

FUNDING PRINCIPLES OF THE STRATEGIC RESEARCH COUNCIL

Decided by the Strategic Research Council on 11 March 2019

The Strategic Research Council (SRC) funds solution-oriented and phenomenon-driven research. Each year, the SRC prepares a proposal on key strategic research themes and priorities to be approved by the Finnish Government. The Government decides the final themes, which the SRC then formulates into research programmes. The projects to be funded must have societal relevance and impact and be of a high scientific standard. Interaction with society is of key importance throughout the projects' funding periods.

The SRC has decided to apply the same decision criteria as those applied by the Academy of Finland, except to the extent that it has adopted different criteria. The SRC's activities are also guided by the Act and Decree on the Academy of Finland and by the Academy's Rules of Procedure.

How funding is granted, what restrictions apply

SRC funding may be granted to consortia that work under a joint research and interaction plan and funding plan. The consortia must include at least two organisations and at least three research teams or work packages (WP). The research to be conducted in the consortium must belong to at least three research fields listed in the Academy of Finland's research field classification. A consortium must have a principal investigator (PI), a deputy PI and an interaction coordinator responsible for implementing the consortium's interaction plan.

PIs and deputy PIs must have a doctoral degree and hold the title of docent or have research experience at the docent level.

The SRC requires that consortium PIs commit themselves with a sufficient level of input to heading the consortium. PIs and deputy PIs of SRC consortia cannot be granted funding in other SRC-funded consortia. Subproject PIs or WP leaders cannot have work assignments in other consortia under the same programme. Directors or subproject PIs (team leaders) of the Academy of Finland's Centres of Excellence cannot act as PIs or deputy PIs for SRC consortia.

SRC funding will not be granted to a person who has participated in the planning of the concerned programme to an extent likely to give them a comparative advantage over other applicants.

Members of the Academy Board, the Academy's research councils and the SRC will not be granted SRC funding during their terms. This restriction will enter into force as of 2019.

The SRC funding contribution comes to 100 per cent, following the full cost model. The consortium's funding plan may also include the full-time salaries of the PI, the subproject PIs and the WP leaders. The funding may be granted to a foreign site of research, but the foreign site must not account for a considerable part of the consortium's funding plan.

The consortium projects run for 3–6 years.

As a rule, SRC funding is not granted to support economic activity. Economic activity is defined as all activity where goods or services are offered on an open market. Funding may be granted for economic activity only if it can be granted in keeping with the EU's state aid rules in the form of de minimis aid.

How applications are reviewed

The review of applications for SRC funding largely follows the Academy of Finland's review practices. The Academy's information systems are used in the review. SRC members may act as reviewers of applications submitted to the SRC.

In SRC calls, the proposed projects are reviewed based on their societal relevance and impact as well as their scientific quality. Applicants append to their application a research plan that includes an interaction plan. In the research and interaction plans, the consortia are asked to describe the societal relevance and impact of the research. The projects to be funded are selected based on panel review reports, interviews with applicants (if applicable) and the SRC's aims for the programme concerned. All selections will be made considering the needs of the programme.

How programmes are reviewed

The Strategic Research Council is responsible for monitoring the research programmes and reviewing their impact. Impact is reviewed on the level of programmes. The aim of the programme review is to evaluate the current or prospective societal impact of the funded research and interaction, and to develop the Academy's strategic research funding.

We review project performance, interaction, and the ways they are realised as impact. Programme activities between different projects and the resulting impact is also under review. Special characteristics of each programme and project, as well as different societal roles of science are all considered in the impact review.

Strategic research funding promotes multidisciplinary research and enables new combinations of expertise to form. A particular focus in the review will be on the results of multidisciplinary work and its ability to renew research. The review allows for the fact that multidisciplinary consortia funded in the strategic research programmes may not have the established publication channels single discipline consortia do.

The review follows the principles of open science and responsible science. The material and data used in the review as well as the review results are published openly, if possible. The methods are transparent and quantitative analyses repeatable. Additionally, the appropriateness of the review system and the relevant indicators are inspected regularly.

National matching funds

The SRC grants national matching funds to research organisations for projects that have received funding under the Societal Challenges priority of Horizon 2020, the EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation. SRC matching funds can be applied for to compensate for funding shortfalls, referring to the difference between the overheads percentage calculated using the Finnish full cost model and the indirect costs reimbursement calculated using the Horizon 2020 model. The minimum amount to be applied for is 10,000 euros.