

STRATEGIC RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM ON NATURAL HAZARDS 2025

RULES FOR APPLICANTS AND EXPERT PANEL

Edition 1.0



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FOREWORD

This handbook serves as a guide for the Strategic Research and Development Program for Natural Hazard for applicants, Expert Panel members, and external evaluators. Its aim is to enhance the transparency of the process for all involved, from the announcement of the application deadline to the awarding and management of the grants. The handbook contains the program's regulations and various useful information, such as the rights and obligations of grant recipients. To ensure the handbook fulfils its purpose, all participants in the process (applicants and Expert Panel members) are encouraged to read it in its entirety.

1 GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE STRATEGIC RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM FOR NATURAL HAZARD 2025

1.1 THE ROLE OF THE STRATEGIC RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

The Strategic Research and Development Program is an open competitive fund operating under Article 7 of the Act on Public Support for Scientific Research (No. 3/2003, as amended): "Grants are provided in the budget for basic research and practical projects under the auspices of the Strategic Research and Development Program in the fields of science, technology, and innovation. The Strategic Research and Development Program in the fields of science, technology, and innovation encompasses strategic plans where temporary prioritization of funding is involved. Projects should be carried out in close collaboration between companies, research institutions, and universities in specific fields or interdisciplinary academic fields based on well-crafted research plans." The Strategic Research and Development Program is funded by the Ministry of Culture, Innovation, and Higher Education. The priorities of the program are determined by the Science and Innovation Council. Rannís is the administrator of the fund.

The role of the Strategic Research and Development Program on Natural Hazards¹ is to better prepare Iceland and its people for events related to natural disasters and extreme natural forces, as well as to respond to them in an organized manner. The program aims to support an innovation-driven knowledge society that utilizes robust basic research and practical knowledge to address challenges related to natural hazards and disseminate knowledge to the public and authorities.

Additionally, the goal of the Strategic Research and Development Program on Natural Hazards is to leverage the knowledge and strengths of various disciplines, technologies, and academic fields to foster a deeper understanding of Icelandic nature, society, and environment.

The program provides grants according to the priorities defined for the fund, based on professional evaluation of the quality of the project, the estimated need for the project's outputs, the competence of the individuals conducting the research, and their facilities to carry out the project.

¹ The following definition of a natural hazard is used herein: A natural hazard is any condition in nature that threatens and could thus become a dangerous event, causing harm, damage to facilities and property, accidents and/or casualties as the case may be (based in part on: <https://www.visindavefur.is/svar.php?id=68712>).

1.2 BOARD PRIORITIES

The board of the Strategic Research and Development Program on Natural Hazards emphasizes strengthening research, development, and application related to natural hazards in a broad context. In determining the priorities for the program, the fourth assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and government policies on civil protection and security were taken into account. Below are examples of potential projects that align with these priorities (the list is not exhaustive):

- Projects that enhance knowledge and improve the ability to predict natural hazards, including volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, avalanches, landslides, glacial floods, extreme weather, cold spells, and floods in seas, rivers, and lakes, wildfires, or epidemics.
- Projects that bolster resilience against natural hazards. This category includes projects related to prevention, follow-up, mitigation and adaptation measures, risk management, societal, health, and cultural impacts of natural hazards, and policy making.

The Strategic Research and Development Program on Natural Hazards supports research and development projects for up to three years. The maximum individual grant is 120 million ISK. The estimated grant amount for each year in the application may vary but should not exceed 60 million ISK in any single grant year.

Collaboration between universities, institutions, and industry is encouraged. A minimum of three partners is required, with at least one being a small or medium-sized enterprise.

1.3 TIMELINES

The application deadline for submissions to the Strategic Research and Development Program will be until [date], and will be announced with at least six weeks' notice.

1.4 BOARD OF THE STRATEGIC RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

The Minister appoints a six-member board for the Strategic Research and Development Program. Three board members are selected from the Board of the Research Fund and three from the Board of the Technology Development Fund. The [names](#) of the board members can be found on the Rannís website. The board of the Program approves allocation rules and guidelines and makes decisions on fund allocations based on the recommendations of an Expert Panel.

1.5 EXPERTS OF THE STRATEGIC RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

General inquiries regarding the fund and applications under review should be directed to the Experts of the Strategic Research and Development Program at Rannís. The email address for the program is markaaetlun@rannis.is and the website can be found [here](#).

Applicants must not, under any circumstances, contact the Expert Panel or Board members regarding their application during the review process. If an applicant contacts an Expert Panel member or board member about their application, it will be removed from the review process.

1.6 CODE OF CONDUCT FOR ADMINISTRATORS

The Board and Expert Panels of the Strategic Research and Development Program, Program experts, and others involved in the administration of applications are bound by confidentiality. All applications, their accompanying documents, and evaluation sheets are treated as confidential. These confidential documents must not be used

for any purpose other than professional evaluation and must not be published, issued, or shown to third parties in any other manner. Copies of these confidential documents should only be made if deemed necessary for professional evaluation. After the evaluation process, the application and evaluation sheets should be preserved in the electronic archive of Rannís. The Board and Expert Panels of the Strategic Research and Development Program are aware that the disclosure or unlawful use of confidential information can cause irreparable damage to their owners.

1.7 CONFLICT OF INTEREST RULES

Expert Panel members, board members, and external experts are considered to have a conflict of interest regarding a particular application if any of the following apply:

- General reasons for disqualification listed in the Administrative Procedures Act ([No. 37/1993](#))
- Close friendship or family ties between the Expert Panel member or Board member and the applicant
- Personal opposition of the Expert Panel member or board member to the applicant
- Professional competition or close collaboration between the Expert Panel member or Board member and the applicant
- Expert Panel members may not be part of an application to the Strategic Research and Development Program
- External experts must not be part of an application to the Strategic Research and Development Program
- If a Board member is part of an application, they must recuse themselves from all discussions regarding the allocation for the relevant grant year and an alternate must be called in

Expert Panel members and Board members who are deemed to have a conflict of interest according to the conditions listed above must leave the meeting when the relevant application is discussed and the decision on the grant is made. This must be recorded in the minutes. External experts cannot review an application where any of the above conditions apply.

If the relevant Board member or Expert Panel member is an employee of an institution or company and an application from the same institution or company is under discussion, the closeness of the relationship with the employees involved in the application and/or the supervisors of the institution must be assessed. These relationships do not necessarily lead to disqualification.

Board members, Expert Panel members, and external experts are responsible for identifying circumstances that create a conflict of interest for them in reviewing applications to the Strategic Research and Development Program on Natural Hazards

1.8 CODE OF CONDUCT FOR APPLICANTS AND OBTAINING NECESSARY PERMITS

Applicants must indicate in their application whether the project includes elements that need to be specifically considered in terms of general ethical guidelines. In such cases, it is necessary to explain what these elements entail and how they will be addressed. Appropriate permits must be in place (e.g., from the [National Bioethics Committee](#) and the [Data Protection Authority](#)). If the permit application is still in process when the grant application is submitted to the Strategic Research and Development Program, this must be mentioned in the application, and the permit must be submitted to the Program's experts as soon as it is obtained or they notified if the permit has not been granted. No contract will be finalized until all necessary permits are in place.

Applicants are required to comply with international rules and conventions where applicable, such as those concerning the use of patents.

1.9 MISCONDUCT

If there is suspicion of misconduct, fabrication, falsification, plagiarism, or misuse in connection with an application or funded project during the application process, the funding period, or after the funding period has ended, the relevant institution/company and the board of the Strategic Research and Development Program will be notified without exception.

If there is suspicion of misconduct while an application is under review, it will be withdrawn from the review process while the applicant's institution is given the opportunity to investigate. If everything is in order, the application will be re-entered into the review process. If misconduct is confirmed, the application will be dismissed from the review, and the applicant's institution will be held responsible for taking appropriate action.

The Board of the Strategic Research and Development Program may also initiate an independent investigation into allegations of misconduct.

If misconduct is discovered during the application process, the funding period, or after the funding period, the Board of the Strategic Research and Development Program may impose special sanctions, such as requiring partial or full repayment of the grant or prohibiting the applicant from applying to the fund.

1.10 ACCESS TO RESULTS AND DATA

According to the Act on Public Support for Scientific Research [No. 3/2003](#), as amended (Article 10), research results funded by public money must be published in Open Access. The aforementioned law on Open Access only applies to the publication of results in peer-reviewed scientific journals.

There is also a requirement that data collected in funded projects be made accessible in electronic repositories, as permitted by copyright, no later than two years after the end of the funding period. The application must specify, as applicable, how data storage and access will be managed. The management and access to tools, software, or algorithms collected or created in the project must be described according to FAIR principles (findable, accessible, interoperable, and reusable). For projects that receive funding, a data management plan must be submitted, as applicable, in accordance with international standards, i.e., FAIR principles, Icelandic and EU data protection regulations (General Data Protection Regulation), and ethical guidelines on data management. If an exemption from these standards is requested, the rationale for the exemption must be provided in the application.

Grant recipients must acknowledge the Strategic Research and Development Program and the project grant number in all publications of results: *"This work was supported by The Icelandic Strategic Research and Development Programme for Natural Hazards, grant number.. / Verkefnið var styrkt af Markáætlun,Náttúruvá styrknúmer...."*

2 RULES AND GUIDELINES FOR APPLICANTS

Applicants are encouraged to read Sections 3 to 5 - *Application Review Process, Guidelines for Expert Panel Members, and Evaluation Sheet*, which outline the evaluation criteria that the Expert Panel will use.

2.1 LANGUAGE

Applications must be submitted in English, and English is generally the communication language of the Strategic Research and Development Program on Natural Hazards.

2.2 CO-FUNDING

The applicant's co-funding in the project may vary depending on the type of applicant. Co-funding requirements can be found in Appendix 1.

2.3 ELIGIBLE COSTS

2.3.1 SALARIES

The time employees spend working on the project is the basis for salary calculations. Applicants should refer to general collective bargaining agreements and institutional agreements when calculating salaries. Salary costs are based on paid wages plus related payroll expenses. The Program does not support salaries for those working abroad, including postgraduate students, postdoctoral researchers, and other participants. Contracting rates cannot be used as a benchmark for salary calculations. Not all participants need to be named when the application deadline expires, but the contribution of all participants must be defined in the application if salaries are requested. The Strategic Research and Development Program does not support overtime payments or salaries for those who are also on full salaries in other jobs.

2.3.2 OPERATING COSTS

Applicants can apply for costs related to necessary supplies for the project, but not items that fall under shared operations and facilities, including general office equipment such as computers. All operating costs must be itemized in the relevant section. Unexplained costs will not be approved.

2.3.3 TRAVEL COSTS

Applicants can apply for costs related to necessary travel for project participants. All travel must be justified and its relevance to the project explained. The Program does not support travel costs for individuals who are not direct participants in the project, including those defined as other participants in the application. If applicants consider the travel costs of such individuals essential for the project's progress, they may specify them under outsourced services. Note that per diem expenses for such individuals are not supported.

2.3.4 CONTRACTED SERVICES

This category includes costs for project components not carried out by registered participants but are necessary for the project's progress. The application must detail what the contracted service entails and all associated costs. The cost of contracted services should generally not exceed 20% of the total project grant. Offers for contracted services must be available at the time of contract signing. Contributions related to shared operations and facilities are not included for contracted services.

2.3.5 EQUIPMENT PURCHASES

Applicants can apply for funding to purchase specialized equipment that is deemed necessary for the project's progress. Justification for the equipment purchase must be provided, and the cost should generally not exceed 20% of the total project grant. Quotes from the seller/manufacturer of the equipment must be available at the time of contract signing. Contributions related to overhead and facilities are not included for equipment costs.

2.3.6 OVERHEAD AND FACILITIES

Applicants can apply for contributions amounting to up to 25% of the total project cost, excluding contracted services and equipment purchases, to finance overhead and facilities. This includes costs for office and research facilities such as rent, heating, electricity, management of operational units, book and journal purchases, and the purchase and operation of general-use computer equipment.

2.3.7 TRANSFER OF FUNDS BETWEEN COST ITEMS

Pre-approval is required for transferring more than 10% of the total amount of each grant year (excluding contributions for overhead) between different cost items. Approval is always required for changes in the use of funds from the salary item for doctoral and master's students and postdoctoral researchers, and such requests are evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

2.4 WHAT SHOULD THE APPLICATION INCLUDE?

Applications are only accepted through the electronic application system of Rannís. To be considered valid, all fields in the application system must be completed. The application must also include the following attachments, uploaded through the application system:

Attachment A. Project Description

A customized form (template) found in the application system must be used for the project description and submitted in PDF format. The template uses 11 pt. Calibri (body) or a similar font with 1.5 line spacing and 2.5 cm margins. These settings must not be altered. The project description should be a maximum of 15 pages. The project description is supplemented by a cover page, summary, and table of contents, allowing for an 18-page PDF file (excluding the bibliography) to be uploaded to the application system. Applications that do not use the correct template for the project description will be dismissed from the review process. This can occur at any time during the review process.

Attachment B. Curriculum Vitae

The CV of the project manager must include information about their current position, education and training, previous positions, awards/recognitions, summary of publications, completed software, patents, etc. The CV should be a maximum of 2 pages, and unnecessary details that do not contribute to the evaluation of the application should be omitted.

Attachment C. Collaboration Statement

The Strategic Research and Development Program on Natural Hazards only supports collaborative projects. A minimum of three partners is required, with at least one being a small or medium-sized enterprise. The application must include a signed confirmation specifying the participants and their roles in the project.

Applications must meet all eligibility criteria to receive a professional evaluation. If it becomes apparent during the review process that one or more criteria are not met, the application will be withdrawn from the review process. The professional evaluation of the application is based solely on the information provided in the application and its attachments.

No additional documents will be accepted after the application deadline.

2.5 EXPERT PANEL OF THE STRATEGIC RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM ON NATURAL HAZARDS

All valid applications are evaluated by an Expert Panel. The Board of the Strategic Research and Development Program appoints individuals with extensive experience in research and/or innovation to the Expert Panel. When appointing the Expert Panel, attention is paid to ensuring a broad range of expertise and a balanced gender ratio.

The Board appoints the chair of the Expert Panel from among the Panel members. The chair is responsible, with the help of the Expert Panel coordinator from the Strategic Research and Development Program's team, for

coordinating the work of the Expert Panel and ensuring it operates according to the program's strategy, mission, and code of conduct. After the Expert Panel is appointed, the names of the Panel members are published on the fund's website on the Rannís portal.

Applicants must not, under any circumstances, contact Expert Panel members during the evaluation process. Questions regarding specific Expert Panels and fields should be directed to the Experts of the Strategic Research and Development Program at Rannís. If an applicant contacts an Expert Panel member regarding their application, it will be withdrawn from the evaluation process.

3 APPLICATION REVIEW PROCESS

3.1 PRELIMINARY REVIEW/REJECTIONS

Applications are reviewed by the fund administrators. Incomplete applications and applications that do not comply with the fund's rules are dismissed without further evaluation, and the applicant is notified of this.

3.2 EXPERT PANEL EVALUATION

All applications that pass preliminary review are evaluated by the Expert Panel. Applications received by the Expert Panel are distributed among the Panel members. All Panel members are encouraged to familiarize themselves with all applications, but at least three readers within the Panel are assigned to each application. The Expert Panel also seeks opinions from two or more external experts for each application. The same ethical and conflict of interest rules apply to external reviewers as to Panel members.

The Expert Panel processes each application with a reasoned, written report and prioritizes applications based on professional evaluation. Applicants receive the Expert Panel's evaluation once the board of the Strategic Research and Development Program has decided on the annual allocation. In the evaluation and allocation decision, factors such as the scope and impact of projects in relation to the requested grant amounts are considered.

4 GRANT ALLOCATION

4.1 DECISION ON GRANT ALLOCATION

After the Expert Panel has completed its work, the chair of the Expert Panel meets with the Board of the Strategic Research and Development Program to present the Panel's work and discuss any issues that arose during the evaluation of applications. The Board of the Strategic Research and Development Program makes the final decision on grant allocations based on the Expert Panel's recommendations. In addition to the professional evaluation provided by the Expert Panel, the Board considers the strategy of the Science and Innovation Panel and the fund's financial resources. Once the allocation decision is made, applicants receive a response letter with the Expert Panel's final evaluation.

Grant allocations are published on the Rannís website. The Board's decisions on grant allocations from the Strategic Research and Development Program are final at the administrative level. According to Article 4 of Act No. 3/2003, the Board's decisions on grant allocation or rejection are not subject to administrative appeal.

4.2 CONTRACT

Rannís enters into a contract with the grant recipient on behalf of the Strategic Research and Development Program for one year at a time. The submission of progress reports and the payment schedule are based on this contract. The contract must be finalized within two months of the grant notification, otherwise the grant will be forfeited. An extension to finalize the contract can be requested, but this must be done in a timely manner.

4.3 DISTRIBUTION OF ANNUAL PAYMENTS

- The first payment of each year (40%) is made upon signing the contract.
- The second payment of each year (40%) is made upon approval of the progress report. The submission deadline is specified in the contract.
- The third payment of each year (20%) is made upon approval of the annual or final report. The submission deadline is specified in the contract.

4.4 REPORTS

The project manager is responsible for submitting progress, annual, and final reports in accordance with the contract and including all required information. The reports are reviewed by the fund's staff at Rannís, who make recommendations to the Board of the Strategic Research and Development Program on how to proceed with the project's support. The fund's staff may request additional information and explanations from grant recipients and consult with the Expert Panel if necessary. The final payment of each grant year, 20%, is made upon approval of the annual or final report, as applicable. If a report is not approved, the fund's board may terminate the contract with the grant recipient and request repayment of the grant funds. The final report must detail the project's progress, final results, and outputs. A detailed cost statement (itemized table and transaction list) must accompany the report, explaining any deviations from the original plan. Templates for progress reports, annual reports, and final reports can be found on the Strategic Research and Development Program's website.

5 EVALUATION SHEET

Table 1. Weight of Evaluation Factors

Evaluation Factors and Weighting The scale of 1-5 is used for evaluation factors 1.1-2.2 (see Table 2). Under each evaluation factor, there is a list of possible questions to guide the assessment.	
1. Objectives and Impact	60%
1.1 Objectives and Context in Relation to General Knowledge <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the objectives and their significance clear? • Is the general knowledge status adequately explained? • Is there a clear connection between the objectives and the general knowledge status? 	30%
1.2 Expected Impact of the Project <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment of the project's novelty • Assessment of the usability of the outputs/results • Assessment of the scope and importance of the project's impact 	30%
2. Implementation	40%
2.1 Project, Time, and Cost Planning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the description of project phases, milestones, and timelines appropriate? • Is the cost plan realistic, understandable, and does it demonstrate the applicant's understanding of the project's expenses? 	20%
2.2 Capacity and Feasibility <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the team composition aligned with the objectives in terms of knowledge, experience, and competence? • Are the equipment/infrastructure/resources well-defined, adequate, and is access ensured? • Is it likely that the objectives will be achieved? 	20%

Table 2. Evaluation scale

Grade	Review
A1	Outstanding application with essentially no weaknesses
A2	Very strong application with negligible weaknesses
A3	Strong application with some minor weaknesses
B	Application with one or more minor weakness
C	Application with major weaknesses or not eligible for the fund

APPENDIX 1: RULES ON CO-FUNDING

Different requirements are made for applicant co-funding based on the total cost of the project.

No co-funding is required from universities or research institutions.

The co-funding requirement for companies depends on the size of the company, the type of project, and certain conditions, as shown in Table 1. The cost of the project must at least equal the grant amount awarded to the project. The application must specify how the co-funding will be managed. The definition of company size can be found in Appendix 2.

Table 1: Minimum Co-funding Requirement for Companies Based on Project Cost per Grant Year

Definitions of project types can be found in the EFTA² Surveillance Authority's guidelines.

	Small company	Medium-sized company	Large company
Industrial research	30%	40%	50%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ With the condition of effective collaboration between companies (for large companies, cross-border collaboration or with at least one small or medium-sized company) or between a company and a research institution; or ○ With the condition of extensive dissemination of results. 	20%	25%	35%
Development work	55%	65%	75%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ With the condition of effective collaboration between companies (for large companies, cross-border collaboration or with at least one small or medium-sized company) or between a company and a research institution; or ○ With the condition of extensive dissemination of results. 	40%	50%	60%

² <http://www.efta.int/sites/default/files/documents/eea-supplements/icelandic/2015-is/su-nr-44-is-06-08-2015.pdf>

APPENDIX 2: COMPANY SIZE

Small Company: A company with fewer than 50 employees and an annual turnover of less than 10 million euros and/or a balance sheet total of less than 10 million euros, according to Annex I of Commission Regulation (EU) No. [651/2014](#) of 17 June 2014.

Medium-sized Company: A company with 50-250 employees and an annual turnover of less than 50 million euros and/or a balance sheet total of less than 43 million euros, according to Annex I of Commission Regulation (EU) No. [651/2014](#) of 17 June 2014.

Large Company: A company with more than 250 employees, according to Annex I of Commission Regulation (EU) No. [651/2014](#) of 17 June 2014.

APPENDIX 3: COMPANIES UNDERTAKINGS IN DIFFICULTY

Companies older than three years that are Undertakings in difficulty cannot receive grants from the Strategic Research and Development Program in categories outside of minor aid (*de minimis*). According to the EFTA Surveillance Authority's guidelines, a company is considered in difficulty if, without public intervention, an undertaking is considered to be in difficulty when, without intervention by the State, it will almost certainly be condemned to going out of business in the short or medium term. Therefore, an undertaking is considered to be in difficulty if at least one of the following circumstances occurs:

- a) In the case of a limited liability company, where more than half of its subscribed share capital has disappeared as a result of accumulated losses. This is the case when deduction of accumulated losses from reserves (and all other elements generally considered as part of the own funds of the company) leads to a negative cumulative amount that exceeds half of the subscribed share capital.
- b) In the case of a company where at least some members have unlimited liability for the debt of the company, where more than half of its capital as shown in the company accounts has disappeared as a result of accumulated losses.
- c) Where the undertaking is subject to collective insolvency proceedings or fulfils the criteria under its domestic law for being placed in collective insolvency proceedings at the request of its creditors.
- d) In the case of an undertaking that is not an SME, where, for the past two years:
 - i. the undertaking's book debt to equity ratio has been greater than 7.5 and
 - ii. the undertaking's EBITDA interest coverage ratio has been below 1.0

If a company or a partner company in a project receiving a grant from the Strategic Research and Development Program encounters Undertakings in difficulty during the grant period, the project manager must inform the program staff as soon as possible.