

The research council is now called Independent Research Fund Denmark | Social Sciences (IRDF | Social Sciences) in English and DFF | Samfund og Erhverv (FSE) in Danish

Before beginning your application, please read the calls for proposals very thoroughly

https://ufm.dk/en/research-and-innovation/councils-and-commissions/independent-research-fund-Denmark/calls?set_language=en&cl=en

Research funds are public monies and the granters are the fund managers. The granters are looking to be convinced of the credibility and feasibility of your project design and the rate of return it will give them. They will especially consider the following aspects:

- scientific merit - *is this high quality, cutting-edge research?*
- the societal relevance - *does this research tackle an important societal problem?*
- the organizational aspects - *are you and your team the experts in this field?*
- the suitability of the environments involved - *is the main applicant's and their research partners' departments the best place to carry out this kind of work?*
- the output or deliverables - *which papers will be written and which journals are targeted?*
- the feasibility of the research plan - *how and when will the research be carried out? Will you actually be able to deliver what you promise?*
- the economic viability - *is the budget reasonable and realistic?*

Try to be as convincing as possible to the granters by clearly documenting each of the above in your project description. Below, we list some typical mistakes that occur when applying for grants to the FSE:

ELIGIBILITY – A common mistake is applying for a type of grant that one is not eligible for. For instance, applying for a research project 1 or 2 before having finished 3 years of post doc/assistant professorship at the time of application; applying for a DFF-International Postdoc when one is more than 6 months away from finishing one's PhD or more than 3 years after completing one's PhD at the time of application; applying to fund a post-doc researcher in a research project application who is more than 4 years beyond their PhD completion; applying for Sapere Aude: DFF-Starting Grant when one is more than 8 years beyond PhD completion.

Or, it could be that the project does not fit in the council's area of expertise (e.g. it should be sent to some other council such as the Science, Technology or Health).

Note: the applicant does not have to be a Danish citizen or even affiliated to a Danish institution to apply to DFF, as long as the project benefits Danish research in some (very broad) sense.

LENGTH – The proposal text is longer than what is allowed:

DFF-International Postdoctoral grant, DFF-Research Project 1: max 5 A4-pages
excluding references

DFF-Research Project 2, Sapere Aude: DFF-Starting Grant: max 7 A4-pages
excluding references

You must submit your application via the e-grant system at www.e-grant.dk using the IRFD Project Description Template all the required appendices. Figures and Tables can be included but within the page limit above in each case. You must use Times New Roman, 12 point font size, 1.5 line spacing and with a right, left, top and bottom margin of at least 2 cm. The Project Description Template is formatted accordingly. In the “Confirmation” section of the application form, you must confirm that your project description observes the permitted maximum length, before you can submit your application. Note that FSE will disregard any portions of the project description that exceed the permitted maximum length.

CONTENTS – The application does not contain the required parts, i.e. a project description following the guidelines listed in the call for proposals, and a CV and list of publications for each named scientific participant in the project. Post-docs integrated in research projects should preferably be named. If unnamed, it should at least be described how they are going to be recruited. It is generally more acceptable for large grants and Sapere Aude to have unnamed junior positions. Applicants have to document their expertise, but a great CV alone is not going to get you the grant. Some applications read like this “We are top researchers within our field with good international collaborators. Give us the money and you can be sure we will do the research.” They are not funded. Most weight is given to a good project description.

STYLE – The project description is written for mainly specialists within one’s own sub-field, for example, it contains many equations that are not adequately described in words. No effort is made to situate the topic more broadly in the social sciences. The project description should be written in a way that sociologists, anthropologists, political scientists etc. can follow the reasoning and the methodologies proposed. The project description must include a literature review at the time of application. Note, you cannot apply for funding to hire an RA to do your literature review for you!

THEORY – Many applications from Economics and Business fail to adequately describe the underlying theory. This is especially true for applications originating from the more applied sub-fields. Even though the work being proposed is largely empirical in nature, it is necessary to name and describe well-established theories (with key references to seminal papers in your field plus a few from the other social sciences) that underlie the empirical relationships that will be tested, and to make clear what the hypotheses are for each research question proposed, the direction of the relationships and address issues of causality.

METHODS -At the same time, many applications also lack a clear, step-by-step description of the methodology. Some reference is made to use of causal econometric methods or advanced panel data methods, for instance. However, the level of detail the granters would like to see is a fully-specified (in words) empirical model. They would also like to have some idea of the relevance and validity of the empirical strategy. This could be given based on analytical reasoning or on evidence from other studies, or even a first stage attempted on a reduced dataset. A description of the data source, observation period, key variables and how they will be used in the study etc. is highly necessary. A description of which questions are being asked in a survey or how the specified experiment is supposed to lead to answers to the posed research questions is advised. A qualified reader should be able to imagine how the project will be carried out.

SYNERGIES – Particularly relevant for Research project 2 and Sapere Aude: DFF-Starting Grant is how the different parts of the project fit together. The application should appear as a focused, close-knit set of questions which involve progression and learning (synergies), rather than stand-alone parts which have been contributed by different researchers depending on their independent research interests. Some ways to link parts together is if they all make use of the same data or all explore variants of the same question; Or, if the phases of the project are interlinked with the results of one part designed to give important input into the next part etc. However, at the same time it should be clearly specified which parts of the project juniors are responsible for.

BUDGET – the amount does not respect the upper or lower limits that apply to the instrument in question. Also, the amount asked for does not match the level of activities. Asking for 100% buyout for oneself for 4 years is unrealistic. Also, purchase of computers or other equipment would rarely be granted and have to be justified as being necessary to carry out the work in the project. Allotting time buyouts to top researchers in the field in your project is also unrealistic unless they really are going to contribute to your project. For research project 2 and Sapere Aude: DFF-Starting Grant applications: including only senior

people is rarely a good idea, there should be some possibility for educational upgrading and learning in the project, i.e. including post-doc or phd scholarships.

TIME – applicants do not give themselves enough time when finally uploading the application. Besides uploading the project description and appendices, there is a lot of information that needs to be filled out on the application template via the e-application system. This includes writing the summary, the popularized description of the scientific content (please note this should be written as far as possible in Danish. Please ask for help from a native speaker if needed), indicating scientific keywords, main areas of science, suggesting potential reviewer names (including email addresses), budget particulars etc. Fill out and save as much of this as possible before-hand, so you are not trying to do this in the last few seconds before the submission deadline!

.....& finally, good luck with your application! ☺