research on the Environment and Natural Values Related to Possible Future Mineral Activities on the Norwegian Continental Shelf

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Financial scheme: Collaborative and Knowledge-building Project

Application deadline: 4 June 2025, 13:00 CEST

Relevant thematic areas for this call: Energy and transportation

Target groups: Research organisations

Funding scale: NOK 8 000 000-16 000 000

Amount of funding presumed available for this call for proposals:  
NOK 50 000 000

Project duration: 24-48 months

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## Important dates

**23 Apr 2025: Open for applications**

**04 Jun 2025: Application deadline**

**16 Dec 2025: Expected response to the application**

**01 Jan 2026: Earliest permitted project start**

**01 Apr 2026: Latest permitted project start**

**31 Mar 2030: Latest permitted project completion date**

## Purpose

The purpose of this call is to stimulate research organisations to collaborate with relevant societal and business actors. This will increase knowledge about the biodiversity on the seabed where the minerals are located, knowledge about the mineral resources, and what consequences any extraction may have for the marine environment. The research and development needs are linked to the Storting's decision to allow mineral activities on the Norwegian continental shelf (Report No. 25 to the Storting (2022–2023) and Prop. 1 to the Storting (2024–2025)).

### SHORTCUTS

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## About the call for proposals

Through this call, we will support projects in which research organisations and actors outside the research sector work together to develop new knowledge needed to address important societal challenges.

This call constitutes an aid scheme that must be notified to the EFTA Surveillance Authority, ESA, and the scheme must be implemented in accordance with the EEA Agreement's state aid rules. Read more about state aid under the heading "Conditions for funding".

Before applying, you must acquaint yourself with the [Guide for Applicants - Collaborative Project to meet Society and Industry-related Challenges](#).

[You can see a video presentation of how to fill out the application form here](#) (in Norwegian).

The call is available in both Norwegian and English. The text of the Norwegian call for proposals is legally binding.

This is the only call in 2025 that will be aimed at seabed minerals. We will not have a call for innovation projects for industry aimed at deep sea minerals.

Funding is available for research projects that build knowledge about the environment and natural values associated with possible future deep sea mineral activity on the Norwegian continental shelf.

### Delimitations

Projects must fall under at least one of these three topics:

- Knowledge of the deep-sea environment and ecosystem in connection with mineral deposits
- Knowledge and geological understanding of mineral-forming processes on the Norwegian shelf
- Knowledge about the effects of possible mineral activities on the seabed

The projects are intended to increase the knowledge-base on mineral activities on the seabed and the consequences that any extraction of minerals may have for the marine environment. Environmental perspectives must be represented in all applications, and the projects must be limited to resources in areas on the Norwegian continental shelf that may be opened for such activity.

Who is eligible to apply?

Only approved Norwegian research organisations are eligible to apply. [See the list of approved research organisations](#).

Who can participate in the project?

### Requirements relating to the Project Owner

The research organisation listed as the Project Owner in the application form must have approved the submission of the application. The application must be set up in accordance with the strategies of the Project Owner.

### Requirements relating to the project manager

The project manager's academic competence and suitability to carry out the project will be assessed by peers. There are no formal requirements for the project manager's qualifications.

The project manager must be employed by the Project Owner or by one of the partners.

### Requirements for collaboration and roles in the project

- The project must have at least two Norwegian partners that are not research organisations (see the guidelines for definition). These must be societal or industry actors who contribute expertise and experience, and who ensure that the project and its objectives address real challenges in society and/or the industrial sector.

- Universities, university colleges and institutes whose main task is to conduct research may not have the role of societal or business actor in this call.
- The application must be strategically supported by all partners. They must confirm this in a letter of intent.
- You will carry out the project in actual collaboration. Read more in the guide and under [Article 25: Important definitions](#).
- The Project Owner and partners must be independent of each other. This means that one cannot have a controlling influence over the other. This applies both between the Project Owner and the partner, and between all the partners, and the subcontractors and the Project Owner(s) must also be independent of each other. By controlling influence, we mean majority ownership or other specific legal or factual circumstances that mean that one actor can control the other. [Read more about such dependencies here](#).
- At least 10 per cent of the project's total costs must be borne by the partners who are not research organisations. In the guidelines, this is referred to as the participation requirement. You make this visible in the table in the project description.
- One and the same actor cannot have several roles in the project, for example as a partner and subcontractor.
- The project must have a steering group or reference group in which the partners are represented.
- The project must not be commissioned research. In the application, you must describe how the expertise built up in the project can benefit larger user groups.

What can you seek funding for?

You can apply for funding to cover the actual costs necessary to carry out the project. The Project Owner must obtain information on costs from the partners in the project. These costs must be entered in the cost plan under the cost type to which they belong.

We require that you break down the project budget into the following cost types in your application:

- [Payroll and indirect expenses](#), which are costs related to researcher time (including research fellowship positions and the project manager's position) at the research organisations participating in the project. For doctoral scholarships, the support is limited to three full-time equivalents. For postdoctoral fellowships, the support is limited to a minimum of three years and a maximum of four years. See our website about [postdoctoral research fellowship positions](#) and [doctoral research fellowship positions](#).
- [Other operating expenses](#), which are costs for other activities that are necessary to carry out the project's R&D activities. Any purchases from subcontractors must be entered here. All costs entered as "other operating expenses" must be specified in the application.
- [Equipment](#), which are costs that include operating and depreciation costs for scientific equipment and research infrastructure necessary to carry out the project.

The cost type **Procurement of R&D services** cannot be used.

If doctoral and postdoctoral research fellows are included in the project and there are specific plans for them to stay abroad, this may be included in the application. The Research Council also has a separate call for proposals for research stays abroad for doctoral and post-doctoral research fellows.

You will find detailed and important information about [what to enter in the project budget](#) on the website.

## Costs for Norwegian partners

### Companies

Companies that are to be partners must be registered in the Norwegian Register of Business Enterprises and have economic activity in Norway. By economic activity, we mean offering goods or services in a market. This means that the partner must either be a private company, or a public enterprise that conducts activities of an industrial or commercial nature. The partners whose project costs are covered by our support will be recipients of state aid. These limitations depend on the size of the enterprise and the type of research being conducted. Please note, however, that in this call, funding is only awarded that corresponds to the funding intensity for industrial research, even if the company(s) are involved in basic research in the project.

If the application is recommended for award, we will ask for more information to ensure that our funding is in line with the regulations.

### Public actors

Public actors other than those mentioned in the section above are not covered by the state aid rules. This means that we can cover up to 100% of your costs.

## Costs for foreign partners

The Research Council's allocation may cover the costs of the foreign research organisations. See [Budgeting costs for foreign partners](#).

We cannot cover costs with other foreign partners. These costs must therefore be kept out of the budget tables. However, you must mention the activities they will carry out, as well as their costs, in the project description (see section 3.2).

## Ethics

The Research Council requires a high standard of research ethics in the projects we fund, and ethics is included in the assessment criterion for Research Quality. In the template for the project description, there is a separate section that deals with this. The description of ethics is first and foremost an assurance to the peers that there is a plan in place to deal with the most important ethical dilemmas in the project. If you need to describe this in more detail, this can be done elsewhere in the project description, for example under method selection, or you can do so in the data management plan(s) (see below).

The responsibility for compliance with the research ethics standard lies with the individual researcher and research organisation (cf. The Act on the Organisation of Research Ethics).

The panel's assessment and the Research Council's decision regarding funding do not entail any approval of research ethics.

## Conditions for funding

- Support for a research organisation goes to the organisation's non-economic activity. It therefore does not constitute state aid. The Research Council assumes that the necessary accounting separation is in place.
- Aid to undertakings constitutes state aid. In this context, an undertaking means any actor that engages in economic activity by offering goods and/or services in a market. When an enterprise is to be reimbursed for part of its project costs, as a partner in the project, this must be done in accordance with Article 25 of the General Block Exemption Regulation (Commission Regulation (EU) No. 651/2014). [Read more about state aid](#). The call for proposals has been notified as an aid scheme to the EFTA Surveillance Authority (ESA) with the reference GBER 30/2025/R&D&I.
- Aid may not be granted to undertakings that have not complied with the requirements for repayment following a previous decision by the ESA/EU Commission declaring the aid illegal and incompatible with the internal market. Nor may aid be granted to undertakings in difficulty within the meaning of EEA law. See our website about [Enterprises in difficulty](#).
- We require annual project accounting reports documenting incurred project costs and their financing. The Research Council's prerequisites for awarding and disbursing funding are set out in [the General Terms and Conditions for R&D Projects](#).

In addition, you must be aware of the following if you should receive an award from us:

- The Research Council's prerequisites for awards can also be found in our general terms and conditions for R&D projects on the information page [What the contract involves](#).
- The Project Owner must establish a [collaboration agreement\(s\)](#) with all partners in the project. The collaboration agreement is intended to regulate mutual rights and obligations and ensure the integrity and independence of research. The collaboration agreement must also ensure that no collaborating undertaking receives indirect funding from the research organisation that is the Project Owner or from the collaborating research organisation. The cooperation agreement must therefore contain conditions that ensure that [ESA's guidelines on state aid for R&D&I, section 28](#), are complied with.
- If the project has PhD and postdoctoral research fellows where the responsible higher education institution does not participate in the application, you must also have a collaboration agreement with the responsible/degree-conferring institution.
- The project manager and the Project Owner must have assessed and handled the consideration of research security in the project. [Research security](#) refers to risks associated with unwanted transfer of knowledge and technology, impact on research and innovation, or breaches of research ethics/integrity where knowledge and technology are used to undermine key societal values.
- Research organisations that receive grants and the public sector (Project Owners and partners) must have [action plans for gender equality \(GEPs\)](#) available on their websites. The requirement does not apply to the private sector, interest groups or the voluntary sector.
- The Research Council requires full and immediate open access for scientific articles, see [Plan S - open access to publications](#).
- For all projects that handle data, the Project Owner must prepare a data management plan in connection with the revised application, [where you will find more information about the requirements for data management plans in projects that receive funding from us](#).
- The Project Owner decides which archiving solution(s) will be used for storing research data that emerges from the project.
- For medical and health studies involving humans, the Research Council sets [special requirements and guidelines for prospective registration of studies and publication of results](#).

# Relevant thematic areas for this call

Energy and transportation

## Practical information

Requirements for this funding scheme

You can change and submit the application several times until the application deadline. We recommend that you submit your application as soon as you have completed the application form and uploaded the mandatory attachments. When the application deadline expires, it is the version of the application that was submitted most recently that we process.

- The application and all attachments must be written in English.
- All mandatory attachments must be in PDF format.
- The project must start between 1 January 2026 and 1 April 2026. Projects that have received a decision on allocation, but which do not start during this period, may lose their allocation.
- The latest permitted project completion is 31 March 2030.

### Mandatory attachments

- Project description. Use the standard template that you can download at the bottom of the page.
- CVs for the project manager and for the most important project participants, each of a maximum of four pages. You yourself assess which project participants are the most important. Key project participants who are researchers can use the CV template called "Template for CV researchers". Other key project participants can use the CV template called "Template for CV".
- Letters of intent from all the partners. [See sample letter of intent on our guidance page.](#)
- Description of relevance of a maximum of one page. Uploaded as attachment type "Other".

You must use standard templates for all required attachments. The templates can be found at the bottom of the call. All requirements in the call must be met. Applications that do not meet the requirements for design, attachments, the Project Owner, collaboration and roles in the project will be rejected.

### Optional attachments

Feel free to attach proposals for up to three professionals (or academic communities) who you believe have the competence to assess the application, or a brief description of the expertise that you believe will be suitable for assessing it. We are not obliged to use the suggestions, but can use them if necessary. We encourage gender balance in the proposals.

All attachments to the application must be submitted with the application. We do not accept attachments submitted after the application deadline unless we have requested additional documentation.

We will not consider documents and websites linked to in the application, or attachments other than those specified above. Be careful to upload the correct attachment type, as there are no technical restrictions on what kind of templates it is possible to upload in the application form.

Assessment criteria

Applications will be assessed in light of the purpose of the call and the following criteria:

### Excellence

The extent to which the proposed work is ambitious, novel, and goes beyond the state-of-the-art

- Scientific creativity and originality.
- Novelty and boldness of hypotheses or research questions.
- Potential for development of new knowledge beyond the current state of the art, including significant theoretical, methodological, experimental or empirical advancement.

The quality of the proposed R&D activities

- Quality of the research questions, hypotheses and project objectives, and the extent to which they are clearly and adequately specified.
  - Credibility and appropriateness of the theoretical approach, research design and use of scientific methods.
- Appropriate consideration of interdisciplinary approaches.

- The extent to which appropriate consideration has been given to societal responsibility, ethical issues and gender dimensions in research content.
- The extent to which appropriate consideration has been given to the use of stakeholder/user knowledge.

## **Impact**

Potential impact of the proposed research

- The extent to which the planned outputs of the project address important present and/or future scientific challenges.
- The extent to which the planned outputs are openly accessible to ensure reusability of the research outputs and enhance reproducibility.
- The extent to which the planned outputs of the project address important present and/or future challenges for the sector(s).
- The extent to which the competence developed and planned outputs of the project will provide the basis for value creation in Norwegian business and/or development of the public sector.
- The extent to which the planned outputs of the project address UN Sustainable Development Goals or other important present and/or future societal challenges.
- The extent to which the potential impacts are clearly formulated and plausible.

Communication and exploitation

- The extent to which the appropriate open science practices are implemented as an integral part of the proposed project to ensure open sharing and wide distribution of research outputs.
- Quality and scope of communication and engagement activities targeted towards relevant stakeholders/users.
- The extent to which the partners are involved in dissemination and utilisation of the project results.

## **Implementation**

The quality of the project manager and project group

- The extent to which the project manager has relevant expertise and experience and demonstrated ability to perform high-quality research (as appropriate to the career stage).
- The degree of complementarity of the participants and the extent to which the project group has the necessary expertise needed to undertake the research effectively.

The quality of the project organisation and management

- Effectiveness of the project organisation, 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 participants have a valid role and adequate resources in the project to fulfil that role.
- Appropriateness of the proposed management structures and governance.
- Appropriateness of the partners' contribution to the governance and execution of the project.

## **Relevance to the chosen topic**

- The extent to which the project satisfies the thematic orientation described in the text for the chosen topic.
- The extent to which the project satisfies any other priorities in the text for the chosen topic.

Priority will be given to projects with a female project manager when the applications are otherwise assessed equally.

Administrative procedures

## **Relevance**

When we award a mark for the application's relevance, it will be considered positive that the project

- has a well-defined research question within one or more of the topics with realistic ambitions for the activities in the project
- opens for sharing data and knowledge
- has high relevance for decision-makers
- give a thorough account of environmental perspectives
- has partners from the Norwegian industrial sector

## **Portfolio assessments**

The portfolio board aims to fund 3-5 projects, and wants a balanced portfolio with regard to the topics described above. In addition, a wide range of actors outside the research sector is desired, including the Norwegian industrial sector.

Once the application deadline has passed, we will first check that all formal requirements are met. Applications that do not satisfy the formal requirements will be rejected.

The Research Council may reject applications where the Project Owner or partner has materially breached its obligations in other projects funded by the Research Council in the two years prior to the submission of the application.

The application may be rejected if the project manager has been appointed to the Joint Integrity Committee or the Investigation Committee in the last two years prior to the submission of the application.

In addition, applications that are outside the thematic limitations set out in the call will be rejected. Decisions on this are made by the portfolio board.

Where the requirements are met, we will make the application, with all mandatory attachments, available in an online portal for peers who individually assess the criteria "Excellence", "Impact " and "Implementation". The referees then meet in panels where they arrive at a consensus assessment of the application for each of the three criteria.

If the referee panel assesses all the criteria for a mark of 4 or higher, the application will also be assessed on the basis of the criterion "Relevance to the chosen topic" by the Research Council's case officers.









The assessment of the four above criteria is summarised in an overall mark for the application. The Research Council's administration then creates ranking lists based on this grade.

Finally, it is the portfolio board that decides which applications will receive funding. Their decision is based on the ranking lists and an overall portfolio assessment.


We expect to publish which applications will be awarded on 16 December 2025.

On the Research Council's website, you can read more about [the administrative procedure for Collaborative and Knowledge-building Projects](#).

## Download templates

	Template for project description - Collaborative Project 2025.docx	
	Template for CV researchers.docx	
	Template for CV.docx	
	Template - Relevance of the project.docx	

★ MANDATORY ATTACHMENT

Download all templates 

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