● COMPLETED

Researcher Project for Early Career Scientists (Thematic Call)

Financial scheme: Researcher Project

Application deadline: 5 March 2025, 13:00 CET

Relevant thematic areas for this call:
Food and bioresources, Welfare and education

Target groups: Research organisations

Funding scale: NOK 4 000 000-10 000 000

Amount of funding presumed available for this call for proposals:
NOK 70 000 000

Project duration: 36-48 months

Contact for the call: ResearcherProject | ResearcherProject@rcn.no

[Download all files ⌄]

⚠ Tildelingsmøtene for denne utlysningen holdes i ukene 24, 25, 37 og 39. Vi publiserer resultatet så fort dette er klart etter møtene.

Important dates

22 Jan 2025: Open for applications

05 Mar 2025: Application deadline

01 Oct 2025: Earliest permitted project start

01 Apr 2026: Latest permitted project start

31 Mar 2030: Latest permitted project completion date

Last updates

28 FEB 2025   ○   We have updated the General Terms and Conditions for R&D Projects. These new terms and conditions apply to applications received by the Research Council of Norway from 1 March 2025. Please see What the contract involves.

⌄

Purpose

The purpose of this call is to give researchers the opportunity to pursue their own ideas and to lead a research project within the topics specified in the call. The call is aimed at researchers at an early stage in their careers, 2–7 years after the defence of an approved doctorate, who have demonstrated the potential to conduct research of high scientific quality.

About the call for proposals

The purpose of the call is to stimulate researchers at the start of their careers to lead projects based on their own ideas.

In addition to this call, we have other calls for proposals with a deadline of 5 March that are aimed at research organisations. These calls are:

- Researcher Project for Early Career (thematic, this call)
- Researcher Project for Scientific Renewal (thematic call)
- Large, interdisciplinary research project
- Knowledge-building Projects for Industry
- Collaborative Project to Meet Societal and Industry-related Challenges

In the thematic texts of this call, you will find information on which of the other calls may be relevant to the individual topic.

We therefore recommend that you also read through any other relevant calls to see which one is most suitable for your project. Please note that we do not move applications between the calls, and that it is therefore important that you send the application to the correct call.

You can create an application and fill in the application form from 22 January.

- Here you can see a video presentation of how to fill out the application form. The video is from 2024, and the dates mentioned relate to the deadlines in March last year. The general content of the video, however, is still relevant to our calls with deadline 5 March this year.
- Watch the recording of the applicant webinar on the March deadlines for researchers.

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

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.

If the application is a collaboration between several organisations, the Project Owner must submit the application on behalf of all partners.

Requirements relating to the project manager

You can only serve as project manager for one application submitted for the deadline of 5 March 2025. This

means that if you are the project manager for an application under this call, you cannot serve as the project manager for applications for any of the other calls with a deadline of 5 March 2025.

Requirements for experience: You must have an approved doctoral degree and between two and seven years must have passed from the date of the public defence to the application deadline. You must have defended your thesis no earlier than 5 March 2018 and no later than 5 March 2023.

If more than seven years have passed since the date of the public defence, you can apply for a deduction for statutory leave, compulsory military or civilian service, asylum seeker or refugee status or sick leave in accordance with our deduction rules.

Deduction rules
You can apply for a deduction if you have:

- had statutory leave,
- completed compulsory initial military or civilian service (up to 12 months deducted for each),
- applied for asylum or refugee status (deduction for the period from submission until you receive an answer to your application for asylum or refugee status and/or the granting of a residence permit), or
- had continuous full-time and/or part-time sick leave corresponding to at least eight weeks of full-time absence.

The deduction periods must have taken place after the date of the defence date.

In order to grant a deduction, we require that you attach documentation of what you are applying for a deduction for when you submit the application. You must also fill in the deduction in the application form. We accept documentation from NAV, doctor/health service or other public bodies/bodies (in Norway or another country) and employer. Documentation from the supervisor/previous supervisor is not sufficient. If you use documentation from your employer, it must be from the employer's administration, such as the HR department. The documentation must be in Norwegian, Swedish, Danish or English, or an approved translation into one of these languages must be included.

We follow the leave rules described in the Working Environment Act, and you can apply for a deduction for leave that you would have been entitled to if you lived in Norway when you were on leave. For example, you can claim a deduction for parental leave in a country where parental leave is not required by law, if you actually had parental leave. The requirement is that you can document the leave as described above.

- You must work at least 25 percent of a full-time position in the project during the project period.
- You must be employed in at least 50 per cent of a position by the Project Owner research organisation throughout the project period. You can be employed or become employed in a position as a postdoctoral research fellow, researcher or other academic position. You can, but do not have to, be employed by the Project Owner when you submit the application.

Requirements relating to partners
We do not require collaboration in this call. If you are going to include partners, the following applies:

- Only approved Norwegian research organisations (see "Who is eligible to apply?" above) or equivalent research organisations in other countries are eligible to be partners and receive funding under this call.
- Other types of organisations, including companies and other enterprises, may not be partners in research projects.
- All partners must enter into a collaboration agreement as part of the contract if you are awarded funding from the Research Council.

Read more about partners.

As the Project Owner or partner in the project, you can engage subcontractors to deliver services and contribute to the implementation of certain tasks in the project. Subcontractors cannot be given rights to project results. Organisations that are subject to the regulations for public procurement must in the usual way carry out the selection of subcontractors in line with these regulations. You cannot have R&D suppliers in the project.

Read more about the use of R&D providers and subcontractors

One actor cannot have different roles in the project. This means that a subcontractor cannot be the Project Owner or a partner in the project at the same time.

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 post-doctoral research fellowship positions and doctoral research fellowship positions.
- **Other operating expenses**, which are costs for other activities 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 item **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, or if there are specific plans for visiting researchers or stays abroad for researchers in the project, this may be included in the application. The rules for such stays and information about rates can be found on the budget information page (see link below).

You can find detailed and important information about what the budget should contain on the website.

Scope of funding

Funding of NOK 4–10 million per project is available under this call.

We do not require own funding. If our lump sum rates do not cover all costs for recruitment positions in the university and university college or institute sector or for research positions in the university and university college sector, we assume that you cover the difference with your own funding. For research positions in the institute sector, you must use the reported hourly rates.

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 institution (cf. The Act on the Organisation of Research Ethics). The panel's assessment and the Research Council's decision on funding do not entail any research ethics approval.

Conditions for funding

We do not award state aid under this call. This means that the funding should only go to the research organisation's non-economic activity. We assume that the necessary accounting separation is in place. Our requirements relating to allocation and disbursement of funding for the first year, and any pledges and payments for subsequent years, can be found in our General Terms and Conditions for R&D Projects on the information page What the contract involves.

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

- The project manager and the Project Owner must have assessed and managed any issue of research security in the project. Research security refers to the risks related to undesirable transfer of knowledge and technology, malign influence on research and innovation or violations of research ethics or integrity, where knowledge and technology are used to undermine key societal values.
- Grant recipients that are research organisations or public sector bodies (Project Owners and partners) must have a Gender Equality Plan (GEP) available on their websites. This must be in place before the contract is signed for projects awarded funding from us. The requirement does not apply to private businesses, special interest organisations 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. Here you will find more information about the requirements for data management plans in projects that receive funding from the Research Council.
- For medical and health studies involving humans, the Research Council stipulates special requirements and guidelines for prospective registration of studies and publication of results.

Relevant thematic areas for this call

It is only possible to submit applications aimed at the topics mentioned in the call. You must explain how the application is relevant to the topic in the appendix *Relevance to the topic*. The topics in this call are grouped into the thematic areas below. The topics contain special requirements and guidelines that will be emphasised in the assessment of the application.

Food and bioresources

ANIMAL HEALTH AND WELFARE (INCLUDING FISH)   SUSTAINABLE FEED

NOK 20 million for research to improve animal health and welfare (including fish) ⌄

Good animal health and welfare is a cornerstone for optimal and ethical production of food and absolutely necessary to take care of the animals' intrinsic value. Both the seafood sector and livestock production have challenges with animal health and welfare. There is a great need for knowledge about how different factors, alone or in combination, affect animal health and welfare. This includes, but is not limited to, new and existing diseases and parasites, immunology and the spread of infection, genetics, environment, technology and operating methods, feed and nutrition, animal behaviour and ethical animal husbandry, fishing and killing.

Delimitations

Funding is available for projects that strengthen knowledge about animal health and welfare. The projects will contribute to increased knowledge about how different factors affect animal health or welfare. The topic includes research in all disciplines and areas aimed at improving the health or welfare of terrestrial production animals, aquaculture animals (both freshwater and saltwater) and/or during fishing and hunting.

The research must be relevant to aquaculture, fishing or livestock husbandry that provide a basis for value creation in Norway. Pets, competition animals and hobby-based animal husbandry, and wild, terrestrial animals, are not covered by this topic.

We expect projects that are relevant to the topic "Sustainable feed" to apply there. The Research Council has the right to move applications to the topic Sustainable feed if we believe the application is more relevant there.

The Ministry of Trade, Industry and Fisheries and the Ministry of Agriculture and Food are allocating funding for this topic. The allocation of projects must reflect the funds allocated by the respective ministries.

Relevance

Priority will be given to applications that meet the theme of the topic.

The active participation of at least one international partner in the project, who has costs and involvement in at least one work package, will also count positively.

Portfolio assessments

The portfolio board takes into account the following factors when allocating funds:

- the marks awarded in the assessment of the applications
- a good thematic distribution of projects within the industries in the portfolio

In practice, this means that the portfolio board can allocate funds to projects of poorer quality, rather than projects of better quality, in order to achieve the goal of a good distribution of projects in the portfolio or to use up the available funds.

Up to 20 million for research into sustainable feed raw materials for farmed fish and livestock ⌄

The Portfolio Board for Food and Bioresources wants to invest in research that supports the social mission of sustainable feed for livestock and farmed fish. The report from the design phase of the social mission pointed to several barriers to new feed raw materials being further developed on a commercial scale or being put into use. Among these are obstacles in the food safety regulations for the use of some new, sustainable feed raw materials. For some of these raw materials, it is likely that new knowledge will be able to show that the feed

raw materials are safe, and thus contribute to changes in the regulations and enable their use in feed in the relatively short term. There is also a need for basic research to support further development in the production and application of sustainable feed raw materials.

Delimitations

Projects must fall under one of the following research areas:

1. Research that contributes to the development and/or application of sustainable feed raw materials. This includes (not limited to) production, harvesting and use of biological raw materials, processing into raw materials that are planned to be included in feed, technical/physical quality of feed production, nutritional suitability and/or effect on health and welfare. Projects that primarily focus on the production or harvesting of a biological raw material or feed raw material should include studies of its use in feed and nutritional suitability. The research area is open to issues in the natural sciences, social sciences and/or cross-cutting issues that include the humanities. Where relevant, the project should highlight possible dilemmas in using biological feed raw materials while maintaining biodiversity and safeguarding the climate.
2. Research to close knowledge gaps that currently cause barriers in the food safety regulations for the use of a feed raw material and where it can be substantiated that new knowledge can remove the barriers. The application must describe in the relevance appendix both points a and b:

   a) why a lack of knowledge is currently a barrier in the regulations

   b) make it probable that new knowledge will be able to remove this barrier in the relatively short term.

The application must describe in the relevance appendix which of the two areas it primarily targets.

We encourage cross-sectoral projects.

The Ministry of Trade, Industry and Fisheries, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food and the Ministry of Education and Research are allocating funding for this call. The allocation of projects must reflect the funds allocated by the respective ministries.

Relevance

Priority will be given to applications that meet at least one of the thematic areas set out in the call.

Portfolio assessments

The portfolio board takes into account the following factors when allocating funds:

- the marks awarded in the assessment of the applications
- a good thematic distribution of projects in the portfolio

In practice, this means that the portfolio board can allocate funds to projects of poorer quality, rather than projects of better quality, in order to achieve the goal of a good distribution of projects in the portfolio or to use up the available funds.

	Anders Karlsson-Drangsholt	anka@forskningsradet.no
✉	Kjersti Mariann Moi	kmmo@forskningsradet.no

🔗 Relevant plans

→   A social uplift for sustainable feed - Report from the design phase

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Welfare and education

Up to NOK 30 million for research for and about the education sector ⌄

Funding is available for research on and about the education sector. Funding is available for projects relating to teaching and learning, the content and forms of assessment of education, professional education, educational technology, governance and organisation of the education sector, and the role of the education system for the individual and in society and working life. The call is open for projects on all levels of the education system, from kindergarten to higher education and competence in working life. Projects that look at transitions between levels are also relevant.

The aim is to generate high-quality research that is of particular interest to actors and stakeholders related to policymaking, administration and fields of practice in education, learning and competence development. The projects are intended to contribute to knowledge-based development. We encourage projects that are interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary when this serves the purpose.

Delimitations

The thematic priorities for research for and about education are divided into four broadly defined thematic areas. The thematic areas are interrelated and are not mutually exclusive, so that issues may intervene across these. Projects must be relevant to at least one of the following four areas:

- **Teaching and learning.** Learning and education is a continuous and lifelong process that takes place in many social arenas. We need knowledge about how different children, young people and adults learn and develop in different contexts in the face of the future and new challenges.

- **Competence development.** In order to have a stronger working life orientation and a continuously updated knowledge base, the aim is for the programmes to work to link research, education and professional practice. There is a need for research for evidence-based practice and the development of tools, systems or models that can promote quality in practice throughout the education system, from kindergarten to higher education and working life.

- **Management and organization**. Good management and well-functioning organisation are crucial for high quality in education and training programmes. In order to develop a future-oriented and flexible education system, we need more knowledge about how governance and management at and between different levels contribute to development work.

- **The importance of education for the individual and for society and working life.** Access to and facilitation of participation for all in the education system and in working life is of great importance for the individual's opportunities for a good life. There is a need for gender and diversity perspectives in research, including indigenous and minority perspectives.

Relevance

If the applications are relevant to the points above, priority will be given to projects that have a

- active collaboration with at least one other national research institution
- active collaboration with at least one research organisation abroad

Portfolio assessments

1. The thematic area Governance, management and organisation will be prioritised in the allocation process.
2. The portfolio board aims for a balanced portfolio with regard to the gender of the project managers.

✉ ## Contact

Miriam El Moussaoui	memo@forskningsradet.no
Kari Tonhild Aune	kta@forskningsradet.no
Velferd og utdanning	velut@forskningsradet.no

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 required attachments. When the application deadline expires, it is the version of the application that was submitted most recently that we process.

The application must meet the following requirements:

- The application and all attachments must be written in English, with the exception of the description of relevance to the topic, which you can write in Norwegian or English.
- All attachments must be in PDF format.
- Mandatory attachments must be included.
- Requirements relating to the Project Manager and the Project Owner must be met.
- The project must start between 1 October 2025 and 1 April 2026.
- You must clearly demonstrate that the project is within the priorities described in the topic from which you are applying for funding.

Mandatory attachments

- Project description of a maximum of 11 pages.
- CV for the project manager of maximum four pages.
- Documentation of deductions if you apply for a deduction for experience we have no separate template for this). The document must be uploaded under "Attachments/Other items" in the application form.
- Description of relevance of a maximum of one page. When describing the application's relevance, we recommend that you read the relevant topic text carefully. Uploaded as attachment type "Attachments/Other items".

Applications that do not meet the requirements above will be rejected. You must use standard templates for all mandatory attachments (except for documentation of deductions). The templates can be found at the bottom of the call.

Optional attachments

- CVs for the most important project participants, each of a maximum of four pages. It is mandatory to use the CV template at the bottom of the call.
  - You will assess which project participants are the most important, and in which cases it will be of

importance for the application processing to assess the project participants' qualifications.

- If you wish, you can attach a brief description of competence or suggestions for up to three peers you believe would be suitable to assess your application. We are not obliged to use the suggestions, but can use them if necessary.

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 – potential for advancing the state-of-the-art

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.

Excellence – quality of R&D activities

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 ethical issues and gender dimension in research content, and the use of stakeholder/user knowledge if appropriate.

Impact

Potential impact of the proposed research
▪ Potential for academic impact:
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.
▪ Potential for societal impact (if addressed by the applicant):
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 with different target audiences, including relevant stakeholders/users.

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.

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.

Administrative procedures

We will assess your application as it has been submitted. It is not relevant how an identical or approximately similar application has previously been assessed by us.

Here you can read more about the processing procedure for Researcher Projects.

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

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

Applications that are outside the thematic delimitations set out in the call will not be eligible for funding. This also applies to applications that include partners that do not meet the requirements set out in the call. Decisions on this are made by the individual portfolio boards.

Where the requirements are met, we will make the application, with all mandatory attachments, available in an online portal for referees who individually assess the criteria *Research quality – potential for advancing the research frontier*, *Research quality – quality in R&D activities*, *Impact* and *Implementation*. The referees will then meet in thematic panels where they will reach a consensus assessment of the application for each of the four criteria.

The panels will assess the applications for open research practice as part of the criterion Impacts and impacts.

You can read more about the assessment of open science in applications here.

If, following the panel's assessment, the application exceeds a threshold value, the Research Council's case officers will assess the application on the basis of the criterion "Relevance to the chosen topic". The threshold value will be set based on how many applications each topic receives, the marks after the referee panel has assessed them and how much funding is available.

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

Finally, it is the portfolio boards that decide whether the applications will be awarded funding or not. Their decisions are based on the ranking lists and an overall portfolio assessment. Under the individual topics in this call, the considerations taken by the portfolio boards will be stated.

The Research Council will fund projects that will contribute on the road to a low-emission society in line with the Paris Agreement. In cases where two projects have received otherwise equal assessments, the portfolio board will prioritise the project that is most sustainable in terms of effects on climate, the environment and society.

The portfolio boards will generally have decision meetings after the summer of 2025. We will publish the results of the application processing after these meetings.

Download templates

📄	Template for project description - Researcher Project for Scientific Renewal and Early Career Scientists 2025.docx	⬇
📄	Template for CV early career scientists.docx	⬇
📄	Template for CV researchers.docx	⬇
📄	Template - Relevance to the Chosen Topic Researcher Project 2025.docx	⬇

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