

# Action Plan for External Funding

*The Research and Innovation Committee, decided by the Top Management Group 7th March 2023*

## Contents

- Introduction ..... 2
  - The goal of the Action Plan for external funding..... 2
- Why seek external funding?..... 4
  - What is NIPH’s ambitions concerning growth in externally financed business? ..... 4
  - How to create economic profitability? ..... 6
    - Investment projects ..... 7
  - Professional independence and external funding ..... 7
  - We want to..... 8
- Which type funds should NIPH apply for? ..... 9
  - Contribution versus assignment ..... 9
  - Thematic or free research funds ..... 9
  - Research infrastructure..... 11
  - We want to..... 11
- Where should NIPH apply? ..... 12
  - Application activity and success ratee ..... 12
  - Others funding sources ..... 12
  - Funds announced on DOFFIN ..... 12
  - We want to..... 13
- Who should NIPH cooperate with and which role should NIPH have? ..... 14
  - Collaborative partners within academia..... 14
  - Private actors ..... 14
  - Authority cooperation financed through EU (Joint action) ..... 14
  - Shall NIPH have the role as partner or coordinator in the project? ..... 15
  - We want to..... 15
- What is required from internal infrastructure to support growth in external funding? ..... 16
  - Application processes ..... 16
  - We want to..... 18
- Attachments: Relevant quality documents, etc. .... 18

## Introduction

The Norwegian Institute of Public Health's (NIPH) strategy for the period 2019-2024 provides guidance for how we prioritize going forward, including the organization of the Institute's research and other kinds of knowledge production. It is recommended that each Division creates a plan for research and innovation that supports the strategy. Since we are completely dependent on external funding to fulfil the social mission and realize the investments in the strategy, the Divisions' plans should include a strategy to apply for external funding (see Fig 1.). This is also in line with instructions from the Ministry of Health and Care Services: "Efforts should be made to ensure that the Institute's research activity to a large degree is based on competitive research funds from external sources, as a contribution to ensuring the research's quality and impartiality." It must also be expected to obtain external funding to other administrative tasks through calls aimed at innovation and building infrastructure.

The research activity at NIPH is to a large extent financed by funds allocated from external actors. The Norwegian Research Council and the EU account for 2/3 of all external funding, while 1/3 comes from other national and international funding sources. In 2021, 12% of all positions at the Institute were financed through external funds.



Figure 1: Relations between the Institute's strategy and applications for external funding with associated responsibilities in the organization.

### The goal of the Action Plan for external funding

To support [the Institute of Public Health \(NIPH's\) strategy for the period 2019-2024](#) a [Development Plan for Research and Innovation](#) has been developed. The pronounced goal of the Development Plan is to increase the external funding to create a wider space for action in the years to come. Through the Institute adjustment and downsizing process 2022-24, an increase in the Institute's income through external funding, and an increased share of free buy outs of fixed employees, is defined as a means of action. The aim of this Action Plan for external funding is to specify:

- Which ambitions we should have for externally funded activity.

- How we should work to reach the goals we set us.
- What type of internal infrastructure we need serving increased externally funded activity.

As illustrated in figure 2, this Action Plan constitutes one of three planned Action Plans under the Development Plan. In particular, it covers the instruments for external funding, but also touches on several of the other objectives and instruments, e.g. independence and national and international cooperation.

## Development plan for research and innovation

### Goals

- High relevans
- High quality
- Openness
- Independence

### Means

- External funding
- Adaptability
- High quality research infrastructure
- National and international cooperation

### Action plans

- Quality in research
- External funding
- Open research

### Working groups

- Internal researcher school
- Systems for project management

*Figure 2: The structure of the Development plan for research and Innovation decided 14.09.2021.*

The objectives and measures are followed up with three preliminary Action Plans, where the *Action Plan for quality in research* was completed together with the *Development Plan*. In the extension of the *Action Plan for quality in research*, two working groups have been set up at the Institute.

Even though the main objective of the *Development Plan* and the *Action Plans* is to strength the research and research-based innovation, it should also contribute to strengthening additional knowledge production in the Institute. There are good opportunities to apply for external funds to finance the construction of infrastructures for research, monitoring and health/health service analysis. We can also apply for innovation funds to strengthen knowledge production in a wider sense, e.g. for further development of knowledge summaries, surveillance and health/health service analyses. Furthermore, there are efforts to increase the activity within drug safety studies based on external funding.

## Why seek external funding?

The research at NIPH forms part of and supports the Institute's other knowledge production, and thus constitutes one of our three core tasks – knowledge, preparedness and infrastructure (cf. [the Institute's strategy 2023-2024](#)).

The externally funded activity is crucial for producing the knowledge needed to solve the Institute's mission. An increase in external funding will increase the strategic room for action for the Institute. In other words, we can build capacity in several areas with external funding. It is also important to have a conscious relationship to the resources we invest in seeking external funds. This relates to who we cooperate with and under what conditions we receive funds. In addition, it is important that the knowledge and infrastructure that is funded externally is of a high quality and relevance and supports our mission. In a situation where providing more external funding is a stated strategy, we must focus on ensuring that the externally funded projects are in line with our priorities and support our administrative duties.

How we can ensure open and transparent processes for quality assurance and prioritization of research projects that are primarily funded through the framework is also a central question. This is discussed in the [Action Plan for Quality in Research](#) and is not a part of the current plan. However, we will take into consideration that the Institute contributes with own funds/costs in applications for external funding, e.g. in connection with applications for infrastructure, large interdisciplinary research projects (50% own cost in the Research Council's calls) and Norwegian Centres of Excellence (SFF).

### What is NIPH's ambitions concerning growth in externally financed business?

As we can see from tables 1 and 2, the income from externally funded projects has varied somewhat over the past three years. The distribution between the various sources we register is more stable: About one half comes from the Research Council and between 10% and 20% from the EU. The proportion of externally funded positions has fallen somewhat in the last two years. This must be seen in the context of the fact that the number of employees has increased in connection with handling the Covid-19 pandemic.

Table 1: Income through externally funded projects in the period 2019-2021.

Funding source	The income from externally funded projects (NOK)		
	2019	2020	2021
<b>The Research Council</b>	108 537 682 (56 %)	67 008 937 (57 %)	79 799 175 (48 %)
<b>EU</b>	27 950 600 (14 %)	12 746 669 (11 %)	30 500 554 (19 %)
<b>Others*</b>	57 626 123 (30 %)	37 948 497 (32 %)	54 178 227 (33 %)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>194 114 405</b>	<b>117 704 102</b>	<b>164 477 956</b>

\* NIH, Gates foundation, Norwegian Cancer Society, Health South-East, the foundation DAM, directorates and ministries.

Table 2: Externally funded man-years in the period 2019-2021.

	Number of externally funded projects	Annual work by NIPH externally funded (%)
<b>2019</b>	269	16 %
<b>2020</b>	202	12 %
<b>2021</b>	204	12 %

There is a stated desire for growth in externally funded activity, but we have not set concrete, measurable targets. What does it mean to grow? Which parameters should we look at? It is recommended that each Division sets clear targets for expected growth in the coming years, which can be aggregated at Department level and included in the long-term planning. Ambitions and targets should then be incorporated into the quarterly reporting for internal steering of the Institute. The activity and the financial obligations and income from externally funded business must be seen as an integral part of the respective Division’s total economy. In the assessment of the size of a salary budget, there should be expectations concerning free buy-outs of permanent employees. See box.

**Example:**  
 If a Department has 10 permanent employees, all of whom are on average exempt 25%, this Department's burden on the frame's salary budget will be equivalent to 7.5 full-time equivalents. In other words, a Department that can afford 7.5 full-time equivalents can have 10 permanent employees, if all are freed up for 25%.

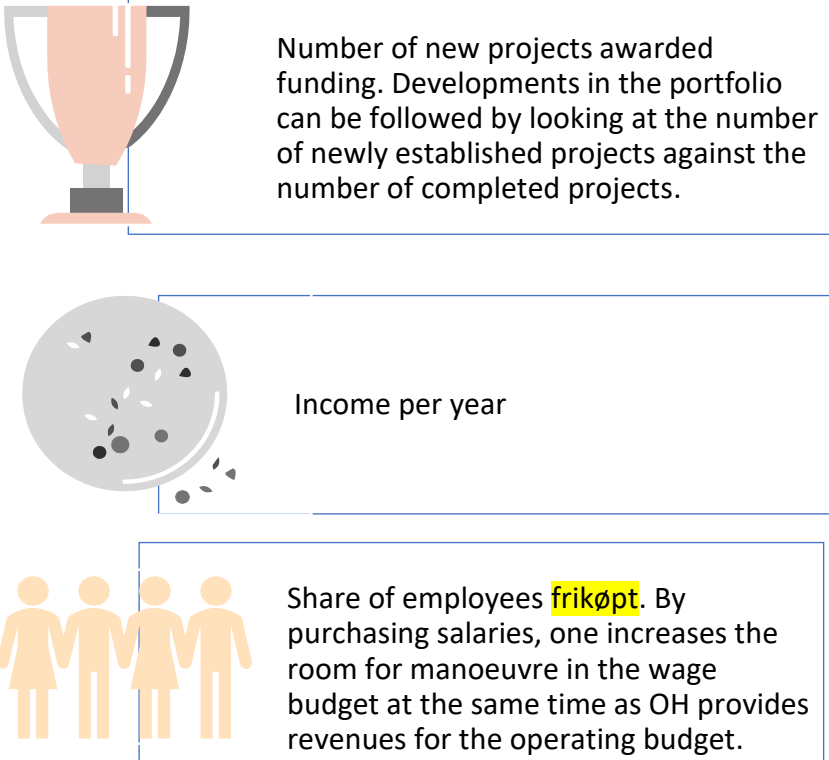


Figure 3: Current goals for the Institute’s externally financed business.

Current goal for the Institute's externally funded activities is the number of new projects, income per year and proportion of permanent employees **bought out** with external funds, cf. figure 3.

It should be possible to break down the targets by funding source and other indicators linked to the type of funds, e.g. centres and infrastructure, to evaluate whether the development towards different

actors is as aimed for and happens in interaction with internal processes and application activity.

In 2021, a new framework program started in the EU, Horizon Europe (HEU). In the previous framework program (Horizon 2020), NIPH participated in 29 projects. HEU has an expected budget that is 25% larger than the previous framework programme. Likewise, we know that EU4Health is 10 times larger than its predecessor, the EU's 3rd health programme (3HP). In 3HP, NIPH participated in 11 projects. Should NIPH set a goal for the amounts of funding resulting from application to HEU and EU4Health?

NIPH is currently hosting for a Norwegian Centre of Excellence (SFF): *Centre for Fertility and Health*. The Institute should aim to always host an SFF.<sup>1</sup>

### How to create economic profitability?

The economic profitability of a project depends on to what extent granted project funds contributes to cover costs normally covered by the Divisions' budgets. Traditionally, there are three types of costs that can be covered by an externally funded project;

- Salary
- Coverage of indirectly costs (overhead)
- Use of own infrastructure (tenancy model – direct costs).

The sum of these three elements becomes defined as *the net contribution* to a project. The bigger the net contribution is, the more economically profitable is the project. This is because costs planned to be covered by allocation from the national budget is covered by other funding sources, and thus creates an economic room for action.

In NIPH's budget template for applications for external funds, the net contribution should be calculated to give an overview of the financial contribution that the project will make. The calculated net contribution can help make decisions that lead to better financial profitability in the project. Some funding sources will only finance part of the total indirect cost that is charged. It is therefore important that the project's total finances are assessed.

$$\text{Frikjøp av lønn} + \text{Indirekte kostnader (OH)} + \text{Andel av leiestedsinntekt} = \text{Nettobidrag}$$

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<sup>1</sup> Hosting refers to the coordinator role in a Norwegian Centre of Excellence.

## Investment projects

Occasionally, good arguments can exist to seek funds to start up a project that is less economically profitable. Within a strategically important area where NIPH aspires to build/strengthen professional groups it might for example be important to hire new researchers or have recruitment positions. This will then happen on expense of funding permanent employees and thus, reducing the net contribution.

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There may also be a need to invest in a pilot project or in a start-up phase, with the aim of obtaining additional external funds in the long term. Such types of projects/initiatives are defined as *investment projects* and the Divisions should establish good processes for treatment of application initiatives that falls within this category of projects. This creates an awareness about the expected project contributions, as well as a transparent process concerning how the Divisions use their economic scope (figure 4). This applies for example to applications to the DAM Foundation or Marie Skłodowska Curie Actions (MSCA) which is only partially funded.

**Investment projects:** Projects that are considered so strategically important that they are carried through in spite of low or negative profitability.

## Professional independence and external funding

The role as independent knowledge producer may be more important than ever. The interaction between profession and politics have been put to the test in connection with handling the Covid-19 pandemic. We must be aware our role and our professional integrity both in regular operation and in the handling of crises. That our research is not experienced as governed by others – neither the responsible ministry or various funding sources – is absolutely crucial for credibility as a knowledge producer.

Public-private cooperation in research is high on the political agenda, e.g. *The health industry — Together for value creation and better services* (Meld. St. 18 (2018–2019) Report to the Storting (white paper)) and in the Institute's allocation letter. There is a requirement/desire for collaboration between the public and private sector in several of the calls under the auspices of The Norwegian Research Council and EU. As an administrative institute we have certain conditions attached to independence and conflicts of interest that must be assessed in such research collaborations.

The impression is that, in several of our professional groups, there is some uncertainty concerning research collaboration with the private sector, and that it is important to set a direction and a level of ambition for such collaboration going forward. In addition, measures to increase awareness of and support for good assessment will be important.

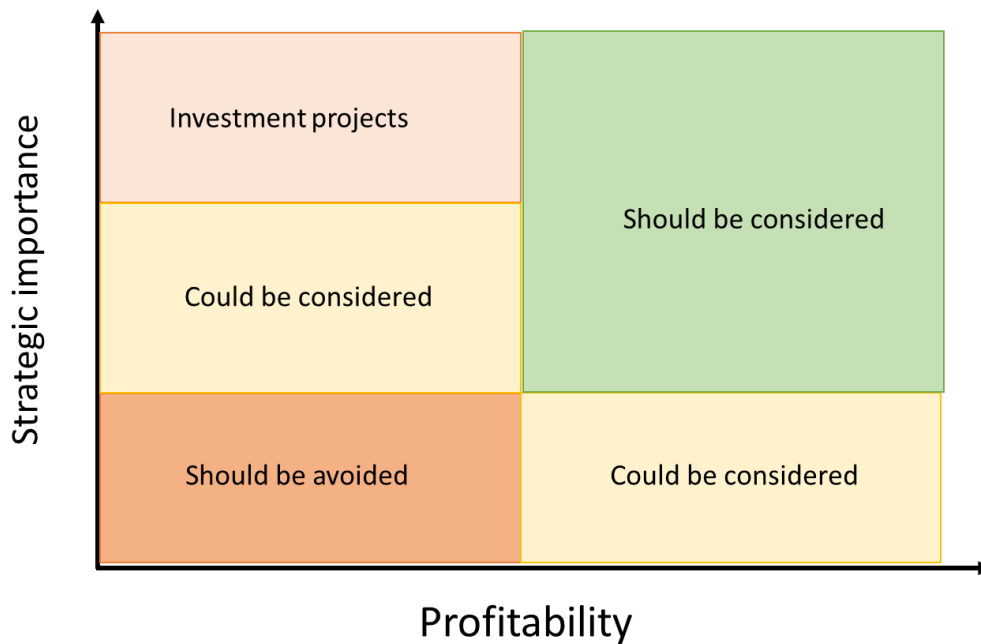


Figure 4: Overall assessment by startup of new projects – profitability and strategic relevance.

We want to

- Set concrete goal for external funding for each Division, which are aggregated up to the institute level. Achievement of targets is reported in existing internal reporting to Department for business management, including the management's recurring reviews (LGG).
- Have a greater awareness of the projects' profitability in the application phase and that the Institute's own contributions and any grant needs are based on strategic choices.
- Have a significant awareness of accepting funds from and collaborating with actors from the private sector. The Institute has prepared one internal guideline for cooperation and interaction with private actors ([Interaction with external actors \(business life and organizations\)](#)). This one should operationalized through a checklist. Furthermore, emphasis will be placed on necessary training through the Research School and raising the debate at management level, e.g. at meetings for all managers.



## Which type funds should NIPH apply for?

NIPH's mission and core tasks are linked to knowledge, preparedness and infrastructure. Different types of external funds will thus be able to help strengthen our activity and increase the Institute's room for action. The breadth of the calls for proposals is wide, and several professional environments have opportunities to obtain funds if one thinks beyond traditional research projects. It is therefore also important to pay attention to the possibility to apply for external funds in environments with low or no application activity as of today. In this section, we briefly describe the breadth of opportunities, and which type of funding the Institute should prioritize applying for.

**Contribution (grant)** - Projects where FHI obtains support from national and international funding sources for its own activities without any requirement of counter-performance from the institution at the time of contract signing.

**Assignment** - FHI provides a service for a client in exchange for a fee. In other words, one can say that there is a turnover between the parties.

### Contribution versus assignment

When assessing whether a project shall be classified as a contribution (grant) or an assignment, the project's *purpose* is central.

Traditionally, a contribution project would be a grant based on an application to a source of funding such as The Norwegian Research Council or the EU, and which has been received in competition with other research institutions. Funds announced by competition/ tender on e.g. DOFFIN are categorized as assignments. The state aid regulations require that commissioned activity must be fully funded. This means that NIPH cannot have deductible own costs in such projects. It is therefore important to ensure that the estimated time spent is realistic and verifiable.

### Thematic or free research funds

The Institute must provide funding for projects, that to a great extent answers important societal challenges and NIPH's mission, as e.g. expressed in the current strategy.

The Institute has a wide range of activities, from basic research and method development to more applied research and innovation in public sector. Some examples of innovation projects: "Historical Registers", funded by the Norwegian Research Council; "A new generation of Patient-Reported Quality Measurements in Mental Health and Addiction Services (PRQMs-MAS)", funded by the Norwegian Research Council; or development of electronic health records in LMIC financed by EU through ERC, The Norwegian Research Council and NORAD. It is therefore appropriate to view the activity up against various funding opportunities. This can be illustrated with a scale between non-thematic and thematic calls for proposals with associated funding sources. The types of announcements are not one exhaustive list, but the types of funds NIPH mostly apply for (see figure 5. Note that it is not a clear distinction between the different levels or the degrees of application).

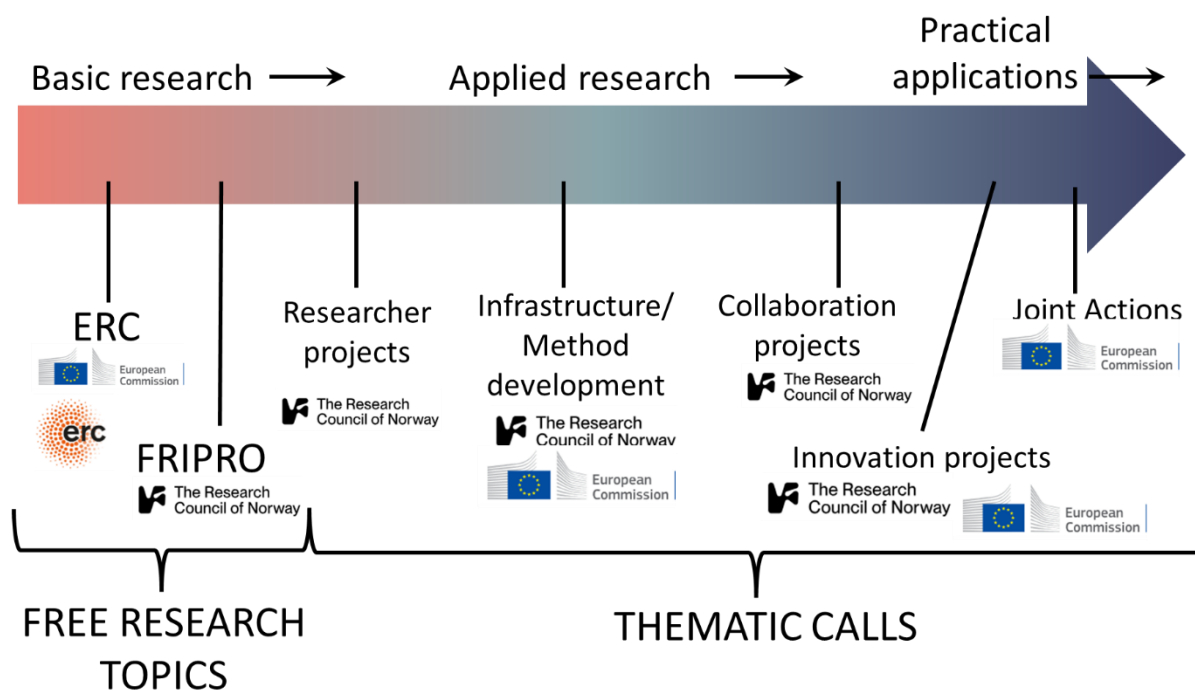


Figure 5. A scale between non-thematic and thematic announcements with corresponding funding sources.

In research environments where new knowledge on fundamental aspects is being acquired, it is most relevant to orientate yourself towards calls for proposals that give more freedom in terms of choice of topic (e.g. ERC, FRIPRO). It does not exclude applications for thematic announcements, but rather highlights where the main weight of application activity should lie. Awareness of this can give the management the opportunity to prioritize resources in a way that ensures the further development of environments and the safeguarding of key competences through external funding.

Most of the professional groups at NIPH are placed towards the right side of the scale. This points in the direction of thematic announcements that to a great extent is based on solving significant societal challenges nationally and internationally.

Thematic calls challenge the composition of the consortium to a greater extent than non-thematic calls, and NIPH positions itself distinctly within the fields we choose to enter. Requirements for the composition of consortia vary with funding source and/or type of call. This means that a different approach to network building and utilization of results is needed. For example, it is more desirable to collaborate with business and private actors now than it was a few years ago.

It should also be emphasized that positioning on the above-mentioned scale is dynamic and should be considered periodically, as environments evolve.

On a few, selected fields NIPH should strive to be the host institution for SFF relevant to our mission. To these groups, NIPH will attract researchers with high professional expertise who provide the basis for independent research projects (ERC) and internationally influential work. These projects support already existing professional groups, which in turn create opportunities for more thematic applications. It is necessary to make use of the Institute's own strategic funds as partial funding of a SFF. In such cases it should be clear expectations that the centre shall apply for and get approved project funding. Figures from the Research Council from 2020 shows that 1/3 of all ERC funding is allocated to environments of excellence (such as SFFs).

The calls govern what we can apply for. It is therefore important to work systematically to influence the calls from our most important funding sources, especially the EU and the Norwegian Research Council. The Research and Innovation Committee (FIU) oversees these processes at NIPH and plays a role in giving input in such processes.

### Research infrastructure

Infrastructure is one of NIPH's three core tasks. It is important that NIPH maintains and further develops the infrastructure we manage today, and that we continue to invest in new infrastructure of national importance. There are opportunities to apply for funding for infrastructure both nationally (the Norwegian Research Council) and internationally (EU). These kinds of applications require own funding in the development phase and viable business plans for further operation of established infrastructures following the end of the external funding. These are large, long-term projects, often requiring both customization of systems for management of the infrastructure and resource allocation for long-time operations. Therefore, the infrastructures NIPH will invest in should be carefully selected and in line with our social mission. NIPH should strive to make a transparent pricing model (tenancy model) enabling the use of the infrastructure to be financed by externally funded activities which makes use of them. The possibility of future income from externally funded activities should be part of the basis of decision-making when an investment in infrastructure is decided.

### We want to

- That each Division creates a plan with thematic priorities for research and innovation that supports the Institute's strategy. This plan should be reflected in an associated application strategy that is based on updated overviews of relevant funding sources and calls for proposals.
- Have greater awareness that our applications are relevant to our social mission. This includes working systematically with selected funding sources to ensure relevant calls.
- Increase the consciousness concerning the difference between contribution and assignment projects.
- Plan for high quality applications to the SFF scheme (Centres for outstanding research).
- Make plans for which infrastructures the Institute wants to build up and prioritize seeking funds for these.
- Have greater awareness of the opportunity to seek funds in groups with low or no current application activity. The breadth of the calls for proposals is wide, and several groups have the opportunity to obtain funds if thinking beyond traditional research projects.

## Where should NIPH apply?

Our most important sources of funding will vary over time (Table 1). In this section we describe the funding sources we primarily send applications to as of today and the degree of success we achieve from various sources. Furthermore, we ask: should we direct a greater proportion of application activity towards sources where we currently have achieved relatively great success? Should we invest more on other sources than the ones we most often orientate ourselves towards?

### Application activity and success rate

Since 2018, the Department for Research Administrative Support has analyzed feedback on applications to the Norwegian Research Council. The purpose of this evaluation is to give overall feedback to the research communities and develop measures for improving the quality of the applications. The evaluations also indicate which success rates we achieve in various programs (table 3).

*Table 3. Success rate per funding source/type application.*

<b>Success rate (for NIPH's coordinator applications)</b>	<b>2021 in %</b>	<b>2022 in %</b>
The Norwegian Research Council, Research project	12.5 (N=40)	10.7 (N=28)
The Norwegian Research Council, Collaborative project	20 (N=5)	28.6 (N=7)
Horizon Europe	25 (N=4)	50 (N=6)

NIPH's success rate pertaining to thematic calls in Horizon Europe and to calls for Collaborative projects from the Norwegian Research Council is significantly higher than regarding calls for Research projects from the Norwegian Research Council. Calls for Research projects includes FRIPRO, a non-thematic funding scheme.  $\frac{3}{4}$  of every application answering the call for Research projects in 2022 was sent to FRIPRO. Non-thematic calls are a good opportunity when the thematic calls are not in line with NIPH's thematic priorities. However, we should ensure that opportunities within calls for Collaborative projects and international funding sources are well known in the professional environment and that their potential is exploited.

Both Collaborative projects, Innovation projects, Infrastructure projects and thematic calls from Horizon Europe require the composition of a consortium, which can be challenging for some research groups and early-career researchers. These challenges should be acknowledged by research managers and should inform the discussion concerning the strategic use of Retur-EU funds at the Institute<sup>2</sup>.

### Others funding sources

The Norwegian Research Council and the EU account for 2/3 of all externally funded funds. Thus, 1/3 of the Institute's income derives from other national and international funding sources. In this group it is a large span from national funds from Ministries and Directorates, Helse Sør-Øst, The Foundation DAM and to international sources such as NIH and NordForsk.

### Funds announced on DOFFIN

NIPH should work more purposefully to submit tenders for and receive assignments via Doffin, the national announcement database for public acquisitions. The premise is that the call for tender in question falls under the Institute's subject areas and is in line with the Institute's social mission. This is to ensure that calls for tenders announced on Doffin can give NIPH opportunities to deliver larger

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<sup>2</sup> Earlier denoted STIM-EU funds (2012-2021) and RES-EU funds (2022).

social benefits, increase funding of knowledge production, as well as further strengthen relations and cooperation with several actors, also across sectors and with the municipalities.

To have success with such tenders, it is important to establish good internal infrastructure such as support personnel, templates and routines. Calls for tenders often have short deadlines (between 3-4 weeks), making it important to act quickly. It is also important that there is an awareness of the premises for commissioned research; no own funding, use NIPH's hourly rates and that the number of hours estimated is verifiable. When NIPH wins a tender, it must be expected that the competitors in the tender process ask for access to the accepted offer. If there is doubt as to whether the planned effort does not correspond to the estimated time spent or that the budget does not reflect all the project's costs, NIPH can appeal to KOFA (Complaint Board for Public Procurement) for cross-subsidization (indirect state aid). It may also be relevant for NIPH to respond to calls for tenders from the EU via the TED portal (Tenders Electronic Daily).

### We want to

- Shift some of the application activity for research projects from the Norwegian Research Council to other types of calls and funding sources: collaborative projects when the call is relevant; EU for applicants that are ready for it; The DAM Foundation and similar funding sources for applicants that need to build a research career to be competitive in other arenas.
- Build up the application activity directed towards EU in several professional environments.
- Ask the support team to create, maintain and disseminate updated overviews of relevant funding sources and calls as a support for the Divisions's plans for thematic priorities for research and innovation and associated application strategies.
- Rig a system for submitting tenders in competitive bidding.

## Who should NIPH cooperate with and which role should NIPH have?

Who NIPH cooperate with, and what role the Institute assumes, is determined by several factors. For example, the calls provide guidance on the type of collaborative partners that are relevant in various project types. Whether it is pertinent that NIPH takes the role as coordinator or partner in one application depends both on how strategically relevant the topic is for the Institute and the inhouse expertise in the field.

Network building is crucial for research groups in considering coordination of projects (especially within EU programs). This should be seen in the context of the use of strategic funds at the Institute. Many nationally leading research groups at NIPH lack international networks that enable positioning in consortia. Managers of relevant groups should engage in dialogue with researchers concerning strategies for expanding their networks. Possible activities can include, but is not limited to: participation in brokerage events under the auspices of the EU Commission, organization of meetings for invited potential partners, meetings in connection with conferences, exchange of students, etc. For networking with the aim of an EU application, employees can apply to the Research and Innovation Committee (FIU) for stimulus funds from the Retur-EU scheme.

### Collaborative partners within academia

NIPH has cooperation agreements with the largest universities in Norway; UIB, UiT, NTNU, NMBU and UiO and work is underway to get an agreement in place with the University of Agder. In addition to general cooperation agreements NIPH have an extensive collaboration in the form of adjunct positions. The cooperation in such agreements provide a strategic tool that contributes to solving the Institute's social mission. Going forward, the Institute should strive for such collaboration arenas to provide a high strategic value.

### Private actors

Politically, it is a wish that NIPH, as a state actor, should collaborate with various actors both from the private business world, private foundations and civil society in general. So far, most of the cooperation NIPH has with such actors has been in form of projects funded by The Norwegian Research Council or EU. But it is big interest and demand for both the knowledge and data that NIPH manages. It is important that such collaborations are carried out in a responsible manner. Several needs must be assessed at the same time; benefit for business, benefit for society in general and maintaining trust in the population.

The main guide for such collaboration is a common understanding that NIPH's contribution is as a knowledge producer. This clarification of roles is particularly important regarding external communication. It must be clear to the public whether the parties are speaking on behalf of the project or their own institution. It is also important to be aware of partners' political agenda and motives. Collaboration contracts must therefore clearly describe the roles and expectations of the parties in the project.

Before such cooperation is operationalized, a short note should be drawn up and archived where it appears why NIPH has decided to cooperate with the actor in question, and which role NIPH shall have in the collaboration. The project owner must ensure that all project staff from NIPH are aware of their role as employees of an Institute in the central health administration.

### Authority cooperation financed through EU (Joint action)

Joint Actions are larger collaborative projects between health authorities in member states of the EU, as well as associated EEA countries. It is the European Commission that allocates funds for cooperation projects across the countries. The EC's contribution usually covers between 60-80% of the total budget. Such collaboration arenas are particularly relevant for an administrative institute

such as NIPH.

### Shall NIPH have the role as partner or coordinator in the project?

It is important that a proven assessment is made of the role NIPH has in a project. If the topic of the project is such that it is natural that NIPH takes a leading position nationally/ international, it will be applicable to take a lead in big projects/consortia. In such cases it is important that the management group of the Division that consider the topics relevant makes an assessment of potential project managers. As coordinator of a large project/major investment, NIPH is building its reputation as a leading research group within the topic. An experienced project manager does not necessarily mean a good project manager. Therefore, it should not only be professional skills of the potential project manager that are assessed, but also communication skills, organization skills and tidiness, authority, risk and time management skills, etc. Lack of project management competence can, to a certain degree, be compensated for if the application/project is supported with an administrative project coordinator from the Department for Research Administrative Support (FAS). In such a model, the project manager will still be the professional manager of the project but will be relieved by an experienced project administrator.

NIPH should be able to offer identified potential project managers training in project management. Such competence should be included as an element in building a research career. A working group has been set up to come up with proposals for project methodology and training.

It is worth noting that one can play an important role in a project without having the coordinator function. As a work package leader, one will gain experience and have an influence on the work to be done in the project without the responsibility for the entire project. There are also several funding sources where NIPH only can participate as a partner, such as Helse Sør-Øst, NIH, and more.

### We want to

- Strengthen the understanding of the role as scientist in an administrative institute. The theme should enter into in the research school and be raised in relevant management forums, e.g. gathering for all managers.
- Have greater awareness concerning when NIPH assumes a coordinator role in in extensive applications.
- Have greater awareness concerning the participation in applications in the role as partner.
- Professionalize the project manager role and the support to this.

## What is required from internal infrastructure to support growth in external funding?

Several measures have been taken to strengthen the research infrastructure at NIPH. In recent years, a Department for Research Administrative Support (FAS) with over twenty employees have been established. The Department collaborates closely with other parts of the Institute, e.g. Department for legal services, data protection officer, security officer, Department for accounting and Department for corporate governance. Efforts are made continuously to ensure a good infrastructure to start up, implement and terminate externally funded projects in line with requirements set by legislation, from funding sources and internal guidelines. Processes have been drawn up for applications for external funding, including templates for budgeting, work is being done on digital infrastructure for secure storage and sharing of research data, new protocol solution for keeping overview over research projects, etc. However, there is a need to look collectively at which systems and support we have for the management of research projects and follow-up internally as of today and assess the need for strengthening and harmonization across of the Divisions. There are increased demands that research institutions in general should have good tools both for economy control in the project and data management, but also to assist the project manager in controlling progress, changes and risks in projects. Ambitions for growth in external funding must happen in tandem with the strengthening of the support apparatus and tools.

Externally funded projects are charged indirect costs such as salary mark-up in addition to the direct costs. The purpose of this is that the funding source should pay for the total cost of the project. By being charged for indirect costs, the funding source expects that the Institute has an adequate internal infrastructure that support the operation of the project. It is therefore important that the Institute has a transparent process on how the contribution from overhead income is used (estimated at 59 million NOK in 2023). For the Institute's annual budget process, inputs should be gathered, where registered needs related to the operation of externally funded activity are raised and assessed. In addition, it will be important to discuss possible incentive schemes in the subject areas in question.

### Application processes

The Department for Research Administrative Support (FAS), as the process owner for the Norwegian Research Council's joint calls, has established routines for e.g. approval, overview of the support team and anchoring which is communicated internally. The process is illustrated in the road map "Path to..." below.



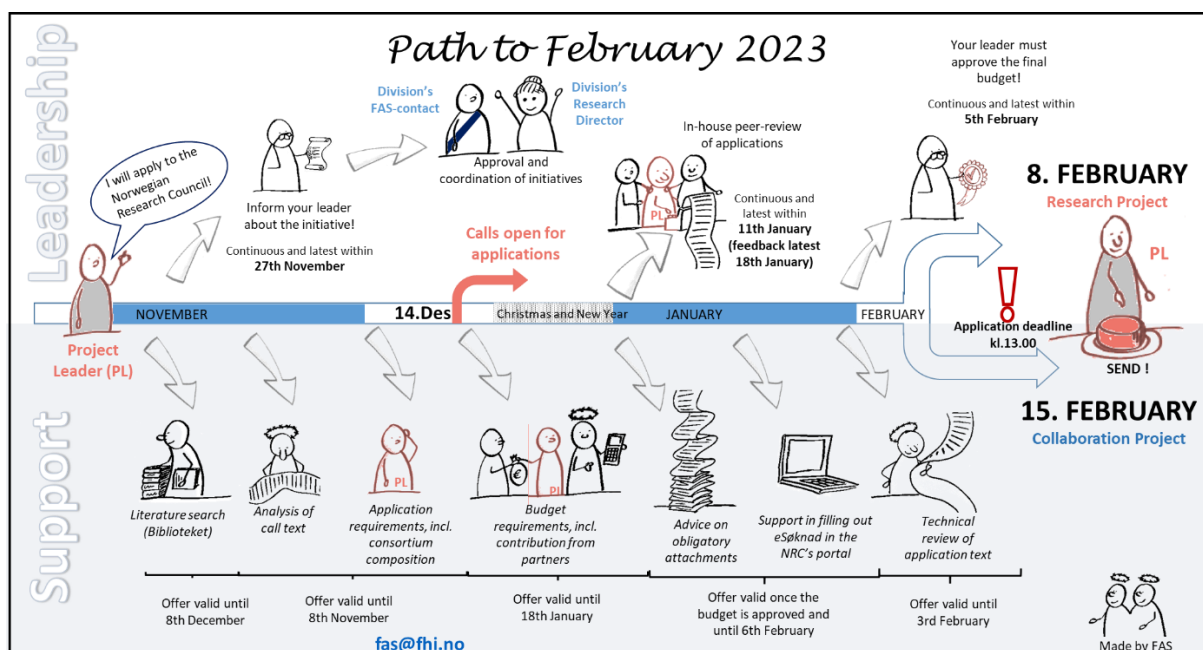


Figure 6 Process map for applications to the Norwegian Research Council's deadlines in February each year. Here example from 2023.

An ERC support programme has been developed and established in cooperation between Center for fertility and health (CEFH) and the Department for Research Administrative Support (FAS). Should similar processes and courses for training be established for other calls?

It is an expectation from funding sources that NIPH is able to carry out the project that has been granted. This requires a clear anchoring at management level of all applications before sending. An application should be approved internally in accordance with the authorization matrix. In PF, separate [budgeting principles](#) have been created as a basis for setting up budgets for applications, where assessment criteria for approval are specified. Traditionally, applications with significant own funding and/or long-term commitments such as SFF, environmental support and national infrastructure, have been decided in the Top Management Group. The Top Management (TL) and Research and the Innovation Committee's (FIU) roles in approving applications have not been established yet, and it is therefore not predictable which applications require the involvement of TL/FIU. We must establish adequate procedures for proceedings for applications where FIU's case preparations and TL's approval are required.

It is important that the approval routine at the Institute is well known for applicants and that the proceedings are effective as experience shows that applications are often worked on until the deadline. It is not only financial profitability and relevance (figure 4) that must be assessed when an application is to be approved. The figure below illustrates several elements that must be assessed before an application can be approved (figure 7).

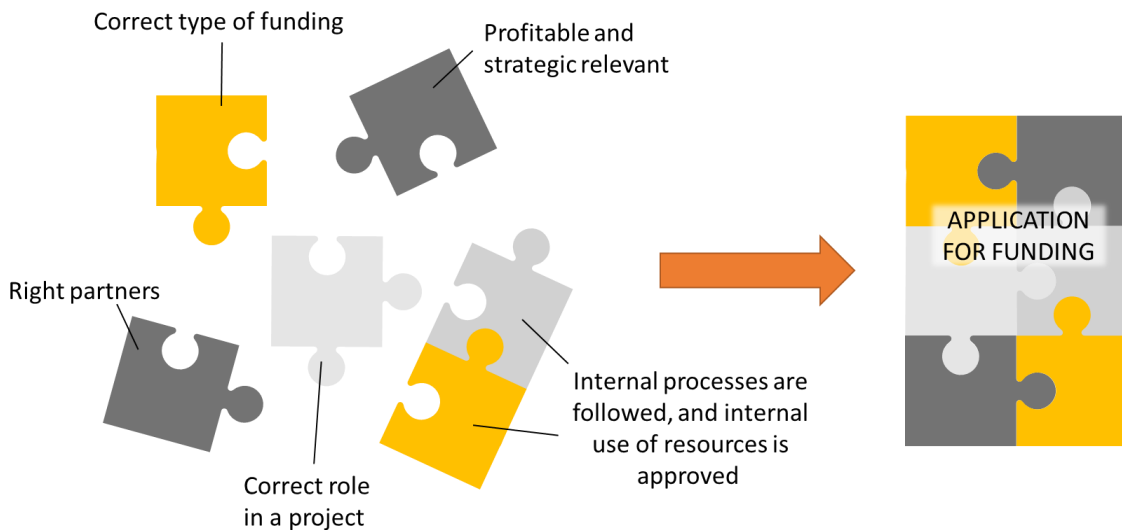


Figure 7. Elements that must be considered before an application can be approved.

Preparation of applications requires a lot of time and a lot of the Institute's internal resources. It is therefore important that the application process is thoroughly professionalized. Regularly, both internal application processes and feedback on applications from funders are evaluated. The applicant should have approved project descriptions available at an early stage. In consultation with the support staff, the Department for Research Administrative Support FAS has created a workspace [Search for external funding \(Pre Grant\)](#) where one of the purposes is to share knowledge and experiences from previous application rounds. To increase the quality of the applications and thus the success rate of the Institute, annual systematic evaluations of feedback from funding sources are conducted, focusing on both approved and rejected applications. Results of such evaluations are published on Opus (the intranet) and presented in Division Managers' Meetings (OLMs), the Research and Innovation Committee (FIU), Top Management (TL) and in other relevant forums.

#### We want to

- See wider than The Norwegian Research Council and EU when application processes are facilitated.
- Introduce common budgeting principles at the Institute.
- Establish processes with decision in Top management (TL) when large shares of own funding are needed or the obligations extend over a long period of time, e.g. applications for centres (e.g. SFF) and national infrastructures.
- Develop or acquire better tools for follow-up of the economy in granted projects.

Attachments: Relevant quality documents, etc.

[AD-OP-RE 013\) Cooperation and interaction private actors.](#)

[Budgeting principles to PF](#)

[Authorization matrix](#)

[ST-LO-RE-003\) Academic adjunct positions paid by the Institute](#)