

FAQ POST-COVID INFORMATION SESSION 26/04/2023

BUDGET RELATED QUESTIONS

A. How many projects are you aiming to fund?

BELSPO does not fix any limit to the number of projects aimed to be funded. Applicants need to propose a project budget in line with the project objectives and the foreseen deliverables. The requested project budget and its implementation and allocation is part of the evaluation criteria. The budget will be allocated to the best projects up to the maximum available programme budget.

B. Should the budget claim include the budget for the 1-6 months implementation phase?

Yes. The submission form includes a section where the impact plan and its budget is detailed.

C. What max. amount of overhead is allowed?

Maximum 5% on personnel and functioning costs.

D. Do we need to state an estimation of the budget in the preproposal?

Yes, but this can be a first rough estimation.

E. Is there a preference for projects with smaller budgets? Put differently: do proposals asking for smaller budgets have an advantage?

No. BELSPO follows the ranking list from the expert review panel. This panel takes into account the criteria “value for money”.

F. Is there a limitation for the budget requested by a consortium? What is the estimated budget for every consortium?

There is no limitation to the budget requested. Evaluators will examine the requested project budget and its implementation and allocation in detail and provide an advice on the value for money of projects.

G. Is there a document available with the budget rules? (what kind of costs are eligible?)

The budget rules including eligible costs are included in the Full Proposal Template (section “budget” at the end of the document).

H. What is the maximum of the budget that can go to subcontracted non-academic partners?

Subcontractors (academic or commercial) can claim a maximum of 25% of the total budget of a given partner responsible for the follow-up of the subcontractor.

I. How strict is the separation between the 4 categories and their budgets. Can for instance a project combining relevant aspects of wellbeing with epidemic intelligence be considered?

Yes indeed. However, applicants must make a clear choice of topic: when a project is submitted in topic 4 (pandemic intelligence) which has its own budget (2 Mio€), it will be evaluated against the other projects submitted in this topic. When submitted in topic 1, it will be in competition against all projects submitted in topic 1, 2 and 3.

J. Would it be possible to organize a meeting in December with the financial departments?

Yes indeed. We will contact them in this respect. The meeting will however take place sooner than in December (most probably beginning of November).

SCOPE RELATED QUESTIONS

K. Is there somewhere a clear overview available of the federal competences?

Unfortunately not. In case of doubts, applicants are invited to contact BELSPO on post-covid@belspo.be

L. If we submit a project including the first 3 topics, do we need to present them independently or could we integrate them in the different sections of the call?

Proposals that cut across the three first topics are welcome. The topics are not designed as independent silos.

In the submission form, applicants can explain in what way their proposal addresses several dimension of the three topics: (extract from submission form):

B. SCOPE OF THE PROPOSAL

C.1. COMPLIANCE WITH THE SCOPE OF THE CALL (MAX. 1 PAGE)

With reference to the call text, explain how your proposal will contribute to the call? If applicable, how does the proposal cut across different themes of the call?

[Click here to enter text.](#)

M. From the information sheet, the focus of topic 4 seems very much on 'governance', rather than technicalities of surveillance (in the large sense). Is this a correct reading?

Topic 4 invites proposals to examine in depth conditions for setting up a network of pandemic intelligence. Therefore, aspects of governance and technicalities (which expertise should be embarked in the network etc.) are both pertinent.

N. Is the emphasis in this call on long-term health and well-being effects, or would the call also be open to an exploration of public engagement with science, and how the COVID pandemic affected trust and use of evidence?

From the call text, both aspects are welcome.

O. Can you mix e.g. topic 1 and 4, given the separate funding for the latter?

Cutting across these two topics is of course welcome, but since topic 4 has its own earmarked budget (2Mio€), and topics 1/2/3 also have an earmarked budget (5mio€), applicants will have to choose the topic in which their proposal is submitted and evaluated (either 1 or 4). In the submission form, they will have the possibility to explain that their proposal cuts across both topics, even if it is submitted in either one or the other.

P. Is the call purely related to Covid or is it the intention to be generically applicable to other types of epidemics that can (and will) occur in the future. (=backwards analysis or forward prediction, or both)

While topic 4 is clearly a call for a better preparedness for the future, topics 1/2/3 are clearly backwards looking and asking for lessons to be learned from the past COVID crisis.

Q. To what extent does the scope of the call opens up for research that links decision-making in COVID-response, social policies and environmental policies?

Taking onboard dimensions of the call (compulsory) and adding new dimensions not contained in the call text (such as environmental policies) is welcome.

EVALUATION RELATED QUESTIONS

R. What is the percentage of pre-proposals that will be selected to go forward for full proposals?

The screening is not a selection phase. It is only destined to stop projects that are out of scope because they are mainly not dealing with federal competences. In the best case 100% of the proposals will pass.

S. Will the international panel consist out of scientific experts or also more policy oriented experts?

We seek to have high level foreign senior foreign researchers with a good mix in disciplines, age, gender and nationality, who have experience in panel evaluations. Their role is to examine the quality of projects (in terms of science/implementation/impact), not to evaluate the Belgian policy.

T. It says that the State Secretary/Minister of Health have a final say: can they overrule the rankings proposed by the expert committee?

Yes, but he would need to argue his decision against a selection proposal based on a two-step evaluation process and an advice of the programme committee whose arguments are explained in the information file, as adopted by the council of ministers.

OTHER QUESTIONS

U. Are PhD bursaries allowed?



BELSPO prefers staff to be hired under labour contract. However, tax-free doctoral or post-doctoral scholarships can be exceptionally accepted under the following restrictive conditions: the total number of person months funded by the BELSPO project under a tax-free scholarships scheme is limited to max. 50% of the total number of person months funded under labour contract. In any case, there shall not be more than 2 tax-free scholarships/project.

V. Is there a GANTT chart for this proposal?

Yes. The submission form asks for a simplified G.T. compared to for example BRAIN-be calls. See below an extract of the submission form:

F.2. TIMETABLE AND WORK INTENSITY

Provide a timeline for your work packages, including the partners in charge and their work intensity (in Person/month). Colour, merge and name cells for each WP.

- To colour the cells go to the Home menu and use the Shading tool 
- To merge the cells, choose several cells, click right with the mouse and choose merge 
- Then enter the name of your work package and the work intensity per partner (in Person/months to be funded) in the shaded zone

- Example: Workpackage 1 is management of the project, this includes 6 person/months for the Coordinator (C) and 0 person months for Partner 2, 3 and 4.

WP1: management – C=6PM, P2/P3/P4=0

	Mo 1-6	Mo 7-12	Mo 13-18	Mo 19-24	Mo 25-30	Mo 31-36
WP1						
WP2						
WP3						

W. When you say 'impact' - is this impact of research on addressing/managing long-term effects of COVID pandemic OR impact with respect to future-proofing (i.e. preparedness)?

Lessons to be learned from both aspects are welcome.

X. For the gender aspect: do we need to state names of individual researchers that will work on the project?

Applicants will and can only state the name of the researcher to be paid by BELSPO when these are already identified. Names cannot be inserted for personnel yet to be hired in case of selection. In terms of gender, applicants must consider the gender balance in hiring or appointing personnel.

Y. What is the eligibility for applying in terms of seniority of the researcher? I assume that it needs to be submitted by a professor-level promoter? Or is it not the case?

The network is composed of partners appointed by their institution and who can therefore submit a project on behalf of their institution (personnel appointé/Zappers). Personnel with a fixed term contract (phds, post-docs...) cannot submit a proposal in their name and/or on behalf of their institution.

Z. Follow up on promoters: do they need to be (tenured or tenure track) full time ZAP or is 10% temporary ZAP also allowed?

As long as they are under ZAP status they are eligible to submit.

AA. Where do we need to add researchers who will work on the project under the supervision of the coordinator? Is it as separate “partner paid by the project”?

In the submission form, a section is dedicated to justify expenses. This is where you can detail the personnel paid by BELSPO and the personnel not paid by BELSPO :

Personnel costs					
	Staff name (if identified) and qualifications and experience	Number of P/M to be financed by BELSPO <i>(hint: check P/M in the Timetable in section F.2.)</i>	Estimated full time monthly cost ¹²	Total	P/M not financed (including supervision by partner)
Coordinator	Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.
	Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.	Click here to enter text.		

BB. Are there any specific deliverables to be met?

BELSPO asks for an initial report (to be submitted within the three months following the conclusion of the research contract) followed by an administrative report each subsequent year. In the last year of the project, the administrative report need not be submitted as it is replaced by the scientific final report.

CC. Is participation of non-academic actors incentivized (ASBL, NGOs, etc)?

Yes, this is strongly advised in the follow-up committees and in the impact plan. They can also be involved in the research itself (via focus groups, living labs...). They cannot be a partner under BELSPO funding in the network, since they do not have the pursuit of scientific research in the statutes of their institution.

DD. Are international partners eligible to participate in this call

Yes, they can be a partner in a network, in which case they will need to bring their own funding (they are not eligible to receive funds from BELSPO). They can also be subcontractors when their task is focused and their expertise is not present in the network. Since international partners do not receive BELSPO funding, they will not sign the project contract in case the proposal is selected for funding.

^{1 1} Full time monthly cost must include the withholding tax on research and development (cfr article 275³, WIB 92 - edition 2022)

EE. To what extent is seniority/previous success with funding taken into account?

Past experience is not an evaluation criterion and is therefore not taken into account in any step of the selection.