

Q&A: Rise to Challenge call 2026 (Näytönpaikka)

Application, applicants

Q: When to apply for Rise to Challenge funding?

A: Apply for Rise to Challenge when the research topic is unique and has major long-term commercial potential, but the technology, market and company ecosystem are not yet mature enough for a Co-Innovation project.

If the research questions align with a Leading Company (Veturi) roadmap, you should apply for a partnership project (Co-Research) linked to that Leading company.

<https://www.businessfinland.fi/globalassets/finnish-customers/news/calls/2026/call-for-co-research-partnership-funding-2026-.pdf>

Q: In which languages can the application be submitted?

A: The application can be submitted in Finnish, Swedish, or English.

Q: Can a single organization apply, or is a consortium required?

A: Both individual organization applications and consortium applications are welcome

Q: How the work should be split within different research organizations. Is it similar as with co-innovation or are there different requirements.

A: No specific requirements. Make use of each party's best expertise to achieve impactful results. Consider what is the most relevant way to organize the research work to reach the objectives.

Q: Can the same research organization apply for multiple projects within the same call?

A: Yes.

Q: Can the same researcher apply for multiple projects within the same call?

A: There are no strict rules regarding this. However, it should be considered how successfully a researcher can develop several different world-class ideas. If the researcher's role in the project is minimal and easily replaceable with another resource, the situation might be different. Our goal is to support substantial, significant investments that will generate new growth for Finland in the future.

Q: Requirements of Principal Investigator

A: Proven leadership and managerial skills of the team/consortium leader are important for the successful implementation of the project.

Q: Do we have to use the exact template with given fonts and so on?

A: Format is free but be sure to include the content of seven given slides.

Q: What time is the preliminary proposal phase closing?

A: 3.11.2026 at 23:59

Consortium and Team

Q: On the first round, most of the funded proposals were consortium projects. Are consortium projects preferred from single applicant ones?

A: We do not have preference on consortiums over projects carried out by a single research organization. We expect the applicants to build a dream team with world class excellence.

Q: What kind of consortium structures between research organizations do you prefer?

A: We do not have any specific preference regarding the consortium, or even requirement to have consortiums of several research organizations. You may want to consider what is the most relevant way to organize the research work to reach the objectives of the project.

A: Can you talk a bit more about the assessment of the research team(s): What international standards do you refer to? Do you value excellence in academic research or also merits in industry collaboration, entrepreneurship etc.?

Q: The team members' excellence in academic research as well as versatile expertise is highly valued, as well as merits in industry collaboration and entrepreneurship

Proven leadership and managerial skills of the team/consortium leader are important for the successful implementation of the project.

Q: Is it possible to have more than one PI from one research organization Scientific PI + Experienced project manager

A: Yes

Eligibility, foreign participants, university hospitals/wellbeing services counties

Q: What is a research organization?

A: A research and dissemination organization is an entity (such as universities or research institutes, technology transfer bodies, innovation brokers, research-oriented physical or virtual collaborative communities), regardless of its legal status (public or private) or the method of funding, whose main objective is to independently carry out basic, industrial or experimental research. or disseminate the results of such activities through training, publications or knowledge transfer. Read more:

<https://www.businessfinland.fi/en/Connection-and-support/frequently-asked-questions/maaritelmat/What-is-a-research-organization/>

Q: Only public research organizations are eligible as formal applicants. May an individual university researcher serve as the project initiator or principal investigator, with the university itself submitting the application as the formal applicant

A: Yes

Q: Do the consortium members need to be Finnish universities or research institutions, i.e., are foreign universities and research institutions eligible consortium members and can they receive funding from the call?

Can foreign universities and research institutions participate as collaboration partners?

A: Business Finland funding can only be granted to Finnish organizations. International collaboration is very important in BF-funded research, meaning it can be conducted with participants funded through their own resources.

As a rule, funded research projects are expected to engage in active international collaboration. International collaboration must be well justified in relation to the project's objectives. International collaboration may include organised knowledge exchange, joint projects, and/or researcher and expert mobility according to the standard Business Finland funding terms.

Q: Can the companies utilizing and commercializing the research be from outside Finland, elsewhere in Europe?

A: Through the Rise to Challenge call, Business Finland aims to create a foundation for future business opportunities and growth sectors for Finnish companies. Therefore, we expect that the new knowledge generated in the funded projects will be available for Finnish companies to utilize. BF evaluates the positive impacts of funding on Finnish society.

Q: Can research groups from the field of medicine, such as those from a university hospital, participate as part of a consortium?

A: University hospitals/wellbeing services counties are not considered public research organizations because research is not their primary function. Therefore, they cannot act as applicants in the Rise to Challenge call. However, like companies, they can function as subcontractors from whom a research organization purchases services.

More info: <https://www.businessfinland.fi/en/for-finnish-customers/services/funding/cooperation-between-companies-and-research-organizations/co-innovation/funding-for-university-hospitals>

Q: In the first stage of the funding call, only research institutions are eligible for funding. Is it possible for a funded research institution to procure expertise from a company as subcontracting within the project

A: Subcontracting is limited in research projects, e.g. testing and analysis services are accepted. Joint action partners cannot provide their contribution as a purchased service to the beneficiary.

Q: Can company partners receive funding in the second stage.

Companies are not eligible even in the second stage. Joint projects between companies and research are funded through co-innovation projects.

Theme/topic

Q: Are technology-driven ideas only approved? The research gap on management in various areas is topical for example. Are these kinds of ideas feasible for funding?

A: We are looking for novel and unique initiatives which have remarkable future business potential. Ideas don't need to be technology driven.

Q: Does the call emphasize research into new technologies, or the application of existing technologies to new uses?

A: Both approaches are possible. The technology could be old, but its novel application might require additional research. The key criterion is impact.

Q: Do you plan to fund different themes as compared to the projects that got the funding from the pilot? Or is it possible to propose a topic that is related to one of the currently funded ones - to aim at building a larger cluster on that theme?

A: We can fund the same themes as in the previous calls, but there has to be a new and different approach and additional value.

Roadmap

Q: Is the timeline 2020-2035 for the roadmap only a suggestion for a timespan or a mandatory time frame to be used?

A: The given timeline is indicative and can vary depending on industry and research themes. We want to understand what expertise the project builds on, what will be achieved during the project, and which are potential pathways for utilizing the results; timeframe for utilization.

Q: Are the required roadmaps like Veturi/Leading company roadmaps?

A: Rise to Challenge roadmaps should visualize the big picture for years 2020–2035: a) what the research is based on, b) what will be achieved during the project and c) potential pathways and timeframe for utilizing the results. How can other disciplines potentially be included, 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?

Implementation Paths

Q: How is the recognition of commercial potential defined? Does it need to be demonstrated somehow?

A: There is no straightforward formula or definition for identifying commercial potential. We look for high-level research ideas that can lead to future business opportunities. Therefore, recognizing business potential is inherently case-specific and abstract. [Neocarbon](https://www.businessfinland.fi/ajankohtaista/caset/2025/nain-syntyi-uusi-maailma-neo.carbon.energy) is a good example of this, incorporating aspects like future global markets and systemic change.

<https://www.businessfinland.fi/ajankohtaista/caset/2025/nain-syntyi-uusi-maailma-neo.carbon.energy>

Q: “View on the potential new business that may arise from the research.” How precise does this vision need to be and how it can be presented?

A: There is a big variation in different sectors. Explain, in the relevant sectors of your research, what steps need to be taken during the research and after it, and how long does this take. What type of actors / companies (existing, new) could commercialize the research results?

Q: What is the desired time frame for the expected post-project impacts (e.g., how many years after the project ends).

A: Depends on the research area and the industry utilizing / commercializing the results

Q: Should proposals focus on one application field for the methods/tools/knowledge we want to develop or is the potential for multi-sector applications and multi-disciplinary research equally appreciated?

A: Broad applicability is an advantage

Q: Does Business Finland provide support or training for planning commercialization pathways during the first phase, for example, if the research team lacks prior commercialization experience?

A: The project should focus on research. Research institutions can collaborate with partners who bring expertise in commercialization. Many research organizations also have support services to help plan the commercial utilization of results.

Role of companies

Q: What is the role of companies in projects and in preparing for the first and second phases? How much commitment from companies is expected in the first phase? Could you please clarify whether having company commitments would have positive impact or would not be considered for evaluating of the proposals

A: In the first phase of the call, company participation is not expected. Business Finland's Rise to Challenge projects do not require company co-funding or parallel projects.

Company commitments or willingness to co-fund the first stage of Rise to Challenge project probably indicate that rather than Rise to Challenge, the research should be organized as a Co-Innovation project. So, we do not give priority to proposals based on existence or lack of company commitment at the beginning of the project.

Exploring options for company commitment is a task during the first stage (up to three years). E.g., commitment and participation of existing companies in future co-innovation projects and/or creation of new (university spin-out) companies are both possible avenues.

Q: You say that you do not need companies involved in the first stage of the application, but in the pitching PowerPoint template the indicator says about companies committed as partners - so do you need to have companies involved in the application or not?

A: The template asks for the expected number of companies involved in the second phase, for example through participation in the steering group. The idea is that you indicate what kind of utilizers of the results you expect to get onboard for the second phase. Company commitment is not needed in the application or first phase of the project. Indicators should be met by the end of the first stage, not in the beginning of the first stage.

Eligible costs

Q: Are there any specific guidelines for budgeting the project?

A: Cost categories and terms are identical as for [Co-Research](https://www.businessfinland.fi/4b142f/globalassets/finnish-customers/01-funding/08-guidelines--terms/funding-terms/public_research_funding.pdf) projects. Cost categories are described in detail in the Funding Terms: https://www.businessfinland.fi/4b142f/globalassets/finnish-customers/01-funding/08-guidelines--terms/funding-terms/public_research_funding.pdf

Q: Is it possible to include expensive infrastructure costs to the budget if they are essential for the project? Can there be (e.g. laboratory) investments included in the budget?

A: Our goal is not to fund infrastructure itself, but impactful research, which may require infrastructure for its execution. This is a competitive situation between different proposals, and we want to maximize the impact of Business Finland's funding. There is no specific accepted share of equipment cost. See chapter 4.8 of the funding terms https://www.businessfinland.fi/4b142f/globalassets/finnish-customers/01-funding/08-guidelines--terms/funding-terms/public_research_funding.pdf

Evaluation

Q: Will this involve a traditional scientific peer review or some other method?

A: According to Business Finland's standard practices, evaluations will be conducted by Business Finland's experts. In Business Finland's funding, the focus is on relevance and impact (compared to the Academy of Finland's excellence-based peer review).

Q: Do you consider it necessary to use standardized metrics, like TRL levels, market forecasts, or competitor and value chain analyses, to clarify the impact of the application? Could a systematic framework, such as the Blue Ocean Strategy, enhance the evaluation?

A: The applicant is free to choose the methodology and metrics for convincing the evaluators jury of the relevance of the research idea. TRL levels and other standard methods help us to understand the project idea if they are applicable.

Q: What do you mean by “Radical Innovation” - does this mean radical innovations which can be taken up by the current industries - or rather - radical innovations for which exploiters (companies) will emerge

A: Both are possible utilization pathways

Q: What were the most important defining factors of those applications that were chosen to the last phase/were funded on the previous round?

A: The uniqueness of the research idea, potential impact to Finnish economy, and “The Dream team”: The team members’ excellence in academic research as well as versatile expertise.

Commitment of a host organization

Q: How are we supposed to show the top management commitment?

A: In the preliminary application phase, no separate commitment letter is needed. Describe in the power point presentation the significance of the proposed research theme to your organization.

We want to understand that this is not merely the interest of individual researchers, but that there is broader capability within organizations in this field and a willingness to increase, for example, resources over a certain period of time.

The projects invited to the next stage should provide a commitment statement. The format is free, but for instance a separate commitment letter could be a good solution.

Q: About the commitment of the applicant organization: Do you want the commitment from the management level of the organization (e.g. the rector of the university) or from the project leadership level (e.g. the principal investigator of the project)?

A: We prefer commitment from the level that can secure necessary research organizations own funding for the project, and that can positively influence human and other resources. So, preferably the commitment of the top management.

Intellectual Property, IP and Steering Group

Q: What is BF's expectation on IP ownership?

A: Please see Funding Terms and Conditions for public research, chapter 13:

www.businessfinland.fi/4b142f/globalassets/finnish-customers/01-funding/08-guidelines--terms/funding-terms/public_research_funding.pdf

Q: What is the role of a steering group in Rise to Challenge projects?

A: Steering group helps in achieving the project results and ensuring their broad exploitation. Ensure that the consortium’s shared mission remains a central focus in all steering committee (and consortium) meetings.

Participants of steering groups can consist of e.g. (international) top researcher(s), visionaries, authorities, legislation bodies, developer(s) of enabling technologies.

Q: When should the Steering Group be nominated?

A: The core members of the Steering group should be nominated at the full application stage. Members can also be added later.

Q: Who has the Right of first negotiation on the utilization of results

A: In the first phase of the project, companies or expert members of the steering group do not have preferential right to negotiate on the utilization of the results.

Possibly, at a later stage of the Rise to Challenge project: if a company provides funding (or other forms of necessary contribution to the project) and is a member of the steering group, it receives a preferential right to negotiate. The minimum requirement is that at least three companies are offered the same opportunity on equal terms, in accordance with our funding terms.

Pitching

Q: What is the estimated number of proposals you will invite for a pitching session?

A: We anticipate that no more than 30 proposals will be invited to pitch.

Funding

Q: How much funding will be allocated to future Näytönpaikka, Rise to Challenge calls?

A: Business Finland's funding authority for research is expected to increase significantly in the coming years, enabling additional funding for long-term strategic research. For the current call, 30 million euros is reserved for the first phase of projects. The call will fund 5–10 projects.

Start of project

Q: When are funded projects expected to start, beginning of 2028, still in 2027 or is this flexible?

A: Funding decisions are foreseen to be made before summer break 2027 and projects to be started soon after that.