

Instructions for SAFER2028 call 2023 (12.8.-7.10.2022)

The SAFER2028 call for proposals has been officially opened with the [Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment \(MEAE\) letter](#) on 12.8.2022. The call remains open until 7.10. at 14:00.

The objectives and organisation of the SAFER2028 programme are described in the [SAFER2028 Framework Plan](#).

SAFER2028 funding is available for different project types:

- Research projects lasting one or several years, applying funding annually
- Excellence projects lasting two or more years, with funding granted for the entire duration of the project
- Doctoral education (DENSE) projects for postgraduate students receiving funding from SAFER2028 for their doctoral studies, with funding granted for the entire duration of the project
- Complementary education projects for further training of experts
- Infrastructure projects for improving nuclear energy research infrastructure in Finland.

In addition, Management Group can start small studies outside of the call.

Project proposals

The project proposal consists of four documents:

- 1) [Financing proposal](#)
- 2) [Project plan](#)
- 3) [Budget and resource plan](#)
- 4) [Summary of the annual plan for 2023](#).

Additionally, DENSE projects should include recommendation letters from the supervising professor and supporting organisations when applicable (see DENSE evaluation criteria below).

The projects can have one or more partnering research organisations. Projects involving more than one research organisation are known as coordinated projects. Each partner organisation in a coordinated project must fill in the financing proposal (1) and the budget and resource plan (3), whereas the project plan (2) and the summary of the annual plan (4) are common documents for the whole project. All proposal documents from all partners should be submitted as a single application by the project management organisation.

The maximum duration of research, Excellence and infrastructure projects is three years and shorter, one or two years, projects with focused research topics are encouraged. The three-year maximum duration exists to give the research programme flexibility and the ability to innovate in later years also.

Excellence project status is granted to a few, selected projects that have a high-quality research plan with clear objectives and expected outcomes for each year, and a detailed budget and resource plan for their entire duration. Excellence projects submit the full proposal in the call only for their first year and receive a funding recommendation for their entire duration.

In later calls, Excellence projects submit a financing proposal (1) and summary of the annual plan (4) for each year. The Management Group of SAFER2028 has the right to withhold funding or require updated research and budget plans from an Excellence project if it is not progressing as expected. In case of significant changes for the next year, Excellence project managers must submit an updated proposal in the call. Small changes in Excellence projects can be approved in Technical Advisory Group (TAG) meetings and do not require action in the call.

Doctoral Education Network (DENSE) project proposals

The funding of the Doctoral Education Network (DENSE) will be divided into operational funding, with a strong emphasis on networking and international collaboration, and direct salary funding. Operational funding is applied from the DENSE Steering Group outside this call. The salary funding for doctoral students is available as two alternatives: (a) salary funding for doctoral students within DENSE, employed primarily at universities as full-time doctoral students, and (b) project funding covering some part of the salaries of doctoral students participating in other SAFER2028 projects.

Type (a) funding for doctoral students is typically granted for a four-year period. Additionally, applications for coordination of DENSE for the six-year duration of the programme are accepted and one proposal will be selected.

DENSE project applications are using the same templates as other project types following the instructions for Excellence projects, with emphasis on scientific excellence, taking into account the different durations.

Submitting the proposal

Please use the templates provided for the call and listed above. The SAFER2028 programme administration (safer2028@vtt.fi) is happy to assist with any questions related to the call and creating a proposal.

The application is submitted as follows:

- 1) all documents (1-4) as a single PDF file to the MEAE (tarjoukset.tem@gov.fi) and to the programme administration (safer2028@vtt.fi)
- 2) budget and resource plan (3) and summary of the annual plan for 2023 (4) in their original formats (Excel and Word) to the programme administration (safer2028@vtt.fi).

The MEAE reference number VN/21022/2022 must be referred to in the email. The name of the pdf file should be "ACRONYM_SAFER2028_2023.pdf" where ACRONYM is the acronym of the project name.

The deadline is 7.10.2021 at 14:00. Electronically signed proposals are also accepted.

Evaluation criteria

SAFER2028 evaluation criteria for the research (including Excellence) project proposals are:

- project's ability to develop expertise
- nuclear safety significance
- usability for end users
- scientific level of the proposal
- novelty of the methods and new approaches
- use of experimental facilities
- national and international collaboration and networking
- compatibility with the framework plan of the SAFER2028 programme.

SAFER2028 evaluation criteria for DENSE proposals are:

- scientific level of the proposal
- relevance of project proposal for scientific goals of SAFER2028 programme (in the long term)
- recommendation letter from a supervising professor
- recommendation letter from a stakeholder organisation if applicable (industry, regulator)
- international network connections
- overall participation of the host organisation in the wider SAFER2028 research programme
- complementary funding/in-kind funding already promised from other sources
- diversity of topics and disciplines within the Doctoral Education Network.

Other instructions

Budget for reporting and dissemination activities: Before making the applications, read the draft version of the [Terms and conditions for VYR -funded projects](#) (final version to be published when projects start). Each project is expected to follow these terms as well as participate in the SAFER2028 activities such as Technical Advisory Group meetings (hosted and documented by the project managers on a rotating basis), programme seminars and external evaluation. Make sure your project covers the expected project management activities such as travel costs and work time related to these and possible other project specific dissemination activities.

Follow the requirement for own / other financing: Research organisations may receive State Nuclear Waste Management Fund (VYR) funding for up to a maximum of 70% of the project's total expenses. The remaining 30 % must be funded by the research organisation (own funding) or another organisation, e.g. an end user (other funding).

Exceptions: For participation fees related to international treaties, 100% VYR funding is possible. 100% VYR funding is also possible for small companies. Companies having 50 or fewer employees can report 50% indirect employee costs and 30% general overhead costs. A company can also propose larger general overhead costs in reporting, but then it should be based on the accounting. For bigger companies, acceptable indirect employee and general overhead costs are 50% and 50%, respectively. In addition, the de minimis rule of the EU subsidy regulations will be applied to companies.

Explain in-kind contributions (if you have them): In-kind contributions should be explained in the research plan. If the in-kind is actual funding of the research project it should be shown as financing in the budget and resource plan and also included in the expenses of the corresponding tasks. If the in-kind is other kind of contribution, such as use of equipment, it shall not be included in the project budget, but should be mentioned in the project plan.

Confidentiality and non-disclosure agreement: It should be noted that all participating organisations need to sign a multilateral confidentiality and non-disclosure agreement regarding information shared e.g. from OECD/NEA projects. Their results should not be distributed to third parties until made public. A signed NDA agreement is a precondition to having access to the SAFER2028 intranet as project reports are directly distributed there and in TAG meetings. The agreement covers also other information distributed in the frame of SAFER2028 programme that is explicitly marked as "confidential".

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