Royal Higher Institute for Defence

Defence-related Research Action - DEFRA

Call for proposals 2022

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

PARTNER COMPOSITION

01 Is there an obligation to include (a) defence research institute(s) in a proposal?

The Belgian Defence research institutes (Royal Military Academy (RMA), the Military Hospital Queen Astrid (MHQA) and the Defence Laboratories (DLD)) <u>can</u> be a coordinator/partner in a proposal. It is <u>not mandatory</u> to have one of these institutes as a project partner; it will neither have a beneficial effect on the evaluation result (<u>no bonus</u>).

02 Is there a restriction to the number of project proposals a given institute/company/researcher/person may participate in as partner and/or coordinator?

No, there is no limitation to the number of proposals a given Institute/company/researcher/person may participate in as partner and/or coordinator.

03 Will the fact that a given researcher acts as coordinator of several project proposals be taken into account in the evaluation?

The fact that a given researcher acts as coordinator of several proposals may be taken into account in the final strategic selection of projects to be financed.

04 Can someone who is hired as subcontractor also appear as staff?

No. Someone engaged as a subcontractor cannot appear as staff.

05   Is it necessary to identify the subcontractor in the proposal?

No, only the subcontracted task(s) need(s) to be described. The specification of the particular company/institute is not mandatory. It is recommended not to mention the name unless it is certain.

06   Is it possible to link a PhD student from a given university to the proposal?

Yes, this is possible. If the PhD student is to be financed by the university, then the candidate's tasks must be included in the Gantt chart and Work Plan (under Other sources). If the PhD student is to be financed by the DEFRA programme via the project, then the candidate must be included within the budget as staff, and his/her tasks included in the Gantt chart and Work Plan. Remark: tax free doctoral scholarships are not accepted for PhD students in charge of the DEFRA programme.

07   Is it possible to include a civil society organisation as financed partner?

No, civil society organisations cannot be included as official financed partners to the project. They can only be financed as a subcontractor.

08   Can we add a partner in the Full Proposal that was not mentioned in the Pre-proposal?

Once your Pre-proposal is selected to submit a Full proposal, the data of the partners will appear by default in the Full proposal. Changes in the partnership (i.e. removing or adding partners) require the explicit approval of the RHID.

09   How are large/medium/small companies defined?

Art 2 of the General Block Exemption Regulation to Article 107(1) TFEU on State aid is used.

Staff headcount and financial ceilings determine enterprise categories:

1. The category of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) is made up of enterprises which employ fewer than 250 persons and which have an annual turnover not exceeding EUR 50 million, and/or an annual balance sheet total not exceeding EUR 43 million.

2. Within the SME category, a small enterprise is defined as an enterprise which employs fewer than 50 persons and whose annual turnover and/or annual balance sheet total does not exceed EUR 10 million.

3. Within the SME category, a microenterprise is defined as an enterprise which employs fewer than 10 persons and whose annual turnover and/or annual balance sheet total does not exceed EUR 2 million.

01 Is it possible to hire staff with a given degree for more than the stipulated maximum (4.640€/month technician, 6.075€/month master, 7.180€/month master degree engineering, 8.285€/month PhD)?

Yes. It can be done, provided the person to be hired is identified by name in the proposal. Then, a higher salary will be accepted.

02 Can personnel hired under the project be 'shared' between two partners in terms of time and budget?

Yes. The time and cost of personnel can be shared by two institutions, but it must be explained within the proposal. Should the proposal be funded, the institutions are responsible for how they apply this arrangement.

03 What rules apply if there are staff changes along the way during the execution of the project? Is it possible to affect part of the staff budget to other partners/budget category?

Once the contract of the project has been signed, changes can be made via an amendment to the contract. Amendments can include shifts in budget categories and also - in case of a network project - budget shifts between partners.

04 Is it possible to include salary, operating and/or equipment costs under 'Subcontracting budget'?

It is possible to include salary and operating costs under 'Subcontracting budget', including the budget for equipment use/hiring. The purchase of equipment is not allowed.

05 How many proposals will be awarded per theme?

The number of selected and funded proposals per theme will depend on the quality of the proposals and the budget requested per proposal. RHID aims to fund at least one proposal per theme and more if the overall DEFRA budget allows it.

06 Will private companies be fully paid for the project?

See section 3.7. of the information document. This call is subject to the European legislation on State Funding (Art 107 (1) TFEU and the General Block Exemption Regulation in particular. Financing a private company is limited to a maximum of 65% of the eligible costs for LargeCap enterprises, to maximum 75% for MidCap and to 80% for SME.

07 Must VAT be included in the budget?

We assume that, a priori, all partners are liable to VAT and recommend mentioning the amounts including VAT. However, if you believe that your institution should be fully or partially exempt, you can indicate this by adding the legal reference. After a possible selection, the amounts can then be refined when preparing the contract

ANNEXES TO THE (PRE-/FULL)PROPOSAL

01   Is it possible to annex CV's to the proposal?

No, CV's in annex are not accepted. Space is provided within the (pre-/full) proposal template for the description of the profile of the project partner(s).

02   Is it possible to include annexes to the (pre-/full) proposal description?

No, annexes are not accepted. However, note that aside from the full proposal description template, 2 other forms are provided to annex to the full proposal:
- *GANTT chart - compulsory*
- *Cash or in-kind commitment letter - non compulsory*

03   Is it possible to annex the agreements for in-kind contributions of the project partners to the proposal?

No, this is not accepted. The in-kind contributions of the official project partners should be mentioned in the proposal description

04   Is it possible to annex support letters to the proposal?

No, letters of support are not accepted. However, should institutions/organisations/companies which are not partners of the project wish to make an in-kind or cash contribution to the project, there is a template at your disposal: Cash or in-kind commitment letter. Should you wish to upload several of such letters, you must merge them into one single PDF document to be uploaded in the introduction platform.

EVALUATORS

01   Do proposed evaluators have to be European?

By preference evaluators are European. However non-European evaluators are eligible.

02   Do I need to have the agreement of the 'proposed experts' in order to include them in the pre-proposal?

No. You do NOT need the agreement of the researchers that you want to include in the pre-proposal as 'proposed experts'. In fact you must NOT contact the foreseen experts at all:
- *You must NOT tell them that you are preparing/sending the proposal*
- *You must NOT ask them to be 'proposed experts'*

It is the task of BELSPO and RHID to contact the experts.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

01 What are the evaluation criteria for these proposals and the weights of the different criteria?

The evaluation procedure is described in section 5 of the information document. Evaluation criteria and their respective weights are listed in the evaluation matrices for pre-proposals and full proposals.

PLATFORM

01 Why can't the partners and/or collaborator of the proposal Log In to the platform?

Only the coordinator of a proposal can create and submit a (Pre-/Full) proposal. Partners included in a proposal will not have access to the given (Pre-/Full) proposal.

02 Is it possible to have access to the proposal template without logging in to the platform?

Pre-proposal template: in order to have access to the template and online fields that compose the pre-proposal, you need to Log In to the platform. All entered data may be changed (or deleted) at any time before the pre-proposal is submitted. You can always decide not to submit your pre-proposal. Non submitted pre-proposals will not be considered for evaluation.

A PDF version of the pre-proposal template is available on the DEFRA website for information purposes.

Full proposal template: a copy of the full proposal template is available in PDF-format on the DEFRA website for your information. However, in order to have access to the Word-file of the full proposal template, the other documents (Gantt chart; Cash or in-kind commitment letter) and online fields that compose the proposal, you need to Log In to the platform. All entered data may be changed (or deleted) at any time before the proposal is submitted. You can always decide not to submit your proposal. Non submitted proposals will not be considered for evaluation.

03 How can I delete my proposal?

In order to delete the proposal you must follow the instructions provided within the Platform Submission Guidelines document.

04 Is it possible to edit my proposal, once submitted?

If your proposal is submitted before the deadline, exceptionally, BELSPO will be able to un-submit your proposal, and you may continue to edit it. After the deadline, there will be no possibilities of editing submitted proposals.

05 I've submitted a pre-proposal and would like to prepare the full proposal. I cannot find the template for the full proposal on the platform.

For each theme, maximum 5 pre-proposals will be invited to submit a full proposal. Only for the selected proposals the DEFRA platform will become accessible for the submission of the full proposal.

A copy of the full proposal template is available in PDF-format for your information on the DEFRA website. Note however that in order to have access to the Word-file of the full proposal template, to the other documents (Gantt chart; Cash or in-kind commitment letter) and online fields that compose the proposal, Log In to the platform is necessary.

DURATION OF THE PROJECT

01   Is it possible to submit a 3 year project?

Yes, projects must have a minimum duration of 2 years and a maximum duration of 4 years.

LENGTH OF THE PROPOSAL

01   Will the proposal be deemed ineligible for evaluation if the 'Proposal description' exceeds the established length limits?
Yes.

02   Do the length limits established for the 'Proposal description' include also other online forms (i.e. GANTT chart, Cash or in-kind commitment letter …)?
No. The limit is only for the 'Proposal description' template.

PROJECT REQUIREMENTS

01   What kind of reporting will be required from the projects?

All mandatory reporting is described in section 6.4 of the information document

PROJECT RESULTS

01   Who owns the intellectual property (IP) at the end of the project?

As described in section 7.2 of the information document all aspects regarding IPR are covered in Annex II "General Conditions" of the contract (see DEFRA website: documents: https://www.belspo.be/belspo_off/defra/call_nl.stm#documents *)*

02   How is follow-up R&D / commercialization / implementation based on the results of the projects seen)?
For multiple reasons, such as different markets for different themes, there is no "one fits all" answer to this question. This being said, there is a definite interest in valorisation of the project results. Ad hoc solutions will have to be established.

PERMISSION TO SUBMIT A PROPOSAL

01 Do I require the signature of my director/rector/CEO in order to submit the project proposal?
No, the signature of the director/rector/CEO is not mandatory for the funding authority. However, you must have the agreement of your hierarchical authority for the submission of the proposal.

02 Are there particular requirements regarding the electronic signature of the documents that must be submitted?
No, there are no signatures required to submit a proposal.

03 Must researchers sign specific clearance documents to participate in a project?

For some themes a security screening by Belgian Defence might be imposed in the contract on ALL partners of the project. See section 7.3. of the information document.

SPECIFIC QUESTIONS ON THE THEMES OF THE SECOND CALL

01 **ALL THEMES**: What's the TRL level of the solutions you're looking for (at the beginning & at the end of the project)?
For this DEFRA call, there is no minimum TRL-level defined. The TRL-levels mentioned in the information document are indicative. The TRL of the envisaged project result will not be used as an exclusion criterium during the evaluation.
As a general rule, the end TRL should be 4/5, but there might be good reasons why this cannot be achieved although the project is still of high value.
The evaluation will consider the innovative character of the project.

02 **SPACE**: the STCE is explicitly mentioned in the call. How should that be interpreted?

The call text refers to the STCE to give some context information.
For all themes, STCE can be a partner in the network. It is not mandatory to have STCE as a partner; it will neither have a beneficial effect on the evaluation result (no bonus).

03 **HEALTH:** At what development stage should the 'recent sensor-based technology' be (research proof-of-concept in lab or in relevant environment or a commercial product)?
For this DEFRA call, there is no minimum TRL-level defined. Be aware however that the innovative character is an evaluation criterium. As a general rule, the end TRL should be 4/5, but there might be good reasons why this cannot be achieved although the project is still of high value.

04 **HEALTH:** Focus is on sensor-based technology but are topics such as innovative self-sampling techniques (for eg blood sampling by soldier) with the aim of determining biomarkers + exposure to pollutants/chemicals in environment also relevant for this theme?
Yes, this is relevant as this is within the scope of "soldier's performance".

05   **HEALTH:** Are technologies related to medical imaging of interest to this call?

No, there will be no monitoring based on medical imaging. In terms of performance monitoring, this is off topic.

06   **HEALTH:** The scope of this theme is quite restrictive and excludes research groups working on disease surveillance/control and those working on therapeutics rather than "preventive medicine". Is it expected that the "Health theme" will be expanded in the future?
Not all interesting themes can be fitted into one call. For every year a new set of topics is selected. We can neither give a guarantee that the health theme will be expand or exclude that that there will be more health-related themes in the future.

NOT FOUND WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR? E-mail to DEFRA@BELSPO.BE