



Instructions for reviewing funding applications

Special funding for RDI partnership networks 2020

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1 Role of experts

The Academy of Finland funds cutting-edge and innovative research aiming at significant scientific breakthroughs. Our funding is based on open competition, independent peer review and responsible science principles.

The aim of this special funding for RDI partnership networks is to support and promote the networking of higher education institutions and government research institutes with the business sector in order to boost the societal impact of high-quality research.

Experts are invited to review the quality of the action plans provided by the applicants. The review criteria are the research basis and quality of partnership network, concrete and realistic nature of proposed plan, and network's importance for the operation of the competence centre, and the impact of the partnerships. In most cases, the applications are reviewed in expert panels. However, external reviewers may be used to support the panel review or as independent reviewers.

After receiving the review reports, decision-making bodies (research councils or subcommittees) make the final funding decisions. The decisions are based on a peer review, and in case of the

panel review the panel ranking, but the funding decisions will also take into account the call objectives and how the funding applied for and the planned partnership network actions are related to the research organisation's entire research funding portfolio.

2 Confidentiality and ethics

In Finland, according to the Finnish Act on the Openness of Government Activities (621/1999), research plans, abstracts, progress reports, trade secrets, and reviews are confidential documents. Application documents should therefore be handled and stored with due care and confidentiality.

The Academy of Finland is committed to following the guidelines of the Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity for responsible conduct of research. The guidelines also apply to reviewing funding applications, research programmes and scientific disciplines. All reviews must be handled confidentially, competently and impartially, based on the criteria set for the review process. Care must be taken to ensure that the review complies with general stipulations about conflicts of interest. Prior notice must be given if a reviewer has economic or other affiliations or significantly different schools of thought in relation to the applicant under review. This is a way to avoid conflicts of interest.

As a reviewer, you are not allowed to disclose any information concerning application documents or reviews to outsiders, nor are you allowed to use this confidential information to your own benefit or anyone else's benefit or disadvantage. You may not reveal to outsiders that you are assessing the application of a particular researcher. If you are contacted by anyone, including the applicant, who has questions about the application or reviews, please advise them to contact the Academy of Finland.

Reviewers are guilty of research misconduct if they misappropriate research ideas from applications. The quality of the review is not a research-ethical issue unless the review has been conducted carelessly, which may give an appearance of a review that deliberately either underrates or overrates the applicants under review.

Disclosing the contents of action plans to third parties or contacting applicants personally without explicit agreement to do so are also regarded as instances of inappropriate behaviour on the part of reviewers.

Once the review has been completed, you are required to destroy all application documents and any copies made of them, or to return them to the Academy. Confidentiality must also be maintained after the review process has been completed. Reviews are confidential documents, but applicants will have access to the review reports on their own application after the funding decisions have been made. The draft reviews and possible external draft reviews are also confidential documents unless otherwise stated in the applicable legislation or required by court order.

After the funding decisions have been made, the Academy will publish a list of names, current positions and institutions of all individual reviewers and panel members used in the call. In addition, the applicants will see the names of all panel members in the panel review report. If requested, the names of reviewers that have supplied the draft reviews will also be disclosed to the applicant (under the Finnish Act on the Openness of Government Activities).

3 Conflicts of interest

Reviewers are required to declare any personal interests according to the following criteria:

You must disqualify yourself if you or a close person to you (e.g. a family member, relative or a close friend) can in any way benefit or suffer specific loss from the approval or rejection of the proposal. You must also disqualify yourself if you are or a close person to you is a member of a governing organ of an applicant or in another position that might compromise your impartiality.

You are also disqualified from reviewing the application if your impartiality may otherwise be endangered, or if you feel that you have a conflict of interest.

If you identify any conflicts of interest, please notify the Academy as soon as possible.

4 Reviewer's declaration

Please acknowledge that by accepting the task of a reviewer you guarantee not to disclose the information you receive and not to use it for anybody's benefit or disadvantage as stated in section 2 above (Confidentiality and ethics). Further, you affirm that you will immediately notify the Academy if you have a conflict of interest in one or more applications.

5 Expert panel meeting (virtual meeting)

The applications submitted by research organisations will be reviewed by an international panel. Before the meeting takes place, each application is assigned to at least two panel members who then prepare draft reviews. All draft review reports will be made available to the panel members before the meeting. In some cases, an application may be reviewed by an expert outside the panel to provide additional knowledge pertaining to a particular field through an external draft review.

At the meeting, the panel will discuss, and review applications assigned to it and rank them. The panel prepares one joint panel review report on each application based on the discussions and the draft reviews. Academy staff will assist the panel in preparing the panel review reports and the reviews are finalised in expert panel meetings. The panel members have access to all applications assigned to the panel, barring conflicts of interest (see above).

6 Independent reviews

Applications that cannot be reviewed by any of the panels are reviewed by at least two independent experts. In independent review the review criteria and the principles of the review excluding panel ranking are identical to panel review.

7 Review and ranking

How to review applications in the Academy's online services

Please use the Academy of Finland's online services to review applications. Review reports are completed in the online services. You can access the items of the action plan directly from the corresponding review form questions. However, we do expect you to read the full application.

You can find the review instructions and all our review forms under [Guides for reviewers](#) on our website.

Reviewing funding applications

Written reviews: Evaluative comments are particularly valuable to the decision-making bodies. After the funding decisions have been made, the applicants can access the review report on their own application. The review also provides the applicant with important feedback. Reviewers should therefore:

- write evaluative rather than descriptive comments (avoid copying text directly from the application)
- write comments under each sub-item
- write coherent comments in the passive voice.

Numerical evaluation: The consistency between the numerical rating and the written comments is particularly important. The numerical evaluation of the sub-items and final rating is made with a rating scale ranging from 6 (outstanding) to 1 (unsatisfactory).

Rating scale in the review form.

Rating	Description
6 (outstanding)	The action plan includes viable, significant and very concrete measures that clearly support the target and that contribute significantly to the objectives of the call.
5 (excellent)	The action plan includes viable, significant and very concrete measures that support the target and that contribute to the objectives of the call.
4 (good)	The action plan includes viable and concrete measures. The proposed concrete measures should have been more extensive to reach the target and to contribute to the objectives of the call.
3 (modest)	The action plan includes moderate measures. For instance, the measures should have been more extensive or viable.
2 (weak)	The action plan is not viable in its present form.
1 (unsatisfactory)	The action plan is out of scope.



Review criteria

The main criteria in the review are:

- 1 justification for the partnership network and the objectives
- 2 implementation
- 3 impact.

The detailed review criteria are presented in the review form (Appendix 1). The same instructions can also be found in the [Academy's online services](#).

The Academy of Finland is committed to promoting the DORA recommendations and to not using journal-based metrics, such as Journal Impact Factors, as a surrogate measure of the quality of individual research articles, to assess an individual scientist's contributions (see [DORA – San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment](#)).

Ranking applications (panel review)

After the panel has completed the review of the applications during the panel meeting, it will be asked to rank the applications (or some of the applications). The applications are ranked based on the review criteria used and the call-specific objectives (see Appendix 1) – no additional criteria are used.

8 Responsible science

Research ethics

The Academy of Finland requires that the Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity guidelines [Responsible conduct of research and procedures](#) (link takes you to the Board's website) for handling allegations of misconduct in Finland is followed in all Academy-funded research. We also require that researchers follow ALLEA's (All European Academies) [European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity](#) (link takes you to ALLEA's website) when engaging in international collaboration.

The Academy will not process a funding application if the applicant has been found guilty of research misconduct in the three years preceding the year of the call. If the Academy finds out



about the misconduct during the funding period, whatever is left of the funding period will be added to the three-year limit. If the applicant appeals the decision on the misconduct, and the appeal is successful, the Academy will process the applicant's new applications following normal procedures. Read more about the [ethical questions](#) on our website.

Equality and non-discrimination

The Academy of Finland's research funding promotes equality and non-discrimination as part of responsible science. To secure responsible reviews and decision-making, the Academy is, in accordance with its [Equality and non-discrimination plan 2019–2020](#), committed to defining the means to support combining work and family life and the research careers of women in all funding opportunities. Therefore, career breaks that might be caused by family leaves cannot be evaluated negatively in the review process.

The Academy requires that all Academy-funded research promotes gender equality and non-discrimination. Academy reviews and decision-making emphasise the importance of promoting equality and non-discrimination either in the suggested project or in society as a whole. Gender is not part of the information in the applications for review.

In the review of applications, the Academy of Finland asks reviewers to pay attention to the unconscious bias that affects us all. Unconscious bias refers to a positive bias towards our "ingroup" and a negative bias towards our "outgroup". For example, when you are assessing whether the research might be groundbreaking and whether the applicant is competent enough to carry out the proposed project, pay special attention to the possible unconscious biases that you might have and that could have an impact on your evaluation. The very act of realising hidden biases makes them less powerful.

In review (especially in panel work), it is easier to detect unconscious bias in others than in yourself. We ask you to be prepared to call out bias when you see it.



Open science

The Academy of Finland is committed to promoting the principles and practices of open science to improve the quality, responsibility, and social impact of science. The goal is to make all outputs produced and used in research (research publications, data, methods and metadata) widely available for reuse. The principles of open science must be pursued with due attention to good scientific practice and law. The degrees of data openness may justifiably vary, ranging from fully open to strictly confidential. Read more information on our [open science policy](#) on our website.

When reviewing publication plans, reviewers are asked to take note of the Academy's open access policy and value the applicants' efforts to publish in OA journals or use other alternatives that secure the open access aims.

When reviewing applicants' preliminary presentations on data management and open access to research data, reviewers are asked to take note of the Academy's research data policy and value the applicants' effort to open the research data collected during the research project. Reviewers are also asked to support well justified arguments, if the applicant states that no research data is collected or gives understandable reasons for not opening the research data. The funded projects submit a full research data management plan after the positive funding decision has been made.

Appendix 1

Review form: Special funding for RDI partnership networks

