

Defence-related Research Action - DEFRA

Call for proposals 2026

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

NETWORK 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)) can be a coordinator/partner in a proposal. It is not mandatory to have one of these institutes as a project partner; it will neither have a beneficial effect on the evaluation result (no bonus). Except for theme 2 – CYBER, in which partnership with the RMA is preferred. In case projects within this theme obtain an equal score, proposals including the RMA will be favoured.*
- Please note that DLD and MHQA must inform the RMA of all proposals they are participating in.*
- 02** Is it mandatory to include a private company as a partner in all proposals?
- Yes, at least one private company must be included as partner in all proposals. If not, the triple helix requirement will not be met.*
- 03** Is it mandatory that the research institute is the coordinator of the project?
- No, all types of eligible organisations can be the coordinator.*
- 04** Is it necessary to identify the subcontractor in the proposal?
- It is mandatory to describe the subcontracted task(s) and preferably the particular company/institute to whom the task(s) is(are) subcontracted is identified. Subcontractors that are companies, a(i)sbl and foundations must submit to the DEFRA call secretariat:*
- an extract from the UBO register
 - proof of delivery of security verification consent
 - company honourability & vulnerability awareness self-assessment
- In case the subcontractor has access to classified information, the subcontractor must obtain a security clearance (see section 7.3. of the information file).*

- 05** **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.
- 06** **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. In case other companies, a(i)sbl and foundations join the network, they must provide to the DEFRA call secretariat:
- an extract from the UBO register
- proof of delivery of security verification consent
- company honourability & vulnerability awareness self-assessment

It is not possible to change the coordinator of the project.
- 07** **Must the project partners be Belgian institutes / companies?**
Indeed, the call is open to Belgian public and private non-profit research institutes and private companies as funded partners.

*From the **public research sector**, all Belgian universities, colleges of higher education, federal scientific institutions, defence research institutes and other public research institutes are eligible partners.*

***Private non-profit research centres** must have operational and/or research activities in Belgium. They must have legal personality and their registered office in Belgium.*

*From the **private sector**, companies (including SMEs) complying with the following criteria are eligible partners:*
 - *The company must have operational and/or research activities on the Belgian territory.*
 - *The company must have a legal personality and its registered office in Belgium. The legal personality is required at the latest when signing the research contract.*
 - *At the moment of signing the contract, the company must have fulfilled its obligations to pay its taxes and social security contributions.*
- 08** **Must subcontractors be Belgian as well?**
Yes, subcontractors must be Belgian.
- 09** **Must a public research centre (e.g. a university) submit the extract of the UBO register (or other security related forms)?**
No, a university is a public research institute and must not submit an extract of the UBO register, neither the proof of dispatch of consent for security verification of the Company Honourability and Vulnerability self-assessment declaration.
- 10** **Can foreign organisations be part of a proposal?**
Foreign organisations can be part of a proposal but cannot be funded. Foreign organisations can confirm their interest and commitment to provide input to the project

via cash or in-kind contributions by completing the cash or in-kind commitment letter available on the DEFRA-website.

Note that foreign partners must be registered in a country of the European Union or in a country of the European Free Trade Association or in a country that is a member of NATO.

- 11** Can a project with two partners be compliant with the triple helix requirement?
Yes, this is possible. The partnership must include at least one private company and at least one (public or private non-profit) research institute. The third pillar of the triple helix (government) is the RHID as funding organisation. It is recommended to describe how the partnership will exchange and/or cooperate with the Belgian Defence.
- 12** Can an end-user be a (lead) partner in the project?
No, the end-user should not be a partner in the project
- 13** Can a (small) company submit a proposal?
A (small) company on its own cannot submit a proposal. Each proposal must contain at least one private company (regardless of its size) and at least one (public or private non-profit) research institute.

BUDGET

- 01** Is it possible to hire staff with a given degree for more than the stipulated maximum (5.700€/month technician, 8.000€/month master, 8.700€/month master degree engineering, 10.500€/month PhD)?
Yes. It can be done. For personnel already employed by the organisation a higher salary can be accepted. In that case the person must be identified by name in the proposal. The above mentioned salaries apply to personnel that is still to be hired.
- 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 categories?
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 **Must VAT be included in the budget?**
Yes, all amounts must be VAT included if applicable. In no case, the budget of your proposal will be increased to cover VAT expenses.
- 06 **Can someone who is hired as subcontractor also appear as staff?**
No. Someone engaged as a subcontractor cannot appear as staff.
- 07 **Are staff costs limited to costs related to employees?**
No. Costs related to non-employee staff, i.e. staff working in a management company, as freelancer or interim staff on behalf of the partner are also accepted as staff cost. However, the RHID prefers staff to be hired under a labour contract.
- 08 **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.*
- 09 **Are there specific ratios for budget share between research organisations and industry partners?**
The partnership must be well-balanced, and it must be clear that each partner contributes to the project realisation. Budget of each partner must be coherent with the work to be performed.
- 10 **In case equipment is purchased, can the total amount of the purchase be covered by the project or must depreciation be taken into account?**
The equipment that will be purchased to realise the project objectives must be described in the proposal. The total amount must be justified by invoices and can be covered by the project. Only costs incurred after the start of the project are eligible.

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 partners.
- 02 **Is it possible to include annexes to the (pre-/full) proposal description?**
*For the **pre-proposal**, companies, a(i)sbl and foundations must upload the extract of the Ultimate Beneficial Owner (UBO) register in the online submission platform. The proof of dispatch of the consent form for the security verification and the Company Honourability and Vulnerability self-assessment declaration must be sent by e-mail to defra@mil.be.*

For the **full proposal**, following documents must be annexed to the full proposal:

- Data management plan – compulsory
- Research ethics self-assessment - compulsory
- GANTT chart – compulsory
- Budget file – compulsory
- Cash or in-kind commitment letter - non compulsory
- Visual/graphical abstract – non compulsory

For newly identified partners and subcontractors: extract from the UBO register, proof of dispatch of the consent for security verification, Company Honourability and Vulnerability self-assessment declaration (compulsory if they are a company, an a(i)sbl or a foundation)

03 Are these “security forms” (UBO, proof of dispatch of the consent for security verification, Company Honourability and Vulnerability self-assessment declaration) required for all consortium partners or only for the coordinator at the pre-proposal stage ?

All partners (and subcontractors) that are a company, an a(i)sbl or a foundation must submit these documents in the pre-proposal stage. Failing to deliver these documents will result in exclusion of the pre-proposal.

04 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

05 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 funded 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. You can upload a maximum of five such letters in the online submission platform.

EVALUATORS

01 What is the role of the evaluators that need to be proposed by the applicants?

BELSPO will ask some of these evaluators to perform the remote scientific evaluation of the full proposals.

02 Do proposed evaluators have to be European?

We ask you to propose at least 2 Belgian evaluators and at least 2 foreign evaluators. The latter must be nationals of a country of the European Union or nationals of a country of the European Free Trade Association or nationals of a country that is a member of NATO. Please check the [eligibility criteria for potential evaluators](#) on the DEFRA website.

03 Can a military from an EU or NATO country be proposed as evaluator?

Yes, this is possible. But not from the Belgian military.

04 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](#).

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 How many proposals will be awarded per theme?

The number of projects that will be funded per theme depends on the evaluation of the proposals and the requested budget per proposal. Passing the threshold of scientific quality, the best ranked proposal per theme will be funded. The remaining proposals will be put together in a common ranking list based on their final evaluation results.

ONLINE SUBMISSION PLATFORM

01 Why can't the partners and/or collaborator of the proposal Log In to the online submission 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 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.

The pre-proposal template is available on the DEFRA website. This template must be completed and uploaded on the platform (in addition to the online fields).

Full proposal template: the full proposal template as well as the templates for the annexes to the Full proposal are available on the DEFRA website. 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 re-open 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.

Only a limited number of pre-proposals will be selected and invited to submit a full proposal. Only for these selected pre-proposals the online submission platform will become accessible for the submission of the full proposal.

The full proposal template as well as the templates for the annexes to the Full proposal are available on the DEFRA website.

06 Can one account be used to submit multiple pre-proposals?

Yes, it is possible to submit more than one pre-proposal with the same account.

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.

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 that is available on the DEFRA website. The principles for the use of joint foreground will have to be determined by the project partners, with respect for these General Conditions. These principles can be included in a Consortium Agreement to be concluded between the partners.

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.

03 Do scientific publications need to be vetted by RHID?

In general, RHID encourages the dissemination of the research results, including by scientific publications. At least 45 days prior to the dissemination, the partners of the project and defence must be informed of the planned dissemination activity. The partners and defence can make objections against the dissemination when this can harm their own rights or impact the project negatively (cfr article 13 of annex II to the contract).

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?

A security screening by Belgian Defence might be imposed on all researchers that are actively involved in the project. See section 7.3. of the information document.

04 Do I need authorisation from the ethical committee before submitting a proposal?

Yes, it is the responsibility of the applicants to consult the relevant Ethical Board for their organisation before submitting a proposal.

CONTRACTS

01 What kind of contract will be concluded for selected projects: a contract with the coordinator only or a network contract?

For the selected projects a network contract will be concluded between the RHID and the partnership. All partners have to sign the contract.

02 Must the partnership conclude a partnership agreement?

It is good practice to conclude a partnership agreement to settle the internal operations and ownership of results of the partnership. If a Consortium agreement is concluded, a copy must be provided to the RHID. A template for [the Consortium agreement can be found on the DEFRA-website](#)

SPECIFIC QUESTIONS ON THE THEMES OF THE SIXTH 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)?
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, max 6 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** Will the current themes be included again the next DEFRA call?
Not all interesting themes can be fitted into one call. For every year a new set of topics is selected. We cannot give a guarantee that the current themes will be expanded or excluded.
- 03** Can we submit the same proposal in different themes (e.g. thematic theme and open theme)?
No, Proposals can only be introduced in the "Open call" if the subject of the proposal does not correspond with one of the other nine themes. In the same way, duplication with the Human Factors or the Space call must be avoided.
- 04** Can BELSPO or the RHID decide to move a pre-proposal from one theme to another?
No, this will not be done. The applicants must decide in which theme they will submit. Evaluators will assess whether the proposal corresponds with the scope of the theme.

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