What type of research infrastructure is eligible for funding?

Funding may be sought for investments in, and the operation of, national and international research infrastructures.

The term "research infrastructure" refers to advanced scientific equipment and large-scale equipment facilities, electronic infrastructure (e-infrastructure), and scientific databases and collections.

Funding is limited to research infrastructures of national importance (as defined in Section 2), and only infrastructures with establishment costs exceeding NOK 2 million are eligible. The maximum amount that may be requested from the Research Council is NOK 200 million, with a funding period of up to five years.

Applicants may seek support for investment, establishment, and installation costs related to new research infrastructures, or for the upgrading of existing ones. Funding may also cover coordination and adaptation of shared services based on existing infrastructures.

In exceptional cases, operational costs may also be eligible for funding (see Section 5).

While the maximum allocation per project is NOK 200 million, applicants are permitted to submit proposals exceeding this amount (see Section 10 for details).

1. Categories of research infrastructure

Under this call, the term "research infrastructure" refers to:

1.1 *Advanced scientific equipment and large-scale equipment facilities*

Funding may be sought for advanced scientific equipment within all scientific disciplines as well as for large-scale national laboratories, equipment components and research installations. Smaller equipment may be a part (improvement/upgrade) of a larger research infrastructure of national importance or a part (local node) of a larger-scale nationally coordinated infrastructure. The grant proposal must describe how the infrastructure for which funding is being sought is related to existing national and international research infrastructures.

1.2 *Electronic infrastructure (e-infrastructure)*

E-infrastructure for research refers to the digital foundation that supports advanced scientific work and data management. This includes computing systems, data storage, software environments and high-capacity networks, along with the expertise and services needed to use them effectively. It also covers digital registries, data repositories and scientific collections that are systemised and digitised for research purposes, as well as the tools, expertise and services needed to make these data accessible and reusable.

Funding may be sought for hardware and software that enable efficient use of the e-infrastructure, including solutions tailored to specific research needs. Support may also cover the development and testing of new services such as experimental architecture, cloud-based platforms, and tools for data access and integration, provided they align with the international FAIR Guiding principles for

scientific data management and stewardship[1]. For further information, please see under item 4 below.

Applicants must describe how the project integrates with existing national and international e-infrastructures. We ask the applicant to consult relevant national e-infrastructures to clarify integration and costs related to the expansion/use of this infrastructure. Sigma2 is the national infrastructure for computing and storage of large-scale research data.

2. Research infrastructure of national importance

Funding may only be sought for research infrastructure *of national importance*. This means that:

- *The research infrastructure is of widespread national interest.* The establishment of the infrastructure must be of major interest to Norway as a whole. For more information, please refer to the Norwegian Roadmap for Research Infrastructure for 2023, as well as to the Norwegian Government's Long-term plan for research and higher education 2023–2032. (An updated roadmap will be published in September 2025)
- *The research infrastructure will be available in only one or a few locations in Norway, as a general rule.* The Research Council encourages research institutions with common interests to implement task-sharing when appropriate and work together on grant applications.
- *The research infrastructure lays a foundation for internationally cutting-edge research.* Allocations are intended to support the activities of research groups that are already at the international forefront or demonstrate good potential realistically speaking to achieve that position.
- *The research infrastructure will be made accessible to relevant researchers and industries.* Access must be given to any groups outside the applicant institution that will need to utilise the infrastructure. Grant applications must include plans for user access.

3. Development of equipment and software

Equipment and software funded under the National Financing Initiative for Research Infrastructure (INFRASTRUKTUR) normally comprise standard solutions that can be procured on the market. Under certain conditions, however, applicants may seek funding for development of equipment and software. Applicants must document that all the following conditions are met:

- a service will be established and put into operation for research conducted under the project;
- there are no suitable solutions on the market;
- the users are identified, and the user group has a stated need for the equipment/software;
- the method/technology on which development will be based has been demonstrated to function in a relevant environment (Technology Readiness Level (TRL) 6 on the EU scale).

Each of these prerequisites must be documented.

[1] The international FAIR Principles have been formulated as a set of guidelines for the reuse of research data. The acronym FAIR stands for findable, accessible, interoperable and reusable. Research data must be of quality that makes them accessible, findable and reusable. The concept interoperable entails that both data and metadata must be machine-readable and that a consistent terminology is used.

4. Equipment and tools for data collection

Funding may be sought for:

- procurement and establishment of equipment and tools (including IT tools) for data collection for research purposes
- technical systems for quality assurance and preparation of data for use in research
- technical systems for archiving data and making data accessible for use in research

A prerequisite for funding is that applicants must identify and document the users of the data, and their express need to use this data in their research. Funding to cover other costs related to collecting/generating data will not be awarded under the INFRASTRUKTUR initiative.

5. Funding to cover operating costs

The INFRASTRUKTUR initiative is primarily intended to provide funding for investment in new or upgrades of existing research infrastructures. Operating costs for a research infrastructure are to be covered to the greatest possible extent by the projects using the infrastructure. The INFRASTRUKTUR initiative may award funding for operation of infrastructures during the start-up phase but will be restrictive in supporting long-term basic funding of operation of infrastructure beyond the start-up phase.

The INFRASTRUKTUR initiative will only award *long-term* basic funding for operation of a research infrastructure if all of the following prerequisites are met:

1. **Costly operation:** The research infrastructure is particularly costly to operate.
2. **Market failure:** It will be impossible to fully finance the operating costs with contributions from the projects using the infrastructure and/or institution-based core funding.
3. **Major need:** The infrastructure's number of user hours is high or expected to be high after a start-up phase.
4. **Research Infrastructure Resource (RIR):**[2] Appropriate budgeting and accounting practice for the operation of the infrastructure is in place.
5. **Business model:** The business model for operation includes incentives for the projects using the infrastructure to contribute to covering operating costs.
6. **Own contributions:** Owner institutions with substantial basic allocations contribute significantly towards covering operating costs.
7. **The Research Council is participating in, or has participated in, establishment of the infrastructure:** The Research Council requires that funding for establishment of the research infrastructure is, or has been, awarded under the INFRASTRUKTUR initiative.

Applicants seeking long-term basic funding for operation must submit this information in a special attachment in addition to the project description and other mandatory attachments. A separate template for this attachment is available and must be used ("Attachment for long-term basic funding for operation").

Please note that all items in the template must be completed.

Basic funding for operation may be awarded for a period of up to five years; however, applicants should specify the projected need for support for a period of up to 10 years. Decisions to continue

[2] A Research Infrastructure Resource (RIR) is defined as a laboratory or other common research infrastructure for which the operating costs are presented separately and distributed proportionally between the projects and activities which employ the infrastructure.

funding after the initial five-year period will be taken after a new review of grant applications received in response to subsequent calls for proposals under the INFRASTRUKTUR initiative.

6. International research infrastructures and projects on the ESFRI Roadmap

Norwegian institutions or consortia seeking to participate in international research infrastructures must apply to the INFRASTRUKTUR initiative in the same arena as applicants seeking funding for national research infrastructures in Norway.

Funding may be sought for:

- establishment and/or investment in the Norwegian node of an internationally distributed research infrastructure;
- the Norwegian contribution to an international research infrastructure located at a single site or shared services/installations.

Funding may also be sought to cover the contribution for national membership of international research infrastructures, including research infrastructures on the ESFRI Roadmap.

Regarding Norwegian membership in *distributed* international research infrastructures, infrastructures located at Norwegian research institutions must comprise one or more nodes of the international research infrastructure. Costs related to Norway's membership, including membership fees, are considered part of the operating costs for the Norwegian node. As a general rule, operating costs for a research infrastructure are to be covered to the greatest possible extent by the projects using the infrastructure. Thus, the Norwegian node must include funding to cover membership fees in its operating budget. The INFRASTRUKTUR initiative may grant funding for operation of research infrastructures during the start-up phase, and in special cases it may also provide long-term basic funding for operation beyond this period (see above under 5. Funding to cover operating costs). Continued funding from the INFRASTRUKTUR initiative for operating costs beyond the start-up phase will only be possible when operating costs of the Norwegian node are very high and will not be provided to solely finance membership fees for participation in international research infrastructure.

Grant applications for Norwegian participation in international research infrastructures, including projects on the ESFRI Roadmap, must include a concrete description of the Norwegian contribution/design of the Norwegian node for which funding is being sought. Additionally, applications should document Norway's role and commitments under the international participation and the added value of this participation for the Norwegian research landscape. Applicants must submit this information in a special attachment in addition to the project description and other mandatory attachments. A separate template for this attachment must be used ("Attachment for membership in international RI-projects"). All items in the template must be completed.

Grant proposals for realisation of Norwegian participation in projects on the ESFRI Roadmap must be coordinated with the activities of the European consortium (see ESFRI webpages). The review of the projects will take into consideration that the final plans regarding the ESFRI Preparatory Phase may not yet be completed.

The Research Council may give a recommendation on participation in an existing ESFRI infrastructure which includes equipment the institutions already own - without funding from INFRASTRUKTUR for upgrades. In such cases, the Norwegian node should contact the Research Council. In cases where applications include an upgrade existing equipment, it must be made clear whether ESFRI participation is still relevant if the application for upgrading is not approved.

7. The research infrastructure's building-related needs

Applicant institutions must provide suitable facilities for the research infrastructure). Funding may not be sought to cover expenses associated with this, with the exception of extra outlay for particularly costly technical installations essential to establishing the research infrastructure. The project description must specify any building-related needs and costs associated with the research infrastructure, including those that extend beyond what is covered under this call for proposals, and describe plans for how these needs will be financed and implemented.

8. Examples of costs not covered by the INFRASTRUKTUR scheme

Funding may not be sought for:

- *basic equipment* that a number of research institutions may generally be expected to have. Equipment that is not of national importance may be financed partially by contributions from research projects funded under other programmes and initiatives at the Research Council[3]
- establishing and maintaining networks between people, even if the aim of the network is to lay a foundation for research or provide assistance to researchers
- collection of data (see point 4)
- research activity
- PhD, postdoc, or researcher positions. Only working hours of personnel necessary for establishing the infrastructure may be included
- Buildings (see point 7)

10. Research infrastructure requiring investments that exceed NOK 200 million

The establishment of research infrastructure involving external investments that exceed NOK 200 million is decided at the ministerial or government level, in accordance with national strategies.

However, the Research Council may assess grant proposals seeking more than NOK 200 million as part of the review process for other grant proposals in order to make its recommendation to the relevant ministries. Institutions or consortia seeking to establish research facilities with investment costs over NOK 200 million are encouraged to contact the Research Council for submission and assessment of such proposals together with other applications.

A positive recommendation may be provided for projects that have received high marks in relation to the assessment criteria stipulated by the Research Council. In exceptional cases, the Research Council, in consultation with the Ministry of Education and Research, may allocate funding for the planning phase of a project.

[3] For prosjektstøtte skal budsjettet inneholde