

22 September 2015

COMPETITIVE FUNDING TO STRENGTHEN UNIVERSITY RESEARCH PROFILES

NOVEMBER 2015 CALL

The call is open in the Academy of Finland's online services from 26 October to 12 November 2015.

The funding depends on whether the necessary funds will be allocated to the Academy of Finland by the Finnish Government in the state budget for 2016.

Aim

The aim of this funding opportunity is to support and speed up the strategic profiling of Finnish universities in order to improve their capacity for enhancing the quality of research. The funding is fixed-term and intended for measures that strengthen the research areas outlined in the universities' strategies and that support any deselection of research areas. The funding is open to all scientific, scholarly and artistic disciplines.

Strengthening of university research profiles will often require collaboration and effective distribution of work between universities. In addition, it contributes to reaching the objectives laid out in the Government Programme to achieve closer cooperation between higher education institutions and research institutes and more clearly profiled responsibilities for each institution. The regional and thematic competitive clusters formed via such collaboration and distribution of work may also include partners active in the private and non-profit sectors.

Key concepts

A profiling area is a research area that a university develops according to its strategy. It is a select area of a university's total spectrum of research activities.

Profiling areas can be:

- existing high-quality areas
- emerging areas with potential to reach the top level
- new areas with high potential.

A profiling measure is an action that a university will carry out to advance a chosen profiling area.

A profiling measure may target the following types of profiling areas:

- a profiling area that is related to an area funded in the first call but that will be advanced with a different measure (i.e. no funding overlaps)
- a profiling area that did not receive funding in the first call
- a new profiling area.

Applicant and funding

The funding is applied for by universities, each university with its own application. Consortium applications will not be accepted. If the chosen profiling measure is a joint effort between two or several universities, each university must describe its own contribution and its cost estimate in the action plan to be appended to the application. Each participating university must describe the joint profiling measure in its application.



ACADEMY OF FINLAND

The call will open in October 2015 with a total budget of 50 million euros to be granted for measures supporting the research-related profiling of universities. Applicant universities must draft their cost estimates (see Table 2) following the annual instalments of the state budget (10% in 2016, 10% in 2017, 20% in 2018, 40% in 2019 and 20% in 2020).

The call is implemented under the full cost model. The Academy of Finland's funding contribution comes to 100 per cent, covering the costs in full. The universities will not be required to contribute to the Academy's funding.

Costs related to research infrastructures may be included in the profiling measure only for special reasons, such as if the infrastructure is a 'local infrastructure' owned and primarily operated by the host organisation. The key funding instrument by which research infrastructures are supported is the funding provided by the Finnish Research Infrastructure Committee at the Academy of Finland. The Academy will not grant overlapping funding for research infrastructures.

The funding is granted to support the profiling measures specified in the action plan included in the application. The Academy will not make advance payments on the funding.

Please see [How to use the funding](#) on our website for all up-to-date conditions and guidelines regarding the funding.

Review of applications

The applications will be reviewed by an international panel of experts convened by the Academy of Finland. University management representatives will be called in to be interviewed by the panel on 13–15 January 2016.

The review will focus on the following criteria:

- how the action plan is linked to the university's strategy
- scope and clarity of the proposed focus areas and deselections
- development needs and opportunities in the proposed focus areas
- how research in the proposed focus areas compares with international standards and what added value it generates in comparison to research at other Finnish units
- plans for reaching the international level of research
- new, strength-based initiatives and their resources
- the university's commitment to the profiling measure and to advancing the quality of research, for example with resources freed as a result of deselections
- collaborative structures and distribution of work between universities, research institutes and other societal actors (incl. research infrastructure collaboration)
- significance of selections and deselections for competence-based growth and other needs in society.

Funding period

The funding period will start on 1 April 2016 and end on 31 August 2020.

Follow-up and reporting

One decision will be made per each application, and universities will be required to report on each decision. The Academy of Finland's [general conditions and guidelines for funding](#) oblige the universities to report on the use of funds and on the progress of the profiling measures.



The Academy will provide the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture with reports on the use of funding.

The application

The application consists of an application drafted in the Academy's online services and an action plan. The cost estimate for funding to be applied for from the Academy must be specified by type of expenditure.

The action plan

The action plan and its appendices shall be no more than 30 pages long and written in English.

In addition to the applications, the Academy will provide the review panel with a bibliometric analysis of the universities' publication activities, together with descriptions of the 2010 university reform, the Finnish research system and the Finnish university funding model. The panel will also be given copies of the 2014 report on the state of scientific research in Finland and Finland's Strategy and Roadmap for Research Infrastructures 2014–2020.

The action plan shall be drafted according to the guidelines below. Tables 1–4 shall be completed using the templates provided.

1. Summary and background

- Table 1: key figures for the university
- Summary of all of the university's chosen profiling areas including a description of the current phase of profiling
- Brief overview of the progress of profiling measures previously funded by the Academy
- Description of how the university aims to follow the implementation and impacts of the profiling measures
- Table 2: summary of funding applied for from the Academy of Finland in November 2015 (following the annual instalments of the state budget)

2. Description of the profiling measures for which funding is sought

Strategy and current state

- Description of how the profiling area is linked to the university's strategy; justifications for how the chosen profiling measure supports the strategy; description of the selections and deselections included in the measure; description of how the measure is linked to other profiling areas
- Implementation schedule
- Description of the current and the aspired level of research in the concerned field in comparison to the international level, and ways to reach the aspired level
- Short description of the key research topics in the chosen profiling area: a "top 5" of publications authored or co-authored by the university's researchers from the profiling area; a list of current PIs (*name, title/position, department, field*)
- Description of the added value of the research in the chosen profiling area in comparison to research at other Finnish units

Resources

- Description of how the profiling area will be advanced and maintained: personnel, collaboration and contents



- Table 3: current funding for the profiling area, funding estimates for 2016–2020
- Table 4: current personnel figures for the profiling area, personnel estimates for 2016–2020
- Estimate of long-term cost effects; description of how the costs will be distributed after the profiling funding has ended

Collaboration and distribution of work

- Collaboration and distribution of work with other Finnish and foreign organisations
- If the profiling measure is a joint effort between two or several universities, each university must describe the distribution of work and other responsibilities regardless of whether the university is applying for Academy funding for the measure in this call (November 2015)
- Description of the significance of selections and deselections for competence-based growth and other needs in society
- Cooperation with and dissemination of information to business and industry and society at large
- Description of how the measure is linked to structural development projects run by Universities Finland (UNIFI)

How to submit the application, when decisions are made

Competent representatives of the applicant universities will submit the funding applications using the Academy of Finland's online services. In the online services, the representatives will also issue a commitment on behalf of the site of research. Applications can be submitted as of 26 October 2015. The call closes on 12 November 2015 at 16.15.

A subcommittee appointed by the Board of the Academy of Finland will make the funding decisions in March 2016.

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