



Instructions for reviewing funding applications - Antarctic research call 2024

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1. Objectives of the Research Council of Finland and the funding schemes

The Research Council of Finland's mission is to open up new avenues for excellent, responsible and high-impact research. Our objectives are to advance new scientific breakthroughs and solutions for the benefit of society; the capacity of research for renewal and reform; and better and higher-impact skills and competence. Our funding is based on open competition, independent peer review and responsible science. We grant funding to researchers and research teams as well as to the most promising early-career researchers through different funding instruments.

1.1. Antarctic research

The aim of the Antarctic research funding is to generate internationally significant new breakthroughs in Antarctic research. The themes have not been confined to any particular



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thematic area, but the call is open for all projects relevant in terms of Antarctic research. The research may be global, or it may focus on both Polar Regions, but it must be research that cannot be conducted without material on or from the Antarctic. Projects are required to engage in international collaboration.

The focus of the review should be on scientific quality and implementation of the research plan, taking into consideration the specific objectives of the call. The aim is to reach internationally as high scientific standard as possible and to support scientific breakthroughs and top-tier international research collaboration. The funding is applied for to employ a research team, and it may be applied for by individual research teams or consortia composed of two or more research teams. Read more in the [call text](#).

2. Role of experts and the Research Council of Finland

Experts are invited to review the scientific excellence of the applications. The experts are esteemed, mostly international researchers in the field of the applications concerned. The funding decisions are made by the Research Council of Finland's decision-making bodies based on the scientific review and science policy factors of the Research Council and its scientific councils or subcommittees.

2.1. Panel

As a rule, applications submitted to the Antarctic research call will be reviewed in a panel. The panel consists of a chair, a possible vice chair and panel members representing the scope of the submitted applications. There may be more than one panel if there is a high number of applications in the call.

2.2. Panel chair

Each panel is assigned a chair from among the panel members. The duties of the chair are to chair the panel meeting via an online platform (Teams), lead the discussion and ensure that all applications are reviewed in a responsible and fair manner. The chair also has duties as a panel member.

2.3. Individual reviewers and panel members

Experts may act as individual reviewers and panel members. The duties of individual reviewers are to review and write review reports of the applications allocated to them. As a rule, individual



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reviewers also participate in the panel as members. All panel members are expected to actively participate in the panel meeting.

Applications will be allocated to at least two individual reviewers and/or possibly a reader in the panel review phase. The reader is asked to form an opinion of the application without writing a review. One of the reviewers will be a summariser in the panel meeting and will write the final panel summary review for the application.

2.4. Research Council of Finland officials

The Research Council of Finland's officials invite the panel members and, if needed, additional external individual reviewers to support the panel, provide instructions on the review process and organise a pre-panel meeting when relevant. The officials also take care of the practical arrangements in the panel meeting and follow that the review process is carried according to the Research Council's established procedures.

2.5. Decision-making bodies

The decisions will be made by the [Scientific Council for Natural Sciences and Engineering](#) (link takes you to the Research Council of Finland's website). If applications are submitted from the sectors of other scientific councils, a separate subcommittee will be set up to decide on the projects to be funded from the call. The decisions are based on the peer review and the panel ranking, but factors related to science policy may also influence the decisions. In making the funding decisions, the Scientific Council for Natural Sciences and Engineering (or the subcommittee) will consider the same [general policies and decision criteria as for Academy Projects in the winter call 2024](#).

3. Review and ranking

3.1. Review criteria and rating scale

The main criteria in the review are as follows:

- project's relevance to call; for more details, see the [call text](#) on our website
- scientific quality, novelty and innovativeness of the research as well as its impact within the scientific community
- feasibility of the research plan and the quality of research environment, including responsible science



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- competence of applicant(s) and/or research team in terms of project implementation
- quality of main international research collaboration
- significance of other research collaboration and researcher mobility

Written reviews: Evaluative comments are particularly valuable to the decision-making bodies. Also, after the funding decisions have been made, the applicants will receive the individual reviews and the panel summary assessment including the names of the experts on their own applications. Written reviews play a crucial role in aiding decision-making bodies. In addition, they provide important feedback to applicants. Reviewers should therefore:

- write evaluative comments and give justifications using full sentences
- avoid descriptive comments and copying text directly from the application
- write comments and give subratings under each review item, taking into consideration the specific guidelines for each item (however, item "Review panel's summary assessment" will be developed and finalised during the panel meeting)
- maintain coherence throughout their comments and give constructive feedback.

Numerical rating: The consistency between the numerical rating and the written comments is particularly important. The rating scale ranges from 6 (outstanding) to 1 (insufficient). At all levels of the review process, please pay close attention to the potential for breakthrough research.

Rating	Description
6 (outstanding)	Demonstrates extremely high novelty and/or innovation; has potential to substantially advance science at global level; presents a high-gain plan that may include risks
5 (excellent)	Is very good in international comparison - contains no significant elements to be improved
4 (good)	Is in general sound but contains some elements that should be improved
3 (fair)	Is in general sound but contains important elements that should be improved
2 (poor)	Contains flaws and needs substantial modification or improvement



1 (insufficient)	Contains severe flaws that are intrinsic to the proposed project or the application
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3.2. Individual review

Each application is assigned to at least two individual reviewers. Reviewers write individual reviews, using specified sections in the review form, and give sub- and overall ratings to the applications. The individual review reports will be given to the applicants as is, including the names of the reviewers. It is important to note that these reports provide important material for the decision-making bodies and valuable feedback for the applicants.

3.3. Review panel meeting (online)

The panel members have access to all applications submitted to the panel, with exceptions made in the case of conflicts of interest (see [Review principles](#), section 1.3). Also, individual reviews will be made available to all panel members at the latest one week before the meeting, and therefore the given deadline for submitting the individual review reports is essential. Please note that these review reports will only be made available to panel members once all review reports have been submitted to the Research Council.

At the panel meeting, the panel discusses all applications. The individual reviewers appointed to the application will present their opinion on the application and, typically, a third panel member (read-only/reader) may be assigned to read the application to form an additional, more general view of it. The review panel's summary assessment will be written for each application during the panel meeting by a dedicated summariser (a panel member). The summary is based on the discussions and the individual reviews. The panel decides the final overall rating for each application. When the final overall rating is 5 or 6, also subratings for specified review criteria will be decided by the panel. To complete the review, the panel is asked to rank the applications rated 5 or 6. The applications are ranked based on the review criteria used and the objectives listed in the review form - no additional criteria will be used.

3.4. How to review applications in the Research Council's online services

Please use the [Research Council of Finland's online services](#) (link takes you to the online services via our website) to review applications. You can find the review instructions and offline versions of all our review forms under [Guides for reviewers](#) on our website. Both individual reviews and panel review reports are completed in the online services. You can access the research plan or



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other sections in the application form directly from the review form questions. However, we do expect you to read the whole application.

4. Expert fees

There will be a modest compensation for participation, EUR 460 (EUR 600 for panel chair) per panel day (taxed as per your national taxation rules). This compensation also covers participation in a short pre-meeting. Furthermore, EUR 75 (EUR 100 in the case of consortium applications) will be paid for each individual review.

To claim your fees, please enter your own personal banking details in the online services. The honorarium will be paid into your personal bank account. Please notice that IBAN is mandatory for bank accounts in Europe. Also fill in the BIC/SWIFT code/clearing code/routing number.

Make sure that you have entered your personal details correctly in the online services to avoid any unnecessary delays in the payment. The payslip will be sent to your home address.

