

MINI GUIDE WEL-T INVESTIGATOR PROGRAMME 2024

1. SCHEDULE

Opening of the call on the web-based application of the F.R.S.-FNRS [e-space](#) for the online submission: **TUESDAY 17TH SEPTEMBER 2024**.

FRFS-WEL-T CALL - INVESTIGATOR PROGRAMME 2024			
STEPS	RESPONSIBLE PERSONS/BODY	INSTRUMENT ¹	
		STARTING (STG)	ADVANCED (ADV)
OPENING OF THE CALL	PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR (PI)	Tuesday 17th September 2024	
DEADLINES FOR ELECTRONIC VALIDATION ²	PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR (PI)	Thursday, 7 November 2024 - 2pm	
	RECTOR	Thursday, 14 November 2024 - 2pm	
PROJECTS' ASSESSMENT STEPS	INDIVIDUAL ASSESSMENTS BY EXPERTS AND CONSOLIDATION BY THE SCIENTIFIC COMMISSION	December – April 2025	
INTERVIEWS OF STARTING CANDIDATES	SCIENTIFIC COMMISSION	April 10-16 2025*	
MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS FRFS		June 2025	
START OF CONVENTION		1 October 2025	
END OF CONVENTION		30 September 2027 (30 September 2029 in case of reconduction)	

* The exact date and time, and the practical modalities of the interview, will be communicated to the PIs in due course. It is the responsibility of the candidates in the Starting category to be available on this date, no exceptions will be made.

2. SCOPE OF THE “WEL-T INVESTIGATOR PROGRAMME” CALL

The **Fund for Strategic Fundamental Research (FRFS)** is an Associated Fund of the F.R.S.-FNRS. Its purpose, within the framework of a mission assigned by the Walloon region, is to fund fundamental research of excellence in strategic axes through rigorously selected programmes carried out by Principal Investigators within the universities of the French-speaking Community of Belgium.

The **WEL Research Institute** is an inter-university research institute whose mission is to support excellence in strategic fundamental research within its departments, with a view to translate disruptive innovations into a societal impact in the fields of health and sustainable transition.

The **WEL-T** (Walloon Excellence in Technology) funding instrument corresponds to a strategic axis of the FRFS and a department of the WEL Research Institute. It supports strategic fundamental research of excellence in engineering, chemistry and physics with a view to

¹ See section “Characteristics of the instruments”

² All times are Brussels local time.

developing breakthrough innovations for industrial applications aimed at sustainable transition. Through this instrument, Wallonia grants significant resources over several years to WEL-T Investigators within the WEL Research Institute to develop ambitious research programmes and achieve major scientific breakthroughs. These programmes constitute a pillar of the Investigators' laboratory and are flexible, so the research scope can be adapted over time as needed. Investigators within WEL Research Institute must demonstrate a combination of scientific excellence, an awareness of unmet sustainable transition needs in their field, and a willingness to seek opportunities for application of their discoveries.

3. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE INSTRUMENTS

The call WEL-T INVESTIGATOR PROGRAMME 2024 has 2 funding instruments:

► Starting

Funding for the Starting instrument is maximum € 200k on an annual average over a 2-year funding period (years 1 and 2, years 3 and 4).

The applicant to the Starting instrument must be, by the validation deadline of his/her application by the academic authorities (rectors), holder of the academic degree of doctor, obtained after defense of a thesis and delivered by an academic institution, for a maximum of 12 years. The applicant must demonstrate scientific autonomy within the laboratory in which he/she evolves (the candidate has e.g. : publications as last author, publications independent from his/her usual environment,). The maximum period of 12 years is increased by one year by childbirth and/or adoption.

The eligible candidates who have been awarded a Starting Grant in a previous FRFS-WEL-T call, regardless of their seniority, are not concerned by this category.

► Advanced

Funding for the Advanced instrument is maximum € 350k on an annual average over a 2-year funding period (years 1 and 2, years 3 and 4).

The instrument Advanced is open to the following researchers:

- Experienced with a seniority of more than 12 years ;
- And/or
- Who have been awarded a Starting Grant in a previous FRFS-WEL-T call, regardless of their seniority.

The FRFS-WEL-T research programme spans a 4-year period. It is renewable every 4 years based on positive evaluation by the Scientific Commission. Each 4-year programme is divided in two 2-year funding periods. At the end of the first two years, administrative reconduction for the second funding period is conducted within the limits of the financial resources available to the FRFS for the WEL-T strategic axis and in the absence of serious ethical or productivity breaches (article 34 of the regulation).

4. ELIGIBLES COSTS

The eligible costs that can be requested through the Starting or Advanced instruments are of 3 types:

- Personnel
- Operating

Categories related to the **personnel**³ are detailed in the table below:

Categories	Activity	
	Part time	Full time
Doctoral Researcher – Grant ⁴ or Salary	x ⁴	x
Postdoctoral Researcher ⁵	x	x
Non-doctoral Researcher – Salary	x	x
Technician - Salary	x	x

On the date of the hiring by the host institution, Doctoral Researchers must have obtained one of the following degrees:

- 1° a master degree for a value of at least 120 credits awarded by a Higher Education Institution within the French-speaking Community of Belgium;
- 2° a master degree for a value of at least 120 credits awarded by a Higher Education Institution within the Dutch-speaking Community, German-speaking Community or from the Royal Military Academy;
- 3° another degree as referred to in Article 115 of the French-speaking Community of Belgium Decree of 7th November 2013 that defines the landscape of Higher Education and the academic studies organisation.

On the date of the hiring by the host institution, Postdoctoral Researchers must have obtained a doctoral academic degree after the defence of a thesis.

Holders of a Master's degree (or equivalent) or a Ph.D. are not eligible under the Technician category.

Holders of a Master's degree (or equivalent) are eligible for Non-doctoral Researcher category. The Non-doctoral Researcher cannot, under any circumstances, conduct any personal research work contributing to a Ph.D. degree during the working hours devoted to this function.

The host university shall determine the appropriate scheme (grant or salary) for the personnel listed in the proposed budget.

For the research agreement covering years 1 and 2 of the research program, a deferral of the employment of staff planned but not effective at the start date of the agreement is allowed. This deferral, equivalent to the duration of the employment lost, may not exceed the end date of the agreement by more than 6 months. The duration of the employment initially granted may not be exceeded. The staff concerned will be dedicated to the FRFS-WEL-T program for the duration of their employment.

The eligible **operating** expenses are the following:

- Consumables

³ *For all personnel, the promotor shall contact the relevant department of their host institution to determine their status and obtain an estimate of the total personnel costs involved based on the scientific seniority.*

Total personnel costs cannot be changed after application submission. However, if funding is granted, these may be adjusted if necessary in accordance with Article 23 of the Regulations.

⁴ *In case of a grant, the Doctoral Researcher must only be hired on a full-time basis.*

⁵ *The promoters shall contact the relevant department of their host institution in order to determine the Postdoctoral Researcher's status (Mobility situation, grant, employee...) and the work time.*

- Costs for small scientific and technical equipment
- Costs for equipment⁶ maintenance and insurance
- Internal services
- Trainings
- Missions⁷
- Publications
- Overhead costs equals to 15% of the personnel costs and of the operating costs (except subcontracting costs and equipments)
- Subcontracting
- Software

The eligible expenses for **equipment** are the following:

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

5. PROCEDURE AND EVALUATION CRITERIA (EX-ANTE EVALUATION)

The evaluation follows several steps under the responsibility of the Scientific Commission that lead to a priority ranking which is submitted to the Boards of Trustees (BoT) of the FRFS and of the WEL Research Institute. The FRFS BoT decides on the allocation of funding based on the proposals of the Governing Board of the WEL Research Institute.

The evaluation criteria are:

- the quality of the applicant;
- the quality of the programme;
- the focus on valorisation of the intellectual property.

The procedure and the evaluation criteria are detailed in the [Appendix 2](#) of the regulation.

6. OPEN ACCESS POLICY

PIs are Investigators of the WEL Research Institute and members of the university and are required to mention their double affiliation in each of their publications or communications as follows:

* *University name, University address, Belgium*

* *WEL Research Institute, avenue Pasteur, 6, 1300 Wavre, Belgium*

Pursuant to the “Rules and [Regulations](#) 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 an instrument of the call FRFS-WEL-T INVESTIGATOR PROGRAMME shall mention the source of this funding as follows:

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

7. VALORISATION OF THE INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

WEL Research Institute ensures, with the help of its experts, the monitoring of research progresses, the respect of confidentiality, the detection of results with a valorisation potential,

⁶ Only equipment acquired with WEL-T funding

⁷ Missions carried out for research purposes by research staff having their remuneration partially or fully or not included in eligible expenses.

and the respect of the publication constraints necessary for the protection of intellectual property resulting from the Investigator programme.

The intellectual property of the results obtained within the framework of the research agreement is the exclusive property of the university of the French-Speaking Community of Belgium in which the research was carried out.

The valorisation of intellectual property is the responsibility of WEL Research Institute, which carries out this mission within the framework of a valorisation committee, comprising the university of the French-speaking Community of Belgium, represented by a representative from the university's Technology Transfer Office, the PI and WEL Research Institute.

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

ALL DOCUMENTS, GUIDES AND REGULATIONS AND PRIVACY POLICY ARE AVAILABLE AT <https://www.frs-fnrs.be/en/reglements-guides> AND <https://www.frs-fnrs.be/en/charte-vie-privee>

