28 January 2026

Instructions for reviewing funding applications – 2026 Shared-use research infrastructures: National research infrastructures fostering innovation and ambitious R&D

Content

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

The Research Council of Finland's (RCF) 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. Achieving these objectives entails having competitive researchers, research environments and competence centres as well as high-level research infrastructures that contribute to the renewal of science and society. Our funding is based on open competition, independent peer review and responsible science.

1.1. 2026 call for shared-use research infrastructures

The overall aim of this call is to promote innovations and ambitious research and development activities by directing funding to research organisations that conduct high-level research and host research infrastructures for shared use. The funding is targeted at the construction,

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upgrading and increased shared use of internationally high-quality research infrastructures, including their test beds, that are utilised by different user groups within the RDI ecosystem.

The applicant is an individual research organisation, that is, a university of applied sciences, a university, a research institute or some other research organisation, or a consortium formed by them.

The main focus of the review should be on the call objectives:

The aim of the call is to increase the shared use of research infrastructures, the cooperation between R&D actors and the significance of research infrastructures for national or international RDI ecosystems. By the end of the development project, objective is for the research infrastructure to have at least one new service implemented, including a plan how to maintain the new service(s). Funded research infrastructures must be relevant to the function of national or international innovation and RDI ecosystems. They must have operating principles that enable their services to be widely utilised by user groups of the RDI system.

Other important review items are the quality of R&D activities facilitated by the research infrastructure, the implementation of the development project as well as the operational aspects of the research infrastructure. Read more in the [call text](#).

2. Role of experts and the Research Council of Finland

Experts are invited to review the added value/impact, potential to support excellent R&D activities and the operation of the research infrastructure. The experts are esteemed, mostly international research and development specialists representing different fields.

The funding decisions are made by the RCF's decision-making bodies based on the scientific review and science policy factors of the RCF and its scientific councils or subcommittees.

2.1. 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 in reviewing the applications.
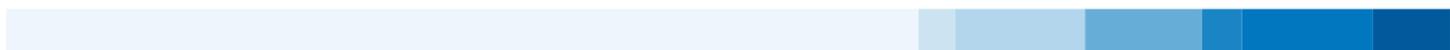
2.2. Individual reviewers and panel members

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 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.

2.3. Panel

Applications submitted to the call are reviewed in one panel. The panel consists of a chair, a vice chair and panel members representing the scope of the panel. A panel may be split if there is a high number of applications addressed to it.

2.4. RCF officials

The RCF'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 instructive webinars and pre-panel meetings 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 established RCF procedures.

2.5. Decision-making bodies

After receiving the review reports, the Scientific Council for Research Infrastructures appointed by the Finnish Government (link takes you to the RCF website) makes the final funding decisions. The decisions are based on the peer review and the objectives of the call, but factors related to science policy may also influence the decisions. Examples of such factors are the objectives of the long-term plan for research infrastructures 2030 (PDF) regarding national and international research infrastructure activities and their comprehensive development.

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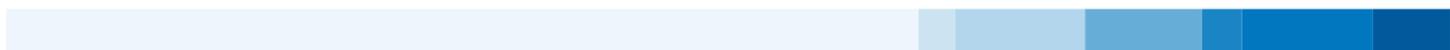
3. Review and ranking

3.1. Review criteria and rating scale

The main criteria in the review are as follows:

- relevance of described development activities and project to call objectives (most important criterion)
- significance in supporting high-quality, innovative and ambitious R&D activities
- feasibility of development project
- quality of research infrastructure organisation (incl. ownership, long-term financial plan, services and users, digitalisation and data management, and responsible science)

Please note that the research security appendix is not part of the review.

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).

Rating scale	Description
6 (outstanding)	Has high potential to successfully deliver (a) new service(s) to new (a) user group(s); is crucial to the function of the national or international innovation and RDI ecosystems; enables cooperation between R&D actors with exceptionally high quality, ambition and innovation as well as impact with crucial relevance; presents

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	a very high-quality plan that may include risks; operational aspects are well aligned to reach the objectives of the research infrastructure
5 (excellent)	Has potential to successfully deliver (a) new service(s) to (a) new user group(s); is significant to the function of the national or international innovation and RDI ecosystems; enables cooperation between R&D actors with high quality, ambition and innovation as well as impact with significant relevance; presents a high-quality plan that may include risks; operational aspects are suitable to reach the objectives of the research infrastructure
4 (good)*	Has potential to deliver (a) new service(s) to (a) new user group(s); is significant to the function of the national or international innovation and RDI ecosystems; enables cooperation between R&D actors with good quality as well as impact with relevance; is in general sound but contains some elements that could be improved; operational aspects are mostly suitable to reach the objectives of the research infrastructure
3 (fair)*	Has some potential to deliver (a) new service(s) to (a) new user group(s); has some significance to the function of the national or international innovation and RDI ecosystems or cooperation between R&D actors as well as makes cooperation between R&D actors likely; is in general sound but contains important elements that should be improved; operational aspects have several limitations to reach the objectives of the research infrastructure
2 (poor)*	Has low potential to deliver (a) new service(s) to (a) new user group(s); has low significance to the function of the national or international innovation and RDI ecosystems or cooperation between R&D actors; contains flaws and needs substantial modification or improvement
1 (insufficient)*	Contains severe flaws that are intrinsic to the proposed project or the application

* Below threshold for panel discussion if all individual overall ratings are below 5.

3.2. Individual review

Each application is assigned to at least two individual reviewers. Reviewers write individual reviews, using specified sections in the review forms, and give subratings and overall ratings to the applications. Applications given an overall rating of 5 or 6 from at least one reviewer will continue to the panel review phase. The other applications will continue directly to decision-making. Therefore, the deadline for submitting the individual review reports is strict. It supports the preparation of the panel meeting following the individual review phase. 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

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reviews for applications continuing to the panel review phase will be made available to all panel members at the latest one week before the meeting. However, please note that these review reports will only be made available to panel members once all review reports have been submitted to the RCF.

At the panel meeting, the panel discusses applications that reached the panel review phase. 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, the panel will also decide subratings for specified review criteria. To complete the review, the panel is asked to group the applications with a final overall rating of 5 or 6. The applications are grouped based on the review criteria used and the instrument-specific objectives listed in the review forms – no additional criteria will be used.

3.4. How to review applications in the RCF'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 action plan or other sections in the application form directly from the review form questions. However, we do expect you to read the whole application.

4. Expert remuneration

There will be a modest compensation for participation, EUR 550 (EUR 700 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 150 will be paid for each individual review.

To claim your remuneration, please enter your own personal banking details in the online services. The remuneration will be paid into your personal bank account. Please notice that

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IBAN is mandatory for bank accounts in Europe. Also fill in the BIC/SWIFT code/clearing code/routing number.

Please note that if you are not a Finnish citizen and you do not have a Finnish social security number, you need to fill in a foreign identity number. This information is mandatory so that the Finnish Tax Administration can allocate it to the correct individual. Please also fill in the Tax Identification Number (TIN) or equivalent if you have it.

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.