FRIPRO

FRIPRO is an open, national competitive arena within all disciplines and topics. Through FRIPRO, we fund basic, excellent research, where the project ideas come from the researchers themselves. The Research Council has five open-ended calls for groundbreaking research.

Free, basic research is important for scientific and academic renewal, and can form the basis for more applied research, business development and policy development. The FRIPRO scheme will contribute to this, and funding is available for basic and applied research projects in all disciplines where the project ideas come from the researchers themselves.

The FRIPRO scheme shall promote

- scientific quality at the forefront of international research
- bold and innovative research
- career and international mobility for researchers early in their research careers

At FRIPRO, we are willing to invest in bold research that has the potential to provide significant advances in the field, even if it also carries a significant risk of failure. When you apply, you should describe well how you will manage the risk and alternative plans if the first do not go as desired.

Fierce competition in FRIPRO

FRIPRO is designed for exceptionally talented researchers in their respective fields, but the likelihood of securing funding is low. Therefore, only applications awarded a mark of 6 or 7 on all assessment criteria are eligible for FRIPRO funding. In 2024, 21 per cent of FRIPRO applications were granted.

Among the eligible applications, we place most emphasis on the assessment criteria Excellence – potential to advance the research front and Excellence – quality in R&D activities when selecting applications for funding. For detailed information about how we select applications for funding, see "FRIPRO's application processing" below.

Only research organisations may apply for FRIPRO schemes, possibly in cooperation with other research organisations. Companies and other undertakings may not be partners, but may provide R&D services to the projects as subcontractors.

FRIPRO's five calls for groundbreaking research

We want to reach researchers in different stages of their research careers, and different stages of their research. We therefore have five calls for proposals:

- Researchers at the start of their research careers may apply for a Three-year Researcher Project with International Mobility. When the application is submitted, you as the project manager must have submitted your doctoral thesis. If you have already defended your thesis, it must be less than seven years since the public defence. The projects have a duration of three years, where you as project manager spend two years abroad and spend the third year in Norway.
- The second step in the career ladder is the Researcher Project for Early Career Scientists. All researchers with 2–7 years of experience after completing a doctoral degree are eligible to apply. The projects have a duration of 3–4 years, and you can apply for funding for yourself, other researchers and operating costs.
- Scientists early in their career can also apply for Radical Research Ideas for Early Career Scientists. The project manager must have 2–7 years of' experience after completing a doctoral degree. The projects have a duration of 4-12 months, and you can apply for support to find out if your most radical research idea is worth pursuing

further.

- The third step in the career ladder is the [Researcher Project for Experienced Scientists](#). As project manager, you must have at least six years of experience after a doctoral degree or approved associate professor qualifications. The projects have a duration of 3–8 years, and you can apply for funding for yourself, other researchers and operating costs.
- Experienced researchers can also apply for [Top Researchers](#), where the goal is for the research environment to become world leading within its field. The projects have a duration of 4-8 years, and the funds are allocated for projects where cooperation between two or more scientists is a prerequisite for reaching the projects research goals.

If you are interested in investment plans and other information about our initiatives in groundbreaking research: see [the portfolio page for groundbreaking research](#) (opens in a new window).

Not sure which call to choose to choose?

Do you meet the requirements for more than one of FRIPRO's calls for proposals and are unsure which one to choose? Our general recommendation is to choose one of the calls that has the lowest requirements for the career of the project leader. Here we expect a better chance of succeeding in the competition for funds.

In addition, all project managers for FRIPRO projects may apply for funding for research stays of 3–12 months for the Research Council-funded doctoral and post-doctoral fellowships in their projects, under the call Overseas Research Grants for Doctoral and Post-doctoral Research Fellows (coming soon). Project managers for Researcher Projects for Early Careers and projects of the older application types, Researcher Project for Young Talents and Young Research Talents, may also apply for funding for such stays abroad under the same call.

Detailed information about the requirements that apply to your application can be found in the calls for proposals.

When can I apply?

We receive and process applications in FRIPRO on an ongoing basis, which means that you can apply at any time. There are restrictions on how often you can apply, and if you already manage an ongoing FRIPRO project, the only application type you may apply for is Radical Research Ideas for Early Career Scientists. Applicants who are in FRIPRO quarantine must wait longer before applying again. The project for which funding is sought must have been scheduled to start 8–18 months after submitting the grant application. The average application processing time is 5 months, varying from approximately 2–10 months. Read on for details.

Waiting period and submission restriction period

As project manager for a FRIPRO application, you will be given a one-year waiting period calculated from the date you submit the application until you can serve as project manager for a new FRIPRO application. *In addition* you will also be subject to a submission restriction period of 1–2 years if the application is awarded marks below the specified thresholds in the panel review. The length of the submission restriction period depends on which call you applied for. There is no submission restriction period for Researcher Project for International Mobility and Radical Research Ideas for Early Career Scientists. In the table below you can see which average grades give the different waiting period and submission restriction periods. (Grading scale 1–7, where 7 is the highest grade.)

Call for proposals	1 year waiting period + 0 years submission restriction	1 year waiting period + 1 year submission restriction	1 year waiting period + 2 years submission restriction

Top Researchers	7-5,75	5,5-3,25	3-1
Researcher Project for Experienced Scientists	7–5,75	5,5–3,25	3–1
Researcher Project for Early Career Scientists/Young Talents	7–4,75	4,5–1	None
Radical Research Ideas for Early Career Scientists	All	None	None
Three-year Researcher Project with International Mobility	All	None	None

You cannot be the project manager for a new FRIPRO application if you are in a waiting period or submission restriction period, but you can be a project participant in other FRIPRO applications and project manager for applications for other calls under the Research Council regardless of the waiting and submission restrictions periods in the FRIPRO scheme.

Waiting periods and submission restriction periods apply to the entire FRIPRO scheme, across calls for proposals, unless otherwise stated in the call. This means, for example, that if you are in a submission restriction period after submitting a FRIPRO application for a Researcher Project for Early Careers, you cannot be the project manager for a FRIPRO application for a Researcher Project for Experienced Researchers until the submission restriction period is over.

You can lead one FRIPRO project at a time

You cannot be the project manager for more than one FRIPRO project at a time, but you can apply for a new project well in advance of the completion of your ongoing project. The new project for which you are applying for funding can start no earlier than the day after the end date of the first approved contract for the ongoing FRIPRO project you are leading, and you can submit the application 8–18 months before the planned project start-up. The restriction applies regardless of the type of FRIPRO project you manage, except for Radical Research Ideas for Early Career Scientists. You can apply for funding from this call even if you are the project manager of another FRIPRO project and even if there may be overlap in the project periods.

If you are unsure of which date applies to you, contact the case officer for your project. You will find contact information for the case officer in the contract for the project, which can be found on "My RCN web".

Example

You are the project manager of a FRIPRO funded Researcher Project for Young Talents. In the first approved contract for the project, the project period is 1.10.2023–31.1.2027.

The project has been delayed due to illness and parental leave, and now has an end date of 17.8.2027. The delays have no bearing on when you can apply again. It is 31.1.2027 which is the important date.

You can apply for a new FRIPRO project with a start date of 1.2.2027 or later. Since you must apply between 8 and 18 months before that date, this means that you can submit a new application no earlier than 18 months before, that is 1.8.2025. You will then normally receive an answer between October 2025 and June 2026.

How long before the planned project start-up should I apply?

The average application processing time is 5 months, varying from approximately 2–10 months. This means that you should calculate 2–10 months from submitting your application until you receive an answer. If the application is approved, you may need to update the application/make some changes before we approve it. You will also need to arrange any collaboration agreements and approve the contract, and in addition you may need time to hire PhD candidates or others in the project.

If your project requires significant time from when you learn that the application has been granted funding for the project to start, it is advisable to apply 12–18 months before the planned project start. If you can start quickly, you can apply 8-12 months before. If you receive an answer sooner than you expected and would like to start sooner, we will normally approve this. If the application processing takes more than 8 months, you can also obtain approval to postpone the start of the project if this is necessary for the project.

FRIPRO's application processing

Below is a description of how we process applications to FRIPRO.

Preliminary assessment

First, the Research Council administration checks whether the grant application meets all the formal requirements set out in the call. If your application does not meet the requirements, we will ask you to withdraw the application and possibly submit it again with the necessary changes. If you do not withdraw the application, we will reject it, and you as project manager will receive a one year waiting period before you may submit your application again.

Peer review

Grant applications are sent to peer reviewers who will carry out a scientific assessment of the applications based on the assessment criteria set out in the call. All grant applications must be assessed by a panel comprising at least three referee reviewers, and we define these referee panels as the application's own referee panel. Each peer reviewer may participate in one or more panels.

The peer review process for applications for Radical Research Ideas is currently not ready. More information about this will be provided later.

How do we find peers?

The Research Council has established a database of peers who have agreed to participate in peer review of FRIPRO applications, in order to more efficiently put together referees with appropriate expertise to assess the applications received. This means that we collect peers regardless of when the applications are submitted to the FRIPRO scheme and supplement them as needed. Peer reviewers commit for several years at a time, and generally we use the same peer reviewer for a maximum of three years.

We have the following general requirements for the peer reviewers we use:

- They must have their workplace abroad.
- They must be active researchers with a significant production, both in terms of quality and quantity.
- They should have professorial qualifications. The minimum requirement is associate professor qualifications or equivalent.

All submitted applications are compared with the competence of the peers in the database based on the content of the application using artificial intelligence (AI). Case officers then assess whether the AI-proposed peer reviewers are suitable for assessing each individual application.

We supplement the database as needed with searches in, for example, Web of Science, Google Scholar and well-known foreign universities within the various fields of study. The list of sources varies from field to field. We also consider the applicant's own proposals for suitable peers or a description of suitable competence.

Impartiality

Peer reviewers assess their impartiality for the applications we want them to assess. We ask them to pay particular attention to the points in the impartiality provisions concerning cooperation, friendship and conflict. Peer reviewers will not have access to applications for which they are disqualified and will not participate in discussions of such applications.

Competence

Peer reviewers assess their level of competence based on title, objectives and summary of the applications. It is therefore very important that you write these texts so that the reviewers can state their level of competence as precisely as possible. Before peers receive this information, they must consent to our confidentiality agreement. Peer reviewers can choose one of three levels of competence in each application:

- Specialist (S): The proposal is within your primary area(s) of expertise or connected to your research interests. You are well qualified to evaluate the proposal.
- Generalist (G): You have a general knowledge of the main subject of the proposal (or at least one of the main subjects if there are several). You are qualified to evaluate the proposal.
- Minor (M): You have only minor relevant expertise on the main subject(s) of the proposal.

Write your application so that it can be understood by peers with general expertise in the research field.

The Research Council's competence requirement is that at least two of the referees assessing the grant application must have generalist or specialist expertise in the grant application. If the panel has only three members, all of them must have generalist or specialist expertise in the grant application.

Information for peer reviewers

Peer reviewers receive our general guidelines for application processing in FRIPRO. The four assessment criteria (Potential to advance the research front, Quality in R&D activities, Impact and Implementation) have been elaborated, together with a definition of the grading scale. Among other things, we emphasise the importance of consistent grading and the quality of feedback to applicants.

Application assessment

The panel members read and assess the grant application, and each submit their own preliminary assessment before the panel meets digitally to discuss the grant application. At the meeting, they discuss the application and arrive at a consensus-based assessment with marks.

A single peer reviewer may participate in several panel meetings in one day, together with the same or different peers. How many depends on the number of applications that have been received around the same time that are likely to be assessed by the same peers.

Research Council employees participate in the meetings, but not in the scientific discussion. We have a guiding role and contribute to a common understanding of the assessment criteria and the grading scale. We ensure that every panel member has their say, handle disqualification in line with the rules and stop discussions on matters that are outside the panel's mandate. We check that the assessment texts are in accordance with the panel's decision and meet our quality requirements.

Decision

The portfolio board for ground-breaking research makes decisions on grants, rejections and quarantine every two months (normally even-numbered months). Which applications are awarded funding will depend on the available budget and a set of rules for prioritising grant applications.

The rules are determined by the portfolio board and are intended to contribute to achieving the objectives of the FRIPRO scheme and the priorities described in the calls for proposals, as well as ensuring equal treatment. The Research Council administration submits lists to the portfolio board indicating which applications are to be granted

and rejected in accordance with the rules.

The budget for each decision round corresponds to the proportion of funding rounds that year (normally six), and is thus independent of the number of applications that are ready for decision. This means that FRIPRO's annual budget will not be spent early in the year, even if there are many applications under consideration at that time.

Rules for decisions for applications to FRIPRO

Evaluation criteria and rules for decisions for applications for Top Researchers and Radical Research Ideas for Early Career Scientists are currently under development. More information will be provided later. The text below applies to Researcher Project for Experienced Researchers, Researcher Project for Early Career Scientist and Three-year Researcher Project with International Mobility.

Only applications awarded a mark of 6 or 7 for all assessment criteria are eligible for FRIPRO funding. All applications below the qualification threshold for funding in FRIPRO will be rejected. Project managers for applications awarded marks lower than the grade limits for a submission restriction period (see section further up about this) will be placed under a submission restriction period.

Eligible applications are entered into the competition for funding in three decision rounds. If your application is eligible, but is not granted in the first round of decisions, it will be given a second chance in the next round of decisions. If not granted in the second round, it will enter a third and final round. Applications that are included in their second or third round compete on an equal footing with newly received applications. This method will help to even out any random differences in the quality of applications for consideration in different times of the year, and ensure that the quality of applications awarded funding is as equal as possible, regardless of when they were submitted.

Applications will be granted funding until the budget allocated for the decision round has been exhausted, in accordance with the rules for prioritising applications for allocation. The rules combine marks, the gender of the project manager and equalisation mechanisms for research domains and the three career levels within FRIPRO:

1. Non-qualified applications are rejected en bloc. Project managers for applications with a mark below the applicable submission restriction limits, are given a submission restriction period.
2. Up to 75 per cent of the available budget for the decision round is allocated to applications based solely on marks and the gender of the project manager. The detailed method is described in the document FRIPRO Granting Principles (pdf that opens in a new window).
3. At least one application for each step of the career ladder shall be granted in each decision round.
4. The remaining budget for the decision round is allocated to one application at a time using the standard application prioritisation in FRIPRO. The detailed method is described in the document FRIPRO Granting Principles (see link above).
5. Qualified applications that have not been granted and that have participated in three rounds of decisions are rejected.
6. Qualified applications that have not been granted, and that have participated in one or two decision rounds, will not receive a decision, and will be included in the competition for funding in the next decision round.

Feedback to applicants

We provide information in our calls for proposals and in the newsletter about which applications have been awarded funding and statistics on applications and marks.

Each applicant will receive a letter of decision on "My RCN web" when the portfolio board has made a decision for the application. The letter includes feedback in the form of marks with written justifications for the four criteria against which the panel has assessed the application.

Applicants whose applications are rejected will receive a letter of rejection, while applicants whose applications have been granted will receive a letter of funding. The letter of funding contains requirements for changes and updates that must be made before the Research Council and the Project Owner (the applicant institution) can enter

into a contract.

If you do *not* receive such a letter within a few weeks after we announce the results from a decision round, there are two alternatives: *either* the peer review of your application was not ready in time for the decision round, *or* your application was qualified for funding, but the available budget was not sufficient to approve it. If the latter is the case, your application will compete for funding in the next decision round.

Complaint against a decision

The Research Council's decisions are exempt from the Public Administration Act's rules on the right of complaint, but we have nevertheless introduced a complaint mechanism that gives you a limited opportunity to submit a complaint. You can only complain about procedural errors or shortcomings in the manner in which the Research Council has exercised its discretion. You cannot appeal against the professional assessments or priorities made by the peers or the portfolio board.

Examples of valid grounds for complaint

- If you believe that a peer reviewer, portfolio board member or Research Council employee who has processed your application is disqualified, or if;
- The panel writes that specific information was missing from the application that was included (for example, the CV of a project participant).

Examples of invalid reasons for complaint

- The panel has deducted points for something in the application because you disagree academically. This is subject to professional discretion.
- The peers are not specialists in the field(s) covered by the application. We only require generalist competence to assess applications.
- The panel believes that something is not sufficiently described even if you believe that it is. This is subject to professional discretion.

You can find more information about our procedures on this site: Complaints against decisions.

The responsible portfolio board

The Research Council's portfolio for ground-breaking research is responsible for FRIPRO.

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