

MINI GUIDE WELBIO INVESTIGATOR PROGRAMME 2025

1. SCHEDULE

Opening of the call on the web-based application of the F.R.S.-FNRS [e-space](#) for the online submission: **FRIDAY 12TH SEPTEMBER 2025**.

FRFS-WELBIO CALL - INVESTIGATOR PROGRAMME 2025			
STEPS	RESPONSIBLE PERSONS/BODY	INSTRUMENTS ¹	
		STARTING (STG)	ADVANCED (ADV)
OPENING OF THE CALL	PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR (PI)	Friday, 12 September	
DEADLINES FOR ELECTRONIC VALIDATION ²	PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR (PI)	Tuesday, 28 October 2025 - 2pm	
	RECTOR	Tuesday, 4 Novembre 2025- 2pm	
PROJECTS' ASSESSMENT STAPES	INDIVIDUAL ASSESSMENTS BY EXPERTS AND CONSOLIDATION BY THE SCIENTIFIC COMMISSION	November 2025 – March 2026	
INTERVIEWS OF STARTING CANDIDATES	SCIENTIFIC COMMISSION	End March 2026*	
MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS FRFS		April 2026	
START OF CONVENTION		1 June 2026	
END OF CONVENTION		31 May 2028 (31 May 2030 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 these dates, no exceptions will be made.

2. SCOPE OF THE FRFS-WELBIO 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 **WELBIO** (Walloon Excellence in Life Sciences and Biotechnology) funding instrument corresponds to a strategic axis of the FRFS and a department of the WEL Research Institute. It supports fundamental research in the life sciences, with a view to translate discoveries into industrial applications in all fields of medical, pharmaceutical and veterinary biotechnology. Through this funding instrument, Wallonia grants significant resources over several years to WELBIO Investigators within the WEL Research Institute to develop ambitious research programs and achieve major

¹ See section "Characteristics of the instruments"

² All times are Brussels local time.

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.

The applicants to this call must demonstrate a combination of scientific excellence, an awareness of unmet health-related needs in their field, and an understanding of the strategy required for translating their discoveries into practical applications which could be exploited on the market.

3. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE INSTRUMENTS

The FRFS-WELBIO research programme spans a 4-year period 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 WELBIO strategic axis and in the absence of serious ethical or productivity issues (article 34 of the Rules and Regulations).

The call WELBIO INVESTIGATOR PROGRAMME 2025 enables to apply for funding through 2 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:

- an additional 15 months per childbirth for mothers, or by an additional 12 months for biological fathers ;
- an additional 12 months per adoption for adopting mothers and fathers.

The eligible candidates who have been awarded a Starting Grant in a previous FRFS-WELBIO or 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-WELBIO or FRFS-WEL-T call, regardless of their seniority.

Applicants who were funded under the FRFS-WELBIO 2021 call, and who meet the eligibility criteria set out in article 5 of the regulation, must indicate the type of the instrument obtained in the 2021 call: Advanced Grant or Starting Grant.

4. ELIGIBLES COSTS

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

- Personnel
- Operating
- Equipment

Categories of **personnel** are detailed in the table below:

Categories	Activity	
	Part time	Full time
Doctoral Researcher – grant		x
Doctoral Researcher – salary	x	x
Postdoctoral Researcher	x	x
Non-doctoral Researcher – salary	x	x
Technician – salary	x	x

The personnel is employed by the host institution.

The PI applicant shall contact the relevant department of his host institution to assess the status of the personnel requested (mobility situation, grant, employee...), their working arrangements and an estimate of their cost based on the scientific seniority.

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.

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-WELBIO program for the duration of their employment.

If a deferral has been granted for the research agreement covering years 1 and 2, the same deferral (duration and staff concerned) may also be applied under the same conditions to the agreement covering years 3 and 4.

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

- Consumables
- Costs for small scientific and technical equipment
- Costs for equipment³ maintenance and insurance
- Internal services
- Costs related to services by a university hospital partner
- Trainings
- Missions⁴
- Publications
- Overhead costs equal to 15% of the personnel costs and of the operating costs (except subcontracting costs and costs related to services by a university hospital eligible for VAT exemption)
- Subcontracting
- Software

University hospitals, clinics or hospital departments, hereafter referred to as "CHU", provide specific services to university researchers to carry out projects funded by the F.R.S.-FNRS and its associated funds such as the FRFS.

To best use the funds allocated to scientific research, the F.R.S.-FNRS enables researchers to include, as research partners, the CHU actively participating in the research project provided that these partner institutions are considered as entities affiliated with the host university receiving the funding requested.

In this respect, the F.R.S.-FNRS enables the university to declare the costs strictly generated by the CHU to carry out the funded project. The university is responsible for the CHU's compliance to regulations applying to beneficiaries of F.R.S.-FNRS funding, as well as to relevant tax regulations.

To proceed, the researcher must imperatively detail in their application form:

- the tasks and work packages undertaken by the CHU (in the template),
- the budget required to conduct these tasks (under "Budget").

The researcher shall contact the relevant departments of their host university regarding the legal and financial regulations pertaining to this measure.

Please note: Are eligible only the hospitals, clinics or hospital departments affiliated with a university and listed in this Appendix.

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 and the selection of programmes submitted under the FRFS-WELBIO INVESTIGATOR PROGRAMME 2025 follow several steps under the responsibility of the Scientific Commission. The procedure includes a priority ranking which is submitted to the Boards of Trustees (BoT) of the FRFS

³ Only equipment acquired with FRFS-WELBIO funding

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

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.

For researchers who received funding in the FRFS-WELBIO 2021 call:

- scientific results obtained;
- valorisation actions undertaken.

These criteria are detailed in the table at the end of Appendix 2 of the regulation.

6. PUBLICATIONS

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-WELBIO 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-WELBIO under Grant(s) n° (agreement number).

7. VALORISATION OF THE INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

The 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, 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 the 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 a representative of the 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>