

Reflections on prioritized areas.

Based on discussion note from the NKS Chair to the NKS Board on 15 Feb. 2018.

Background:

One of the issues discussed at the January meeting of the NKS board regarding the future direction of NKS was that of prioritized areas and more considerations of strategic guidelines for projects to be selected for funding.

From the draft minutes of the January meeting there is the following outcome of the discussion.

Conclusions: *The discussion reflected different views in the Board and that "prioritized areas" are implicit in our evaluation i.e. relevance for end users and mean ranking as well in final ranking. PC's, in consultation with the Chair, to develop a discussion paper taking into account the discussion at the board meeting. Draft paper to be circulated to board for comments in good time before June meeting.*

In the e-mail of 15 February the following was offered for the Board's consideration:

1. The question is if it is advantageous for NKS to narrow the scope of CfP and only accept applications in some pre-determined areas of work (prioritized areas) or to give applications in some pre-determined areas of work higher priority than applications in other areas covered by NKS. The prioritized areas could change from one CfP to the next as decided by the NKS board. The conclusion of such a change would be that the research area was considered to be more important than the other present NKS criteria, e.g. technical standards, measurable goals or young scientists.
2. In the past there have been some rather loose guidelines for potential applicants in the framework documents, for instance on the B side mentioning the importance of learning and compiling new data from the Fukushima accident for the Nordic preparedness. This was intended as guiding examples of where application focus could be beneficial, thus increasing inspiration for new ideas, rather than setting limitations for what applications are accepted.
3. There is need a consensus among the NKS owners on which research areas are most important to focus on in order to change (narrow) the scope of CfP. The process to identify these areas is not straight forward and requires a good overview of not just what is in the immediate interest of the NKS owners and "tillægsfinanserere " but also a careful consideration of long-term strategy for the (strategic) research needed. The process of obtaining consensus may even be more difficult given the very different marks the same application is given by different end-users i.e. regulators and industry. This can be clearly seen in the evaluation of the last CfP.
4. Narrowing the scope of CfP would probably give fewer (and not necessarily more useful or better) activity proposals for the NKS board to choose between. It is probable that NKS would need to compromise on quality and fund projects that would not be funded if the number of applications was higher. The number of proposals NKS receives through the CfP has been satisfactory in most years. The applicants have a fair chance of receiving funding, up to 50 %, which is quite high. The broad scope of CfP as is now has not been a problem in terms of number of proposals received or funding requested versus available funding.

5. The CfP's have been open to a broad range of applications that fall within the NKS scope of activities. In the present evaluation process there are clear criteria (priorities) according to which the applications for funding are evaluated. Through this process, in particular through the criteria "relevance for end-users" as well as in the overall mark, ranking and funding recommendations "end ? users" (evaluators) priorities (" prioritized areas ") are reflected. This can be clearly seen by looking at the evaluation of the last CfP. Thus one can say that the prioritized areas is addressed in the present process but not in a formal way.

In conclusion it is not clear to me at all if it would be advantageous for NKS to narrow the scope of CfP's with focus on pre-determined areas of work. I look forward to your views and input before the end of February.

Comments on discussion note from the NKS Board:

21.1.2018 Ole H

Dear all,

Thanks to the chairman for sharing some thoughts with the Board. I understand the possible negative consequences of narrowing the CfP too much. However, it has happened before that we have **given signals regarding on which topics we especially welcome proposals** (e.g. decom and waste).

I think it is worthwhile every May/June Board meeting to spend some (more) time discussing and possibly adjusting the CfP-framework on R and B. Having read, again, the B-framework, an observation is that it covers all aspects of EPR. Based on an analyses of recent years profile of the funded program, it could be reached a consensus within the Board on which parts of the B-framework where we really wish to see proposals.

Best regards Ole

21. feb – SMM

Dear Ole

Many thanks for your input. It may well be that the Framework is too broad but the consequences of any change needs to be carefully assessed before implementation. A text in the CfP clearly saying that NKS welcomes in particular proposals addressing Or similar could work. The proposal to discuss and possibly adjust the CfP-framework on R and B at the May/June meeting is good.

Looking forward to input from other members of the NKS board.

Best regards, Sigurður

26. Feb Anneli H

Dear all,

with a special thanks to the chairman for inviting us to have all to comment on the draft discussion paper already now. As far as I can see, the draft will provide an excellent basis for our discussions in June.

Kind regards Anneli

26. Feb SMM

Dear Anneli

Many thanks. I share your view that the draft is a good basis for the discussion to take place at the June meeting.

Best regards, Sigurður

30. Feb Jorma to SMM

Dear Colleagues,

As February 30 is now, I know what you others have been writing, but my honest opinion is, that we should not start to prioritize CfP more than is done with the normal development in the research, ie. that everyone is now talking of decommissioning etc. And I would use "thought number 4" to back my opinion. And because I am not even an evaluator I can testify that our system is most probably bring nice fruits.

Best regards, Jorma

3. March Carsten to SMM

Dear Board Members,

Sorry for my late reply to this - hope that my views can still be considered.

I agree that priority should always be given to projects of the highest quality. The consequences of having a too narrow scoop for applications could be fewer applications and, as Sigurdur mentions, a risk that we will not be able to identify projects of high enough qualities within a prioritized area.

The number of applications to NKS is, as it is now, acceptable - but not overwhelming. Narrowing the scope of CfP could bring down the number of applications to a level where it would be difficult to justify the amount of funding and effort that is put into the NKS organisation.

Having said that - noting wrong with signalling to potential applicants, if certain research areas are of particular high interest for NKS (Fukushima, decommissioning, etc). However, there should not be any amount of funding sat aside for prioritized areas, as funding should always follow the best projects.

As for the B-program, the present description of funded activities pretty much covers all aspect of EPR and, as far as I am concerned, it could be expanded with fx. decommissioning and waste. Then that would not be to narrow the scope, but to expand it.

I am looking forward to discuss this further at the upcoming NKS meeting in Copenhagen.

Best Regards, Carsten

5. March Tarja

Hi all,

I agree with Carsten.

With best regards, Tarja

5. March SMM to the NKS Board.

Dear Carsten, dear all

Many thanks for your reflections. It seems that there is good agreement with the way forward.

The reflections of 15. February will serve as "discussion paper" for the discussion to take place at the June board meeting.

Best regards, Sigurður

14/5 2018:

Conclusion:

Comments from the NKS board indicate broad support for the conclusions of the discussion note and that the note is a good starting point for the discussion to take place at the NKS board meeting in June. There are suggestions that NKS could give signals regarding on which topics NKS especially welcomes proposals (e.g. decom and waste) and that it is worthwhile every May/June Board meeting to discuss and possibly adjust the CfP framework on R&B.

14.5.2018

SMM