



**Icelandic Research**  
Fund

# **THE ICELANDIC RESEARCH FUND HANDBOOK**

## **Rules for the grant year 2026**

**The Board of the Research Fund has approved the Handbook for the grant year 2026.**

**Key changes from the previous version:**

- A new grant category, Startup grants, is intended for applicants with three to ten years of research experience post-PhD who have demonstrated outstanding achievements.
- Project Leaders (*PL*) of Project grants or Grants of Excellence are required to have a minimum of three years of research experience post-PhD.
- Applicants for Postdoctoral grants must have completed their PhD no more than five years before the application deadline.
- One cannot be a Project Leader or Principal Investigator (*PL/PI*) on more than one Project grant application.
- One cannot be a Project Leader or Principal Investigator (*PL/PI*) on more than one Excellence grant application.
- Applicants for Startup grants cannot be a Project Leader or Principal Investigator (*PL/PI*) on applications in other grant categories.
- Applicants for Postdoctoral grants cannot be a Project Leader or Principal Investigator (*PL/PI*) on applications in other grant categories.
- Universities: The Project Leader must hold at least a 20% salaried academic position at the accounting institution of the application, i.e., a university in Iceland, during the proposed grant period.
- Doctoral student grants are intended for students who are in full-time doctoral studies and do not receive salaries for other work, except for teaching up to a maximum of 20% of their work ratio.
- Overhead costs do not apply to purchases of equipment.
- In special cases, it is possible to apply for up to ISK 3 million per year in additional funding for increased operational costs.
- The costs associated with accessing infrastructures are categorized as contracted services.
- Costs for peer-reviewed publications are up to ISK 750.000 for Project and Postdoctoral grants and up to ISK 1.500.000 for Grants of Excellence over the grant period.
- For Doctoral student grants, the maximum travel cost is ISK 400.000 per year.
- For Postdoctoral grants, the maximum travel cost is ISK 800.000 per year.
- The maximum length of CV's is 2 pages.

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# 1 Introduction

The Icelandic Research Fund (IRF) is an open, competitive fund that supports scientific research and research-related postgraduate studies. To this end, the fund provides grants to students in research-related postgraduate studies and defined research projects that promote scientific research in Iceland.

The IRF awards grants according to the general priorities of the Ministerial Committee on Science and Innovation and based on a professional assessment of the quality of research projects, the competence of the individuals conducting the research, and their facilities to carry out the project.

The fund operates under the Act on Public Support for Scientific Research No. 3 of 2003. The scope of the fund is determined by the annual state budget.

The English version of the IRF Handbook is a translation of the Icelandic version. The original Icelandic text is the authoritative reference. In case of any discrepancies between this translation and the authoritative text, the latter will prevail.

# 2 Timeline

The application deadline for the Research Fund is announced with a minimum of six weeks' notice. No documents are accepted after the deadline has passed. The estimated timelines for the application process for the grant year can be seen in Table 1.

<b>June 13<sup>th</sup>, 2025</b>	Submission deadline
<b>July - December 2025</b>	Expert Panel work and meetings
<b>January 2026</b>	Funding decision

**Table 1. The estimated timeframe for the grant year 2026**

## 3 Rules and instructions for applicants

### 3.1 Eligibility of applicants

Project Leaders (PL) and Principal Investigators (PI), excluding those applying for doctoral student grants, must have completed graduate studies at an internationally recognized university. For postdoctoral, startup, Project grants, and Grants of Excellence, Project Leaders are required to have obtained a PhD or an equivalent degree, along with progressively increasing research experience relevant to the specific grant category.

One can only be a Project Leader or Principal Investigator on one application within the same grant category. Applicants for doctoral student, postdoctoral, or startup grants cannot submit applications in other grant categories. Applicants for Grants of Excellence may simultaneously apply for a project grant, provided it is for an independent research project. However, no grant is awarded to more than one project with the same Project Leader or Principal Investigator.

Members of the IRF Expert Panels cannot participate in applications to the fund.

**Universities:** For Project grants and Grants of Excellence, the Project Leader must hold at least a 20% salaried academic position at the accounting institution of the application, i.e., a university in Iceland, during the proposed grant period. Individuals with unpaid guest positions at Icelandic universities do not meet this requirement.

**Other institutions and legal entities:** The Project Leader must have dedicated facilities at the accounting institution of the application, i.e., a legal entity in Iceland, during the proposed grant period.

### 3.2 Grant categories

Five types of grants are offered. Grants of Excellence, Project grants, Postdoctoral grants, and Doctoral student grants are awarded for up to 36 months. Startup grants are awarded for up to 60 months. Except for equipment purchases and contracted services, a 25% overhead is automatically added to the awarded grant to fund joint operations and facilities. See Table 2.

In special cases, it is possible to apply for up to ISK 3 million per year in additional funding for increased operational costs. This additional funding is not listed in Table 2.

Grant category	Maximum grant amount	Overhead (25%)*	Total grant amount including overhead
Grant of Excellence	145.500.000 kr	36.375.000 kr	181.875.000 kr
Project grant	61.300.000 kr	15.325.000 kr	76.625.000 kr
Startup grant	102.000.000 kr	25.500.000 kr	127.500.000 kr
Postdoctoral fellowship grant	35.400.000 kr	8.850.000 kr	44.250.000 kr
Doctoral student grant	25.000.000 kr	6.250.000 kr	31.250.000 kr

**Table 2.** Grant types, maximum grant amount in 36 months and the calculated overhead. A relatively even distribution is expected over  
\*Overhead is not calculated on contracted services and purchase of equipment.

#### 3.2.1 Grants of Excellence

Grants of Excellence are intended for research groups undertaking extensive research projects that are likely to elevate Icelandic research to the forefront of the international stage. Grants of Excellence are

intended for research groups, and the research group should at least include co-proposers in addition to the Project Leader and Principal Investigators.

Training young scientists through the involvement of postgraduate students and/or postdoctoral researchers is a key aspect of Grants of Excellence.

Project Leaders of Grants of Excellence are expected to have a high level of experience in managing research projects.

One cannot be a Project Leader or Principal Investigator on more than one application for a Grant of Excellence.

If a Project Leader or Principal Investigator has previously received a Grant of Excellence, the project must be completed and the final report approved before a new Grant of Excellence agreement can be finalized. If this does not occur by April 1<sup>st</sup> following the allocation, the new grant will be forfeited.

If a Project Leader or Principal Investigator received a Project grant or Grant of Excellence grant from the IRF in the last allocation, they are not eligible to apply for a project grant.

Applications for Grants of Excellence go through a two-step process. First, expert panels evaluate and rank the applications. The Board then invites a representative of the top applications for interviews and subsequently decides on the grant awards. A limited number of Grants of Excellence are awarded each year.

It is possible to apply for salaries, operational costs, travel expenses, publication costs, and for purchase of equipment and contracted services.

Grants of Excellence are awarded for up to 36 months; see Table 2 for details on grant amounts.

### 3.2.2 Project grants

Among the grant categories of the IRF, the Project grants category is the largest. Research projects can be of various types and span all fields of science and scholarship; the fund is an open competitive fund and does not prioritize one field over another. It can strengthen applications in certain academic fields if a research group is behind them. Additionally, the training of young scientists through the involvement of postgraduate students and/or postdoctoral researchers strengthens the application.

For Project Leaders, a minimum of three years of research experience post-PhD is required.

One cannot be a Project Leader or Principal Investigator on more than one Project grant application.

If a Project Leader or Principal Investigator received a Project grant from the IRF in the last allocation, they are not eligible to apply for a project grant.

It is possible to apply for salaries, operational costs, travel expenses, publication costs, and for purchase of equipment and contracted services.

Project grants are awarded for up to 36 months; see Table 2 for details on grant amounts.

### 3.2.3 Startup grants

Startup grants are a new category aimed at enabling outstanding young scientists to establish independent research at Icelandic universities or research institutions.

The grants are intended for applicants with three to ten years of research experience post-PhD who have demonstrated exceptional achievements. The grant is awarded to an individual and can be transferred between host institutions in Iceland, but the recipient cannot transfer the grant to institutions outside Iceland.

Applicants for Startup grants cannot be Project Leaders or Principal Investigators on applications in other grant categories.

A statement from the host institution, signed by an authorized individual, confirming that the applicant will have work and research facilities there during the grant period must accompany the application.

It is possible to apply for salaries, operational costs, travel expenses, publication costs, and for purchase of equipment and contracted services.

Startup grants are awarded for up to 60 months; see Table 2 for details on grant amounts.

### 3.2.4 Postdoctoral Fellowship grants

Postdoctoral grants are intended to support the career development of young scientists within the research community. Applicants must have completed their PhD no more than five years before the application deadline. A copy of the diploma must accompany the application or be submitted by December 1 following the application deadline. The application is strengthened if the postdoctoral position is at an institution other than the one that awarded the PhD.

Applicants for Postdoctoral grants cannot be Project Leaders or Principal Investigators on applications in other grant categories.

Two letters of recommendation from experts not involved in the application are required. The applicant must provide their names and email addresses in the electronic application system.

A statement from the host institution, signed by an authorized individual, confirming that the applicant will have work and research facilities there during the grant period must accompany the application.

The grant is awarded to an individual, and the postdoctoral position is considered full-time employment. If the recipient accepts any paid position during the grant period, the grant will be terminated from the moment that employment begins, regardless of whether it is full-time or part-time. In exceptional cases, the recipient may be permitted to teach at the university level, up to 20% of a full-time position.

The grant can be transferred between host institutions in Iceland, but the grantee cannot transfer it to institutions outside Iceland.

It is possible to apply for salaries, operational costs, travel expenses, publication costs, and for purchase of equipment and contracted services.

Postdoctoral grants are awarded for up to 36 months; see Table 2 for details on grant amounts.



### 3.2.5 Doctoral student grants

Doctoral student grants are intended for doctoral students who apply in their own name but in consultation with their supervisors. Applicants must have an approved doctoral project (with or without requirements for funding) at an Icelandic university, and a certificate from the postgraduate committee of the relevant department/field, or equivalent, must accompany the application. The doctoral degree must be awarded by an Icelandic university, but a joint degree with a foreign university is possible.

Two letters of recommendation from experts not involved in the application are required. The applicant must provide their names and email addresses in the electronic application system.

Doctoral student grants are awarded to individuals and are awarded for up to 36 months; see Table 2 for details on grant amounts. If applying for a grant for only 12 or 24 months, the maximum grant amount is reduced accordingly. Doctoral student grants are for students in full-time doctoral studies who do not receive salaries from other employment, except for teaching, which can account for up to 20% of their workload.

It is only possible to apply for the salary and travel expenses of the doctoral student, see Table 3; other project-related costs cannot be applied for.

## 3.3 Approved expenses

Approved expenses include salaries, operating costs, travel and publication expenses, equipment purchases, and contracted services (Table 3). On behalf of the IRF Board, the fund's staff retains the right to review cost items, including salaries, before contract signing. Own contribution is not required, but it is necessary to account for the project's total cost.

Grant category	Operational costs	Travel costs	Publication costs	Purchase of equipment	Contracted services
<b>Grant of excellence</b>	yes	yes	1.500.000	3.000.000	max 20%
<b>Project grant</b>	yes	yes	750.000	3.000.000	max 20%
<b>Startup grant</b>	yes	yes	750.000	3.000.000	max 20%
<b>Postdoctoral fellowship grant</b>	yes	800.000/year	750.000	no	max 20%
<b>Doctoral student grant</b>	no	400.000/year	no	no	no

**Table 3.** Approved maximum expenses (other than salaries) for each grant category.

### 3.3.1 Salaries

The IRF provides funding for the salaries of scientists, postgraduate students, and researchers. Salaries can only be applied for individuals with facilities at Icelandic institutions or legal entities. The fund does not cover salaries for individuals working abroad, including postgraduate students, postdoctoral researchers, or other participants.

Applicants should consider general wage and institutional agreements when calculating salaries. Salary costs are determined by full wages plus associated expenses. Outsourced rates should not be used as a benchmark for salary calculations.

Postdoctoral researchers, postgraduate students, or assistants do not need to be named, but their contributions must be defined in the application.

It is possible to apply for salaries for up to 12 months for each master's student and up to 36 months for PhD students. If applying for doctoral students or postdoctoral researchers in more than one application, the same individual cannot receive a higher combined grant than 12 person-months per year.

The IRF does not support salary payments for those who are fully salaried in other jobs (including pensioners), overtime payments, or payments for purchasing teaching discounts.

The IRF is not an employer, and the grantee is not in an employment relationship with the fund. Grants are paid to the accounting institution of the grantee, which is responsible for salary payments and the rights of the employee.

### 3.3.2 Operating costs

It is possible to apply for costs related to necessary supplies, except for doctoral student grants. A detailed breakdown of all operational costs must be provided in the application. Costs related to joint operations and facilities, including general office equipment such as computers, cannot be applied for. Unexplained costs will not be approved.

Travel expenses and purchased services do not fall under general operational costs.

Costs for access to research infrastructure, whether domestic or international, fall under purchased services and not general operational costs.

Operational costs should generally not exceed 20% of the total Project grant (without overhead).

In special cases, it is possible to apply for up to ISK 3 million per year in additional funding for increased operational costs. Detailed justification for the exceptional circumstances that warrant higher operational funding must be provided, and the expert panel will assess each case individually to determine whether additional funding should be granted. Additional funding is not automatically granted, even if a project receives funding.

### 3.3.3 Travel costs

It is possible to apply for costs related to necessary travel for participants that are essential for the project's progress. Justification must be provided for all trips and how they relate to the project.

The fund does not support travel costs for those who are not direct participants in the project, including individuals defined as other participants in the application. If applicants consider the travel costs of such individuals necessary for the project's progress, they may specify them under contracted services. Note that per diem for such individuals is not supported. For postdoctoral grants, only the travel costs for the postdoctoral researcher are covered, and for doctoral student grants, only the travel costs for the doctoral student are covered.

Travel costs should adhere to governmental rules regarding travel expenses for state employees. Attention is drawn to the government's guidelines: "*The general rule is that costs for domestic travel, such as fares, meals, and accommodation, should be paid according to invoices.*"

### 3.3.3.1 *Travel costs for conferences and short meetings*

The fund supports travel costs for project participants attending conferences and short meetings. Per diem is capped at the rates for travel abroad or domestically as per the government's guidelines.<sup>1</sup>

### 3.3.3.2 *Travel costs for research trips and longer meetings*

Actual travel costs for longer research trips, such as fieldwork, is paid according to invoices and transaction lists, in accordance with the guidelines of the government of Iceland: *"Attention is drawn to the fact that the general rule is to pay the cost of domestic travel, e.g., fares, food and accommodation, according to the invoices."*

### 3.3.4 Publishing costs

You can apply for funding to cover costs associated with peer-reviewed publications. Funding amounts are up to ISK 750,000 for project and postdoctoral grants and up to ISK 1,500,000 for excellence grants during the grant period. Please note that publication costs do not apply to doctoral student grants.

### 3.3.5 Purchase of equipment

It is permissible to apply for up to ISK 3,000,000 for the purchase of equipment over the grant period. Purchase of equipment does not apply to Doctoral student and Postdoctoral fellowship grants. A quote from the seller/manufacturer for the equipment purchase must be provided at the time of the contract signing. More expensive equipment can be applied for through the Infrastructure Fund.<sup>2</sup>

Overhead does not apply for equipment purchases.

### 3.3.6 Contracted services

Purchased services include costs for tasks not performed by direct participants, including individuals defined as other participants in the application. Costs for access to research infrastructure, whether domestic or international, fall under purchased services.

The application must detail what the purchased services entail and all associated costs.

A quote for purchased services, including access to research infrastructure, must be provided at the time of contract signing.

Costs for purchased services should generally not exceed 20% of the total Project grant (excluding overhead).

Overhead does not apply to purchased services.

### 3.3.7 Overhead

An additional 25% overhead is added to the awarded grant to fund joint operations and facilities (see Table 2). This includes costs for office and research facilities, such as rent, heating, electricity,

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.stjornarradid.is/verkefni/mannaudsmal-rikisins/kjarasamningar-laun-og-starfskjar/ferdakostnadur/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.rannis.is/sjodir/rannsoknir/innvidasjodur/>

management of operational units, book and journal purchases, and the acquisition and maintenance of computer equipment. Overhead does not apply to equipment purchases or contracted services.

### 3.3.8 Transfer of funds between cost items

Prior approval is required for transfers of more than 10% of the total amount of each grant year (without overhead) between different cost items.

Approval is always required for any changes in the use of funds allocated to doctoral and master's students, as well as postdoctoral researchers. Each request will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

## 4 Application form and supporting documents

### 4.1 Electronic application form

Applications are only accepted through the Rannís electronic application system. An application cannot be submitted unless all mandatory fields are completed.

### 4.2 Disciplines of Expert Panels

Seven Expert panels evaluate applications submitted to the IRF (Table 4). The Board of the IRF appoints up to seven active scientists to each Expert panel. Expert panel members are appointed based on their expertise in the relevant field.

Applicants choose the expert committee they wish their applications to be evaluated by and can additionally mark up to three subcategories as well as keywords. IRF staff, in consultation with the chairpersons of the Expert panels, reserve the right to move applications between Expert panels if there are substantive reasons for doing so.

Expert Panel	Scientific disciplines
<b>Physical sciences and mathematics</b>	Physical science Chemical science Earth science Mathematics
<b>Engineering and technical sciences</b>	Engineering Computer science Technical science
<b>Natural sciences</b>	Biological science Other natural science (except earth science)
<b>Biomedical sciences</b>	Molecular biology Cellular biology General medicine and veterinary medicine
<b>Clinical sciences and public health</b>	Public health Health science Other medical science
<b>Social and educational sciences</b>	Social science Law and economics Educational science Psychology (other than clinical and physiological)
<b>Humanities and arts</b>	Philosophy and religion History and archaeology Arts and design Languages and literature Other humanities

**Table 4.** Disciplines of IRF Expert panels for the grant year 2026.

Applicants may under no circumstances contact the Expert Panel members during the evaluation process. All inquiries shall be directed to IRF staff. If an applicant contacts an Expert panel member regarding an application, the application will immediately be withdrawn from further evaluation.

### 4.3 Project description and Reference list

The project description must be submitted using the fund's template, which is available in the electronic application system. Note that the template may change from year to year, and to ensure

fairness for all applicants, applications that do not use the correct template will be rejected; this also applies if the template is altered. Such rejection can occur at any stage of the evaluation process.

The project description is divided into the following sections, which may not be changed:

- Project objectives, research questions/hypotheses, feasibility, novelty, and impact.
- Present state of knowledge in the field.
- Research plan (time and work plan, methods, milestones, present status of the project, etc.).
- Project management and collaboration.
- Data management and dissemination of results and data in open access.
- Contribution of doctoral and master's students.
- Career development plan (applicable to Startup grants and Postdoctoral fellowship grants).

Before uploading the project description to the application system, the reference list should be separated and saved as a separate document. These two documents should be uploaded separately as PDF files.

The project description includes a cover page and a guidance page. The maximum number of pages varies by grant category; see Table 5. There is no page limit for the reference list.

Grant categorie	Maximum number of pages	
	Project description entered text	Project description Including title page and guidance
Grant of excellence	20	22
Project grant	15	17
Startup grant	15	17
Postdoctoral fellowship grant	12	14
Doctoral student grant	5	7

Tafla 5. Maximum number of pages in the Project description template.

## 4.4 Other supporting documents

Grant categorie	Curriculum vitae	Letter of intent	Doctoral degree certificate	Declaration from host institution	Confirmation of doctoral studies	Letter of recommendation
Grant of excellence	x	x	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Project grant	x	x	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Startup grant	x	x	x	x	N/A	N/A
Postdoctoral fellowship grant	x	x	x	x	N/A	x
Doctoral student grant	(x)	N/A	N/A	N/A	x	x

Table 6. Required supporting documents for grant categories. Brackets (x) mean that a document is optional.

### 4.4.1 Curriculum vitae

The CV should be concise and no longer than two pages. It is possible to refer to a website with a list of publications, such as ORCID. The CV should include information on:

- The applicant's current position
- Education and training
- Supervision of postgraduate students and postdoctoral researchers
- Previous positions and awards
- Up to five articles or book chapters relevant to the project
- Startup grant and Postdoctoral fellowship and Doctoral student grants: Any career interruptions due to parental leave, sick leave, or other reasons should be noted.

#### 4.4.2 Letters of Recommendation

In the fund's electronic application system, applicants for Postdoctoral fellowship and Doctoral student grants must provide the names and email addresses of two experts who are willing to write letters of recommendation and are not participants in the application.

#### 4.4.3 Letter of intent of Other Participants

A signed Letter of intent from individuals listed as "*Other participants*", specifying their involvement in the project, shall accompany the application. The letter shall be no longer than one page.

The Letter of intent must be dated in the application year. Undated collaboration statements and support statements from individuals not directly involved in the project will be removed, and their names will be deleted from the application.

#### 4.4.4 Doctoral degree certificate

A Doctoral degree certificate must be submitted to the IRF no later than December 1<sup>st</sup> after the application deadline if applying for a Postdoctoral Fellowship grant.

#### 4.4.5 Confirmation from the host institution regarding facilities for applicants for Startup or Postdoctoral fellowship grants

A statement from the host institution, signed by an authorized individual, confirming that the applicant will have work and research facilities there during the grant period, if the grant is awarded. This applies to applications for Startup or Postdoctoral fellowship grants. The statement should be no longer than one page.

#### 4.4.6 Confirmation of an approved doctoral project

Applicants for Doctoral student grants must have an approved doctoral project (with or without conditions for funding) at an Icelandic university. A certificate from the postgraduate committee of the relevant department/field, or equivalent, must accompany the application.

## 5 Handling of applications

### 5.1 Rejections of applications

Applications are pre-screened by experts of the Research Fund at Rannís. Incomplete applications and those that do not comply with the fund's rules are rejected without further evaluation, and the applicant is notified.

The main reasons for rejection are as follows (the list is not exhaustive):

- The correct template for the project description is not used.
- The template for the project description has been altered.
- The application is incomplete.
- The application and/or supporting documents are not in English.
- The Project Leader (*PL*) of an application for a Grant of Excellence, Project, Startup, or Postdoctoral fellowship grant has not completed a PhD or equivalent (postdoctoral researchers have until December 1<sup>st</sup> to submit their PhD diploma).
- The applicant for a Doctoral student grant does not have an approved doctoral project at an Icelandic university.
- The Project Leader (*PL*) does not hold a position at the accounting institution of the application, i.e., an Icelandic research institution or legal entity, during the proposed grant period.
- The applicant is a Project Leader (*PL*) or Principal Investigator (*PI*) on more than one application in the same grant category.
- The applicant has contacted an Expert panel member.
- Suspicion of misconduct.

### 5.2 Expert Panel evaluation of applications

Valid applications are evaluated by the relevant Expert Panel, which seeks the opinion of two or more external experts for applications for Grants of Excellence and Project grants. External experts do not review Postdoctoral Fellowship grants and Doctoral Student Grant applications. The Expert Panel processes each application with a reasoned, written review and ranks the applications based on the panels' overall review.

#### 5.2.1 External experts

Applicants can nominate external experts to evaluate their application. Additionally, they may request that specific external experts not be contacted, if they provide a valid reason for this request. Please note that these suggestions are not binding for the Expert Panel.

#### 5.2.2 Evaluation of resubmitted applications

Resubmitted applications are not given priority over other applications are evaluated by the Expert Panel and external reviewers alongside all other submitted applications. For resubmitted applications, it is important to address and specify the previous recommendations and comments provided by the



Expert Panel. If these issues are not satisfactorily addressed, the Expert Panel reserves the right to refer to the previous reviews conducted by both the Expert Panel and external reviewers.

### 5.3 Funding decision

After the Expert panel has concluded its work, the chair of the panel meets with the Board of the IRF to present the committee's findings, the review process, and any issues that arose during the evaluation of applications. The Board makes decisions on funding allocations based on the committee's recommendations. The Board seeks additional advice beyond what the Expert panel provides if necessary. In addition to the professional assessment provided by the Expert panels, the IRF Board bases its deliberations on the general priorities of the Ministerial Committee on Science and Innovation, the fund's allocation policy approved by the Science and Innovation Council, and the fund's financial contributions.

Applications for Grants of Excellence go through a two-step process. The Board meets with the chairs of the Expert panels who present the committee's findings. Subsequently, the Board invites representatives of the top-rated applications (A1), which the committees rank highest in priority, for an interview and then decides on the grant allocation. A limited number of Grants of Excellence are awarded annually.

Once the allocation is finalized, all applicants receive a response letter with the final assessment of the Expert panel. Grant allocations are published on the Rannís website. The Board's decision on grant allocations from the Icelandic Research Fund is final. According to Article 4 of Law No. 3 from 2003, the Board's decisions on grant allocation or rejection are not subject to administrative appeal.

## 6 Grant: contracts, payments, and administration

### 6.1 Contracts

Contracts are made between the Project Leader (*PL*) and Rannís, on behalf of the Icelandic Research Fund. The Project Leader must finalize the contract by April 1<sup>st</sup> of the year the grant is announced. If the contract is not finalized by that time, the grant will be forfeited. Grants are only paid into the bank accounts of Icelandic institutions or legal entities. Obtaining required permits and approvals.

### 6.2 Acquisition of Necessary Permits and approvals

Contracts are not finalized until all necessary permits or opinions are obtained (e.g., from the National Bioethics Committee, Data Protection Authority, MAST, etc.).

The applicant must indicate in the application whether the research project includes elements that need special consideration regarding general ethical guidelines. It is necessary to explain what this entails and how these aspects will be addressed. If a permit application is still in process when the application is submitted, this must be noted in the application.

The applicant must comply with international rules and agreements where applicable, such as those concerning the handling of biological samples and the use of patents.

### 6.3 Distribution of Annual payments

- The first payment (40%) is made upon signing the contract.
- The first payment (40%) is made in September.
- The third payment (20%) is made when the annual report/final report has been approved.

### 6.4 Reports

Annual and final reports must detail all major changes to the project and justify any alterations to the research plan. The financial report must account for incurred expenses related to the project, and a transaction list reflecting the use of the grant must accompany the financial statement.

The fund's staff may request additional information and explanations from grant recipients and consult the relevant Expert panel, if necessary. The final payment for each grant year (20%) is made upon approval of the annual or final report. If the report is not approved, the fund's Board may terminate the contract with the grant recipient and demand repayment of the grant funds. If the grant has not been used in accordance with the application, it must be returned

Templates for annual and final reports can be found on the fund's website: <https://www.rannis.is/sjodir/rannsoknir/rannsoknasjodur/upplysingar-til-styrktheaga/>.

The Project Leader is responsible for submitting annual reports no later than February 1<sup>st</sup> following the end of the grant year, and the final report no later than February 15<sup>th</sup>, more than a year after the final grant year ends. Reports must be accompanied by a transaction list (not applicable to doctoral student grants).

## 7 Publication, open access, dissemination, and data management

### 7.1 Dissemination and publication of results

The results shall be published in a forum that complies with international requirements in the respective field. Grantees are expected to present the project and its results to the public. Target groups and media shall be defined in the application.

### 7.2 Open access to results

According to the Act on Public Support for Scientific Research no. 3/2003 with later amendments, research results funded by public funds shall be published through open access. Researchers who receive funding from the IRF must guarantee that their research findings will be made available by either publishing in open-access journals or open, searchable digital repositories along with publication in a traditional subscription journal. The final peer-reviewed manuscript shall be returned to the repository immediately after the article has been accepted for publication. If the journal requires a waiting period prior to open access, the article shall be made available for public access automatically when the waiting period expires. Please familiarize yourself with the rules of Rannís regarding repositories<sup>3</sup>.

The website [opinvisindi.is](https://opinvisindi.is) provides repositories for Icelandic universities.

The rules on open access currently apply to peer-reviewed articles published in scientific journals, not books or book chapters.

### 7.3 Acknowledging the grant

Grantees shall explicitly acknowledge the IRF grant and grant number in all publications based on the project's results. For example:

„This project/study/work/publication was supported by the Icelandic Research Fund grant no. xxxxxx.“

„Þetta verkefni/rannsókn/útgáfa er unnið með styrk nr. xxxxxx úr Rannsóknasjóði.“

### 7.4 Data Management

In the application it shall be described, as appropriate, how data resulting from the project or collected during the project will be stored and access provided, according to FAIR criteria (findable, accessible, inter-operable and re-usable). Data entails for instance tools, software, or algorithms.

For funded projects, a data management plan shall be submitted, as appropriate, which complies with international standards (i.e. FAIR criteria), the Icelandic, and EU data protection rules (General Data Protection Regulation) and the code of conduct on data management. The Project Leader is responsible for submitting a data management plan to the IRF before June 1st of the grant year. The plan is to be sent to the fund's e-mail address ([rannsoknasjodur@rannis.is](mailto:rannsoknasjodur@rannis.is)) and specify the respective grant number.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://en.rannis.is/activities/open-access/>

## 8 General information

### 8.1 Role of the Icelandic Research Fund

The Icelandic Research Fund (IRF) is an open competitive research fund that operates according to the Act on Public Support for Scientific Research ([no. 3/2003](#)). The role of the Research Fund is to support research and research-based postgraduate studies. To this end, the Fund provides grants to students pursuing research-based postgraduate studies and for defined research projects that promote scientific research in Iceland. Grants are awarded in accordance with the general priorities of the Science and Innovation Policy Council and on the basis of a professional evaluation of the quality of the research projects, the competence of the persons carrying out the research and the resources at their disposal to execute the project.

### 8.2 Board of the Research Fund

The Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation appoints a five-member Board for three years following nominations of the Science and Innovation Policy Council, thereof one member of the Council. The Minister appoints the chairman and vice-chairman of the Board. The names of the Board members are published on the website of the Icelandic Centre for Research (Rannís). The Board issues rules and guidelines for the IRF and makes funding decisions based on the evaluations by Expert Panels.

### 8.3 Ethics for administrator

Members of the IRF Board, members of Expert Panels, external experts, IRF staff and others that administratively handle applications to the IRF are bound by strict confidentiality. Applications, including all enclosed materials and review sheets, are confidential. Confidential information is not to be used for any other purpose than the review process and may not be disclosed, published, or otherwise made available to a third party. No copies of confidential information shall be made available in any format except for review purposes. After completion of the review, a copy of the application and review documents will be stored in the electronic registry of Rannís. IRF Expert Panel members understand and acknowledge that any disclosure or misappropriation of this confidential information may cause the owner irreparable harm. The owner of the confidential information has the right to apply to a court of competent jurisdiction for specific performance and/or an order restraining and enjoining any further disclosure or breach and for such other relief as the owner shall deem appropriate. Such ownership rights are in addition to the remedies otherwise available to registered owners or parties that derive rights from the owner.

### 8.4 Rules regarding conflict of interest

Members of the review committees, board members, and external experts shall be considered disqualified from reviewing a particular application if any of the following circumstances apply:

- General disqualification reasons listed in the Administrative Procedures Act (No. 37/1993).
- Close friendship, family ties, or in-law relationships 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 external expert, Expert panel member or Board member and the applicant.
- Expert panel members cannot participate in an application to the Icelandic Research Fund.
- External experts must not be involved in an application to the Icelandic Research Fund.
- If a Board member is involved in an application, they must recuse themselves from discussions on the allocation for that grant year, and an alternate must be called in.

Review committee members and board members who are disqualified according to the above must leave the meeting when the relevant application is discussed and the funding decision is made. This must be recorded in the meetings minutes. External experts cannot review an application if any of the above circumstances 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 review, the closeness of their 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 in reviewing applications to the Icelandic Research Fund.

## 8.5 Misconduct

Should suspicion of research misconduct, fabrication, falsification, plagiarism, or misappropriation in connection with an application or a funded project arise during the application process, during the funding period, or after the funding period of the project, the relevant party's institution and the IRF Board will be notified, without exception.

Suspicion of research misconduct during the review phase will result in the withdrawal of an application from the review process. At the same time, the Principal Investigator's institution is given an opportunity to investigate. Should allegations of research misconduct be found to be baseless, the application will be reviewed following standard review procedures. If evidence of research misconduct is found, the application will be withdrawn without review, and the applicant's institute will be held responsible for taking appropriate actions.

The IRF Board can initiate an independent investigation into cases of research misconduct.

## 8.6 Information regarding the Icelandic Research Fund

General inquiries regarding the fund and applications that are under evaluation should be directed to the specialists of the Icelandic Research Fund. The email address and website of the fund are [rannsoknasjodur@rannis.is](mailto:rannsoknasjodur@rannis.is) and [rannsoknasjodur.is](http://rannsoknasjodur.is).

## 9 Guidelines for Expert Panels and External Experts

### 9.1 Guidelines for Expert Panels

The role of the IRF Expert Panels is to evaluate applications submitted to the IRF based on the scientific value of the projects, the applicants' qualifications to carry out the project, suitability of the research facilities, and the likelihood of the project resulting in measurable results and gains. The Expert Panels establish a ranking list based on the expert evaluations and finalize each application review with a written report.

#### 9.1.1 Online review system

Each Expert Panel member is given access to the IRF's online rating system where all applications submitted to the panel and relevant accompanying documents and Expert Panel review sheets can be viewed. Expert Panel members must accept a confidentiality statement and declare possible conflict of interest before getting full access to the applications. Expert Panel members do not get access to grant applications where they have declared conflict of interest.

#### 9.1.2 Review process

The applications received by the Expert Panel are divided amongst panel members. Each application is then assigned to three readers, but all panel members are encouraged to review all applications assigned to their respective Expert Panels. The first reader (editor) is responsible for finding external experts to assess the application, at least two experts for Project Grant and Startup Grant applications, and three experts for applications of Grants of Excellence. External experts shall be professionally active outside of Iceland. The selection of external experts is based on the relevant scientist's area of expertise and scientific merits according to professional websites and citation databases. The first reader must make sure that there is no conflict of interest between external experts and applicants. External experts must then confirm that there is no conflict of interest.

The external experts that agree to review an application are given access to a web portal with all necessary information regarding the assessment process. External review involves an in-depth reading of applications. When external experts have submitted their evaluation and readers on the Expert Panel have drafted their reviews, the Expert Panel meets at the premises of Rannís to discuss all applications and deliberate on rankings.

#### 9.1.3 Expert Panel meetings

##### **Before Expert Panel meetings**

For each application three readers from the Expert Panel write an evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the applications. The first reader (the editor) drafts a panel evaluation based on the submitted external reviews and the evaluations from the second and third readers.

##### **At Expert Panel meetings**

During the Expert Panel meetings, the editors present their respective applications, briefly introduce the background of the external experts, present the external experts' reports, and finally offer their own assessment of the respective applications. The second and third reader then provide their comments and the whole panel discusses the review. Based on the panel's discussion, the editor

prepares a final conclusion, which should be constructive and written so that the applicants benefit from it. After discussing all applications, each Expert Panel establishes a ranking list of applications based on the final grades given by the panel. The grades given by the Expert Panel are explained in Table 8.

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

Table 7. Grades of Expert Panel

Expert Panel members who have declared conflicts of interest regarding an application shall leave the meeting when the relevant application is discussed, and this shall be documented in the meeting minutes by the IRF staff assigned to the panel.

A separate ranking list for each grant type is prepared, and applications are ranked into three categories: A (A1-A3), B and C. Sub-category A1 is reserved for top applications only.

### After Expert Panel meetings

The chair of the Expert Panel confirms the final assessment of the Expert Panel in the online rating system of Rannís.

External reviews received after the Expert Panel meetings and before the final IRF Board meeting are discussed by the panel members online, and the final grade is confirmed or altered based on the outcome of those discussions.

## 9.2 Guidelines for External Experts

### 9.2.1 General information

Project Grant and Startup Grant applications are generally reviewed by two external experts. Grants of Excellence are evaluated by at least three external experts. In the Expert Panel, applications are discussed, taking into consideration the external expert evaluations, graded and ranked. The ranking list is presented to the IRF Board for a final decision on allocations.

No fee is paid for the work of external experts.

### 9.2.2 Conflict of interest

External experts are responsible for identifying any circumstances which constitute conflicts of interest for them when it comes to reviewing IRF applications. External experts must confirm that there is no conflict of interest prior to being granted access to the application.

### 9.2.3 External Expert review evaluation criteria and summary

#### Review criteria

This part contains the criteria to be evaluated. It is important that any criticism is well founded and the review constructive. The following should be kept in mind when assessing applications:

1. Originality and impact
2. Scientific quality, feasibility and project management
3. Project leader, principal investigator and co-proposers

Grade	Review
<b>5 Excellent</b>	Outstanding application with essentially no weaknesses
<b>4 Very good</b>	Very strong application with negligible weaknesses
<b>3 Good</b>	Strong application with minor weaknesses
<b>2 Moderate</b>	Application with one or more limiting weaknesses
<b>1 Poor</b>	Application with major weaknesses or not eligible for the fund

**Table 8.** Strength categories for External Experts

## Summary

A summary of strength and weaknesses.

## Submit

In this section, external experts can access an overview of the review for confirmation. Upon confirmation, the review is stored in the database of Rannís and becomes accessible to Expert Panel members.