

**BUSINESS  
FINLAND**

# Innovation and Growth Research 2026



# THEMES 2026 - COMMERCIALIZATION, VALUE CREATION, SOCIETAL IMPACTS

Themes (Pick one of these research fields):

- I. Commercialization and internationalization
- II. Growth and Value Creation
- III. Societal impacts of innovation

# 1. SOURCES OF COMMERCIALIZATION AND INTERNATIONALIZATION PUZZLE

## Intro

Successful commercialization process seems to be one of the most challenging task in firm dynamics. New service or product needs well-planned characteristics and exact matching in the market that final users and consumers are ready to buy a product. It is found that this process has been modest in Finland. Therefore, companies need multiple puzzle to operate simultaneously when they are planning to entry market. More radical innovation are needed, and it needs better planning of, for example, utilization of intangible assets and international collaboration. Successful entry requires also appropriate planning for internationalization in various stages of commercialization and innovation process. Therefore, deeper insights are needed to understand final customer and end user value creation as well as path from invention to innovation in the international market. Some potential research questions in this context could be:

## Research questions

- How can R&D activities lead to successful commercialization of services and products? What are needed to jump from step-by-step incremental innovation process to elements which create radical innovations? How other company-level efforts (intangible/tangible) can be used to support this path? How can innovation processes be managed in a controlled manner, taking resilience into account, in the face of uncertainty? How to understand value creation of final consumers and end users?
- How might the increase of public and private R&D funding improve international innovation collaboration? How national security issues should be considered? How foreign-owned companies can accelerate internationalization of R&D collaboration and innovations in Finland? How do we create ecosystems utilizing science, technology, green transition, security and economic perspectives?

Business Finland expects to get research ideas from various research fields utilizing both qualitative and quantitative methods.

**Innovation and growth policy tools.** What kind of new tools are needed for policy-making and the development of new approaches to monitor and evaluate policy interventions? Applications that formulate sharp, topical and relevant policy-related research questions and approaches are particularly welcomed.

## 2. GROWTH AND VALUE CREATION – INHIBITING AND CATALYSING FACTORS

### Intro

Finnish growth has been sluggish during the last decades despite continued RDI funding and other growth-enhancing innovation and industrial policies. Productivity has been poor, especially in services, and the value-added of exports underperforms those of our main competitors. We've also seen a decline in the number of start-ups and companies face challenges to scale globally. In short, sectoral renewal has been slow and new growth opportunities have not been realized on a broader scale. Recently some cross-sectoral challenges have been highlighted related e.g. to business competencies, RDI incentives, and lack of foreign talent. Is this the whole picture, which other cross-sectoral drivers and challenges should we understand more deeply? Some potential, but non-exhaustive, research questions could be:

### Research questions

- What types of new innovation hot-spots are emerging in Finland, how could they fuel growth and productivity across sectors? Which factors catalyze or inhibit utilization of these hot-spots, or knowledge clusters? Can we predict future hot-spots based on current data?
- Which factors catalyze or inhibit scalability, productivity and growth of businesses in Finland, to what degree are these cross-sectoral or specific to certain companies or growth opportunities?
- Why is value-added of Finnish exports developing poorly? Where is value generated and how is it retained in Finland, how has this dynamics developed recently in the context of new geoeconomics and market disruptions? How should policies react?

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# 3. SOCIETAL IMPACTS OF INNOVATION

## Intro

As a measure to speed up the stagnated productivity growth and balance the public finances in the long run, Finland has committed to significant investments into R&D over the forthcoming years. While the immediate target is raising R&D spending to 4% of GDP, the ultimate objective is to maintain a high level of well-being for citizens. This research theme examines how R&D inputs and innovation activities translate into these end goals. Importantly, the scope includes a business perspective: it investigates how innovation drives broader economic benefits – such as productivity gains, business competitiveness, commercialization success, private investment leverage, and job creation – alongside positive societal outcomes like equality and sustainability. The aim is to uncover the mechanisms and realized outcomes through which R&D and innovation contribute both to societal welfare in Finland. A non-exhaustive list of potential research questions is below.

## Research questions

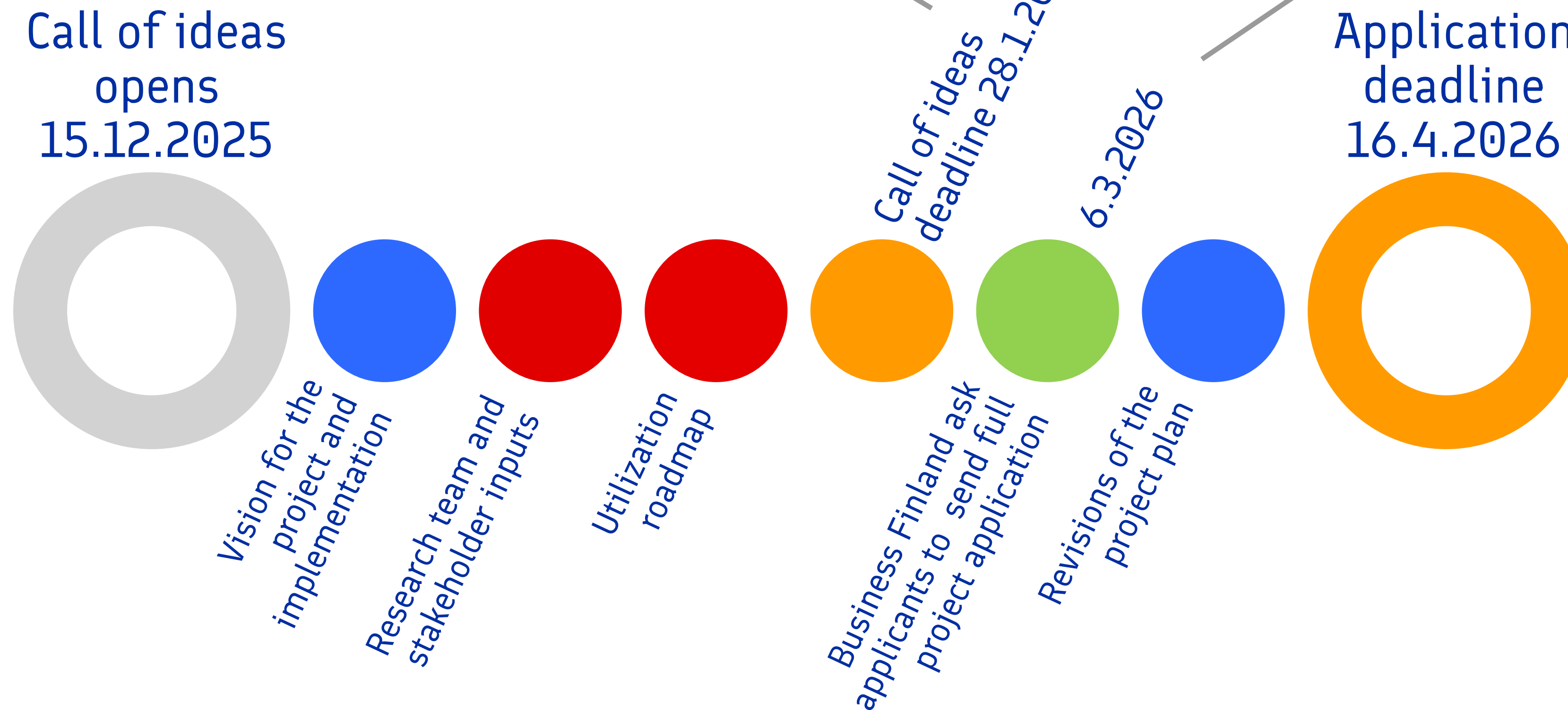
- What kinds of principles or “logics” should guide public R&D funding to maximize positive societal and economic impacts? Can these funding approaches be influenced or optimized to strengthen not only societal outcomes but also business growth and competitiveness – and if so, how?
- What are the anticipated and realized impacts of innovation at the societal level – for example, on income distribution, regional and gender equality, or climate change mitigation – and how do these relate to broader economic outcomes such as business development or job creation?
- What is the role of different stakeholders – such as innovation funders, companies, and policymakers – in ensuring that the benefits of innovation translate into both societal welfare and business prosperity?

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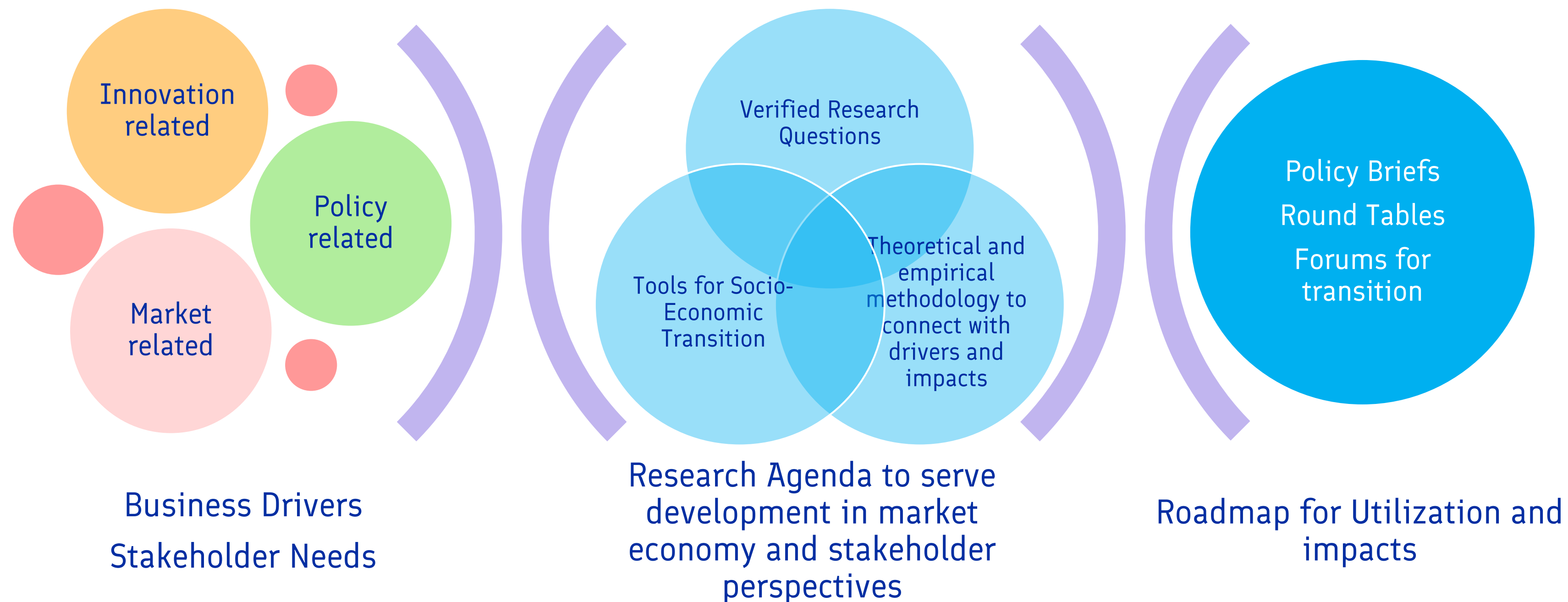
# STEPS IN 2026



# Elements of Utilization Roadmap

Research questions, methods and delivery must be innovation, market, and policy driven

The utilization plan should describe, e.g. with a timeline, how to cooperate with policy developers and policy makers already during the project (e.g. workshops or round table discussions) and what results can be expected (e.g. policy briefs and publications)



# WHAT WILL BE NEEDED FOR CALL OF IDEAS – EVALUATION CRITERIA

Prepare an Idea description document on your research idea. The Idea description must consist of four parts described below. Send **one PDF document** including all four parts to:

<https://secure.businessfinland.fi/suojaposti> (deadline 28.1.2026, 23:59).

1. Idea description: Abstract and description of the novelty and the relevance of the project (max one A4 page)
  - Evaluation criteria: novelty and relevance of the research idea to the call themes as well as innovation and growth policy.
2. Implementation (max one A4 page)
  - Evaluation criteria: concrete implementation and methodology.
3. Utilization (max one A4 page)
  - It is important to describe how to cooperate with policy developers and makers as well as other stakeholders
  - Evaluation criteria: versability and adaptability to its purpose.
4. Team description, international collaboration, preliminary budget and composition of the steering group (max one A4 page)
  - Evaluation criteria: quality, credibility and interdisciplinary of research team, scale and scope of international collaboration, composition of the steering group considering the objectives of the research proposal.



# WHAT WILL BE NEEDED FOR FULL PROJECT APPLICATION?

After the research idea phase, max. 12 applicants are asked to continue to the full project application phase. Compile a full application (including project plan max. 15 pages) **in case that Business Finland support it** by using our online service: <https://www.businessfinland.fi/suomalaisille-asiakkaille/asiointipalvelu/>

## 1. Description of planned work

- Abstract, earlier research and research questions
- work packages (goals, resources, methods, budget)
- research team
- project schedule

## 2. Stakeholders and funding plan

- Stakeholder commitments (preliminary indications for commitment)
- Utilization roadmap
- Composition of steering group

**Note:** Contents of the idea gathering should equal with the final project plan (and evaluation frame)

Attach to the application the forms filled out by the companies participating in the cooperation of the project and possibly other organizations: [Notification of participation in project](#)

# EVALUATION FRAME - WHAT WILL BE APPRECIATED IN THE EVALUATION OF THE FULL APPLICATIONS?

## 1. Novelty and Relevance

1.1 Relevance to the call themes as well as innovation and growth policy

## 2. Implementation and budget

2.1 Quality and credibility of the research plan (incl. work packages and budget)

## 3. Research team and international collaboration

3.1 Resources and knowledge of research team

3.2 Multidisciplinary approach

3.3 Quality and volume of international collaboration (top research groups) *(1) international joint activity; 2) commitment to take part to the project by international experts*

## 4. Utilization

4.1 Quality and credibility of the utilization roadmap with stakeholders

4.2 Composition of Steering Group



# IMPACT STEPS FOR INNOVATION RESEARCH CALL

## Inputs

- R&D and innovation funding
- Top-skilled and internationally oriented research work
- Competence base sourced from innovation environment actors, Business Finland's strategy and impact assessment

## Innovation research / Project activities

### Project activities / funding criteria

- Challenge-based research agenda, which develops new methodologies for stakeholders
- Utilization roadmaps with system level impact
- Team CVs for credibility and development of research groups
- Policy Briefs for creating basis for dialogue between stakeholder groups
- Round Table Discussions for supporting the dialogue
- Transition Arenas for creating new innovation activities

## Outputs / direct and indirect results in Finland

### Project activities

- The quantity and quality of innovation research increase and meets the global context
- New innovation policy tools are established based on strong impact analysis
- Exchange of know-how between research sector, innovation policy actors and companies is enhanced to support renewal of businesses
- Finnish innovation environment's capabilities to catalyze emergence of new growth increases

## Impacts

- Radical innovations and new business models renew economic structure
- Sustainable growth of companies and the economy – What are the driving forces of new economic growth?
- New tools for companies to improve resilience
- Public and private RDI funding and activities generate overall increase in capabilities, productivity and sustainability