

Health from Science (TERVA)

Academy Programme 2018–2020

Programme memorandum

1. Introduction

Health from Science (TERVA) is an Academy Programme aimed at encouraging Finnish researchers to seek bold, new research initiatives that can solve health issues related to major public health diseases. Though there is much previous research, there are still a number of unsolved questions concerning a great many diseases that cause a major burden on quality of life, society and the economy. From the viewpoint of public health promotion, significant scientific breakthroughs often emerge from unexpected results that are firmly based on high-quality basic research and justified risk-taking as regards research designs. There has never been such an extensive funding programme in this field in Finland that emphasises high-risk and investigator-driven research in quite this way. The US (NIH) and many European countries have had positive experiences of the impact of this kind of funding, in terms of both scientific results and the promotion of public health.

Finland hosts a great deal of significant activity at the level of foundations and patient organisations. A major part of this activity is focused on promoting research into public health. The Academy of Finland and the foundations have the common objective of funding the most promising and highest quality research that delivers the highest impact. The Academy has provided funding in programme format for public health research through a number of other programmes as well: Responding to Public Health Challenges (SALVE, 2009–2012, €8m), Personalised Health – From Genes to Society (pHealth, 2015–2019, €10m) and Health from Cohorts and Biobanks (COHORT, 2016–2019, €5m). In addition, the Strategic Research Council (SRC) at the Academy of Finland has a four-year programme connected to the same theme (Health, Welfare and Lifestyles). Within the TERVA Academy Programme, the Academy and the foundations involved join forces with a view to funding the most promising new research projects that include justifiable risks and that promote public health. The foundations involved are the Finnish Brain Foundation, the Foundation for Pediatric Research, the Finnish Medical Foundation and the Cancer Foundation.

2. Objectives and impact

Apart from promoting science renewal and long-term impact through the justifiable risks contained in the research projects, the TERVA programme will also aim at fostering new kinds of collaborations with foundations that support research into major public health diseases. The cooperation with foundations will add to the societal significance of the research by improving the visibility of the projects also outside the academic world.

The research theme tackled within the programme – major public health diseases – has deliberately not been limited other than by excluding so-called orphan diseases. The researchers are free to choose their research designs and approaches, which means that the themes of the programme's call may stretch from basic research involving possible animal models to translational research. In order to receive funding, the projects must however involve open-minded approaches at the frontiers of knowledge – they cannot be continuations of existing projects. The programme invites high-risk research designs where the risks are motivated in terms of potentially significant effects on the promotion of public health.

3. Programme implementation

3.1 Funding

The funding can be applied for by consortia consisting of at least two research teams representing at least three research fields. The total funding by the Academy and the foundations amounts to a maximum of 2 million euros per consortium, and up to 1.3 million euros per consortium subproject. The Academy Board has set the programme's funding budget at a maximum of 7 million euros. The Finnish Brain Foundation will contribute to the programme's funding with up to 150,000 euros, the Foundation for Pediatric Research with up to 500,000 euros, the Finnish Medical Foundation with up to 300,000 euros and the Cancer Foundation with up to 1.5 million euros. There are preliminary plans in place that the three-year funding period would be followed by a two-year funding period to be implemented jointly between the Academy and the foundations.

The programme's steering group, which consists of representatives of the Academy of Finland and the foundations as well as scientific experts, will prepare a proposal on the projects to be funded. Each funding body – the programme subcommittee and the boards of the foundations – will then make its own funding decisions based on its own specific rules. Projects may receive funding from both the Academy and the foundations, together or separately. The funding decisions, which will be coordinated by the programme's steering group, will be made following the Academy's and the foundations' own funding principles. Information about the foundations' funding principles is available on the foundations' websites. Academy funding and foundation funding cannot be used to finance the same costs.

3.2 Steering group and coordination

The programme is run by a steering group composed of members of the Academy's research councils, representatives of the foundations and other possible expert members. The programme strives to promote the development of the selected projects into a coherent and cohesive structure through active cooperation and exchange of information. The programme manager and the project officer are in charge of programme coordination. They work closely with the steering group and the programme's projects to facilitate the attainment of the objectives set for the programme.

The PIs of the projects are required to

- assume responsibility for and report on the scientific progress of the project and on the use of the funds in accordance with the instructions of the programme manager and relevant funding bodies
- see to that the whole research team attends all meetings, seminars and workshops organised by the programme coordination, and facilitate cooperation and exchange of information between the research teams within the programme
- take part in producing reviews, syntheses and information material around the programme, and actively disseminate information about the programme's progress and results on public and scientific forums.

During the course of the programme, the research projects will participate in events arranged together with end-users of research results and in any other activities designed to disseminate information to stakeholders.

3.3 Final evaluation

The implementation and results of the programme will be evaluated upon its completion. The implementation of the evaluation will be planned in detail as the programme progresses, but the evaluation will consider, for instance, the following issues:

- attainment of programme objectives
- programme implementation
- evidence of impacts pursued by the programme.

4. Schedule, application guidelines and review criteria

The TERVA Academy Programme has a two-stage call. At the first stage, applicants prepare letters of intent according to the Academy's guidelines. The letters of intent are submitted in the Academy's online services in connection with the Academy's April 2017 call. The call closes on 26 April 2017 at 16.15 local Finnish time. The call's name in the online services is **Health from Science (TERVA) 2017, call for letters of intent**. The letter of intent must show the project's novelty value from the perspective of science renewal and include justifications for the required risk component in terms of the potentially significant impacts on the promotion of public health. The steering group, extended with scientific experts, and the programme subcommittee will decide by 22 June 2017 which projects proceed to the second call stage.

Applicants requested to submit full applications must prepare a complete research plan and submit it in the Academy's online services by 4 September 2017 at 16.15 local Finnish time. The applications will be reviewed by using international peer review, paying particular attention to the quality of the application and the applicant, but also to the additional criteria mentioned above. The steering group and the programme subcommittee (in the case of the Academy's funding) will make the funding decisions in late 2017 so that the funding period (up to three years) can start on 1 January 2018.

5. More information

This programme memorandum is available as a PDF download at www.aka.fi/TERVA > EN.

Programme Manager
Jukka Reivinen
tel. +358 295 335 099

Science Adviser
Kati Takaluoma
tel. +358 295 335 150

Project Officer
Erika Lempiäinen
tel. +358 295 335 101

Emails: firstname.lastname@aka.fi

Postal address:
Academy of Finland
POB 131 (Hakaniemenranta 6)
FI-00531 Helsinki

www.aka.fi/TERVA > EN

www.aivosaatio.fi (Finnish Brain Foundation)

www.laaketieteensaatio.fi (Finnish Medical Foundation)

www.lastentautientutkimussaatio.fi (Foundation for Pediatric Research)

www.syopajarjestot.fi (Cancer Foundation)