

RULES AND REGULATIONS

"FRFS-WELBIO" CALL FOR PROJECTS 2017: STARTING GRANT (SGR), ADVANCED GRANT (AGR), CONTINUATION GRANT (CGR)

**ADOPTED BY
THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE FRFS
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CHAPTER I: SCOPE

Article 1

The Fund for Strategic Fundamental Research (FRFS) is an Associated Fund of the F.R.S.-FNRS which funds the fundamental research of excellence in strategic axis, within the framework of a mission assigned by the Walloon region.

The FRFS-WELBIO is the FRFS strategic axis in life sciences.

The Governing Board of the virtual Walloon institute of fundamental research of excellence in life sciences (ASBL WELBIO) constitutes the animation and valorisation platform (PAVA) of the FRFS-WELBIO, named WELBIO.

WELBIO aims at supporting fundamental research by promoting research projects rigorously selected among the universities of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation in order to translate scientific achievements in medical, pharmaceutical and veterinary biotechnology applications. The Walloon Government has guaranteed the FRFS-WELBIO significant resources for several years to support senior researchers who are proposing excellent scientific research projects with an undeniable valorisation potential.

The Rules and Regulations hereinafter shall only apply to applications submitted under call 2017 via the instruments as referred to in article 2 and giving access to the funding of research programmes lead by team leaders who are assigned as principal investigator (PI).

Article 2

The "FRFS-WELBIO" Call for projects enables to apply for funding through 3 instruments:

- Starting grant (SGR),
- Advanced grant (AGR),
- Continuation grant (CGR).

FRFS-WELBIO research projects are for 4 years divided in 2 periods of 2 years.

Article 3

The research programme must be conducted within a university from the French-speaking Community of Belgium that will sign a collaboration agreement between the FRFS-WELBIO, WELBIO as well as with the university of the PI.

Article 4

The PI is the person in charge of the scientific responsibility as well as the administrative management of the funded research programme.

According to the collaboration agreement, the PI is also a researcher for WELBIO.

CHAPTER II: CANDIDACY

II- A.: ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR THE PI

Article 5

The F.R.S.-FNRS ensures that the eligibility criteria are met.

By the validation deadline fixed for the academic authorities (rectors) to validate the application, the PI applicant should be:

- Either a Research Associate, a Senior Research Associate or a Research Director of the F.R.S.-FNRS and assuming the function and duties of such position,
- Or a researcher permanently appointed or on probation, but holding a position equivalent to a permanent position in a university of the French-speaking community of Belgium (CFB).

If the PI applicant who is appointed permanently and accesses pension / becomes professor emeritus after the validation deadline fixed for the academic authorities (rectors) and before the end of the funding scheme in case of granting, the submission of the application shall be subject to the prior approval of the Head of institution where the research will be carried out.

The PI applicant permanently appointed who will access pension / become professor emeritus by the validation deadline fixed for the academic authorities (rectors) is not eligible¹.

Article 6

The PI applicant to the "Starting grant (SGR)" instrument will be holding a Ph.D. obtained after defending a thesis and awarded by an academic institution for 12 years maximum. This period shall expire on the closing date of validation by the academic authorities (rectors).

The maximum period as referred to in paragraph 1 is extended for one year per childbirth occurring after obtaining the Ph.D. and defending a thesis.

Article 7

The "Advanced grant (AGR)" instrument is only applicable to experienced researchers.

Article 8

The CGR is only applicable to WELBIO researchers whose initial FRFS-WELBIO project has come to an end, should the researcher still meet the eligibility criteria as referred to in article 5.

A CGR should assure continuity in the running of the initial grant, i.e., whether a Starting grant or an Advanced grant continuation.

WELBIO researchers whose research works have led to actions towards valorisation are encouraged to submit a CGR application.

Researchers whose research works might not come up with actions towards valorisation, or researchers who, for other reasons, would like to propose a new research axis, may submit a new application, should they meet the eligibility criteria.

¹ This ineligibility criterion does not apply to PI applicants submitting a renewal application.

II- B.: CUMULATION RULE

Article 9

The PI applicant may only submit a single application:

- Through the "Starting grant (SGR)" or "Advanced grant (AGR)" instruments;
- Through the "Continuation grant (CGR)" instrument.

PIs, whose initial four-year FRFS-WELBIO project is still running, may not submit any application within the framework of the Call.

II- C.: APPLICATION SUBMISSION

Article 10

The "FRFS-WELBIO" Call for projects is opened according to a decision from the FRFS Board of Trustees.

The opening of this call for projects is published on the F.R.S.-FNRS website <http://www.fnrs.be/> and on the WELBIO website <http://welbio.org>.

Applications can only be submitted online in English through SEMAPHORE, the management platform dedicated to calls for applications at the following address <https://applications.frs-fnrs.be/>.

All applications are subject to a procedure including two successive electronic validations on the dates that will be indicated when the call is published:

- a. The validation by the PI applicant, responsible proponent accountable to the Fund administration: it accounts as a confirmation that the application file is complete.
- b. The validation by the research unit (or Board of Education) of the academic institution to which the PI applicant is related – the Authority to which the application file is transferred once the PI applicant has given her/his consent. This authority may accept or refuse the application. The validation deadline fixed for the rectors puts a final end to the call for projects.

Applications that have not been validated within the time-frame of the call for projects cannot be taken into account.

A mini-guide specifies the validation dates.

II- D.: RENEWAL

Article 11

The PI who benefitted from a funding for the first two years of the four-year programme may submit a mid-term scientific report as a renewal application for the last two years. The approval of the supervising authority of the hosting institution is required.

Article 12

The renewal application may be submitted online in English through SEMAPHORE, the management platform dedicated to calls for applications at the following address <https://applications.frs-fnrs.be/> and includes two successive electronic validations detailed under article 10.

Article 13

The research project Renewal is granted within the limits of the FRFS-WELBIO financial resources available and subject to the assessment of a mid-term scientific report by the Scientific Commission in charge of assessing the initial application, and based on feedbacks, if any, from the General Manager of WELBIO.

CHAPTER III: “STARTING GRANT (SGR)”, “ADVANCED GRANT (AGR)” AND “CONTINUATION GRANT” (CGR) INSTRUMENTS

Article 14

The starting date of the AGR, SGR and CGR instruments is set for the 1st October and the ending date for the 30th September.

Article 15

An application via the SGR instrument enables to apply for funding of a maximum of 200 k€ per year.

An application via the AGR instrument enables to apply for funding of a maximum of 350 k€ per year.

An application via the CGR instrument enables to apply for funding equivalent to the initial grant obtained (SGR or AGR).

Article 16

As part of the SGR, AGR and CGR instruments the allocated fund can cover 3 types of expenses:

- Human resources
- Operating
- Equipment

Article 17

The categories falling within the scope of human resources² are detailed in the table below:

² *For all categories (Doctoral Researcher, Non-doctoral Researcher, Postdoctoral Researcher, Short-term Postdoctoral Researcher, technician), the PI applicant shall contact the relevant service of her/his university to obtain an estimate of the total personnel costs involved based on the scientific seniority.*

Amounts cannot be changed after application submission.

Categories	Activity	
	Part time	Full time
Doctoral Researcher - grant scheme	n/a	x
Doctoral / Non-doctoral Researcher - salary scheme	x	x
Postdoctoral Researcher - salary scheme	x	x
Technician - salary scheme	x	x
Short-term Postdoctoral Researcher ³ - grant scheme	n/a	x

n/a = not applicable

The host university shall determine the scheme (grant or salary) for the personnel to employ.

Personnel may be recruited for **minimum one month** and this period must not exceed the maximal duration of the funding application.

The identity of human resources is not required when submitting an application, however, the human resources category must be specified (see above table). Curricula vitae are not provided to the members of the Scientific Commission.

Article 18

The eligible operating expenses are the following:

- Consumables
- Costs for small scientific and technical equipment
- Costs for equipment maintenance and insurance
- Internal services
- Trainings
- Missions⁴
- Overhead costs (15% of the eligible expenses for personnel and operating costs excluding subcontracting).
- Subcontracting
- Software

Article 19

The eligible expenses for equipment are the following:

- Acquisition cost of cutting-edge scientific equipment essential for scientific research
- Amortisation costs of scientific and technical equipment essential for scientific research

³ The Short term Postdoctoral Fellowship (CTP) is applicable for a maximal duration of 3 years. The Short term Postdoctoral fellow's stay should not exceed the duration of the research agreement. The CTP should be in an "international mobility situation" and should not have resided or carried out his/her main activity (job, studies...) in Belgium for more than 24 months during the 3 last years directly before the first stay as Postdoctoral fellow.

⁴ Missions carried out by research staff for research purposes having their remuneration partially or fully or not included in eligible expenses.

Article 20

Teams' personnel other than the staff whose remuneration is included in the project may include amongst others:

- members of the teaching, scientific, administrative or technical staff pertaining to a university of the French-speaking Community of Belgium,
- members who benefit from a grant allocated by a Belgian or a foreign body promoting research.

No compensation can be granted to the PI or to the above-mentioned staff.

CHAPTER IV: SGR, AGR AND CGR APPLICATIONS EXAMINATION

Article 21

Evaluation procedure of the FRFS-WELBIO is detailed in appendix 2.

CHAPTER V: FINANCIAL PROVISIONS

Article 22

Grants allocated are subject to a 2-year research agreement.

This agreement bears the signature of the following parties:

- **The principal investigator (PI)** commits to carrying out or pursuing the subsidised research and to devote at least 40% of his/her research time to the project;
- **The FRFS-WELBIO** commits to allocating grants covering the personnel costs, the operating and equipment costs, each year covered by the agreement;
- **Welbio** ensures full compliance with the valorisation provisions mentioned in the research agreement;
- **The host institution** provides the necessary logistics but made no commitment to take on this charge after the expiration date of the research agreement.

The agreement provides for unilateral termination clauses, which must include a period of notice.

Article 23

Grants allocated to the PI should cover personnel, operating and equipment costs. Each of these sections may include subsections.

Transfers between subsections of the same section are unrestricted. However, prior written approval of the FRFS-WELBIO is required for transfers between sections.

Article 24

Agreements allow the PI to recruit scientific and technical staff, however, the recruitment may not exceed the duration of the agreement and should be done in accordance with the scales and regulations in force within the hosting academic institution.

Article 25

The financial participation of the FRFS-WELBIO is limited to the total amount mentioned in the agreement.

Article 26

The grants may be postponed to the fiscal year following the one for which they are granted. The remaining amount at the expiry of the research agreement will be recovered by the FRFS-WELBIO.

Article 27

At the end of the research agreement, after gathering the supporting documents, the FRFS-WELBIO will establish a final account and propose the annulment of any remaining budget.

The PI is always notified of this procedure and should react as soon as possible if he/she wants to amend the final account.

Article 28

The grants at the disposal of the PI are managed by the financial department of the institution to which they are attached.

The financial department of the institution is invited to send the supporting documents to the F.R.S.-FNRS as soon as possible. Supporting documents must be sent within 5 months after the end of the agreement, before the 1st March following the end of the research agreement.

CHAPTER VI: MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

Article 29

Any device acquired with a credit from the FRFS-WELBIO becomes the property of the host institution, to which the recipient of the credit is attached.

The purchase of any device must be done with due respect for the provisions defined by the relevant department of the host institution.

This institution commits, however, to putting the mentioned device at the disposal of the researchers involved for the time needed in order to pursue the research which led to its purchase in the first place. In addition, the host institution commits not to alienating or lending the equipment without the approval of the FRFS-WELBIO.

In the event that the device was purchased with the provision of an additional funding, the Board of Trustees of the FRFS will settle the ownership issue with the competent authorities.

Article 30

Given that grants are exclusively allocated for the execution of a research programme approved by the FRFS-WELBIO, PIs are required to use them solely for that purpose. Grants or any remaining budget will be recovered by the FRFS-WELBIO as soon as they are not used for this purpose anymore.

Any fundamental change in the ongoing research programme must obtain the prior approval of the FRFS-WELBIO and of WELBIO.

CHAPTER VII: RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS OF THE PI

Article 31

Any funded research programme must comply with the legal provisions in force regarding ethics.

Article 32

PIs must submit to the rules imposed by the academic authority of the host institution where they work and observe its regulations. Regarding the FRFS-WELBIO, PIs must also adhere to the collaboration agreement between the FRFS-WELBIO, WELBIO and the university to which the PI is related.

Article 33

Throughout the duration of the research programme approved by the FRFS-WELBIO, the PI is forbidden to pursue any research for third parties on the subject of the research programme unless prior written approval from the FRFS-WELBIO.

Article 34

The PI must send administrative reports to the FRFS-WELBIO. Those reports should summarise the scientific publications, filed patent applications, valorisation avenues and the composition of the team. They should be due on the dates as referred to in the research agreement.

The PI shall provide a short scientific report on the research subsidised by the FRFS-WELBIO for 2 years.

Article 35

Pursuant to the "[Regulation](#) on the application of the Open Access policy to scientific publications resulting from research programmes supported by the F.R.S.-FNRS and its associated funds", any scientific publication resulting partially or fully from the funding granted through the call for projects "FRFS-WELBIO" instrument shall mention the source of this funding as follows:

This work was supported by the Fonds de la Recherche Scientifique - FNRS for the FRFS-WELBIO under Grant(s) n° (agreement number).

The PI, WELBIO researcher, F.R.S.-FNRS researcher / member of the university does mention his/her double affiliation in each of her/his publications or communications.

CHAPTER VIII: RESULTS VALORISATION

Article 36

WELBIO ensures, with assistance from the experts, the follow-up of the project progresses, maintenance of confidentiality, detection of results with a valorisation potential, and adherence to the necessary constraints regarding publication for the protection of intellectual property.

Article 37

Intellectual property of the results from the research conducted within the framework of the research agreement is the exclusive property of the university of the French-Speaking Community of Belgium.

Article 38

The valorisation of intellectual property is the responsibility of WELBIO, which performs this task through a valorisation committee, including the university of the French-speaking Community of Belgium, a representative from the university's Technology Transfer Office, the PI and WELBIO.

The valorisation Committee may invite external people, subject to signature of a confidentiality agreement.

APPENDIX 1: ATTACHED INSTITUTIONS GIVING ACCESS TO THE FUNDING OF THE FRFS-WELBIO

SGR / AGR / CGR Instruments
"FRFS-WELBIO" Call for projects

INSTITUTIONS DE RATTACHEMENT / ATTACHED INSTITUTIONS

SGR, AGR AND CGR INSTRUMENTS

<p>Investigateur principal (PI)</p>	<p>➤ Universités de la Communauté française de Belgique (CFB) Universities of the French-speaking Community of Belgium (CFB)</p> <p>Université Catholique de Louvain (UCL) Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB) Université de Liège (ULg) Université de Mons (UMons) Université de Namur (UNamur)</p>
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APPENDIX 2: EVALUATION PROCEDURE OF THE FRFS-WELBIO

SGR / AGR /CGR Instruments
"FRFS-WELBIO" Call for projects

1. THE SCIENTIFIC COMMISSION

The evaluation and the selection follow several steps under the responsibility of the Scientific Commission. The procedure includes a priority ranking which is submitted to the Board of Trustees of the FRFS and the Governing Board of WELBIO. The Board of Trustees of the FRFS should decide on the granting or rejection after the Governing Board of WELBIO has acknowledged the proposals.

The Scientific Commission is made up of 13 to 15 internationally renowned experts in the domains of life sciences, among which:

- 9 to 11 members located outside Belgium or at least outside of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation;
- 4 members within the universities of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation. These members have an advisory role only; they may not vote and may not be considered as rapporteurs.

A Guidance Committee of the FRFS-WELBIO, made up of 3 WELBIO academic administrators and members from the Guidance Committee of the F.R.S.-FNRS with competences in the field, suggests a composition for the Scientific Commission.

The composition of the Scientific Commission is published on the F.R.S.-FNRS website <http://www.fnrs.be/> and the WELBIO website <http://welbio.org/>.

2. EVALUATION CRITERIA

The evaluation criteria are: the quality of the curriculum vitae, considering the team size and the funding already granted; the quality of the data upon which the project is built; the originality and feasibility of the project; the quality of the potential team and the focus on valorisation.

For researchers who have already benefited from a funding from a previous call for projects, concrete actions toward a potential valorisation of the results will also be assessed.

These criteria are detailed in the table at the bottom of the document.

3. PROPOSALS EVALUATION

3.1 GENERAL PRINCIPLES

The principle of a three-step procedure has been adopted: individual evaluations by experts of the first step, preselection of the projects by the Scientific Commission, followed by a consolidation within the Scientific Commission to draw up the final ranking.

During the first step, the proposals are reviewed by several experts. Each expert works individually and remotely through [SEMAPHORE](#), and evaluates the proposal according to the evaluation criteria detailed in the table at the bottom of the document.

An expert is usually in charge of reviewing several proposals. However, the expert is not required to establish any ranking between them, as each proposal must be reviewed independently. A marking grid of the proposals is provided in section 3.3, with the intention to standardise the grading system.

The names of the experts linked to a proposal remain undisclosed.

3.2 EXPERTS APPOINTMENT CONDITIONS AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The FRFS-WELBIO shall send a letter of appointment to each selected expert, whether they are an individual reviewer or a member of a Scientific Commission. This letter constitutes an agreement between the FRFS-WELBIO and the expert, specifying the precise terms and conditions for the expert: it imposes respect of a code of conduct and lays down essential regulations in terms of confidentiality. It includes the description of tasks s/he is entrusted with, as well as the conditions for the remuneration and reimbursement of expenses.

Upon information provided by the experts, the FRFS-WELBIO has put in place a mechanism that ensures they do not face any conflict of interest regarding the proposals they are invited to evaluate. To that end, experts must sign a declaration stating that there is no conflict of interest at the time of the appointment and that they commit to informing the FRFS-WELBIO in case where such a conflict would arise during the fulfilment of their tasks.

3.3 PROPOSALS GRADING SYSTEM

The experts (individual experts as well as members of the Scientific Commissions) shall review the aspects to be considered for each evaluation criterion and classify the proposals as follows:

GRADES	
A+	<u>outstanding</u>
A	<u>excellent</u>
A-	<u>very good</u>
B+	<u>good</u>
B	<u>average</u>
B-	<u>weak</u>
C	<u>insufficient</u>

3.4 STEP 1 - INDIVIDUAL EVALUATIONS

Experts selection

- Potential experts registered on [SEMAPHORE](#) are identified according to their field of expertise, based on the descriptor fields selected that they may, if necessary, complete with unrestricted keywords and on the project.
- The applicant indicates up to 5 experts he/she does not wish to have as reviewer for reasons of a potential conflict of interest.
- For each proposal, the potential experts confirm whether or not they are competent to assess the project based on the title and on the summary of the project. They also confirm that they do not face a potential conflict of interest with regards to the evaluation of the given proposal.
- The President of the Scientific Commission validates step 1 experts assignment performed by the F.R.S.-FNRS administration.

Individual evaluation procedure

- The projects are assessed by at least 2 scientific experts.
- The experts of a given proposal work individually, drawing up an evaluation report for this proposal using the electronic form provided.
- The individual evaluation report of the expert cannot be subsequently changed.

3.5 STEP 2 - SCIENTIFIC COMMISSION

3.5.1 MISSION OF THE SCIENTIFIC COMMISSION

The Scientific Commission shall meet at the F.R.S.-FNRS (Rue d'Egmont, 5 – 1000 Brussels) to assess the proposals based on the evaluation criteria, which are provided both to the applicants and the first-step experts. In order to carry out their work, the Scientific Commission has at its disposal the application files (on [SEMAPHORE](#)), individual evaluation reports (step 1) and consolidated draft reports prepared by the rapporteurs.

3.5.2 PRESELECTION BY THE SCIENTIFIC COMMISSION

Role of the Rapporteurs and the co-rapporteurs

Each project is assigned to a single “rapporteur” who is assisted by a “co-rapporteur” for the task.

- The rapporteur shall prepare the work and the debates of the Scientific Commission, through the elaboration of a consolidated evaluation draft report, based on individual evaluations. The draft report will afterwards be reviewed by the Scientific Commission.
- The co-rapporteur is not required to draw up any evaluation report but will be invited to express his/her opinion during the meeting of the Scientific Commission to bring a complementary perspective or a different point of view.

Role of the Scientific Commission

The Scientific Commission shall proceed to a preselection based on step 1 individual evaluations and rapporteurs reports. The quality of both the applicant and the project are the main criteria taken into account in the preselection process. For projects submitted via a Continuation grant (CGR), the Scientific Commission should pay attention to the originality criterion already assessed by the time of the evaluation of the initial project.

For each project, the valorisation potential will be assessed under WELBIO's control.

The valorisation of research results is defined as the outcome of technology transfer activities that enable an economic player to develop new products or services based on the discoveries or inventions resulting from the research carried out by the university teams. These activities include attention to the protection of intellectual property (such as patent filing), licensing, the sale of patents or the creation of spin-offs.

Results of this valorisation assessment shall be reported in factual reports for each project and submitted to the Scientific Commission in order to include the evaluation of the criterion regarding the valorisation issue each project should address in the global evaluation and establish the final ranking.

3.6 STEP 3 – FINAL RANKING BY THE SCIENTIFIC COMMISSION

During the meeting, the Scientific Commission may interview preselected applicants to a Starting grant (SGR). The Scientific Commission shall establish a consolidated ranking of the proposals and budget recommendations and shall submit this ranking to the Board of Trustees of the FRFS and the Governing Board of WELBIO.

The Scientific Commission validates the final evaluation report to be sent to the applicant.

4. NOTIFICATION OF THE FUNDING DECISION

The funding decision (granting or rejection) is within the competence of the Board of Trustees of the FRFS after gathering the proposals of the Governing Board of WELBIO.

The decision on the allocation and the amounts granted is notified in writing to the applicant by the F.R.S.-FNRS Secretary-General and the General Manager of WELBIO.

The administrative staff of the F.R.S.-FNRS shall communicate to the applicants:

- the final evaluation report and,
- the evaluation reports by the first-step individual experts on an anonymous basis.

EVALUATION CRITERIA
"FRFS-WELBIO" CALL FOR PROJECTS

<p>QUALITY OF THE APPLICANT</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Adequacy between the level of education and experience of the applicant to carry out the project proposed. ➤ "Leadership" at global level. ➤ Productivity: number and quality of the publications considering the size of the team and the grants already obtained. ➤ Adequacy of the time that will be devoted by the applicant to the project ("percent effort"). ➤ For "junior" researchers holding a Ph.D. for 12 years maximum: scientific independency of the applicant whose salary is guaranteed independently of the project throughout its duration. ➤ Other...
<p>QUALITY OF THE PROJECT</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Does the project address an important issue? ➤ Questions to consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the project properly planned? • Is the project feasible? • Is the project based on a hypothesis? • Is the experimental approach appropriate? • Are the preliminary results on which the project is based quality results? • Is the presentation clear? • If a "screening" approach is used, are the organisation and the analysis of the results explained? ➤ Adequacy between the proposed budget and the objectives of the project. ➤ Adequacy between the requested budget and the time devoted by the applicant to the project. ➤ Other...
<p>FOCUS ON VALORISATION</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Scientific originality: does the project include new concepts or new approaches? Are the objectives original and innovative? Does the project question established paradigms? ➤ Technical originality, use of new technologies. ➤ Application potential of the results that could lead to the development of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • therapeutical products: cell therapy, vaccines, targets identification..., • diagnoses: identification of biological markers, genetical..., • production processes, • predictive models: in vivo, in vitro, • other. ➤ Is the patent landscape sufficiently open considering the new intellectual property that can be generated by the project?

EVALUATION CRITERIA
"FRFS-WELBIO" CALL FOR PROJECTS

For researchers who already have benefited from a funding from a previous call for projects (CGR):

- Have concrete actions been taken toward valorisation of the results?
- May the proposed research lead to valorisation of the results obtained with previous WELBIO funding?
- Does the proposed research present any return on investment potential?
- Is the Work package dedicated to valorisation convincing?