2026 Proof of Concept call

Frequently asked questions (FAQ)

Call info webinar materials

The materials from the PoC call info webinar will be made available on the [Ask & Apply website](#) after the event.

Eligibility

The RCF Proof of Concept Funding is intended for utilising research results that have already been funded by the RCF or the Strategic Research Council (SRC).

The 2026 Proof of Concept funding can be applied for by researchers (principal investigators) who have previously received RCF or SRC project funding and whose current research funding period ends between 1 January 2025 and 31 December 2026. Please note that a decision on "Funding for research costs" does not give eligibility; the actual research project needs to end during the indicated period.

The 2026 Proof of Concept funding is targeted at research project PIs that <u>must have a research project funded</u> under one of the following funding schemes:

- Academy Research Fellowship
- Clinical Researcher
- Academy Project
- Targeted Academy Project
- Academy Programme
- SRC programme
- RCF international project funding
- Finnish Centres of Excellence Programme 2018–2025.

The eligibility cannot be transferred to another person; only the PI that has received the project funding and meets the eligibility criteria stated in the call text can apply. The applicant must hold a doctorate degree.

This call is <u>not intended</u> for PIs who have received funding through the following funding schemes:

- Postdoctoral Researcher
- EU Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF)
- Research infrastructure funding
- Finnish Flagship Programme
- Centres of Excellence funding that ended before 2025 and ongoing CoE programmes 2022–2029 and 2026–2033
- Proof of Concept funding

- Personal mobility grants
- Funding for research costs.

The eligibility to apply is determined based on the closing date of the call, 6 May 2026.

If, on 6 May 2026, the applicant has a pending request to extend the funding period and the period is subsequently extended to end after 31 December 2026, the applicant is not eligible to apply. If the request for extension is submitted after the call deadline, the extension does not affect eligibility in this call.

If funding has been granted in two parts (for example, 3 + 3 years as in SRC programmes, or 5 + 3 years as in Centres of Excellence programmes), the funding period refers to the latter period.

PoC consortium eligibility criteria

- All co-PIs of a PoC consortium application need to meet the PoC call eligibility criteria.
- If you have received project funding as a co-PI of a consortium and your own subproject ends between 1 January 2025 and 31 December 2026, you are eligible, even if other subprojects in your consortium do not end during the specified period.
- You can form a PoC consortium with any other eligible co-PI.
- Your PoC consortium application does not need to have the same PIs as the original project consortium on which the PoC application is based.
- The PoC consortium co-PIs can come from the same site of research, or from different sites.

Applying in this PoC call does not affect your eligibility in other RCF calls. You are eligible even if you have:

- applied for any other RCF or SRC funding
- an ongoing project funded by either the RCF or the SRC
- an ongoing RCF Proof of Concept project.

However, please note that the RCF does not grant funding for the same purpose for which it has already granted funding.

Your PoC application needs to utilise research results that originate from the project that makes you eligible in this Proof of Concept call.

You will need to fill in your funding decision number in the application form.

Please also note that you might be eligible based on two different research projects. You can submit only one application, and you need to decide which project's research results you will utilise in the research utilisation plan.

Please contact us via our [helpdesk](#) (thematic calls) if you are uncertain about your eligibility.

What are the national strategic choices and why is the call geared towards them?

The Research and Innovation Council, chaired by the Prime Minister, supports the Government in developing comprehensive research and innovation policy. The Research and Innovation Council announced the national strategic choices in January 2026. These choices aim to address societal and global challenges and to boost sustainable growth, promote renewal and strengthen comprehensive security.

The national strategic choices are:

- data and data-based value creation
- disruptive technologies
- health and wellbeing
- climate, environment and the Arctic dimension
- security, resilience and defence.

By targeting the PoC call at these choices, the RCF supports the expansion of the knowledge base and the utilisation of research in these areas.

In the online application form, there is a dedicated tab where the applicant selects 1–3 strategic choices that best match the project idea. These choices must be briefly justified in the research utilisation plan (section 1: Background and significance).

Who will review my PoC application?

The applications will be reviewed by Finnish and international experts in research utilisation and the fields of the applications concerned. The members of the review panels will have a PhD degree, be affiliated with a site of research as well as have experience from other sectors of society. If necessary, individual reviews may be requested from experts that are not members of the review panel to support the review work.

The experts reviewing your application will most likely not have the same disciplinary background as you have, so it is advisable that you write your application using general terms, avoiding unnecessary use of specialised terminology. The reviewers assigned to your application will be selected not only from the perspective of the scientific discipline but also from the perspective of the application's field of research utilisation, in which case the reviewer's expertise may be related to, for example, product development, technology transfer, marketing, social impact or other aspects of research utilisation.

Experts are invited to review the research utilisation potential and innovativeness as well as feasibility of the applications. Reviewers are also asked to evaluate the research utilisation competence of the applicant(s) and the team members.

The review of applications follows a two-stage process. In the first stage, experts are asked to give at least two individual reviews on the application. Applications with an overall rating of 5 or 6 from at least one expert will proceed to the panel review stage. Applications that receive an overall rating of 5 or 6 from the review panel will be ranked.

See the [review guidelines, review questions and rating scale as well as the review principles](#) that will be used in the review. The review guidelines and forms are only available in English.

Are there any requirements for idea readiness?

The RCF does not have its own technology or societal readiness level descriptions. We recommend using existing ones, such as Technology Readiness Levels (TRL) in Horizon Europe (by [Enspire](#)) or Societal Readiness Levels (SRL) (by [Innovation Fund Denmark](#)).

The projects funded under the Proof of Concept funding scheme are close to scientific research, but are further along the research utilisation path than scientific research.

PoC projects should be at a minimum readiness level of 2 when they start and should aim to climb at least 1–2 levels by the end of the project, regardless of the starting level.

Read also the [instructions](#) on how to write the research utilisation plan.

Research results on which the PoC application is based

The PoC application form has a separate application tab titled 'Research results utilised in the project'. The maximum length of the text is 2,000 characters. This section should briefly describe the results from the research project that gives you eligibility in this call and that your project will utilise.

The reviewers of this call do not have access to your original research project application, so you need to convey the relevant information about the research results in your PoC application so that the reviewers are able to evaluate the utilisation potential of your research.

If the results have already been published in a publication or presented to your peers in a conference paper, you can give the reference to that output in this section and briefly explain the main findings to be utilised in the PoC application. The results do not need to have been published yet. It is necessary that you explain how the results originate from the previously funded project.

You are also asked to fill in the RCF or SRC decision number in the application form.

The research utilisation plan appended to the application should not describe the results of previous research, but rather the plan will need to focus on the utilisation phase of the results.

What costs can be included in the budget?

Individual projects may be granted a maximum of **300,000 euros**. In consortia, the maximum project size is **450,000 euros**. The funding period is **1 May 2027–30 April 2029**.

The project's funding follows the [full cost model](#). The RCF's funding contribution to the costs of the research utilisation project is a maximum of 70%.

[The RCF's standard terms for funding](#) are applied in this call.

Applicants can also apply for funding, for instance, for the following direct costs of promoting research utilisation:

- costs of carrying out the research utilisation plan

- market or patent surveys, other equivalent proof-of-concept activities

- experimentation and pilot projects

- protection of IPRs (not maintenance fees)

- commercialisation preparation (not actual commercialisation or commercialisation activities that will benefit only one company).

Please note that all costs must be justified in the free-text field on the application tab 'Funding for the project'.

PI's salary

As a rule, funding is not granted for the salary of the PI of the research utilisation project. The PI's salary costs may only under certain limitations and on justifiable grounds be incorporated into the total project costs:

- up to 1.5 months/year for project management and carrying out the project activities
- Funding will not be granted for supervision of doctoral dissertations.

For the salary costs to be eligible, the tasks of the PI must be clearly specified and justified.