



Rise to Challenge
Information event 9.9.2025

Agenda

Opening

Kari Komulainen, Business Finland

Goals and the process

Virpi Mikkonen and Karin Wikman, Business Finland

Pilot call case: TeleQuant

Teemu Hakkarainen, Tampere University

Q&A



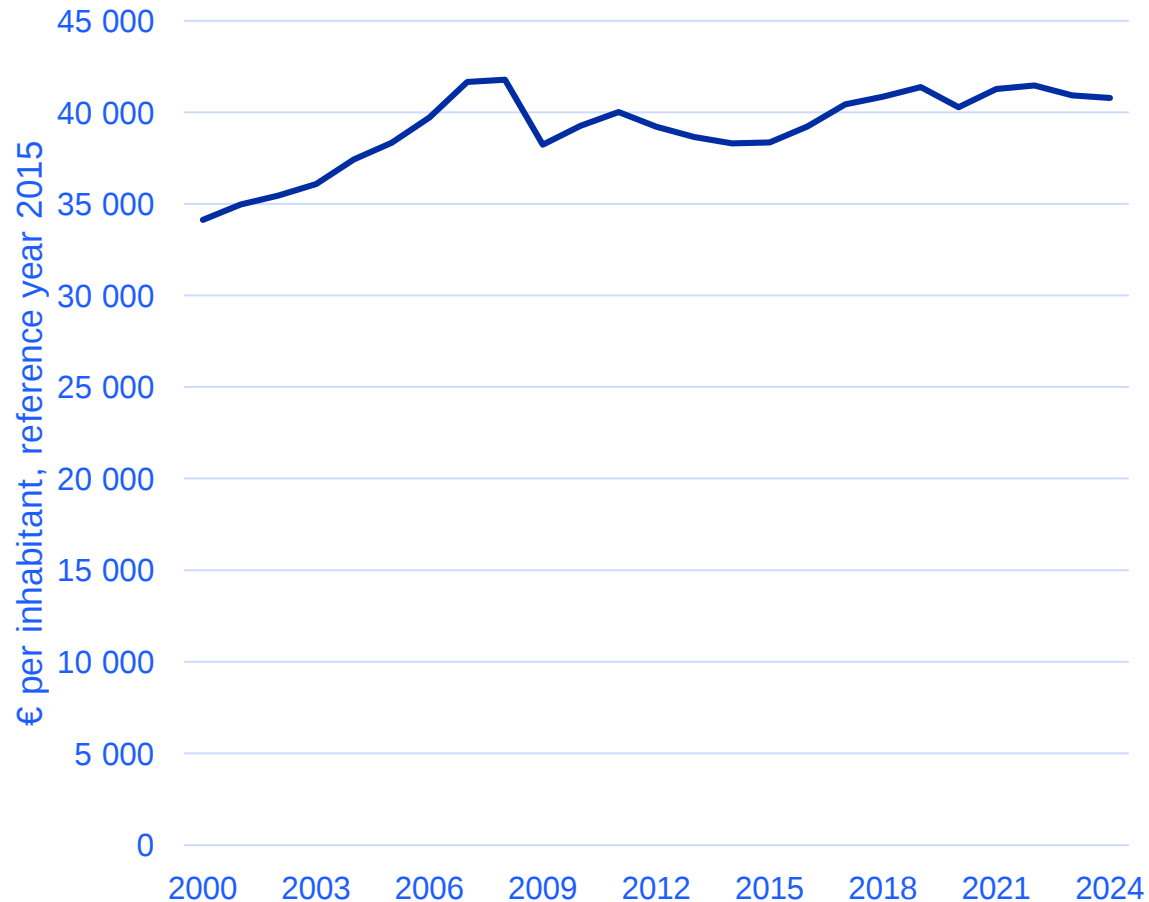
BUSINESS
FINLAND

Now is the time to
RISE TO CHALLENGE

Kari Komulainen

Senior Director
Business Finland

Setting the scene: we need new sources of economic growth



Since 2007, the per capita standard of living, measured by gross domestic product, has remained stagnant.

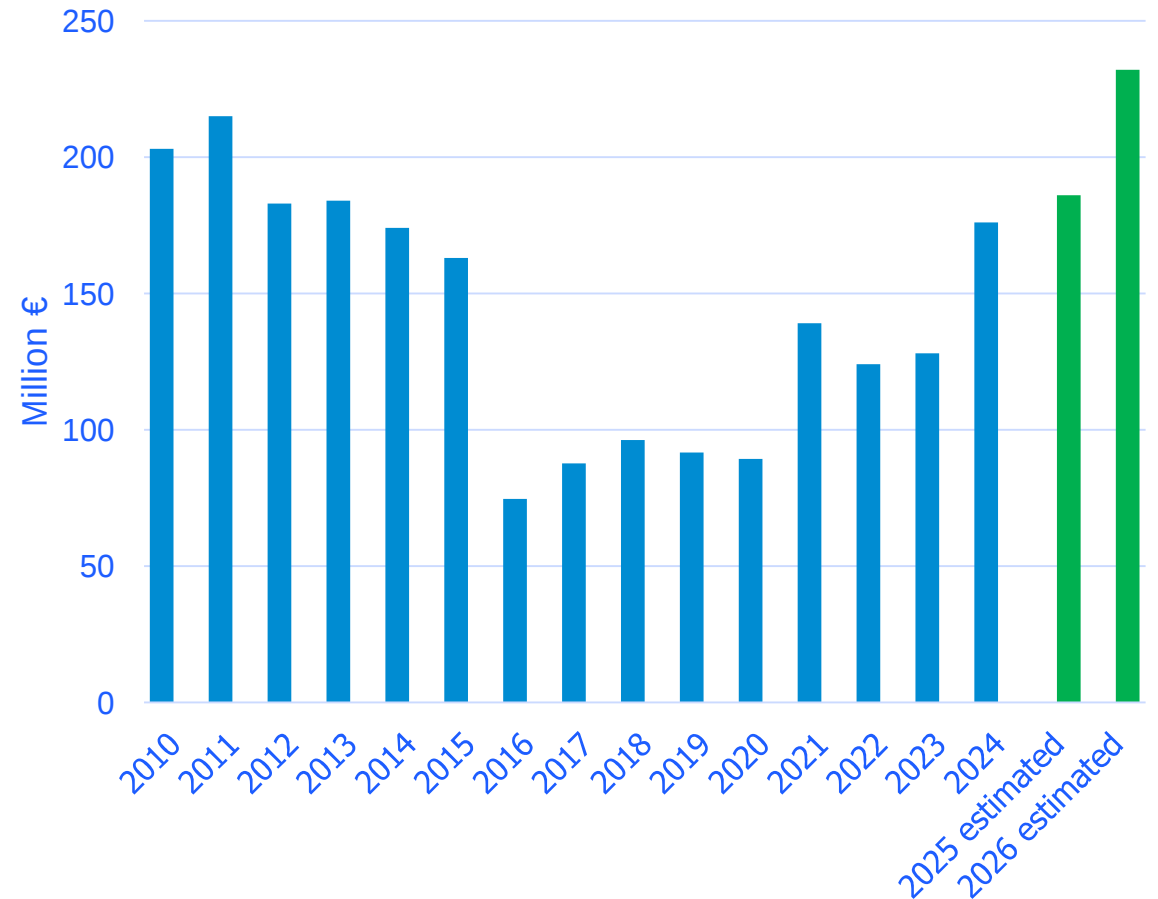
The challenges primarily lie within the market sector.

Economic growth has been largely supported by the publicly funded health and social services sector, which expanded more rapidly than the market sector.

A historic turn is at hand - and it is now a **positive** one!

Funding for public research funneled through Business Finland (then Tekes) was halved a decade ago. This, and political objective to rapidly boost exports, caused us to give priority to research projects co-funded by companies.

Now the recovery of funding is at hand. The Rise to Challenge funding concept is based on this very positive change.



Aim is to create a foundation for future business opportunities

Projects should address important societal challenges of the future through research.

We seek innovative initiatives, courage, and a readiness to take risks from both researchers and the leadership of research organizations.

Insights from the pilot call

We will prioritize non-thematic calls that allow researchers to select their own topics. Annual calls are foreseen.

This approach enables ideas from various research fields to compete against each other, instead of limiting competition to within their specific disciplines.



First Rise to Challenge Projects	
ANSE: AI Native Software Engineering Tampere University, University Of Jyväskylä	The ANSE project is developing a completely new AI-native software engineering methodology. It combines generative AI, process modeling, multimodal interaction, and real-time business monitoring into a single, unified framework.
HUSKI: Protected Critical Infrastructure Against Hybrid Threats Turku University of Applied Sciences, University of Turku, University of Jyväskylä, Jyväskylä University of Applied Sciences	The mission of the HUSKI project is to address the challenges posed by hybrid threats to ensure the stability of society, particularly the functionality of critical infrastructure. The project tackles the highly complex challenges arising from the broad spectrum of hybrid threats.
Oceanaut: On Chip Edge AI Neuromorphic Applications For Security University of Turku	The OCEANAut project explores and develops the next generation of highly energy-efficient neuromorphic computing systems for security and defense applications.
REINFORCE: Automatic Detection And Correction Of Industrial Design Flaws – Toward Fail-safe Industries Tampere University Foundation, University of Helsinki, University of Jyväskylä	The goal of the REINFORCE project is to make a significant breakthrough in industrial design. It aims to revolutionize the early-stage design process by leveraging robotics and cyber-secure solutions through a novel neuro-symbolic AI application
Telequant Tampere University Foundation, VTT, Aalto University Foundation	The objective of the TeleQuant project, "Telecom-Wavelength Quantum Communication with On-Demand Quantum Light Sources", is to develop key components and systems for quantum communication technology.

**BUSINESS
FINLAND**

AIM HIGH

Rise to Challenge call: Targets and the process

Virpi Mikkonen ja Karin Wikman

Call Objective: THINK BIG!

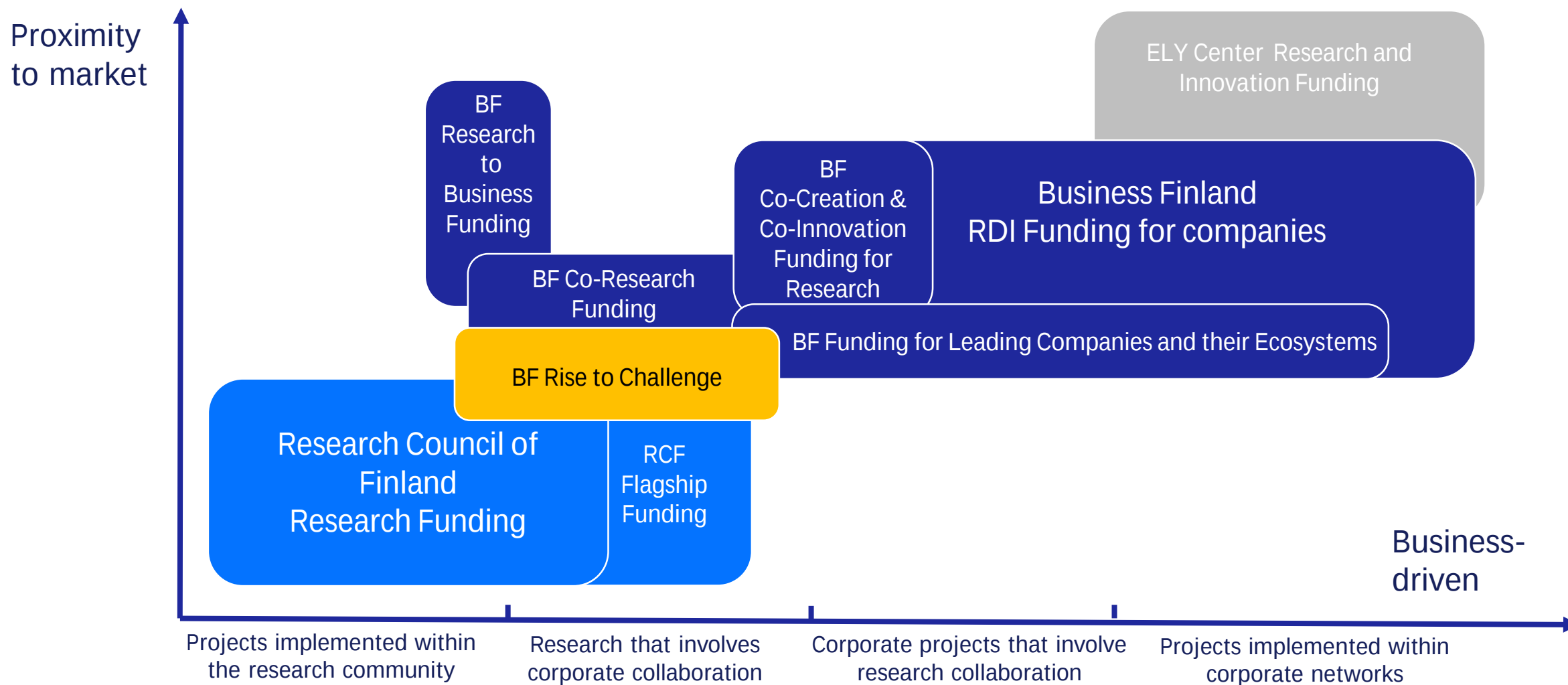


Mission-oriented goal setting: Research is used to solve the great challenges of the future.

- We are looking for radical breakthroughs - new, creative, and market-disruptive research ideas.
- The productivity benefits and/or international commercial potential have been identified but they cannot yet be accurately assessed
- Company participation not required in the first phase

The call supports the government program's goal to raise Finland's research and development spending to 4 percent of GDP by 2030.

RDI FUNDING



SUMMARY OF THE CALL PROCESS

- The call welcomes world-class ideas without thematic restrictions. The projects can be implemented in collaboration between multiple research organisations.
- Preliminary application stage is very important, DL Oct 31st, 2025
 - The selection is based on the project idea presentation in PowerPoint format
 - Send your presentation via [secure email](#). Enter “Näytönpaikka, BFRK/7/910/2025” in the subject line.
 - Only the best project ideas will be invited to pitch their project in Nov-Dec
 - The projects will be informed by Jan 20th, 2026
- The first three-year phase of the projects
 - Based on the ppt-deck and pitch the best ideas are invited to send full application (9.3.2026)
 - EUR 30 million has been earmarked for the first phase
 - We expect to fund 5-10 projects
- A potential two-year continuation phase
 - The second phase depends on the results achieved in the first phase
 - No separate application needed (change decision)

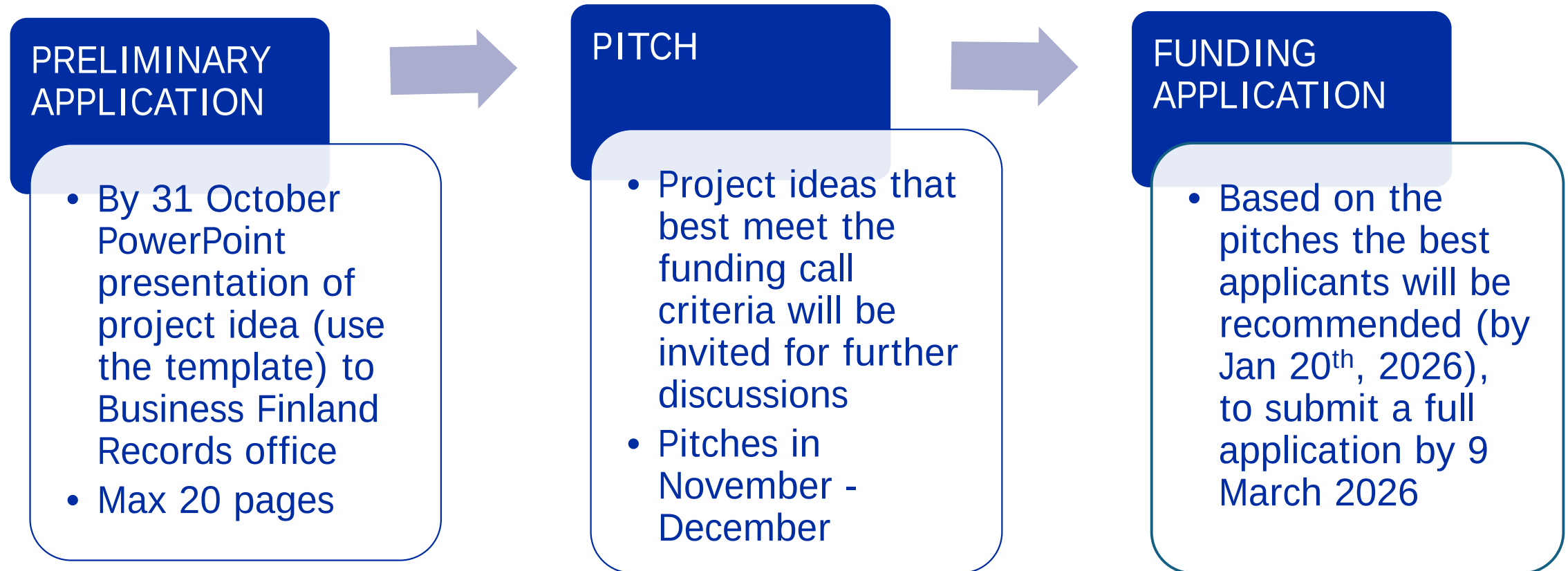
PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA

- Preliminary application phase:
 - Significance of the mission, uniqueness and novelty of the research idea.
 - View of the potential business arising from the research and the timeframe of utilization. Relevance to Finnish society.
 - Diverse expertise of the research team/teams compared to international standards and the project manager's experience and leadership capability.
- For projects invited to further discussions, in addition to the above:
 - The ambition and quality of the project plan, and the plan for engaging stakeholders who will utilize the project's results.
 - Initial resources and RDI capabilities and their planned development.
 - Quality of national and international networks of the research project.

Preliminary application

APPLICATION PROCESS, PRELIMINARY & FIRST PHASE

SELECTION OF PROJECTS



TEMPLATE TO PRESENT YOUR IDEA

Presentation of the project idea by 31 October and pitch agenda

This material must be submitted by Friday, 31 October 2025, at the latest by sending a secure email to the registry at <https://secure.businessfinland.fi/suojaposti>. Enter "Rise to the Challenge Research Funding Call, BFRK/7/910/2025" in the subject line.

Material in PowerPoint format, according to the structure of the adjacent column. One joint set of materials from the consortium. Maximum number of pages: 20.

Projects to be invited to pitch will be selected based on the submitted material.

The time slot for a potential pitch is 30 minutes (November–December), agenda:

- 15 minutes to present the project idea according to the previously submitted PowerPoint slide set (set can be edited before pitching)
- 15 minutes for questions and discussion

BUSINESS
FINLAND

1. Mission and Situational picture
2. Visualized Roadmap for 2020–2035
3. Impact
4. Indicators
5. Team and Leadership
6. Project Content and Cost Estimate
7. Commitment of the Applicant Organisation

Subheadings may not be deleted or edited.

1. Mission and Situational picture

- A concise description of the mission. What challenge/future need will be met and what is the uniqueness, significance and relevance of the idea to Finnish society?
- What is the situation around the world and in Finland; what are the levels of expertise and skills gaps; are similar solutions being explored elsewhere?

2. Visualized Roadmap for 2020–2035

Visualize a roadmap for your idea for 2020–2035:

- What expertise does the project build on?
- What will be achieved during the project?

- Potential
- How can to establish development being done change?

3. Impact

- Assess the impact of the project (e.g. impact on RDI investments / new skills and centres of expertise / theses / number of students in the field / employment / productivity / patents / clean transition / digitalisation / etc.)
- Present your view of the new business opportunities and users potentially arising from the research and the estimated time frame for utilising the results.

BUSINESS
FINLAND

PITCHING

- Based on the PowerPoint-material, the most promising research ideas will be selected for pitching their project to Business Finland's experts.
- Those invited to pitch their project will be sent a link to book a discussion time (beginning of November). The pitches will be presented to BF's experts in November–December.
- The ppt-presentation material can be modified for the pitching. Agenda: 15 min presentation + 15 min Q & A
- At this phase, the project team must demonstrate how the research organization is committed to the project and strengthening the research team.
- Feedback on further discussions will be provided no later than 20 January 2026.

VISUALIZED ROADMAP

Visualize a roadmap for your research idea for 2020–2035 (≠ project plan)

- What expertise does the project build on?
- What will be achieved during the project?
- Potential pathways for utilising the results; timeframe for utilisation?
- How can other disciplines potentially be included later, and how do you intend to establish international cooperation?
- What stakeholder cooperation will be developed, and how?
- In addition to the Business Finland project, what else is being done to promote the matter and how should the operating environment change?

COMMITMENT OF APPLICANT ORGANISATIONS

- Describe the applicant organisation's commitment to strengthening its resources and the entire project.
- There is no specific form to show the commitment of the organization
 - e-mail/ letter/ other written contribution
- We value the alignment with the organization's strategy and the plan to strengthen the resourcing of the respective research area.
- One of the performance indicators of the funded projects (based on which the results will be assessed, and the project may be granted further funding) is "Initial researcher resources and a plan for their development"

Application process for
projects recommended to
submit a full proposal

FIRST PROJECT PHASE, APPLICATION

- Based on the November–December pitches and the PowerPoint deck, the most promising research ideas will be recommended to submit a full application
- Deadline for applications March 9th, 2026
 - The full application must be completed in Business Finland's online service by 9 March 2026 (<https://www.businessfinland.fi/en/for-finnish-customers/online-services>)
 - Select Co-Research as the funding service. You do not need to include “Notifications of Participation in the Project” forms in the application.
 - Select “Näytönpaikka” from the drop-down menu under “Programs and other Related Links”. Enter a name for your application in the following format: “Näytönpaikka – project name x”.
 - Prepare your project plan on a separate [project plan template](#) and attach it to your application.
 - Joint projects have a common project plan covering all parties' activities
 - Each research organization submits its own application in the e-service
 - Parties must use the same project name in their application

FIRST PROJECT PHASE, APPLICATION

Project plan

- Use the project plan template
- The template has the same structure as the PowerPoint deck you have submitted earlier
- Describe the first three years in more detail and the following two years at a more general level
- The funding decision for the second phase depends on the results achieved in the first phase (indicators set in the Project Plan, Chapter 2.2)

Project Plan

In the case of a joint project, this plan describes the contributions of all parties involved!

1. Mission and Situational picture (up to 2 pages)

1.1 Mission and novelty

A concise description of the mission. What challenge/future need will be met and what is the uniqueness, significance and relevance of the idea to Finnish society?

1.2 Situational picture

What is the situation around the world and in Finland; what are the levels of expertise and skills gaps; are similar solutions being explored elsewhere? Alternative/competitive approaches. What is Finland's competitiveness and intended competitive advantage, and why is this topic relevant to Finland?

2. Impact and indicators (up to 2 pages)

2.1 Impact of the whole project

Assessment of the project's impact (e.g. impact on RDI investments / new skills and centres of expertise / theses / number of students in the field / employment / productivity / patents / clean transition / digitalisation / etc.)

Your view of the new business opportunities potentially arising from the research and the estimated time frame for utilising the results.

2.2 Indicators set for the first three-year phase of the project

Achieving the indicators set for the project's first phase is a prerequisite for the second phase. Describe the target levels for the indicators and their verification methods

Indicator	Objective & how to verify
Initial researcher resources and a plan for their development	<i>For example: there will be a total of at least X new people in research groups by the end of Phase 1 of the project, of whom at least Y will be at postdoctoral level. Baseline in winter 2026: a total of Z people in research groups.</i>
Progress towards the mission in the first phase, i.e., implementation of the project in accordance with the roadmap and	<i>Achieving the most important project results and how to verify them in 3-5 bullet points.</i>

INDICATORS, Chapter 2.2

Indicator	Objective & how to verify
Initial researcher resources and a plan for their development	<i>For example: there will be a total of at least X new people in research groups by the end of Phase 1 of the project, of whom at least Y will be at postdoctoral level. Baseline in winter 2026: a total of Z people in research groups.</i>
Progress towards the mission in the first phase, i.e., implementation of the project in accordance with the roadmap and project plan	<i>Achieving the most important project results and how to verify them in 3–5 bullet points.</i>
Identification of utilisation pathways and evidence of stakeholder commitment to the second phase of the research	<i>For example:</i> - <i>At least X companies committed as partners for the second phase of the project</i> - <i>At least Y PoCs with companies</i> - <i>At least Z invention disclosures</i>
Optional indicator	<i>For example:</i> - <i>At least X peer-reviewed scientific publications published or under review</i> - <i>At least Y international funding applications</i>

THE FIRST PROJECT PHASE

- Max amount for the first phase is up to 3 M€ per organization or 6 M€ for a consortium
 - The funding rate is 80 %
 - Company involvement not expected, companies can be engaged during the project.
- The first project phase: Competence development and strengthening resources
 - Assemble and strengthen your research resources
 - Identify interdisciplinary research needs and organize collaboration, for example, with the social sciences, humanities or creative industries, and strengthen international research links
 - A plan for utilizing the results within a 5–10-year timeframe shall be developed.
 - Engage companies that will utilize the research results in their own R&D work for the second phase of the project and outline other paths for utilizing the research
 - Specify the research plan for the second phase

From phase 1 to phase 2

FROM PHASE ONE TO PHASE TWO

- The second phase depends on the results achieved in the first phase
- No new application needed
 - The aim is that the implementation and funding of the projects that have reached their goals in the first phase would continue to the second phase without interruption.
 - When reporting on the first phase, the applicant must also submit a more detailed plan and cost.
 - Funding is granted for the project's second phase; this is made as a change decision to the project plan and the cost estimate

THE SECOND PROJECT PHASE

- Maximum additional amount for the second phase is up to 2 M€ per organization or 4 M€ for a consortium
 - The funding rate is 80 %
 - Potential utilizers of the results should participate in project steering
- The research will proceed according to the specified plan.
- Further utilization pathways will be identified, and links to the business community and other stakeholders will be strengthened further.
- The utilization options include commercialization paths realized through the founding of new companies.
- Applying for international research funding and building the necessary international networks.

PROJECT COMMUNICATION AND DISSEMINATION

- Rise to Challenge projects are high profile projects and we expect efficient communication and visibility of the funded projects
- One work package should focus on project management and communication
 - A communication and dissemination plan is expected

SUMMARY AND IMPORTANT DATES

- Think big!
- Submit your project idea (use the presentation template) by 31.10.2025
- Only a few project ideas will be selected for pitching
 - Selected projects will receive a calendar invite for pitching
- Pitches in November-December
 - Projects recommended to submit full proposal will be informed late January
- Deadline for full proposals March 9th, 2026

FOR INSPIRATION

- Funded pilot call projects
 - <https://www.businessfinland.fi/en/whats-new/news/2025/the-first-rise-to-challenge-projects-selected>
- Breakthrough results from NeoCarbon project (in Finnish)
 - <https://www.businessfinland.fi/ajankohtaista/caset/2025/nain-syntyi-uusi-maailma-neo.carbon.energy>