

Research Centre – Research Institution-based Strategic Project

Requirements and guidelines

Research Institution-based Strategic Project is an application type variant under the application type Research Centre. The purpose of a Research Institution-based Strategic Project is to strengthen capacity and quality through research and/or innovation in strategically important areas. The objective can be increased volume, higher quality and a change of focus in a research area. This application type variant will normally be used for thematically delineated budget purposes. Effective collaboration may be required between research groups and actors outside the research sector, e.g. in business and industry, public sector bodies or non-profit organisations. The requirements for collaboration and relevant actors will be specified in more detail in the call for proposals.

A Research Institution-based Strategic Project is established for a set period and is affiliated to a Norwegian research organisation, approved by the Research Council, which is responsible for the centre's activities. Research Institution-based Strategic Project funding is normally awarded for a project period of either five or eight years, depending on what is specified in the call for proposals. Any deviations are described in the call for proposals.

This document describes the requirements and guidelines that apply to this application type variant. The document forms an important part of the basis for calls for Research Institution-based Strategic Projects and is included as part of the contract between the Research Council and the individual Project Owner awarded funding.

1. Key terms

- 1.1. Terms apply as they are defined in the General Terms and Conditions for R&D Projects.
- 1.2. *Research partner*: A research organisation that is a partner. The Research Council's definition and delimitation of 'research organisation' will be applied. Norwegian research organisations must be approved by the Research Council.
- 1.3. *Business partner*: Company participating as a partner.
- 1.4. *User partner*: Collective term for partners from outside the research sector. This includes companies, public sector bodies and non-profit organisations.
- 1.5. *Undertaking*: An entity that carries out economic activity consisting of offering goods or services in a given market.

2. Delimitations and clarifications

- 2.1. State aid will not be granted through this application type. All projects under the application type variant Research Institution-based Strategic Project must be carried out in effective collaboration with the partners participating in the project.
- 2.2. When Research Institution-based Strategic Project funding is awarded to a centre, the centre is not a separate legal entity. The Research Council enters into an agreement with a research organisation as the Project Owner.
- 2.3. The research can be of a basic and/or applied nature, and benefits broad segments of society. Research results are to be made accessible through sharing and publication in line with the Research Council's Policy on Open Science (applicable from 2020).¹.
- 2.4. Any user partner requirements are specified in the call. If user partners are required under the call, they must be engaged in considerable innovation activities of their own and/or have the ability to utilise research results in the development of their own organisation.
- 2.5. The role of each individual centre partner must be clearly defined.
- 2.6. Any subcontractors must be an external source for the client, who is either the Project Owner or a centre partner. This means that the subcontractor cannot be part of the same group of companies as the client.

3. Organisation and responsibility

- 3.1. The Research Council's General Terms and Conditions for R&D Projects apply. Any additional special terms and conditions will be specified in the call.
- 3.2. The centre must be included as part of the Project Owner's administrative organisation. The centre's organisation must enable it to effectively realise the goals in the project description, its organisation and management form must ensure that the centre is well adapted to the Project Owner's organisation, and it must establish procedures that ensure good interaction between all partners.
- 3.3. The Research Council may require that the Project Owner appoint a board for the centre. The centre's board must comprise representatives of the Project Owner, user partners, if relevant, and research partners. Any requirement for a centre board will be specified in the call.
- 3.4. The board's main responsibility is to ensure that the intentions and plans that form the basis for the contract with the Research Council are met, and particularly that the activities set out in the project description are realised within the adopted budget and time frame. The board is to ensure good cooperation between the Project Owner and the partners.

¹ ISBN 978-82-12-03822-6 (pdf)

- 3.5. Clear guidelines must be drawn up for the centre's activities in terms of responsibility and authority, including what the board is authorised to do, the rules that apply to board representation etc. The board's mandate must, among other things, ensure that the board does not make decisions that interfere with the Project Owner's area of responsibility.
- 3.6. The centre must have joint day-to-day management and one overall research plan that corresponds with the project description. It must also have an effective plan for communication and exchange of personnel between the different parts of the centre.
- 3.7. The Project Owner must ensure that the centre has a strong management that, within the framework of the project description and the funding and cost plans, enjoys great scientific and administrative autonomy. The Project Owner must ensure that the centre has a good administrative support system in place.
- 3.8. The centre director and the members of the management team will be appointed by the Project Owner in consultation with the partners. A description must be available of the centre director's authorisations.
- 3.9. The centre is to be built up around researchers who have already proven to have the potential to work at a high scientific level. The Project Owner and the partners must themselves determine how employer responsibility for the centre staff should be organised, but the centre cannot have employer responsibility.
- 3.10. When recruiting staff, the centre must take gender balance into account and actively work to attract outstanding researchers.
- 3.11. The Project Owner and relevant partners are responsible for the staff when the centre closes down.

4. Costs and funding

- 4.1. The contract entered into between the Research Council and the Project Owner applies for the full contract period of either five or eight years, depending on what is specified in the call. For centres that have a contract for eight years, there will be an underway assessment carried out well in advance of the end of the fifth year after the start of the project period for the centre.

Cost plan

- 4.2. The Research Council only approves actual costs directly related to carrying out centre activities or activities at the institution in accordance with the contract. The Research Council's rules for calculating payroll and indirect expenses to be included in the budget must be used. Rules have been adopted for the following groups: The university and university college sector, the institute sector, companies and public sector bodies. Partners' payroll expenses must be budgeted pursuant to the rules that apply to the group the partner is affiliated to. All partners must use the stipulated research fellow rates for all years the application covers.

- 4.3. The Research Council's grant cannot be used to cover any of the project costs of the undertakings² participating in the centre. They must therefore bear their own costs. Nor must the undertakings receive indirect state aid through favourable conditions for their collaboration with the research organisations participating in the research centre.

Funding plan

- 4.4. A centre requires long-term commitment on the part of user partners. The call stipulates the minimum requirement for funding from any user partners. The Project Owner and other research partners can also contribute funding to highlight their engagement and the project's strategic foundation. Any requirements for own funding on the part of the Project Owner and research partners will be stated in the call.
- 4.5. The Project Owner must work to secure funding for the centre if any partners leave the centre. The Research Council can reduce its grants if the minimum requirement for user funding is not met after a user partner leaves the centre. If the change in partners means that important assumptions that formed the basis for the establishment of the Research Institution-based Strategic Project lapse or are significantly changed, the Research Council may terminate its contract with the Project Owner.

5. Collaboration agreement

- 5.1. The Project Owner is obliged to enter into a joint collaboration agreement with all partners. The collaboration agreement must be drawn up in accordance with the Research Council's agreement document, the Requirements and Guidelines for a Research Institution-based Strategic Project and the General Terms and Conditions for R&D Projects. The Research Council's knowledge of the collaboration agreement does not mean that it approves any deviations from the contract between the Project Owner and the Research Council.
- 5.2. The Research Council's General Terms and Conditions for R&D Projects regarding property rights, utilisation rights, licensing, publication of project results and confidentiality must be used as a basis for a Research Institution-based Strategic Project. The collaboration agreement's terms and conditions regarding these issues must be worded in a manner that ensures that the enterprises participating in the centre do not receive indirect state aid, as described in the EFTA Surveillance Authority's guidelines on state aid for research and development and innovation Section 28 letters b), c) or d).
- 5.3. The collaboration agreement should contain provisions setting out the Project Owner's and partners' obligation to contribute resources in accordance with the activity and funding plan, rules regarding the right to join and leave the centre, rules regarding employer responsibility, and provisions on property rights, utilisation rights, licensing, publication of project results and confidentiality. A period of notice of at least six months must be given before a partner can leave the centre.

² Research organisations are deemed to be engaged in non-economic activities when conducting research and development in effective collaboration with others. The EFTA Surveillance Authority (ESA) deems research that the research organisation conducts in effective collaboration with others, as the term is defined in the state aid rules, to be part of its independent research. The research organisation is not considered an enterprise as far as this activity is concerned.

6. Scientific and administrative follow-up

- 6.1. The scientific and administrative follow-up described here comes in addition to the reporting procedures specified in the Research Council's agreement document.
- 6.2. In principle, research data should be openly available. The Project Owner must ensure that a data management plan is prepared in line with the Research Council's Policy for Open Access to Research Data.³
- 6.3. Special reporting requirements will be set out in the call and the contract.
- 6.4. The Research Council may require regular follow-up meetings to be held in consultation with the Project Owner, and, if relevant, a 'site visit' to the centre to review developments, the centre's work and plans going forward. Representatives of the centre's board of directors, the centre management, the centre participants and the Research Council are obliged to be present. Such requirements are described in the call and the special terms and conditions in the contract.

Underway assessment

- 6.5. For centres with an eight-year contract, the Research Council will carry out an underway assessment of each centre well in advance of the end of the fifth year after the start of the centre. The underway assessment will assess the centre's activity in relation to its objectives and the success criteria for centre type in question (see attached document). The centre's plans for activities in the last three-year period will also be assessed. The centre will present a plan for what will happen in terms of activities after the Research Council's funding has ended. Based on the underway assessment, the Research Council may stipulate new conditions in the contract for the centre's activities during the centre's last three years, so that the success criteria are met in the best possible way. It is the Research Council that decides how the success criteria can be met.
- 6.6. Any changes the Research Council may make to the funding conditions for the last three years will be based on recommendations from the underway assessment on how the centre can be improved and further developed in order to meet the success criteria in the best possible way. The underway assessment may also make recommendations for the centre to prepare for activities when the Research Council's funding ceases. The Research Council will enter into a dialogue with the centre about issues that are uncovered through the underway assessment.

³ ISBN 978-82-12-03653-6 (pdf)