Proof of Concept 2025 call: frequently asked questions (FAQ) (updated on 26.3.2026)

Call info webinar materials

The materials from the PoC call webinar on 19 March 2025 will be uploaded to the RCF [material bank.](#)

Eligibility

The RCF Proof of Concept Funding is intended for utilising research results that have already been funded by the RCF or the Strategic Research Council (SRC).

The 2025 Proof of Concept funding can be applied for by researchers (principal investigators) who have previously received RCF or SRC project funding and whose current research funding period ends between 1 January 2025 and 31 December 2025. Please note that a decision on "Funding for research costs" does not give eligibility; the actual research project needs to end during the indicated period.

The Proof of Concept funding is targeted at research project PIs that <u>must have a research project funded</u> under one of the following funding schemes:

- Academy Research Fellowship
- Clinical Researcher
- Academy Project
- Targeted Academy Project
- Academy Programme
- SRC programme
- RCF international project funding.

The eligibility cannot be shared; only the PI that has received the project funding that is eligible according to the above criteria can apply. The applicant needs to hold a doctorate.

This call is <u>not intended</u> for PIs with the following funding:

- Postdoctoral Researcher
- EU Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF)
- Research infrastructure funding
- Finnish Flagship Programme
- Centre of Excellence funding
- Proof of Concept funding
- Personal mobility grants
- Funding for research costs.

The eligibility to apply is determined based on the closing date of the call, 14 May 2025. If the applicant has requested to extend the funding period due to pregnancy, maternity, paternity, parental or childcare leave, military or civilian service or long-term illness before the deadline, and the extended funding period ends after 31 December 2025, the applicant is not eligible to apply in this call. If the application to extend the funding period is submitted after the deadline, the extension will not affect the eligibility. If a project has been funded in two parts (e.g. 3 + 3 years), the funding period refers to the latter period.

<u>PoC consortium</u> eligibility criteria:

- All co-PIs of a PoC consortium application need to meet the PoC 2025 call eligibility criteria.
- If you have received project funding as a co-PI of a consortium and your own subproject ends between 1 January 2025 and 31 December 2025, <u>you are eligible</u>, even if other subprojects in your consortium do not end during the specified period.
- You can form a PoC consortium with any other eligible co-PI.
- Your PoC consortium application does not need to have the same PIs as the original project consortium on which the PoC application is based.
- The PoC consortium co-PIs can come from the same site of research, or from different sites.

Applying in this PoC 2025 call <u>does not affect your eligibility</u> in other RCF calls. You are eligible even if you have:

- applied for any other RCF or SRC funding
- an ongoing project funded by either the RCF or the SRC
- an ongoing RCF Proof of Concept project.

However, please note that the RCF does not grant funding for the same purpose for which it has already granted funding.

Your PoC application needs to utilise research results that originate from the project that makes you eligible in this Proof of Concept 2025 call.

You will need to fill in your funding decision number in the application form.

Please also note that you might be eligible with two different research projects. You can only submit one application and you need to decide which project's research results you will utilise in the PoC plan.

Please contact us via our [helpdesk](#) (thematic calls) if you are uncertain about your eligibility.

Who will review my PoC application?

The applications will be reviewed by Finnish and international experts in research utilisation and the fields of the applications concerned. The members of the review panels will have a PhD degree, be affiliated with a site of research as well as have experience from other sectors of the society. If necessary, individual reviews may be requested from experts that are not members of the review panel to support the review work.

The experts reviewing your application will most likely not have the same disciplinary background as you have, so it is advisable that you write your application using general terms, avoiding unnecessary use of specialised terminology. The reviewers assigned to your application will be selected not only from the perspective of the scientific discipline but also from the perspective of the application's field of research utilisation, in which case the reviewer's expertise may be related to, for example, product development, technology transfer, marketing, social impact or other aspects of research utilisation.

Experts are invited to review the research utilisation potential and innovativeness as well as feasibility of the applications. Reviewers are also asked to evaluate the research utilisation competence of the applicant(s) and the team members.

The review of applications follows a two-stage process. In the first stage, experts are asked to give at least two individual reviews on the application. Applications with an overall rating of 5 or 6 from at least one expert will proceed to the panel review stage. Applications that receive an overall rating of 5 or 6 from the review panel will be ranked.

See the review guidelines, review questions and rating scale as well as the review principles that will be used in the review. The review guidelines and forms are only available in English.

Are there any requirements for idea readiness?

The RCF does not have its own technology or societal readiness level descriptions. We recommend using existing ones, such as Technology Readiness Levels (TRL) in Horizon Europe (by Enspire) or Societal Readiness Levels (SRL) (by Innovation Fund Denmark).

The projects funded under the Proof of Concept funding scheme are close to scientific research, but are further along the research utilisation path than scientific research.

PoC projects should be at a minimum readiness level of 2 when they start, and should aim to climb at least 1–2 levels by the end of the project, regardless of the starting level.

Read also the instructions on how to write the research utilisation plan.

Research results on which the PoC application is based

The PoC application form has a separate application tab titled 'Research results utilised in the project'. The maximum length of the text is 2,000 characters. This section should briefly describe the results from the research project that gives you eligibility in this call and that your project will utilise.

The reviewers of this call do not have access to your original research project application, so you need to convey the relevant information about the research results in your PoC application so that the reviewers are able to evaluate the utilisation potential of your research.

If the results have already been published in a publication or presented to your peers in a conference paper, you can give the reference to that output in this section and briefly explain the main findings to be utilised in the PoC application. The results do not need to have been published yet. It is necessary that you explain how the results originate from the Academy Project.

You are also asked to fill in the RCF or SRC decision number in the application form.

The research utilisation plan appended to the application should not describe the results of previous research, but rather the plan will need to focus on the utilisation phase of the results.

What costs can be included in the budget

Individual projects may be granted a maximum of 300,000 euros. In consortia, the maximum project size is 450,000 euros. The funding period is 1 January 2026–31 December 2027.

The project's funding follows the full cost model. The RCF's funding contribution to the costs of the research utilisation project is a maximum of 70%.

The Research Council of Finland's general funding terms and conditions are applied in this call.

Applicants can also apply for funding, for instance, for the following direct costs of promoting research utilisation:

- costs of carrying out the research utilisation plan
- costs of making research data available (open access)
- market or patent surveys, other equivalent proof-of-concept activities
- experimentation and pilot projects
- protection of IPRs (not maintenance fees)
- commercialisation preparation (not actual commercialisation or commercialisation activities that will benefit only one company).

According to the RCF's funding terms and conditions, the funding cannot be used for economic activity. Economic activity is defined as all activity where goods or services are offered on an open market regardless of whether profits are pursued or generated. Read more: Economic operators.

Please note that all costs must be justified in the free-text field on the application tab 'Funding for the project'.

PI's salary

As a rule, funding is not granted for the salary of the PI of the research utilisation project. The PI's salary costs may only under certain limitations and on justifiable grounds be incorporated into the total project costs:

- up to 1.5 months/year for project management.
- up to 12 months for well-motivated research-related reasons.
- Funding will not be granted for supervision of doctoral dissertations.

For the salary costs to be eligible, the tasks of the PI must be clearly specified and justified.