

## Societal and Industry-oriented Research Centre

### Requirements and guidelines

**Societal and Industry-oriented Research Centre** is an application type variant for focused and long-term initiatives at a high international level that strengthen research and innovation with a view to value creation and benefits to society. The research centres are intended to help increase capacity and expertise through long-term research and/or innovation. Effective collaboration is required between research groups and actors outside the research sector, e.g. in business and industry, public sector bodies or non-profit organisations.

A research centre is established for a set period and is affiliated to a Norwegian research organisation, approved by the Research Council, which is responsible for the centre's activities. Societal and Industry-oriented Research Centre status is normally awarded for a project period of five years, with an option to extend for a further three years.

In this document, a societal and industry-oriented research centre will be referred to as a research centre or centre.

This document describes the requirements and guidelines that apply to this application type. This document forms an important part of the basis for calls for this type of application and is included as part of the contract between the Research Council and the individual Project Owner awarded funding.

#### 1. Key terms

- 1.1. Terms apply as they are defined in the General Terms and Conditions for R&D Projects.
- 1.2. *Research partner*: A research organisation that is a centre partner. The Research Council's definition and delimitation of 'research organisation' will be applied. Norwegian research organisations must be approved by the Research Council.
- 1.3. *Company partner*: Company participating as a centre partner.
- 1.4. *User partner*: Collective term for partners from outside the research sector. This includes companies, public sector bodies and non-profit organisations.
- 1.5. *Undertaking*: An entity that carries out economic activity consisting of offering goods or services on a given market.

## **2. Delimitations and clarifications**

- 2.1. A Societal and Industry-oriented Research Centre is not a separate legal entity.
- 2.2. State aid will not be granted through this application type. All projects carried out by a Societal and Industry-oriented Research Centre must be carried out in effective collaboration with the partners participating in the project.
- 2.3. The research can be of a basic and/or applied nature, and benefits broad segments of society. Research results are to be made accessible through sharing and publication in line with the Research Council's Policy on Open Science (applicable from 2020).<sup>1</sup>
- 2.4. Each centre must have at least three user partners unless another minimum requirement is specified in the call. The user partners must be engaged in considerable innovation activities of their own and/or have the ability to utilise research results in the development of their own organisation.
- 2.5. The role of each individual centre partner must be clearly defined.
- 2.6. Any subcontractors must be an external source for the client, who is either the Project Owner or a centre partner. This means that the subcontractor cannot be part of the same group of companies as the client.

## **3. Organisation and responsibility**

- 3.1. The centre is to be a part of the Project Owner's administrative organisation, but must be managed by its own board. The centre's organisation must enable it to effectively achieve the objectives specified in the project description, its organisation and management form must ensure that the centre is well adapted to the Project Owner's organisation and it must establish procedures that ensure good interaction between all partners.

### *The centre's board*

- 3.2. The Project Owner is responsible for ensuring that a board is appointed for the centre. The centre's board must comprise representatives of the Project Owner, user partners and research partners. The centre should have a strong and consistent user focus. Unless otherwise specified in the call, the user partners are to have the majority on the board and the chair of the board should be a representative of one of the user partners.
- 3.3. The board's main responsibility is to ensure that the intentions and plans that form the basis for the contract with the Research Council are fulfilled, and particularly that the activities set out in the project description are realised within the adopted budget and time frame. The board is to ensure good cooperation between the Project Owner and the partners.
- 3.4. Clear guidelines must be drawn up for the centre's activities in terms of responsibility and authority, including what the board is authorised to do, the rules that apply to board

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<sup>1</sup> ISBN 978-82-12-03822-6 (PDF)

representation etc. The board's mandate must, among other things, ensure that the board does not make decisions that interfere with the Project Owner's area of responsibility.

#### *Advisory committees*

- 3.2 Unless otherwise specified in the agreement document with the Research Council, the centre must have a Scientific Advisory Committee comprising independent international top researchers. The committee must be involved in discussions about the centre's scientific strategy and scientific challenges throughout the project period. The committee can also give advice on other issues.
- 3.6 The centre can also have other advisory committees such as technical committees comprising representatives of the user partners.

#### *Centre management*

- 3.5. The centre must have joint day-to-day management and one overall research plan that corresponds with the project description. It must also have an effective plan for communication and exchange of personnel between the different parts of the centre.
- 3.6. The Project Owner must ensure that the centre has a strong management that, within the framework of the project description and the funding and cost plan, enjoys great scientific and administrative autonomy. The Project Owner must ensure that the centre has a good administrative support system in place.
- 3.7. The centre will be managed by a centre director or by a centre director supported by a management team. The centre director will act as the project manager in accordance with the contract between the Research Council and the Project Owner. The director must be able to act with autonomy in the scientific context and in connection with recruitment of staff for the centre. The director and, if relevant, the members of the management team will be appointed by the Project Owner in consultation with the partners. A description must be available of the centre director's authorisations.

#### *Staffing and personnel responsibility*

- 3.8. The centre is to be developed around researchers who have already proven to have the potential to work at a high scientific level. The Project Owner and the partners must themselves determine how employer responsibility for the centre staff should be organised, but the centre cannot have employer responsibility.
- 3.9. When recruiting staff, the centre must take gender equality into account and actively work to attract outstanding researchers. The centre must facilitate staff exchanges between partners.

#### *Researcher education*

- 3.10. The centre must encourage and contribute to researcher education in areas where recruitment is important for renewal and value creation. The centre must take steps to ensure that students and research fellows can carry out parts of their work with one of the user partners. The centre must also ensure that user partner staff participate in the supervision of students and research fellows. The Project Owner and relevant partners are responsible for the staff when the centre closes down and must especially ensure that master's and doctoral degree students can complete their studies according to plan.

## 4. Costs and funding

- 4.1. The contract between the Research Council and the Project Owner applies for five years with an option to extend for a further three years.

### *Cost plan*

- 4.2. The Research Council only approves actual costs directly related to carrying out centre activities in accordance with the contract. The Research Council's rules for calculating payroll and indirect expenses to be included in the budget must be used. Rules have been adopted for the following groups: The university and university college sector, the institute sector, companies and public sector bodies. Partners' payroll expenses must be budgeted pursuant to the rules that apply to the group the partner is affiliated to. All partners must use the stipulated research fellow rates for all years the application covers.
- 4.3 The Research Council's grant cannot be used to cover any of the centre undertaking's<sup>2</sup> project costs. This means that they cannot receive state aid through the Research Council's grant, but must cover their own costs.
- 4.4. Nor must the undertakings participating in the research centre receive indirect state aid through favourable conditions for their collaboration with the research organisations participating in the research centre.

### *Funding plan*

- 4.5. The societal and industry-oriented research centre scheme requires the long-term commitment of the user partners. The call for proposals stipulates the minimum requirement for funding from the user partners. The Project Owner and other centre research partners can also contribute funding to highlight their engagement and the centre's strategic foundation. Any requirements for own funding on the part of the Project Owner and research partners will be stated in the call.
- 4.6. The board must work to secure funding and necessary expertise for the centre if any partners leave the centre. The Research Council can reduce its grants to the centre if the minimum requirement for user funding is not met after a user partner leaves the centre. If the change in partners means that important assumptions that formed the basis for the establishment of the centre lapse or are significantly changed, the Research Council may terminate its contract with the Project Owner.

## 5. Collaboration agreement

- 5.1. The Project Owner is obliged to enter into a joint collaboration agreement with all center partners in the research center. The collaboration agreement must be drawn up in accordance with the Research Council's agreement document, the Requirements and Guidelines for Societal and Industry-oriented Research Centre and the General Terms and Conditions

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<sup>2</sup> When research organisations engage in research and development in effective collaboration with others, this activity constitutes non-economic activity. The EFTA Surveillance Authority considers that R&D carried out by a research organisation in effective collaboration with others is part of the organisation's independent R&D activity, as defined in the state aid rules. The research organisation is not considered an undertaking in the context of this activity.

for R&D Projects. The Research Council's knowledge of the collaboration agreement does not mean that it approves any deviations from the contract between the Project Owner and the Research Council.

- 5.2. The collaboration agreement should contain provisions setting out the Project Owner's and partners' obligation to contribute resources in accordance with the centre's activity and funding plan, rules regarding the right to join and leave the centre, rules regarding employer responsibility, and provisions on property rights, utilisation rights, licensing, publication of project results and confidentiality. A period of notice of at least six months must be given before a partner can leave the centre.
- 5.3. The Research Council's General Terms and Conditions for R&D Projects regarding property rights, utilisation rights, licensing, publication of project results and confidentiality must be used as a basis. The collaboration agreement's terms and conditions regarding these issues must be worded in a manner that ensures that the undertakings participating in the centre do not receive indirect state aid, as described in the EFTA Surveillance Authority's guidelines on state aid for research and development and innovation Section 28 letters b), c) or d).

## **6. Scientific and administrative follow-up**

- 6.1. The scientific and administrative follow-up described here comes in addition to the reporting procedures specified in the Research Council's agreement document.
- 6.2. The Project Owner must create a website for the centre to be actively used in external and internal communication.
- 6.2. The Project Owner must ensure that a communication plan is prepared for the centre.
- 6.4. In principle, research data should be openly available. The Project Owner must ensure that a data management plan is prepared in line with the Research Council's Policy for Open Access to Research Data.

### *Reporting to the Research Council*

- 6.4. By 1 April each year, the Project Owner must draw up an annual report for the previous year. The annual report must be written in English, sent to the Research Council and published on the centre's website.
- 6.5. By 1 December each year, the Project Owner must prepare and send a work plan to the Research Council with updated plans for the forthcoming year.
- 6.6. The Project Owner must send a final report no later than three months after the end of the project period.

### *Site visit*

- 6.7. In consultation with the Project Owner, the Research Council must, at appropriate intervals, organise a site visit to the centre to review developments, the centre's work and plans going forward. Representatives of the centre's board, the centre management, the

centre participants and the Research Council are obliged to be present. The first site visit must take place no later than two years after start-up.

*Midterm evaluation*

- 6.8. The Research Council will carry out a midterm evaluation of each centre within four years of start-up of the centre. The elements that will be given particular weight in this evaluation are described in the list of key success criteria for a Societal and Industry-oriented Research Centre, which is enclosed with this document. The evaluation will also entail an assessment of how the centre will contribute to achieving any thematic objectives and priorities described in the call and how, if relevant, the stipulations for allocation have been followed up. The evaluation will particularly compare the results achieved by the centre with the original project description. The evaluation will also give an assessment of the plans for the centre's activities during a potential three-year extension of the contract. The centres must be given an opportunity to comment on the midterm evaluation. In addition to this evaluation, the Research Council will evaluate the administrative situation at each centre.
- 6.9. The midterm evaluation, any comments from the centres and the evaluation of the administrative situation form the basis for the Research Council's decision to either extend operation of the centre for a total of eight years after start-up or to close it down five years after start-up.

## **Success criteria for Societal and Industry-oriented Research Centre**

*In addition to complying with formal requirements, a successful Societal and Industry-oriented Research Centre is characterised by the following:*

### **The research**

- The centre is engaged in long-term research at a high international level that is relevant to industry and/or benefits society in the field described in the project description.
- The centre has a clear research profile and has and has been successful in achieving recognition at the international level.
- The centre incorporates interdisciplinary perspectives in its research.
- Researchers from both the Project Owner's and the partners' organisations actively participate in the centre's research.
- The centre's user partners have increased their research commitments both through participation in the centre's activities and their own R&D activities on topics of relevance to the centre.

### **Innovation, value creation and benefits to society**

- The centre's research has generated or is expected to generate opportunities for innovation and/or increased competitiveness among user partners, as well as expectations of social ripple effects in society beyond the partners directly participating in the centre's activities.
- The centre can document that its research results have helped to address challenges and exploit opportunities in the centre's thematic areas.
- There is expedient mutual staff mobility between the centre's research partners and user partners.
- The centre encourages innovation and defines, maps and follows up research results with innovation potential.
- The centre has implemented measures to ensure that the expertise and results achieved through its research can be used effectively by the partners.
- The centre has taken steps to ensure that results, including results that fall outside the user partners' core areas, can be commercialised through user partners, research-based business start-ups or in other ways.

### **Internationalisation**

- Through the centre collaboration, the partners work actively to become involved and promote their activities in international research arenas, including the EU's framework programme.
- The centre is engaged in active collaboration with international research groups and has also contributed to the internationalisation of Norwegian research and industry in other ways.
- There is mutual mobility between the centre and outstanding foreign research groups.
- The centre attracts outstanding foreign researchers.

### **Researcher education and recruitment**

- If relevant, the centre offers high-quality researcher education.
- The centre helps to strengthen recruitment, also at master's level, to the centre's field of research and, if relevant, contributes to research-based teaching.
- The centre contributes to gender balance and diversity in researcher education and recruitment.
- The centre's research contributes to higher quality of education in the centre's thematic areas and disciplines.

### **Partners and funding**

- The Project Owner and the partners have a long-term commitment to the centre. The company partners have increased their funding above the minimum requirement.
- Active and targeted endeavours are made to strengthen the composition of centre partners.
- The centre's participants succeed in winning competitions for national and international R&D funds.

### **Organisation**

- The centre has a high profile and clear identity and enjoys successful collaboration with its partners.
- The centre's board and management contribute to the follow-up of the intentions and plans that formed the basis for the centre's establishment.
- The centre has succeeded in creating added value as a centre where synergies are secured between different work packages to achieve common goals.