

Lead Agency Agreement

between

National Research foundation of Korea
("NRF")

and

The Research Council of Norway
("RCN")

NRF and RCN are hereinafter jointly referred to as the "Parties" and singularly as a "Party".

Whereas

Both NRF and RCN are charged with fostering and supporting academic research in their respective countries. The Parties also recognise that the very best research in all countries may be delivered by working with the best researchers internationally.

To this end the Parties welcome, encourage and support research projects that may cut across their national boundaries and involve internationally collaborative teams.

This agreement facilitates cooperation between the Parties allowing joint proposals from researchers in Norway and Korea to be submitted to the NRF's Thematic call addressing **Artificial intelligence (AI) and Hydrogen**.

This agreement provides for a "Lead Agency Agreement" whereby NRF will receive and assess collaborative proposals from eligible applicants in both Norway and Korea on behalf of the Parties.

1 Purpose and characteristics

The purpose of this agreement is to foster Korea – Norway collaboration in science and to fund joint research projects conducted by teams from both countries.

The cooperation does not represent a bilateral call but enables joint proposals from Norway and Korea to be submitted to NRF's call for proposals on *AI and Hydrogen*.

The Parties have agreed on an operational document (Annex 1 to this Lead Agency Agreement) setting forth the more specific and operational procedures applicable to the cooperative activities, including the selection procedures. The call text is in Annex II.

2 Miscellaneous

Each Party will cover its own administration costs, unless otherwise jointly agreed in writing.

Each Party will fund its successful national applicants.

In signing this agreement, each Party shall abide by the applicable laws and regulations of their respective country.

This agreement is drawn up in English and all documents, notices and meetings pertaining to it shall be in English.

This agreement, and its annexes, may only be amended and/or supplemented by a document signed by both Parties and identified as an Addendum to this agreement.

The Parties agree to maintain the highest ethical and legal standards in funding research within this agreement.

Any dispute or controversy related to this Lead Agency Agreement, or the implementation of the cooperative activities provided for shall be solved through negotiations between the Parties.

3 Confidentiality

Performance of the cooperative activities facilitated by this Lead Agency Agreement may require NRF to share confidential information about projects/ applications including panel assessments with RCN.

The Parties shall take all necessary measures in accordance with applicable law to protect confidential information.

RCN ensures that internal distribution of confidential information shall take place on a strict need-to-know basis. Personnel in need of handling confidential information shared by NRF shall only handle such information after signing a non-disclosure agreement. The confidential handling of sensitive information is described in the operation document (Annex 1).

Applicants will be informed of the potential disclosure of information regarding the application, the project team and evaluation to RCN.

4 Data protection and privacy

Where necessary, the Parties shall cooperate in order to enable one another to fulfill legal obligations arising under applicable data protection laws (the Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data) and relevant national data protection law applicable to said Party within the scope of the cooperation.

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In particular, the Parties shall, where necessary, conclude a separate data processing, data sharing and/or joint controller agreement before any data processing or data sharing takes place.


5 Term of this agreement

This Lead Agency Agreement will become effective upon date of last signature and stay effective until the end of the funded projects.

This Lead Agency Agreement and the annexes, including this clause, may be amended or modified by written agreement between the Parties.

The Parties agree to make every reasonable effort to fulfill the intentions of this Lead Agency Agreement and the procedures expressed herein.

6 Signatures

The Research Council of Norway	National Research Foundation of Korea
Place/date: Seoul, 29 October 2024	Place/date: Seoul, 29 October 2024
Signature: Mari Sundli Tveit	Signature: Kwang Bok Lee
Title: Chief Executive	Title: President
p.p. 	p.p. 

Annex 1 to Lead Agency Agreement between National Research Foundation of Korea (NRF) and the Research Council of Norway (RCN) dated: [29.10.2024]

Operational aspects of the cooperation

NRF and RCN hereby agree to the following framework for the collaborative mechanism (to be supplemented by more detailed guidance to applicants):

Call for proposal

- a) The cooperation will in its entirety be implemented within the NRF-RCN Joint Research program 2025 call for proposals on AI and hydrogen.

Applications

- b) Joint proposals are submitted by the Korean partner through the NRF's Call submission system to the NRF-RCN Joint Research program 2025 following the applicable guidelines and NRF's general application requirements, as published on the Call website (Text version also in Annex II) 한국연구재단.org/nrf.re.kr.
- c) Norwegian and Korean applicants must satisfy the eligibility criteria of RCN and NRF respectively. The RCN and NRF will separately assesses the eligibility of the projects.
- d) When submitting an application to the NRF-RCN Joint Research program 2025 all applicants and individuals named on the application agree that any personal information in the proposal can be shared with officers of NRF and nominated experts. Moreover, applicants are informed that confidential information regarding the application and the project may be disclosed to RCN and nominated experts for the purpose of reaching a decision on funding of Norwegian partners of the project. NRF and RCN ensure confidential handling of such information and adheres to relevant data protection laws.
- e) Compulsory documents are provided in the call text (Annex 2).

Costing

- f) Applications shall in the proposal budget clearly differentiate the costs to be incurred by the teams based in Norway and in Korea.
- g) The selected collaborative projects must follow the funding guidelines of the RCN for the Norwegian partners and the NRF for Korean partners.
- h) Costs to be incurred by applicants based in Norway and costs to be incurred in NRF must be eligible according to the funding rules and existing financial practices pertinent to RCN and NRF respectively.

Evaluation/assessment procedures

- i) Proposals will be processed and assessed by NRF according to its own rules and processes.
- j) The assessment and administrative procedures for the call are published on the NRF's Call website here (requirements, assessment criteria and management procedures summarized in):

NRF's assessment criteria

Criteria	Indication	Score
Researcher Capacity (20)	Track record and Expertise of the researchers	10
	Appropriateness of research team organization	10
Excellence (30)	Excellence and Originality of the project's objectives	15
	Appropriateness of the methodology and feasibility	15
International Cooperation (30)	Necessity and Concreteness of international cooperation	15
	Complementarity of the research partners	15
Expected Impacts (20)	Dissemination and Exploitation of research results	10
	Academic, Economic, and Social impacts	10
Total		100

- k) The selection process, as a whole, remains a process of NRF. RCN agrees in principle to accept the results of the peer-review process as presented by the reviewers nominated by NRF.
- l) NRF will assess the eligibility of the joint proposals, as according to the eligibility criteria for the NRF-RCN Joint Research program 2025 call. These are stipulated in the call text. RCN will assess the eligibility of the Norwegian partner organisation.
- m) RCN assures confidential handling of the evaluation documents and relevant personnel in need of handling confidential information shall only handle such information after signing a non-disclosure agreement.

Funding decision

- n) RCN will confirm any budgetary constraints on submitted projects prior to a final decision on an award being made by NRF.
- o) Ultimate responsibility for decisions to award funding for the Norwegian and Korean part of a proposal, remains with RCN or NRF respectively.
- p) When a funding decision is made on both ends, RCN and NRF shall inform the applicants of the outcome. Such communication shall be mutually agreed upon and coordinated.
- q) RCN and NRF will fund their respective parts of approved joint projects and disburse funds according to its own rules and procedures.

Project follow-up and reporting

- r) RCN and NRF will follow up on the project in accordance with own rules and procedures.
- s) The Norwegian partner shall report on the entire project to RCN according to its rules and procedures.
- t) The Korean partner shall report on the entire project to NRF according to its rules and procedures.

Annex 1

Contact points.

Enquiries should be addressed to the following persons:

National Research Foundation of Korea	Research Council of Norway
Name: SeonHong Park	Name: Axel Haraldsen-Sverre
Address: 25, Heolleung-ro, Seocho-gu, Seoul 06792, Korea	Address: P.O. Box 564 NO-1327 Lysaker
Telephone: +82 02 3460 5725	Telephone: +47 993 64 986
E-mail: tjsghd8234@nrf.re.kr	E-mail: axh@rcn.no

The Parties hereby agree to the above description as applicable to the Lead Agency Agreement.

For NRF:

Place/ date: Seoul, 29 October 2024

Name: Kwang Bok Lee

Title: President

p.p. MinJung Baik

For RCN:

Place/ date: Seoul, 29 October 2024

Name: Mari Sundli Tveit

Title: Chief Executive

p.p. Mari Sundli Tveit

Annex 2: Call text

**Research Council of Norway (RCN) –
National Research Foundation of Korea
(NRF) Joint Call 2025**

A maximum of 4 joint projects will be funded.

1 Objective

To enhance mutual cooperation and strengthen the competitiveness of science and technology between Korea and Norway through joint research

2 Summary

- Program Category : Joint Research
- Eligible Fields : AI, Hydrogen

AI	e.g.) Responsible development of new, sustainable AI technologies and solutions. This involves research where results and knowledge can be widely applied. It covers both further development of the "state of the art" within established technology areas, but also research into new methods and techniques. Examples are the development of more energy- and resource-efficient AI models and algorithms, AI models that handle transparency, inequalities and prioritize ethical considerations and development of more sustainable AI systems.
Hydrogen	e.g.) Safe and cost-efficient use of hydrogen and hydrogen derivatives in maritime application.

- Funding Period: 3 years(2025.07.01. ~ 2028.06.30.)
- Funding Size : Up to 4 projects
- Funding Amount: 1 million NOK (120 million KRW) / from each country per project per year.

Note: The number of funding projects for each field will be determined based on the number of projects received and the evaluation results.

3 Funding

This program is funded by both countries on a one-to-one basis, and in principle, expenses for researchers for each country are supported by their own research funds.

- The budget available in Norway (RCN) is NOK 1 million (per project a year)
- The budget available in Korea (NRF) is KRW 120 million. (per project a year)

4 Submission

Proposals are to be jointly prepared by both applicants. The Korean applicant must submit the research proposal (English and Korean versions) through the IRIS (<https://iris.go.kr>). The Norwegian PI must submit the Intention form to RCN before deadline for submission of proposal.

Note: The division of roles must be clearly described in the English proposal after discussion between Korean and Norwegian researchers.

5 Application Documents

The following documents must be submitted via IRIS system.

- Research proposal in Korean (Attachment 1) / Korean PI Only
- Research proposal in English (Attachment 2)
- Other documents including applicant declaration (Attachment 3) / Korean PI Only
- Status of ongoing projects (Attachment 4) / Korean PI Only
- Korean and Norwegian PI's CV (PDF or Other types are available)
- Intention to Submit form / Norwegian PI Only

6 Eligibility and Restriction on Participation

PIs and Participants are not permitted to submit more than one application to this call.

Eligibility criteria in Norway

Norwegian applicants should abide by the applicable laws and regulations in Norway, as stipulated in the National Guidelines for Norway (Annex3).

Eligibility criteria in Korea

Korean researchers must be affiliated with domestic universities, research institutes, and industrial organizations. For more information on eligible Korean host organizations please refer to the National Research and Development Innovation Act.

7 Timetable

Intention to Submit form (Norway)	16 th of Dec 2024 – 28 th of Feb 2025
Proposal Submission (Korea)	16 th of Dec 2024 – 28 th of Feb 2025
Organizational approval (Korea)	16 th of Dec 2024 – 5 th of Mar 2025
Evaluation	March – April 2025
Funding decision and Announcement	May 2025
Start of the project	1 st of July 2025

※ Schedules may vary depending on the progress of the program

8 Evaluation

The evaluation process consists of the following steps:

Pre-review: NRF assesses the projects eligibility, RCN only assess the eligibility of the Norwegian partner institution and PI.

Evaluation: Evaluation panels are set up, composed of external experts proposed by the NRF. Based on the panel members' assessment and discussion, the evaluation panel rates and ranks the proposals based on the evaluation criteria.

Final Decision: The NRF shares the evaluation results with the RCN to finalize the selection. After the RCN confirms the selection, each country announces the selection results according to each party's rules and procedures.

9 Evaluation Criteria (Draft)

Criteria	Indication	Score
Researcher Capacity (20)	Track record and Expertise of the researchers	10
	Appropriateness of research team organization	10
Excellence (30)	Excellence and Originality of the project's objectives	15
	Appropriateness of the methodology and feasibility	15
International Cooperation (30)	Necessity and Concreteness of international cooperation	15
	Complementarity of the research partners	15
Expected Impacts (20)	Dissemination and Exploitation of research results	10
	Academic, Economic, and Social impacts	10
Total		100

※ The above evaluation procedures and criteria may vary depending on the evaluation plan.

10 Application Guidance

- Korean applicants must submit all documents through the IRIS by the proposal submission deadline. Late or incomplete applications will not be considered.
- The research institution must review and approve the proposal within the designated approval period.

Note: We recommend uploading your proposal at least 5 days before the deadline due to common errors in uploading your proposal.

- Re-announcement of the call is possible if there are no applicants or less than the number of projects to support is received.
- Applications may be excluded from evaluation in case such as submission after the deadline, incomplete documents, duplication of research proposals with other projects, ineligibility to apply.
- If it turns out that the submitted proposals and relevant documents contain statements that are not true, selection could be cancelled.
- If there is no project that meets the program requirements, we might not select any project.
- The announcement may be modified during the announcement period, and if modifications occur, it will be notified through the NRF announcement board.

11 Contract Information

Korea (NRF)

Ms. Park Seonhong / E-mail : tjsghd8234@nrf.re.kr

Norway (RCN)

Mr. Axel Haraldsen-Sverre / E-mail: axh@forskningsradet.no

Annex 3: National guidelines for Norwegian applicant Organisation

Here we have an overview of the requirements and guidelines that apply to applicants from Norway that are to be financed by The Research Council of Norway.

Topic	Requirement/guideline
Project manager (PM)	<p>Approved doctorate or similar qualifications before the date of the application submission deadline or</p> <p>if you do not have an approved doctorate but are qualified at associate professorship level or have current or previous employment in a position as forsker 1 (research professor), forsker 2 (senior researcher) or seniorforsker (senior researcher) in the institute sector or a health trust</p>
Applicant organization	<p>Only <u>Approved Norwegian research organizations</u> may apply. See the list of organizations at the bottom of the webpage.</p> <p>Intent to submit (LOI) form must be submitted to RCN from the Norwegian PI prior to deadline of submission.</p> <p>Other entities, including businesses, may be included as partners, but cannot receive funding from the Research Council of Norway in this call.</p>
Eligible costs	<p>Actual costs that are necessary to execute the project. See here for details: What to enter in the project budget (forskingsradet.no)</p> <p>The RCN will not award funding that constitutes state aid under this call.</p>
Requirements for funded projects:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The participation must follow RCN's General Terms and Conditions for R&D Projects. • Norwegian project partners will sign a separate contract with the RCN. The currency in the Norwegian contracts will be in NOK. • The budget for the Norwegian partners shall follow RCN cost model and RCN regulations. • Project partners of funded projects will have to submit national application forms to The Research Council of Norway after notification.
Scope of funding per project	<p>1 mill. NOK per project per year, up to 3 years.</p> <p>Total budget RCN: 12 mil. NOK for up to 4 projects.</p>
Eligible thematic areas	AI and Hydrogen
Early career researchers	For Norwegian applicants "early career researchers" are defined as phd-students or postdoctoral candidates affiliated with a Norwegian host institution.

Open Access	Policy on Open Science (forskingsradet.no)
Contact persons at RCN	Axel Haraldsen-Sverre, axh@rcn.no , +47 993 64 986 Thomas Hansteen, thh@rcn.no , +47 976 88 808