FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Impulse action call
INFRA-FED 2022

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.1. RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURE

1.1.1. What is Research Infrastructure?

Research infrastructures (RI) are facilities, resources and related services used by research communities to conduct research and stimulate innovation. Where appropriate, they may be used beyond research, for example for education or public services.

1.1.2. Which RIs are eligible in the INFRA-FED call?

- The RI eligible in the INFRA-FED call include:

  ✓ Major scientific equipment or sets of instruments
  ✓ Knowledge resources such as collections, archives, or structures for scientific information
  ✓ e-infrastructures such as data warehouses, computing systems and communication networks; software and software development; webservices; data(sets) and population cohorts.
  ✓ Any other infrastructure of a unique nature, essential for achieving excellence in research and innovation.

  - Eligible RI in the INFRA-FED call can be ESFRI RI or other:

If ESFRI RI..	If NOT an ESFRI RI…
Infrastructures which are in the first 3 steps of the ESFRI RI lifecycle: 1- Concept development 2- Design 3- Preparation OR completely new components of ESFRI infrastructures already in the (pre-) operational phase likely to be further developed for a possible future anchorage into the ESFRI RI.	Infrastructures that are not sufficiently developed or used at their optimal capacity to deliver fit for purpose services to their stakeholders. They can be at different levels of maturity.

  - The RI eligible in the INFRA-FED call must:

  ✓ Be based on existing building blocks issued from previous, ongoing development or expertise with the Federal Research Institutes.
  ✓ Flag societal, scientific or political priorities
  ✓ Be likely to play a key/unique role (inter)nationally: have potential to be anchored in international / EU RI or be used by EU / international (scientific) initiatives
  ✓ Be a 'must have'; 'nice to have' is excluded.

1.1.3. Is the call intended to create entirely new infrastructures or to support the growth of existing infrastructure?

The call aims to stimulate the development, upgrade and deployment of **emerging** infrastructures held by Federal Research Institutes with an impactful potential for the (inter)national scientific community and or/society. In this sense, it is not intended to create entirely new infrastructures.

1.1.4. To which extent needs a proposal to be linked at or embedded in ongoing activities, like Health Data Authority, European Health Data Space?

If the proposal is not yet linked or embedded in ongoing (inter)national activities, this must be the target.

1.2. AIM OF THE CALL

1.2.1. Can the proposal be part of long-term planning?

The proposal can be part of long-term planning of a Federal Research Institute but requires a tangible outcome by the end of the project timespan. In this case, the outcome of the project would constitute a milestone in the long-term planning

1.2.2. Should the proposals be multidisciplinary?

Proposals must include robust and strategic collaborative approach, bringing together multiple expertise (not necessarily multiple disciplines) likely to contribute meeting scientific technological or technical objectives in agile way.

1.2.3. Can the same Federal Research Institution introduce 2 different projects?

Yes, it is possible for an FRI to introduce 2 or more different projects. However, the panel evaluation will consider a balanced coverage in terms of domains and type of RI. It is not in the interest of the FRI to introduce competing proposals for the same type of RI or in the same domain.

1.3. PARTNERSHIP

1.3.1. What is the eligibility in terms of partnership (Belgian, international)?

Partners financed by the project will be Belgian public institutions who conduct Research. Other non-financed partners (i.e. (inter)national partners) may partake in the project contributing with cash or in kind. Subcontracting is accepted as stated in the budget rules, therefore there is the option to integrate partners which are not eligible for funding via subcontracting.

1.3.2. Who can introduce a proposal?

Only Federal Research Institutions are partners eligible to introduce a proposal (FRI list in Annex 1 of the Information File). The FRI introducing the proposal will act as coordinator of the project.

1.3.3. Do proposals require having more than one partner?

No, proposals may be submitted as single-partner projects or multiple-partner projects.

1.3.4. Are Belgian university partners available for funding?

Yes, as self-funded partner or subcontractor in consortium coordinated by a Federal Research Institution.

1.3.5. Is it possible to have a consortium with a Federal Research Infrastructure and non-federal institutions where the non-federal institutions take the lead?

No, FRI must always take the lead coordinating the project.

1.3.6. Can BELNET be eligible as partner or subcontractor?

BELNET can only be eligible as subcontractor.

2. REGARDING SUBMISSION PROCEDURE AND BUDGET

2.1. SUBMISSION PROCEDURE

2.1.1. What is/are the mandatory language(s) for submission? EN and/or FR+NL?

The mandatory language for submission is English. Only Expressions of Interest and Full Proposals written in English will be eligible for the evaluation.

2.1.2. The period between EoI and full proposal is very short: will the main selection be at the level of Expression of Interest or at the level of Full proposal?

The evaluation and selection of the projects , including the compliance with the scope of the call , will take place at the level of the Full proposal.

2.1.3. Are only selected Expressions of Interest invited to submit a Full proposal?

Yes, only eligible projects at the state of the Expression of Interest will be invited to submit a Full proposal. Eligibility concerns mainly the eligibility of the partners.

2.1.4. To what point may an Expression of Interest (EoI) differ from the Full Proposal? What is it that can change and what cannot change?

In terms of content, the subject matter of the Full Proposal cannot differ from the Expression of Interest to the point that the experts provided in the Expression of Interest become irrelevant for its evaluation. Any Full Proposal for which the experts provided in the EoI are no longer valid will be deemed not eligible for evaluation.
In terms of participants, the Partners cannot change from the EoI to the Full Proposal, but the promoters may.
Example:
- *Coordinator (Partner 1): Institution A, with 'person X' as promotor*
- *Partner 2: Institution B, with 'person Y' as promotor*
You may change the 'person X' and 'person Y' but not the 'Institution A' or 'Institution B'.

2.1.5. How detailed should the methodology be?

Methodology should be detailed. The Information File contains all the submission-evaluation criteria, in which there are sub-criteria regarding the methodological approach, the methodology, or the collaborative approach in terms of the expertise and complementarity in the frame of the project, for instance.

2.1.6. What is the difference between partners and promotors?

- The Partners are institution(s) who will receive funding to execute the project provided it is selected (subcontractors excluded).
- The promotors are the persons representing the partners in that project. The coordinator is the promotor from the FRI responsible for the submission of the Expression of Interest and the Full Proposal, and who will coordinate the project if/when selected.
- Other project participants, who will work under their promotors' direction are scientists, technicians or any other team(s)'collaborators for which details are to be provided in point 4 of the Full proposal description.

2.1.7. Is it possible to have co-promotors for a given partner?

No, it is not possible to have co-promotors listed under the same partner, but it is possible to list a collaborator. To do so, add a line at the bottom of the table of the concerned partner, writing 'collaborator' on the left column and their 'First name' 'Last name' – 'email' on the right column. Example:

Collaborator	Marie Dupont – marie.dupont@institution.be

2.1.8. Is it necessary to list the details of the subcontractor in the Expression of Interest? And in the Full Proposal?

It is not necessary to list the subcontractor at the stage of the Expression of Interest. The type of subcontracting you are seeking is enough: ICT consultancy, legal advice, etc. It is however recommended that you provide as many details as possible at the Full Proposal stage, considering the rules your institution applies in terms of subcontracting services.

Note that your institution may ask to open a call for tenders -public market- for expenses above a given budget amount. If the budget you seek for subcontracting falls in the 'above' category of that amount, you will not be able to ensure that the subcontractor you list is the same as the subcontractor you will hire. In this case, rather than naming the subcontractor, please provide details of the type of subcontracting you require.

2.2. BUDGET

2.2.1. Is there a max. and minimum budget per project?

There is a maximum budget per project of 1M€. There is no minimum budget per project.

2.2.2. What would be the approximate typical budget for a project?

There is no approximate typical budget for a project, for it much depends on the ambition of the project itself. Applicants must estimate their own budgets bearing in mind that evaluators will be assessing the 'value for money' of the proposal.

2.2.3. Is there a budget for 'maintaining' the services/products after the project has ended?

There is no budget category foreseen for the maintenance of the services/products after the project has ended in this call. Applicants are asked to provide a business plan which guarantees the sustainability of the RI beyond the project duration.

2.2.4. How is the total budget of the call divided? In equal parts per project or do we need to estimate a budget for our submitted project?

The total budget of the call will be allocated to the selected projects according to the budget requested by the applicants. Applicants must estimate the budget for their own submitted project while keeping in mind the broad scope of the call and its expected competitive of nature.

2.2.5. Can the obtained budget be freely and equally used for the salary (e.g. scientific researcher) for purchasing scientific material (e.g. reference materials, analytical goods, scientific instruments), and eventually for consultancy (e.g. outsourcing some computing tasks for a software database)?

No, there are budget rules regarding each budget category explained in the Information File and the Budget table. The budget categories include staff (min 60% of the project's budget) overheads, operating budget, equipment, and subcontracting (max. 25% of the partner's budget), which cover the above-mentioned examples.

2.2.6. What can and what cannot be financed?

Only eligible partners can request funding covering staff, general and specific operation costs, overheads, equipment and subcontracting, as stated in the Budget Rules.

2.2.7. What is the max % of the budget of the project that can go into subcontracting?

Subcontracting will be maximum a 25% of the total budget of the partner who requires it.

2.2.8. How many projects will be accepted for funding?

There will be as many successfully evaluated projects funded as the 11,704M€ allocated to the INFRA-FED call will allow.

3. REGARDING EVALUATION PROCEDURE AND CRITERIA

3.1. EVALUATION PROCEDURE

3.1.1. Does the evaluation procedure occur in one step or are there some pre-selection steps (e.g. eligibility check)?

There are 2 pre-selection steps (=eligibility checks), one after the submission of the Expression of Interest, and another after the submission of the Full proposal. Belspo does not consider them part of the evaluation, EoIs and Full proposals are screened to make sure they are eligible for evaluation. The eligibility checks look into the eligibility of applicants who are submitting the EoI or the Full proposal, ~~the RI object of the proposal,~~ and the language in which the documents are submitted. The evaluation procedure applies only to the Full proposal and occurs in 2 steps: Written remote evaluation, followed by a Panel evaluation.

3.1.2. Is the Expression of Interest already a selection step or only an administrative step before the project submission?

The Expression of interest is mostly an administrative step, which allows Belspo to prepare the evaluation phase, searching for experts relevant for each of the proposals received. There is however an eligibility check for the EoI in which Belspo ensures that applicants and RI respond to the criteria established in the Information File.

3.1.3. Is the evaluation of the proposals done by national reviewers, or international?

The first step in the evaluation of the Full proposals (Written remote evaluation) is carried out by international reviewers. The second step of the evaluation (Panel evaluation) has both national and international reviewers.

3.1.4. How are proposals evaluated?

Each proposal is evaluated by 3 Remote evaluators who work independently and produce a written report including scores and comments. These reports are combined to produce a pre-draft of the Consensus Report which is discussed at the Panel evaluation and adjusted accordingly. The Panel places proposals in 3 different categories: 'Not recommended for funding', 'recommended for funding' and 'highly recommended for funding'. Proposals 'not recommended for funding' will not be selected for funding. Proposals 'highly recommended for funding will be selected for funding' and proposals 'recommended for funding' will be ranked by the evaluation panel and selected for funding until the budget is exhausted.

3.2. EVALUATION CRITERIA

3.2.1. How are the criteria evaluated?

The criteria will be evaluated according to an Evaluation Matrix available on the website. The Evaluation Matrix consists of appreciation statements for each sub-criterion, following a 5-point scale from 'Poor quality' to 'Excellent quality'. Evaluators need to adhere to the appreciation statements when scoring the sub-criteria in the proposals.

3.2.2. Does the panel have any additional criteria?

As stated in the Information File, the panel must abide by the Evaluation Matrix classify the proposals into 'highly recommended for funding', 'recommended for funding' and 'not recommended for funding', taking into account additional criteria:

- Budget availability and value for money of the whole portfolio of selected proposals
- Coverage in terms of domains and types of infrastructure services
- Any kind of consideration for strategic prioritisation

3.2.3. How is the score calculated?

Each of the 3 main evaluation criteria 'Quality and relevance of the proposal and potential for international anchoring', 'Quality and efficiency of the implementation (including budget)' and 'Impact, added value and sustainability' have the same weight. The scores are calculated by obtaining the mean values of each sub-criterion.

3.2.4. What is the score threshold ?

The score threshold is 3/5. All proposals having scored below 3/5 will automatically go in the category 'not recommended for funding' and will not be discussed by the Panel. Proposals that score above this threshold in the Remote Evaluation Phase may still be placed in the 'not recommended for funding' category after the panel discussion if it is agreed that it lacks sufficient quality.

3.2.5. How strong does 'Impact of the project' count in the total score? Should it have impact on society, or can it be targeted towards scientists and/or policy?

The criterion 'Impact, added value and sustainability' has the same weight as the other 2 criteria. Within it, there are 2 sub-criteria: Potential impact of the project, and sustainability. The impact of the project needs to be addressed both for the RI and for the Federal Research

Institution. It must consider political, socio-economic and or scientific aspects of the services developed on the different categories of users.

3.2.6. In which way should stakeholders be approached?

The project must be oriented towards providing facilities, resources, or services to stakeholders. In this sense, one of the main requirements for the RI actions to be eligible are to be likely to play a key/unique role for them at the (inter)national level. The types of collaboration at different stages of the development between applicants and stakeholders must be thus detailed in the proposal. More concretely, under criterion 'Quality and relevance of the proposal and potential for international anchoring' applicants are required to explain the stakehoders which would be using the RI services (scientists, policy and decision-makers, industries, other) and how will the project meet their needs. Under criterion 'Implementation and budget', applicants must describe the articulation of the methodological approach with the stakeholders, and provide details regarding the type, moment and frequency of collaboration at the different stages of the development of the project. Finally, under 'Impact, added value and sustainability', applicants must define KPIs for the monitoring of the performance of the services delivered by the project, including feedback from stakeholders).