

## **“Idea pipeline” for potential large-scale research funding by private foundations**

### **Departmental Research Committees as point of entry to the “idea pipeline”**

At AU Natural Sciences (Nat), the departments play an important role in generating ideas for larger research centres. A selection of these ideas will be put forward by the faculty leadership, including the Dean, in their interactions with private foundations, both Danish and international. As a lead in this “pipeline process”, [Nat’s Research and Business Committee](#) invites the departmental Research Committees to suggest collaborative research endeavours that may have the potential to attract large-scale funding by private foundations, outside the foundations’ open calls, and typically of a strategic and/or mission-oriented nature that addresses a significant societal need or opportunity. With this process we wish to ensure a broad scope and coverage of ideas brought to the attention of the faculty leadership.

The departmental Research Committees are advised to plan for ideations and inputs twice a year (see timeline below). Researchers, incl. research consortia like interdisciplinary networks or centres, are encouraged and expected to put their ideas forward via their departmental Research Committees (contact data to be found on the respective committee’s website, or via the department secretariat). All ideas will be handled confidentially by the committees involved during all steps of the process.

As a rule of thumb, ideas to be put forward by the faculty leadership outside the foundations’ open calls should motivate the allocation in the order of 100 Mio. DKK or more (like, e.g., for the topic of a new NNFs challenge call). However, ideas from the departmental research committees can be of a smaller scope, since Nat’s research and business committee may also assist in maturing and merging ideas from different departments into a bigger program (see below).

### **Overview and timeline for the “idea pipeline process”**

<b>Who</b>	<b>What</b>	<b>When</b>
1. Departmental Research Committees	Discuss ideas and endorse suggestions to be put forward to Nat’s Research and Business Committee	Prior to relevant meetings in Nat’s Research and Business Committee (see below)
2. Nat Research and Business Committee	Discuss suggestions and provide feedback to researchers involved. Funnel ideas with strongest potential to Faculty Management Team.	1 <sup>st</sup> meeting each calendar year and 1 <sup>st</sup> meeting after the summer break (usually late January and late August)
3. Nat Faculty Management Team	Discuss new suggestions presented by Nat’s Research and Business Committee. Receive a “pipeline status update” on previously discussed suggestions.	About a month after the respective meeting in Nat’s Research and Business Committee (usually March or September, respectively)
4. Dean and Vice Dean for Research	Advise researchers and head(s) of department involved on how to proceed	After discussion by Faculty Management Team

### **Information to be compiled prior to discussion in Nat’s Research and Business Committee**

Suggestions to be discussed by Nat’s Research and Business Committee are to be sent to [vicedean.research@nat.au.dk](mailto:vicedean.research@nat.au.dk) no later than two weeks before the relevant meeting (first meeting in the calendar year and first meeting after the summer break, see meeting dates published at the committee’s [website](#). Suggestions must be presented concisely (max. 2 pages) and contain the following information:

- *Title/topic/subject*
- *Names and departments of Nat researchers involved (contact person and core PIs)*
- *Potential partners at AU or externally*
- *Name of private foundation(s) to be targeted*

- *Abstract of the suggested activities, strategic nature, and expected impact*
- *Suggestions for new expertise to be recruited/developed*
- *Potential profile of a director*
- *Envisioned funding volume and period*
- *Alignment of suggested activities with the strategy of the foundation(s)*
- *Arguments for timeliness, urgency, and feasibility*

### **Processing in Nat' Research and Business Committee and Faculty Management Team**

Twice a year, Nat's Research and Business Committee will discuss suggestions endorsed by at least one department Research Committee, with the purpose of developing, maturing and potentially merging ideas that may resonate with the strategies of private foundations. The main purpose of the discussion in Nat's Research and Business Committee is to provide informal sparring and feedback with respect to feasibility, strategic alignment with the respective foundation(s), and potential for improvement and development, potentially in combination with other suggested initiatives. Nat's Research and Business Committee's feedback will be communicated by the Vice Dean of Research directly to the researchers putting forward the idea. The discussion on the committee will also include ideas developed or communicated by the Dean's Office.

The discussion by Nat's Research and Business Committee will be scheduled for their first meeting in each calendar year (usually late January/early February) and their first meeting after the summer break (usually late August). Meeting dates can be found on the committee's [website](#). Ideas to be discussed must be presented to Nat's Research and Business Committee in a short, template-based form (see above), based on prior discussions and endorsement by at least one of the departmental Research Committees.

Nat's Research and Business Committee will nominate particularly strong ideas with potential for funding in the relevant order of magnitude (100 Mio. DKK or more, see above) to the Dean's Office and Faculty Management Team. The presentation by Nat's Research and Business Committee, together with an update on ongoing initiatives, will be scheduled for a Faculty Management Meeting about a month after the respective meeting in Nat's Research and Business Committee (i.e. usually in September and March each year). Based on the discussion of new ideas in the Faculty Management Team, the Dean and Vice Dean for Research will advise the involved researchers and head(s) of department on how to proceed with their given new idea. This may, among other options, include a more in-depth presentation of the idea to the Faculty Management Team by the involved scientists themselves, the production of a "pitching" document to be used in connections with informal meeting between the Dean and the respective foundation, or the submission of an unsolicited proposal to the respective foundation(s).

Once admitted to the pipeline, ideas will be revisited twice every year to monitor the progress of the respective initiative. This includes rounding off initiatives, which no longer seem promising due to e.g. discouraging feedback from the relevant foundation(s), or lack of continued relevance. The respective researchers will be notified of this decision. On the long run, the Faculty Management Team and Dean's Office will strive for a "steady state" of activity with a turn-over of proposals at same pace as new ideas enter.

Questions concerning the process in Nat' Research and Business Committee and Faculty Management Team can be addressed to [vicedean.research@nat.au.dk](mailto:vicedean.research@nat.au.dk). The process will be evaluated by Nat's Research and Business Committee and Faculty Management Team after the first three rounds have been completed, i.e. in the beginning of 2027.