

# #1584 Call for proposals for interdisciplinary research projects

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**Final submission date** 14.11.2019 13:00

## **Available budget**

Approximately NOK 119 million is available under this call. The plans are to fund 8-12 research projects.

## **Background**

The Nordic Programme for Interdisciplinary Research is a collaborative effort between the Academy of Finland, the Independent Research Fund Denmark, the Swedish Research Council, the Research Council of Norway and NordForsk.

Interdisciplinarity is widely acknowledged as essential to the generation of new and ground-breaking research results, and there is an increasingly urgent global demand for scientific research that dares to think across traditional boundaries between fields and disciplines and strives to create fertile ground for new approaches and insights. The integration of methods, data, perspectives, concepts, and/or theories from different scientific fields is crucial in the effort to expand the scope of collective human knowledge.

To address these challenges, the Nordic Programme for Interdisciplinary Research is issuing a call for proposals for interdisciplinary research projects.

## **Aim of the call and thematic framework**

The aim of the Programme for Interdisciplinary Research is to promote high-quality bottom-up research that combines and integrate skills from multiple disciplines.

Key assessment criteria under the programme will be excellence, interdisciplinarity, and Nordic added value. The programme is specifically aimed towards genuinely interdisciplinary projects that combine disciplines which are far removed from one another and rarely collaborate, or that pursue an original research question requiring the exact combination of competencies from different disciplines proposed in the application. Projects awarded funding under the programme are required to encompass research within at least two of the three areas of science as used by the European Research Council: Life science; Physical Sciences & Engineering; Social Sciences and Humanities. The research problems to be addressed must be interdisciplinary and not just incorporate a method from another area; they need to add value to all the scientific areas involved as well as to the interdisciplinary space.

## **Nordic added value of the programme**

Nordic collaboration will create outcomes and impact of greater value for the countries involved than could be achieved through national activities alone. Examples of such added value could be building critical mass; networking; sharing data, infrastructures and resources; enhancing scientific excellence; creating societal impacts; and contributing to research-based policymaking.

Interdisciplinary research is an obvious area in which Nordic collaboration will generate added value. Nordic countries share many cultural, geographical, political and social characteristics, and thus face many of the same challenges.

In addition, interdisciplinary research provides clear benefits from broadening the scope of available researchers from different disciplines and with different specialisations to include all Nordic research environments. Thus, the programme aims to strengthen the ability of Nordic research environments to meet the increasing international demand for truly interdisciplinary research that spurs new scientific approaches in pursuit of answers to novel research questions.

Ultimately, the programme seeks to provide a platform for developing interdisciplinary competence and capacity among Nordic researchers, boosting their competitiveness and branding Nordic research environments in relation to international arenas, such as the upcoming EU Framework Programme Horizon Europe, or other international arenas and funders.

## **Communication and knowledge exchange**

The projects funded under the Programme must have a detailed communication and knowledge exchange strategy. Where appropriate, the strategy should describe the processes by which research-based knowledge can feed into practice and policy in collaboration with stakeholders.

## Financial framework

Applicants may seek funding to establish a Nordic research project with a expected budget of NOK 10-15 million and a duration of up to four years.

Funding may be used for:

- Payroll and indirect expenses relating to researchers (including overheads);
- PhD and post-doctoral positions;
- Research-related costs (such as data collection and analysis and publication charges);
- Project-related costs (such as collaboration activities with project partners and stakeholders, administrative expenses, and costs related to technical staff);
- Communication, dissemination and knowledge exchange activities;
- Travel/accommodation costs and mobility for the project partners;
- Travel/accommodation costs for other participants including stakeholders;

The research consortium is expected to contribute a significant amount of own financing in addition to the NordForsk funding received. This is to demonstrate that there are other resources available (cash or in-kind) to support successful implementation of the research. There is no set amount or percentage for this funding. The applicant is to estimate the appropriate amount of external funding needed, depending on the volume of the project and planned research activities.

Payroll and indirect expenses must be calculated according to the relevant national rules, and the respective organisations' own budgeting models.

The contribution from the consortium partners must be documented in the budget specified in the application form.

Partner institutions outside the Nordic countries may participate with their own funding. Salaries for applicants not affiliated to a research institution in the Nordic countries cannot be claimed as part of the project costs. However, travel and accommodation costs may be covered.

## Eligibility criteria

To be eligible for funding, the following conditions must be met:

- The proposal must address at least two of the three areas of science as used by the European Research Council: Life science; Physical Sciences & Engineering; Social Sciences and Humanities.
- Proposals must be submitted electronically through the NordForsk Application Portal by the call deadline.
- All proposals must be written in English and follow the structure set out in the application form available on the NordForsk Application Portal.
- The research project must include partners from research-performing organisations\* in at least three Nordic countries. Nordic countries are defined here as Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Faroe Islands, Greenland, and Åland Islands.
- The host institution (Project Owner) for the research project must be a research-performing organisation based in one of the countries co-funding the call: Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden.
- The Project Leader must be a qualified researcher at the host institution.
- Researchers are encouraged not to apply as project leader for more than one application under this call. However, researchers can participate in more than one application and research institutions may be affiliated with more than one application.
- Researchers and research groups must be based at a research-performing organisation.
- The proposal must include a signed Letter of Commitment from each partner institution. Letters of Commitment must be signed by a person authorised to take on financial commitments on behalf of the institution for the entire duration of the project.

**Applications that do not fulfil the above eligibility criteria will not be processed.**

\*A research-performing organisation is a legal entity which is a university, university college or a research institute, and is characterised by the following:

- A primary goal to independently conduct fundamental research and/or applied research and or research-based innovation where results are published.
- The entity may be private or public but must not pay out dividends from its activities.
- The entity must have significant production of academic, published research.

## Submission of proposals

The project leader must submit the application form and the annexes on behalf of the research consortium electronically through NordForsk Application Portal.

### *Phase 1: Pre-proposals*

Applicants must submit pre-proposals electronically through the NordForsk Application Portal no later than 13.00 CET on 13 November 2019. To access the application form, the project leader must register as a user at the NordForsk Application Portal.

The proposal must contain all supporting documents as requested below:

- NordForsk pre-proposal form as specified in application portal.
- A preliminary research plan focusing on the project idea and the interdisciplinarity (maximum five pages, including references).
- An overall budget detailing the expected costs for the project.
- A specification of how the costs will be distributed among the different funding sources, including funding sought from NordForsk. The project partners' own contribution (cash and in-kind) to the project must be documented (see instructions in the application portal).
- CV, including a short list of maximum ten publications (maximum three pages for the project leader and one page for each key researcher).
- Letters of Commitment.

### *Phase 2: Full proposals (by invitation only)*

The deadline for phase 2 will be in april/may 2020. The invited applicants must submit a full proposal electronically through the NordForsk Application Portal. The proposal must contain all supporting documents as requested below:

- NordForsk full proposal form as specified in application portal.
- Research plan and a description of the interdisciplinarity (maximum ten pages, including references)
- Management plan (maximum two pages)
- Communication and knowledge exchange strategy (maximum two pages)
- An overall budget detailing the expected costs for the project.
- A specification of how the costs will be distributed among the different funding sources, including funding sought from NordForsk. The project partners' own contribution (cash and in-kind) to the project must be documented (see instructions in the application portal).
- Description of research teams, and gender balance in the project consortium (standard template). Please consult the [NordForsk guidelines on gender policy](#).
- CV, including a short list of maximum ten publications (maximum three pages for the project leader and one page for each key researcher).
- Letters of Commitment
- A plan for contributing to open science based on [Science Europe Principles on Open Access to Research Publications](#).
- If relevant, a description of gender perspectives in the proposed research.

## Assessment criteria

All eligible proposals will be rated using a scale 1-7 (1=poor; 2= weak, 3= fair 4= good, 5= very good, 6= excellent, 7= outstanding) based on the criteria described below, and written feedback will be provided.

An international expert panel will assess the proposals according to the following criteria:

- Interdisciplinarity of the research
  - the added value to both or all scientific domains, as well as to the interdisciplinary space.
- Scientific quality of the research proposal including
  - expected research results, societal relevance, and potential for impact
  - ethical considerations and how these are planned to be handled
  - gender perspectives of the research, if relevant
- The added value of the proposed research collaboration for the Nordic region.
- Quality of the research team and, if relevant, measures to improve the gender balance of the project team composition.
- Feasibility and rigour of the project plan in relation to proposed resources (human resources, budget, schedule)/ Value for money.
- Communication and knowledge exchange plan (including stakeholder involvement, open access to publications and data) (phase 2 only)

The Programme Committee will assess:

- Fulfilment of the aims of the call for proposals and achievement of a balanced portfolio;
- The added value of the proposed research collaboration for the Nordic region;
- The plan for open access to publications and data in accordance with [Science Europe's Principles on Open Access to Research Publications](#).

## Processing of proposals

[NordForsk's guidelines on impartiality](#) will be applied to handle possible conflicts of interest.

The process of evaluating the proposals will be administered by NordForsk. The process leading up to a funding decision includes the following steps:

### *Phase 1: Pre-proposals*

- **Eligibility:** Pre-proposals will be examined to check eligibility and adherence to the requirements of this call. Only applications which meet all the conditions set out in this call text will be eligible and will be included in the assessment procedure.
- **Peer review panel:** Eligible pre-proposals will be evaluated by an external, international expert panel. The panel will use the assessment criteria as specified in this call.
- **Programme Committee:** The Programme Committee is comprised of representatives from the funding partners and will assess the degree to which the proposal fulfils the programme aims and the Nordic added value of the proposed research collaboration. Based upon this assessment and the panel assessment, the Programme Committee will submit a recommendation to NordForsk for the proposals to be invited for the second phase of the call. The number of proposals invited to participate in second phase will be approximately two to three times the projected number of funded research projects.

### *Phase 2: Full proposals (by invitation only)*

- **Eligibility:** Full proposals will be examined to check eligibility and adherence to the requirements of this call. Only applications which meet all the conditions set out in this call text will be eligible and will be included in the assessment procedure.
- **Individual expert review:** Each eligible proposal will be evaluated by minimum two independent international experts. The independent experts will use the assessment criteria as specified in this call.
- **Rebuttal:** Anonymised individual expert review comments will be sent to the project leaders for response. All project leaders will have the opportunity to formulate a rebuttal after receiving the reviewers' comments. The applicants will be informed in advance approximately when they will receive the individual expert reviews.
- **Peer review panel:** The proposals will be evaluated by an international expert panel. The panel assessment will incorporate the individual expert statements and rebuttal comments from the applicants. The panel will use the assessment criteria as specified in this call.
- **Funding decisions:** Based on the assessments of the expert panel, the Nordic added value of the projects, and the balance of the project portfolio, the Programme Committee will submit a recommendation of projects to be awarded funding to the NordForsk Board, which will take the final funding decision. This is expected to take place in the autumn of 2020. The funding decision will be announced in late 2020. All applicants will receive written feedback from the expert panel.

## Management and monitoring of the Research Projects

NordForsk will sign a contract with the host institution for the project. The contract will set out the specific funding rates and details in accordance with [NordForsk Standard Terms and Conditions of Contract](#). The grant will be disbursed to this institution and a consortium agreement regulating the rights and obligations of the various institutions involved in the project must be drawn up. NordForsk will not transfer any funds before the consortium agreement has been signed. The research projects will be monitored through annual reporting consisting of a scientific progress report and a financial report. A final report must be submitted to NordForsk at the end of the funding period.

The project leader will be responsible for the implementation of human resource strategies for researchers in keeping with the basic principles of the [EU Charter for Researchers and the EU Code for the Recruitment of Researchers](#).

### Maximum amount of funding that may be sought (NOK million):

15

### Responsible advisers

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