

# Policy 4 Science

## Information File

Call for proposals 2024 -2025

Princess Elisabeth Station Antarctica

[updated 04/11/2024]

Submission deadlines

02/12/2024 @ 14h00 Expressions of Interest

10/02/2025 @ 14h00 Full Proposals



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## PART I: GENERAL INFORMATION

### 1. P4Science: Multi-year framework programme for research

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For more information regarding the programme, please visit the [P4Science website](#)

#### 1.1. General information

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On 9 February 2024, the Council of Ministers approved the launch of the P4Science (Policy for Science) research programme, implemented under the responsibility of the Belgian Science Policy Office (BELSPO).

This programme aims to support and reinforce the scientific excellence, research capacity and scientific services of the Federal Scientific Institutions<sup>1</sup> (FSI), ensuring their stability in terms of expertise and scientific capacity by funding projects based on their specific research priorities. P4Science promotes a bottom-up approach, where research priorities featured on the calls derive directly from the Research Strategy<sup>2</sup> of each FSI.

Besides the dedicated support to the FSI's, the programme also aims to specifically support research using the **federal research infrastructures RV Belgica and the Princess Elisabeth Station**.

The financing of the management and maintenance of these large scientific infrastructures and/or of their components is placed under specific BELSPO-budget allocations. For the funding of scientific research using these infrastructures, specific calls for proposals will be launched every two years within the P4Science Programme, alternatively focussing on the RV Belgica and the Princess Elisabeth Station Antarctica.

Contrary to the general rule within the P4Science Programme that projects must be initiated and coordinated by an FSI, these specific calls will be open to (networks of) researchers from the entire Belgian research community: universities, colleges of higher education, FSI, other public scientific institutions and non-profit research centres.

#### 1.2. Organisation

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BELSPO is responsible for the implementation and management of the programme, assisted by the **P4Science Programme Committee**.

##### Composition of the P4Science Programme Committee:

- ▶ One effective and one substitute representative from each BELSPO-FSI “pole” (art, nature, space, documentation) on a rotating basis between FSI across calls.

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<sup>1</sup> The 10 Federal Scientific institutions (FSI) that fall under BELSPO: BIRA-IASB, KMI-IRM, KBS-ORB, KBIN-IRSNB, KMMA-MRAC, KIK-IPRA, KMKG-MRAH, KMSKB-MRBAB, ARA-AGR, KBR, and the 3 that fall under other Federal Departments: Sciensano, NICC-INCC, and WHI, as defined in the Royal Decree of 30 October 1996.

<sup>2</sup> Each FSI has developed a Strategic Research document depicting the strategic development of the institution in terms of research. Based on this document, each FSI has identified specific research priorities within it to be featured in the calls of P4Science.

- ▶ One effective and one substitute representative from Sciensano, from NICC and from WHI.
- ▶ Four independent members of the Federal Council for Science Policy, appointed for the duration of the programme.

#### **Mandate of the P4Science Programme Committee:**

- ▶ Advise on the long-term priority research and call calendar.
- ▶ The elaboration of a number of research priorities within the calls based on the long-term priority research and call calendar.
- ▶ Advise on the research projects to be funded within each call based on the peer-reviewed evaluation of project proposals.

*Further information regarding the composition and Terms of Reference of the P4Science committee is available on the [website](#).*

## **2. Contractual obligations for selected projects**

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### **2.1. Contracts**

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For the selected proposals, a contract is concluded between BELSPO and the funded partner(s). This contract is composed of 3 parts:

- ▶ **Base contract:** This part of the contract contains general administrative information of the project, such as (but not limited to) the participating institutions, start and end dates of the project, budget. The Base contract is signed by the official representatives of the institutions: BELSPO's president, General Directors of FSI, Rectors of universities...
- ▶ **Annex I – Technical annex:** This part of the contract contains the specifications on the basis of which the contract is drawn up; this is, the technical information of the project: objectives, methodology, impact, workplan and calendar, budget distribution, etc. The Technical annex is drawn up by the coordinator - and when applicable the promoters - of the selected proposals in consultation with BELSPO. The coordinator will be asked at the end of the evaluation and selection procedure to concisely write these specifications, when applicable together with the other members of the project, considering the recommendations formulated by the evaluators and/or the P4Science Programme Committee. Adaptations to the original proposal may relate, among other things, to the content of the research, the composition of the project partnership or Stakeholder Committee, the budget, or the proposals for valorising research. The technical annex is signed by the programme manager in charge of the follow-up of the project at BELSPO, the coordinator and when applicable the promoters of the project.
- ▶ **Annex II – General conditions:** This part of the contract states the general conditions that apply to it. It does not require signing and is available on the website.

BELSPO grants the selected projects the approved funds required for their implementation. BELSPO shall reimburse at most, and up to the amount specified in the granted budget, the actual costs proven by the partners, providing these costs are directly related to the implementation of the project.

## 2.2. Project and progress reporting

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The contract foresees the following **reporting** to be submitted to BELSPO via the online project management platform:

- ▶ **Initial report:** To be submitted by the promotor and – in case of a project network – each promotor within 3 months after the start of the project. This report provides a beginning status of the project for each research group
- ▶ **Annual activity report:** To be submitted by the coordinator, at the times specified in the Technical annex. This report provides information regarding the state of advancement of the project, encountered problems and possible solutions.
- ▶ **Annual personnel report:** To be submitted by the coordinator and – in case of a project network – each promotor in case there are any changes in the staff working for the project.
- ▶ **Final report:** To be submitted by the coordinator. This report provides a full description of the project, the results achieved and their possible scientific and technological applications and indicates the extent to which the objectives were achieved.

This reporting is to be included in the project work plan and project budget.

Besides these standard reports, BELSPO can ask for a specific report or other input at any time during the project in order to provide scientific support to valorisation and/or service actions related to the programme.

## 2.3. Meetings

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Meetings on the project's progress must be organised - minimum once a year - between the project partner(s), BELSPO and the Stakeholder committee of the project. The organisation of these meetings must be included in the project work plan and the project budget.

## 2.4. Data, results, intellectual ownership and open access

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Foreground - the results (including information) produced by the project – shall be the property of the institution carrying out the work generating this foreground, as mentioned in article 11 of the General Conditions (Annex II of the contract). As regards existing information and data, ownership remains the same. Each institution shall ensure that the foreground of which it has ownership, is disseminated as fast as possible and free of charge.

In accordance with the BELSPO Open Research Data Mandate, each Institution undertakes to make the foreground and background relating to research data, available as soon as possible and free of charge in an approved data repository (Open Research Data Repository). This relates to data that supports the research results, with its metadata and other contextualised (curated) and/or raw data mentioned in the Data Management Plan (DMP) submitted by the grant applicant. The data must comply with the FAIR principle (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable) and must be accessible according to the principle "As open as possible, as closed as necessary".

For research areas concerning the marine environment, the Antarctic, biodiversity and social science and humanities, researchers must transfer a copy of the analysis and measurement data and/or metadata to specific databases such as:

- ▶ **BMDC (the Belgian Marine Data Centre).**  
The Belgian Marine Data Centre, our federal NODC (National Oceanographic Data Centre), ([bmdc@naturalsciences.be](mailto:bmdc@naturalsciences.be)), can be contacted for assistance in the development of a DMP for marine applications and/or in choosing the right repository.
- ▶ **AMD (Antarctic Master Directory).** The Belgian representative of SCADM (the SCAR Standing Committee for Antarctic Data Management) ([avandeputte@naturalsciences.be](mailto:avandeputte@naturalsciences.be)) can be contacted for assistance in the development of DMP for Antarctica related applications and/or in choosing the right repository.
- ▶ **GBIF (Global Biodiversity Information Facility).** The Belgian Biodiversity Platform can be contacted for assistance in the development of DMP for biodiversity related applications and/or in choosing the right repository. See also the guidance document.
- ▶ For social and Humanities data, a copy of the data and/or metadata must be transferred to SODHA (Social Sciences and Digital Humanities Archive).
- ▶ The promoters of projects that include tasks in which biological materials are used, must ensure the preservation of this biological material by depositing it in a culture collection (Biological Resource Centre), and preferably one in Belgium. This does not apply to material that promoters can prove has already been deposited in a culture collection or for which existing agreements (Material Transfer Agreement) do not allow it to be deposited. Biological material includes cultivable organisms such as microorganisms, viruses, plant, animal and human cells as well as the replicable parts of these organisms, such as non-modified and recombinant plasmids (including those with DNAc inserts).

## 2.5. Research ethics

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The "Code of Ethics for Scientific Research in Belgium" is a joint initiative of the Académie Royale des Sciences, des Lettres et des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, the Académie Royale de Médecine de Belgique, the Koninklijke Vlaamse Academie van België voor Wetenschappen en Kunsten and the Koninklijke Academie voor Geneeskunde van België, with the support of BELSPO.

All projects must take this code of ethics into account in their research. Applicants are required to fill out the **ethics form** with their proposal. If necessary, the Ethical Board of the institutions concerned by a project must be consulted before submitting a proposal.

*The code of ethics for scientific research is available here:*

[http://www.belspo.be/belspo/organisation/publ/pub\\_ostc/Eth\\_code/ethcode\\_en.pdf](http://www.belspo.be/belspo/organisation/publ/pub_ostc/Eth_code/ethcode_en.pdf)

## 2.6. Gender

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BELSPO is committed to gender equality. The term 'gender equality' refers both to gender balance in the research teams (choice of researchers) and to the gender dimension of the research (content and implementation) and should be considered as a transversal aspect of the project. All statistics produced, collected and commissioned are, where applicable, disaggregated by sex/gender, and indicators are established where relevant.

In any case, applicants are encouraged to consult the **gender check list** provided by BELSPO to ensure the gender aspect is correctly and fully considered throughout the entire proposal.

*The gender check list is available on the webpage of the call.*

## PART II: SCOPE OF THE CALL

### 3. Research at the Princess Elisabeth Station Antarctica

#### 3.1. Framework

The objective of the call is to fund a wide range of research projects that contribute and add a significant value to existing European and/or international priority polar research initiatives in which the Belgian research community is active, thereby strengthening Belgium's position in the initiative(s) and reaching a significant scientific, political, economic and/or societal impact.

It is a non-thematic call focussed on conducting the research at **the Princess Elisabeth Station Antarctica**, covering a broad range of scientific disciplines, including geosciences, physics, biology, space sciences and astronomy, as well as environmental sciences, socio-economic sciences, humanities and data sciences.

#### 3.2. Project partnership, roles, and eligibility for funding

Within the current call only **R&D projects** can be submitted.

These R&D projects can be carried out by (a network of) researchers from the entire Belgian research community: universities, colleges of higher education, FSI, other public scientific institutions and non-profit research centres.

The Project partners are the research institutions. Projects may be implemented by a **single institution** or a **network of institutions** whether or not in collaboration with international research institutes.

Collaboration among research institutes is encouraged. Belgian research institutes may participate in projects receiving funding and/or contributing in-kind. International research institutes cannot receive funding and may contribute in-money and/or in-kind.

	Role	Institution type	Receive funding?	Contribute in-money or in-kind?	Sign the project contract?
<b>Belgian funded Partner</b>	(C=P1) Coordinator	FSI, Belgian universities, colleges of higher education, public and non-profit research centres.	Yes. Mandatory.	May also partially contribute in-kind	Yes.
	(P2...) Promotor	FSI, Belgian universities, colleges of higher education, public and non-profit research centres.	Yes.	May also partially contribute in-kind	Yes.
<b>Non-funded Partner</b>	(O1...) Other	FSI, Belgian universities, colleges of higher education, public and non-profit research centres	No.	Yes.	No.



	International research institutes.	No.	Yes.	No.
	Non-research organisations	No	Yes	No

Types of partners:

- ▶ **Belgian funded partner:** FSI, Belgian universities, colleges of higher education, public and non-profit research centres. They are funded within the project.
- ▶ **Non-funded partner:** (inter)national research institutes or non-research organisations not funded within the project but providing a substantial contribution (in-money or in-kind) to the research project, appearing in the Work Plan (performing tasks).

Partner roles:

- ▶ **Coordinator:** Researcher within the funded Belgian partner institution responsible for the initiation, management, and coordination of the project.
- ▶ **Promotor:** Researcher within the funded Belgian partner institution financed by the project.
- ▶ **Other:** person pertaining to an (inter)national research institute or non-research organisation that is not receiving funding within the project.

The projects may require specific or punctual expertise, which can be delivered in the form of subcontracting. The subcontractor is not an official project partner. Their specific expertise may be of scientific nature or not.

Projects can have a **duration of 2, 3 or 4 years** and are limited to a maximum of **750 kEURO for network projects** and **375 kEURO for single institution projects**. **These budgets include campaign costs.**

The start of the projects is foreseen in April 2025 allowing to already have a first campaign during the season 2025-2026.

### 3.3. P4Science indicative budget and budget distribution

A total budget of 3 MEURO is foreseen for the current call.

The indicative budget for the 4 calls for proposals related to infrastructure support is distributed as follows:

Budget (€)	Call 1 2024 – 2025	Call 2 2026 – 2027	Call 3 2028 – 2029	Call 4 2030 – 2031	Total
<b>P4Science – support to research infrastructure</b>	3.000.000 (Princess Elisabeth Station)	3.000.000 (RV Belgica)	3.000.000 (Princess Elisabeth Station)	3.000.000 (RV Belgica)	<b>12.000.000</b>



### 3.4. Calendar of the 2024 – 2025 call

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Period / date & hour	Phase
2 December 2024 – <b>14h00</b>	Expression of Interest deadline
10 February 2025 – <b>14h00</b>	Full proposal deadline
February - March 2025	Evaluation of proposals
April 2025	Selection of proposals
May 2025	Start of projects

*The specific deadlines can be found on the website.*

## PART III: PRACTICAL ASPECTS

### 4. Documentation

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The following documents are available to applicants:

- ▶ Information file (this document)
- ▶ Gender checklist
- ▶ Evaluation criteria
- ▶ Eligibility of evaluators
- ▶ Institution request form

Templates:

- ▶ Expression of Interest template
- ▶ Full Proposal template
- ▶ Budget table with budget rules and project budget template
- ▶ Gantt chart template

*These documents are available on the webpage of the call.*

### 5. How to submit a proposal

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#### 5.1. Submitting a proposal (Phase 1 & 2)

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The programme P4Science follows a 2-phase submission process: (1) Expression of Interest and (2) Full proposal.

##### Expression of Interest (Phase 1)

Prior to submitting a Full proposal, applicants must first submit an Expression of Interest (EoI) in PDF email to the email address P4S-Infra@belspo.be – Subject: Call PEA 24-25 – EoI – [acronym of the project].

EoIs do not constitute a step in the evaluation process; they will be used by BELSPO to seek foreign experts for the evaluation of the research proposals. However, the eligibility of the EoI will be evaluated by BELSPO. If the EoI does not comply with the submission rules, i.e. the EoI is not complete or has not been submitted in time, it will be impossible to submit a Full proposal. In case of doubt if a research institution is eligible for funding, please send the completed “Institution request form” to BELSPO. BELSPO will assess the provided information and will decide on the eligibility of the institution.

At this stage applicants are required to provide general indicative information regarding the proposal: title and acronym of the project, budget range of the proposal, duration, a brief

description of the intended project, keywords and the name and contact details of the partners. Accompanying the Expression of Interest (Eoi), applicants will provide the name and contact details of 4 – 6 scientific experts capable of assessing their proposal, and a max. of 2 non-grata scientific experts that will be automatically excluded from the evaluation.

The description of the project at this point is understood as an early stage of reflexion. The content of the description in the full proposal may vary from that of the Eoi to some extent. However, it cannot diverge to the point that the expertise mobilised for the evaluation of the proposal will become irrelevant. The acronym, indicative budget, partners and keywords must remain the same. Changes concerning the title are accepted.

**Deadline for Expressions of Interest:**

**Monday 2 December 2024 @14h00**

To be sent to **P4S-Infra@belspo.be**

Subject: Call PEA 24-25 – EOI – [acronym of the project]

**Full proposal (Phase 2)**

If the Full Proposal does not comply with the submission rules, i.e. the Full Proposal is not complete or has not been submitted in time, it will not be considered for evaluation. Applicants must submit the Full Proposal consisting of the description file, budget file and Gantt chart to the P4Science email address P4S-Infra@belspo.be – Subject: Call PEA 24-25 – FULL – [acronym of the project].

The content of the description in the full proposal may vary from that of the Eoi to some extent. However, it cannot diverge to the point that the expertise mobilised for the evaluation of the proposal will become irrelevant. Changes concerning the partners (including the coordinator) are not accepted. The acronym and the keywords must remain the same.

The full proposal is the ensemble of information and documents describing the intended research activity, its implementation and impact. At this stage, applicants will introduce a detailed description of the intended project, including duration, workplan and calendar, budget, data management plan and ethics form.

**Deadline for Full proposals:**

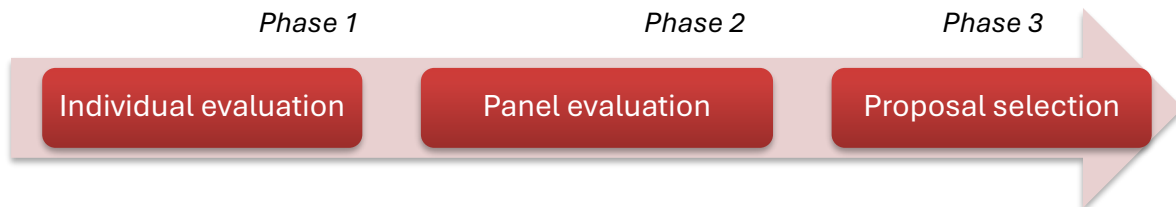
**Monday 10 February 2025 @14h00**

To be sent to **P4S-Infra@belspo.be**

Subject: Call PEA 24-25 – FULL – [acronym of the project]

## 6. Evaluation and selection of proposals

The selection of proposals is based on an international peer-review evaluation of the Full proposals that guarantees scientific excellence and the alignment of the projects with the project call. The procedure, organised by BELSPO, develops as follows.



### 6.1. Written evaluation (Phase 1)

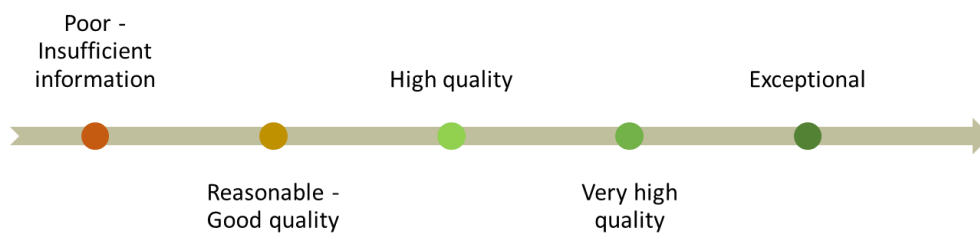
For each Full proposal, an individual written evaluation will be performed by a set of 3 international (non-Belgian) independent experts having an adequate combined expertise to evaluate the research proposal. BELSPO is responsible for composing this remote 'written evaluation team' with experts from BELSPO's own database and experts suggested by the applicants.

The written evaluation takes place remotely. During this assessment, the experts will only have access to the proposals they will evaluate. They will not know who the other 2 reviewers are for that proposal, nor will they have access to each other's evaluations.

Each reviewer will assess the proposal and provide comments considering a variety of (sub)criteria, in the categories of Scientific quality, Quality and efficiency of the implementation and Impact.

The individual **evaluation criteria** are detailed in a separate document available on the website.

Evaluators will assess these aspects of the proposal using the following scale.



The individual evaluations are **neither communicated to the members of the Programme Committee nor to the applicants.**

## 6.2. Panel evaluation (Phase 2)

BELSPO will compose a **Panel of experts**.

The Panel will be composed of international (non-Belgian) experts having the broadest possible expertise on the subjects addressed in the Call. These will have not participated to the remote evaluation in the Call<sup>3</sup>. The number of experts in the Panel will depend on the topics and expertise that need to be covered.

### Step 1: Pre-drafting of Consensus Report

The individual evaluations for each proposal will be compiled and transmitted to the Panel members.

Each panel member will be tasked to prepare one or several draft consensus reports.

### Step 2: Panel meeting

In preparation of the panel meeting, BELSPO will rank the proposals:

1. Translate the appreciations given to each sub-criterion in the draft consensus into numeric scores (from 1 for "poor-insufficient" to 5 for "exceptional")
2. Add the scores of the sub-criteria to obtain a total for each criterion
3. Add these scores over the three categories: Science quality/implementation/impact
4. Perform a weighted sum of the criteria in the following way:

CRITERIA WEIGHT <sup>4</sup>	
Scientific quality	50%
Quality and efficiency of the implementation	20%
Impact	30%

This ranking serves as input to the discussion in the panel. The outcome of this discussion is a finalised ranking (**Panel Funding Scenario**).

Prior to the meeting, each panel member will have access to:

- the Full proposals
- the Compiled individual evaluations (anonym)
- the pre-drafted Consensus Reports

During the meeting, the panel member who has pre-drafted the Consensus Report will present the proposal, followed by a discussion. Panel members reach an agreement regarding the position of the proposal in the **Panel Funding Scenario(s)** and the content of the **Consensus Report**, based on the documents provided.

<sup>3</sup> In case of need and as a last resource BELSPO may call upon Panel members to perform remote evaluations, in the same way that if some Panel member finds him/them/herself unable to attend, BELSPO may invite a remote expert to the Panel.

<sup>4</sup> In/out of scope serves only to discard proposals that are not within the scope of the call and will not be counted as criterion for the 'scientific ranking'.

▶ Panel Funding Scenario

The **Panel Funding Scenario**, based on the pre-drafted document which ranks the proposals according to their score, will classify all proposals according to the individual evaluation criteria, and considering the panel evaluation criteria:

- Budget availability
- Complementarities and/or overlaps between proposals

The **Panel Funding Scenario** will be accompanied by a **Panel Report** explaining the ranking.

The **Panel Funding Scenario** will classify the proposals into:

- Highly recommended for funding
- Recommended for funding
- Not recommended for funding

The Panel may list the proposals by order of preference for funding or put them in alphabetic order within each category.

▶ Project Consensus Report

The **Proposal Consensus Report** will consist of appreciations and comments for the different (sub)criteria. It will be based on the information extracted from the Compiled evaluations, pre-drafted by one of the panel members, and the discussions held in the panel meeting.

At this stage, the **Proposal Consensus Report** is definitive. It will not be modified in the subsequent steps of the proposal selection, and it will be used as feedback for the applicants once the final selection of proposals has been made.

For the sake of transparency and to provide the opportunity to improve their proposal(s) in the future, **applicants will receive an anonymised version of their Consensus Report**

### 6.3. Project selection (Phase 3)

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The **Programme Committee** will receive the following documents:

- Summary of the proposals
- Panel Funding Scenario
- Panel Report explaining the Panel Funding Scenario
- Consensus Report of each proposal

Based on these documents, and on the criteria and the rules explained hereunder, the Programme Committee will perform a strategic selection of the proposals, delivering a **Programme Committee Funding Scenario**.

The following aspects will be considered, when formulating a **Programme Committee Funding Scenario** to be transmitted to the **Secretary of State**:

- Added value of the proposal to the research strategies of the Federal departments
- Amount of Co-funding provided by one or more Federal departments

The Funding Scenario will be formulated considering the following rules:

- In NO case will proposals deemed 'out of scope' be considered
- In NO case will proposals deemed 'not recommended for funding' be considered
- In NO case will proposals deemed 'highly recommended for funding' be put aside

The decision on the final selection of projects to be funded is made by the **Federal Secretary of State** in charge of **Science Policy** based on the **Programme Committee Funding Scenario**.

## 7. CONTACTS

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Further information can be obtained by contacting the **secretariat: P4S-Infra@belspo.be**

## 8. COMPLAINTS

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BELSPO places great importance on the quality of its service and on improving the way it operates. A special form to handle complaints has been created.

The complaint form is available at the following address:

[http://www.belspo.be/belspo/organisation/complaints\\_en.stm](http://www.belspo.be/belspo/organisation/complaints_en.stm)

Complaints submitted anonymously or which are offensive or not related to our organisation will not be processed.

A complaint is handled as follows:

- Once your complaint has been filed, a notification of receipt will be sent
- The complaint will be forwarded to the relevant departments and individuals and will be processed within one month
- An answer will be sent by e-mail or letter
- The complaint will be treated with strict confidentiality.

If you are dissatisfied by the initial response to a complaint, you can always contact the Médiateur Fédéral/Federale Ombudsman, rue de Louvain/Leuvenseweg 48 bus 6, 1000 Brussels (email: [contact@mediateurfederal.be](mailto:contact@mediateurfederal.be)/[contact@federaalombudsman.be](mailto:contact@federaalombudsman.be)).