

Invitation to Apply to ESA Phi-Lab Norway

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Thank you for your interest in ESA Phi-Lab Norway.

Space-based studies and technology developments bring benefits to Earth in the form of services and top-class science. This makes the space industrial sector of high strategic and economic value. At the same time leading edge research brings benefit to space, and indeed to Earth and society with disruptive innovation.

As part of the Phi-Lab NET, one of the Components of the Innovate Element in the ScaleUp Programme, ESA is rolling out a dynamic network of Phi-Labs in ESA Member States.

Phi-Labs do bridge the gap between early-stage research and commercialisation. They ensure that the research is not just innovative but closely serve ESA or industry needs. Phi-Labs are geared for supporting the maturation of technologies that enable commercial applications. The focus is given to technologies with the potential to disrupt existing markets or even create new markets. The support provided is intended to boost the delivery of innovation, thereby reducing the time to market. Beyond the creation of new technical capabilities, the activity shall output an assessment of the market disruption potential and a roadmap to commercialisation.

In Norway, Kongsberg Satellite Services is responsible for managing the ESA Arctic Phi-Lab Norway, together with NORCE, UiT – Arctic University of Tromsø, Akvaplan-niva and Norinnova as partners.

ESA Phi-Lab Norway offers a comprehensive package of support to research teams selected, including access to and use of Phi-Lab laboratories, equipment, workspace, innovation seed funding, technical support, business coaching, and legal/IPR advice. The focus of ESA Phi-Lab Norway is focused on using space assets and information to develop cutting edge technologies, products and solutions that have an Arctic relevance and a potential global market.

ESA Phi-Lab Norway hereby invites you to submit your application to enter the Phi-Lab Norway programme. All research activity proposals shall be rooted in novel research, as well as targeted and shaped for potential commercial applications. The technical elements to be matured as part of the proposed activities are expected to have a TRL between 2 and 6.

This document provides an introduction to the application and evaluation process and contains references to the templates that should be used when applying.

Please contact ESA Phi-Lab Norway for any further questions.

Yours sincerely,
Trude Nilsen
Managing Director
ESA Phi-Lab Norway

Introduction

The purpose of this Open Call for ESA Phi-Lab Norway is to inform about the opportunity for research projects to become supported by ESA Phi-Lab Norway and to provide the material and guidance needed to apply for support.

Selection and evaluation of applications are scheduled periodically, see www.arcticphilab.no for details.

The Call is open from 14.08.2025 00:00 until 01.12.2025 at 13:00 CET.

Research Focus at ESA Phi-Lab Norway

ESA Phi-Lab Norway aims to foster innovative research and development in the field of space technology, with a particular emphasis on projects that can enhance decision-making processes through improved data processing and geospatial awareness. The lab supports projects that leverage satellite data to address specific challenges in various sectors, such as maritime, environmental monitoring, oil and gas, shipping, fisheries, aquaculture, wind farming and security.

Focusing mainly on downstream applications using Earth observation data, the Arctic Phi-Lab seeks projects leveraging satellite data and analytics to address challenges relevant to the Arctic. By advancing tools for gathering and interpreting space-based information, the lab transforms research into services that benefit industry, government, and society, bridging space technology with real-world impact.

The focus is on developing solutions that can be commercialized and have a tangible impact on industries and society. Projects should demonstrate a clear connection to space technology and its applications, and include a commercial partner to ensure successful market implementation

The projects or companies shall have a clear relevance in Arctic needs or an Arctic presence.

Who can apply?

The research project proposal must be submitted by (a team part of) a legal entity or a consortium of legal entities. The team applying shall have the skills necessary to achieve the proposed activity, including insight in the industrial and market ecosystem that the technology will impact. The entities composing the Phi-Lab consortium are allowed to be part of the applying consortium (yet not as prime contractor). The Phi-Lab compositing entities can receive (collectively) up to 25% of the ESA Innovation Seed funding.

The proposed research shall enable market disruptive application(s), with potential high socio-economic impact; it must include a clear plan of research activities, with defined roles for scientific or technical contributors. The proposed work shall be based on solid research-driven evidence of its feasibility. The proposal shall also outline a credible road to commercialisation for the applications that the technology (to be matured by the research project) enables and make a preliminary assessment of potential market disruption.

The idea shall have a valid space connection. This is:

- The exploitation of space technology, use of knowledge from the space domain, or utilisation of space systems and space-based services in non-space domains (spin-off),
- Or the provision of products or services for the space sector, addressing any part of the space value chain (from components to entirely new space systems or related facilities and services) and any related activity (from concept definition to operation), possibly using non-space technology (spin-in).

Some further criteria apply:

- the project shall be relevant for the specific focus of competence of the Phi-Lab and the specific topics as defined in the previous Section;
- the project shall be focused on maturing (a) technology(ies), through a research led process, towards the performance levels required by the target application(s).
- the applicants must fulfil all the requirements below:
 - To be part of a legal entity established in an ESA Member State, Associate Member of European Cooperating State (specify Country), and can demonstrate that the research activity can deliver a benefit to the Phi-Lab, which is of particular importance for applicants that are part of a legal entity established in a State different from the one of the Phi-Lab.
 - To observe the remaining requirements stated in this document;
 - When acting in collaboration with other national or foreign entities, the applicant will be the sole contractor and will be fully responsible for managing the funding.
 - To declare that the work proposed under the submitted ESA Phi-Lab project is not being funded through other means (e.g. ESA R&D activities, ESA Business Incubation, ESA Business Applications, European Commission etc).
- The Phi-Lab composing entities may be part of up to 2 applications per call (as sub-contractor)
- An Economic Operator may be part of maximum 2 applications per call, and may be the prime contractor of only one application.

How to apply

Please make sure you have received the following documents, which are part of the Open Call documentation:

- Cover Letter including Requirement Checklists
- ESA Phi-Lab Research Proposal:
 - Executive Summary
 - R&D and Potential Impact Proposal
 - Activity and Management Proposal
- Draft Research Contract including Draft Service Agreement

Make sure to fill in all required sections in the application templates and pay particular attention to the following:

- Instructions inside the documents ([highlighted in blue in each template](#)) shall be followed in order to fulfil all pre-conditions of the Open Call and for the application to be accepted.
- Please read the Draft Contract carefully. The Cover Letter must include a clear, explicit and unambiguous statement declaring that the applicant has read, understood and accepted the terms and conditions contained in the contractual documentation (this is part of the Cover Letter template). Modifications or amendments to the Contract may only be done in exceptional cases. Please contact the local ESA Phi-Lab Norway Manager for guidance.
- Make sure the Cover Letter and the Requirement Checklists are signed by a representative of the legal entity that will sign the contract.
- Support in ESA Phi-Lab Norway may be requested for a maximum of 24 months.

Please submit the application documents in electronic form (pdf, maximum three files, one for each required document) to the following e-mail address: application@arcticphilab.no with subject "ESA Phi-Lab Norway Open Call".

Any questions related to submission of proposals should be sent to the same e-mail address: application@arcticphilab.no.

Budget and additional benefits

The total budget allocated for the implementation of the Call is 500 000 Euro.

The Innovation Seed Funds per selected project is from a minimum of 200.000 Euro to a maximum of 500 000 Euro.

This amount shall represent a percentage ranging from 50% to 100% of the total allowable cost of the activity, subject to compliance with the following provisions:

- Work carried out by SMEs may be funded up to a maximum level of up to 80% of the total allowable cost of the activity
- Work carried out by universities and research institutions involved as subcontractors in a consortium and justifying no further commercial interest in the product or service may be funded to a maximum level of 100% if this funding does not exceed 30% of the total allowable cost of the activity; Should work need to be (sub)contracted for more than 30% of the total eligible costs, such additional share shall be co-funded up to a maximum of 50% of the total eligible costs; Universities and research institutions claiming to have any commercial interest in the future exploitation of the final product or service shall be required to demonstrate this interest. In such a case, the funding level for SME or non-SME shall apply.
- Work carried out by economic operators that are not SMEs nor universities and research institutions may be funded up to a maximum level of 50% of the total allowable cost of the activity.

In addition to the budget made available for the research activity, the Phi-Lab will contribute with the following elements:

- Research mentoring and technical advisory
- Business and IP coaching / advisory
- Access to technical facilities at favourable conditions [details and conditions to be customized]
- Access to background IP
- Workplace and network

Additional cooperation in the R&D may be negotiated between the bidder and the ESA Phi-Lab.

Eligible costs

In order to be eligible, all project costs must be:

- Necessary to the execution of the project;
- Incurred by the beneficiary and recorded in its accounts;
- Incurred during the contract term;
- Indicated in the cost planning in the proposal;
- Without VAT, interest owned, or duties.

Expenses incurred in the preparation and dispatch of the proposal will not be reimbursed.

The project may consider the following direct costs:

- a. Staff costs;
- b. Subcontracting costs;
- c. Access to data sources or intellectual property;
- d. Materials, equipment, and facilities;
- e. Travelling, subsistence, and accommodation costs

The following costs incurred are eligible:

- Train and plane costs in Economy Class, up to 700 Euro travelling in Europe and up to 1600 Euro travelling outside Europe;
- Taxi costs;
- Car rental and/or car mileage;
- Accommodation up to 250 Euro per person per night;
- Subsistence costs up to 100 Euro per person per day.

Information regarding all Travelling, Subsistence and Accommodation costs must be provided in the Mid-Term (where applicable) and Final Reports, and shall include the objectives of the occasion (event, meeting, etc.), contacts made and results.

- Business development and promotion (data sheets, flyers, trade shows etc.). Attendance to trade shows (or similar) should be agreed in advance with the local ESA Phi-Lab Manager.
- Other – costs not included in the above categories but deemed critical to the execution of the project should be agreed in advance with the local ESA Phi-Lab Manager.

The evaluation procedure

The evaluation of all received applications is managed locally by ESA Phi-Lab Norway and follows common ESA Phi-Lab procedures.

Once a published submission deadline has passed, ESA Phi-Lab Norway first assesses the formal aspects of applications received before the submission deadline. If a formal non-compliance of formal nature is found, the applicant may be asked to address this in an updated proposal within 48 hours. If the proposal is found non-admissible, the applicant will be informed, and the reason will be explained. In such a case an applicant is eligible to submit a revised proposal at a later date.

If the application is compliant with the formal requirements, applicants will be invited to hold a presentation to the ESA Phi-Lab Norway evaluation board. The evaluation will typically take place a few weeks after the submission deadline. The evaluation board consists of representatives of ESA Phi-Lab Norway, ESA, Norwegian Space Agency, one representative from each of the consortium partners and other experts. There will also be an opportunity for the evaluation board to ask questions to the applicant.

The application and the presentation will be marked against the criteria in

Criteria	Sub criteria
Background and Experience (25%)	a) Experience Team composition b) Partnerships and Support Entities c) Vision
Research and Technology developments (30%)	a) Relevance for the Call b) Suitability of technology for targeted application

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> c) Understanding of and leveraging on the State of the Art (SoA), novelty of the proposed research d) Depth and significance of technical innovation e) Maturity of the technology and feasibility for target application(s) f) Clarity and relevance of the research objectives
Commercial Opportunities and Potential Socio Economic Impact (25%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Potential applications, problems addressed and target markets b) Hurdles, risks and roadmap to commercialisation c) Potential for market disruption, industrial transformation and socio-economic impact d) IPR strategy
Activity and Management proposal (20%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Clarity and relevance of work to achieve objectives b) Feasibility: Access to facility and data / Availability of personnel. c) Milestones /Cost-planning / Work break-down d) Approach to align the R&D with the market needs e) Management of the activity f) Fit with the Phi-Lab g) No double funding

Table 1, taking weighting factors into account.

Criteria	Sub criteria
Background and Experience (25%)	a) Experience Team composition b) Partnerships and Support Entities c) Vision
Research and Technology developments (30%)	g) Relevance for the Call h) Suitability of technology for targeted application i) Understanding of and leveraging on the State of the Art (SoA), novelty of the proposed research j) Depth and significance of technical innovation k) Maturity of the technology and feasibility for target application(s) l) Clarity and relevance of the research objectives
Commercial Opportunities and Potential Socio Economic Impact (25%)	e) Potential applications, problems addressed and target markets f) Hurdles, risks and roadmap to commercialisation g) Potential for market disruption, industrial transformation and socio-economic impact h) IPR strategy
Activity and Management proposal (20%)	h) Clarity and relevance of work to achieve objectives i) Feasibility: Access to facility and data / Availability of personnel. j) Milestones /Cost-planning / Work break-down k) Approach to align the R&D with the market needs l) Management of the activity m) Fit with the Phi-Lab n) No double funding

Table 1: ESA Phi-Lab evaluation criteria and weighting factors

Proposals with a score below 40 (out of 100) for any one of the 4 evaluation criteria will be disqualified.

All applicants will be notified in writing about the outcome of the evaluation. The applicant may require, within 10 calendar days from the receipt of the notification, an oral debriefing explaining the reason why the application was successful or not.

ESA Phi-Lab Norway will enter into contract negotiations the best applications with an overall score of 60 and above within the limits of the available budget. ESA Phi-Lab Norway has the right *not* to place a contract if, after three months after the notification to a successful applicant, no contract still has been signed, and this is because of a reason for which the applicant can be held accountable.

Furthermore, we kindly ask you to pay attention to the following:

- Please note that applications will be treated as confidential. However, the applicant's idea may through this application fall into the public domain (e.g. if local laws require so). Therefore, we strongly recommend that the applicant discusses the protection of his/her idea with a dedicated expert in this field prior to application, and – if relevant – takes appropriate steps to protect the idea (e.g. by applying for a patent).
- As far as allowed by law, any title held by the applicant to his/her idea shall remain vested in him/her. An application to ESA Phi-Lab Norway will not result in the acquisition of any title whatsoever to the idea. *However, ESA retains a right to use the Intellectual Property in specific cases. Please read the detailed conditions described under the section "Use of Intellectual Property Rights" in the Draft Contract.*
- No expenses incurred in either stage of the application procedure will be reimbursed to the applicant by ESA Phi-Lab Norway, ESA and/or any third party.
- This Open Call does not impose any obligation upon ESA Phi-Lab Norway to enter into negotiations with any applicant.