WELBIO INVESTIGATOR PROGRAMME

CALL 2023

22 SEPTEMBER 2023

FRFS strategic axes
WEL Research Institute departments

Calls for projects (evaluation and selection), financial and administrative management
Strategy, Industrial valorisation, Bridge Fund

Welbio
FRFS
CALL WELBIO INVESTIGATOR PROGRAM 2023

- Call
  ✓ Miniguide and rules on FNRS website / e-space
  ✓ Closing October 19, 2023 (selected programs to start on June 1, 2024)

- Evaluation
  ✓ International remote experts (1st step) and international scientific commission (2nd step) + interview of STG applicants
  ✓ Criteria: quality of proposant, quality of the program, attention to valorization

- Financial resources: ~14 grants per call — 2019; 23 in 2021...

THE WEL RESEARCH INSTITUTE
INTER-UNIVERSITY RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOUNDED IN 2009 BY THE WALLOON REGION

To support strategic basic research of excellence
- Call for research programmes (FRFS/FNRS);
- Research programmes submitted by PIs in universities of the Walonnia-Brussels Federation;
- Selection by an international and independent Scientific Commission;
- Funded PIs are affiliated to the WEL Research Institute

To translate disruptive innovation into an impact in health and sustainable transition
- Regular meetings with the Investigators at the WEL Research Institute and members of their TTO;
- Early detection of intellectual property;
- Valorisation of the intellectual property: spin-off creation, licensing, industrial collaborations, …
WEL RESEARCH INSTITUTE
COMPOSED OF 2 DEPARTMENTS SINCE 2022

WEL Research Institute asbl

- WELBIO Department
  - Life sciences
    - Health
- WEL-T Department
  - Engineering sciences, chemistry and physics
    - Sustainable transition

WELBIO DEPARTMENT
A DECADE OF STRATEGIC RESEARCH OF EXCELLENCE IN LIFESCIENCES

- 6 Calls since 2011
- 88 Research programmes
- 60 WELRI Investigators
- ~ 600 Team members

SCIENTIFIC EXCELLENCE
- 730 Scientific publications
  - 280 in high-ranking journals
- 37 EU and international Grants
- 62 Awards
  - 2 Francqui-Collen prizes, 2 Quinquenal prizes from F.R.S. F.N.R.S., Baillet Latour prizes, …
**WELBIO DEPARTMENT**

**INNOVATION FOR AN IMPACT IN HEALTH**

- **5 Therapeutic areas**
  - Oncology
  - Immunology & Inflammation
  - Cardiovascular & metabolic diseases
  - Neurosciences
  - Microbiology & Infectious diseases

- **37 Patent applications**

- **5 Spin offs in the Walloon region**

- **7 M€** gross revenue from the intellectual property

- **8 M€** industrial collaborations

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**CALL WELBIO 2023**

*Fundamental research of excellence in life sciences* with a view to translate *breakthrough innovations* into industrial applications in all fields of *medical, pharmaceutical and veterinary biotechnology.*
WELBIO INVESTIGATOR PROGRAMME
WHAT DOES THIS ENTAIL?

✓ Four-year programme (2 x 2-year research agreement)
✓ Core to the lab
✓ Flexible, the investigator adapts the research focus as needed during the four-year programme
✓ Renewable every 4 years to enable ambitious research programmes
  • The evaluation by the Scientific Commission will focus on the impact of the programme as a whole: scientific results, actions taken for valorisation, and programme for the next 4 years.
✓ Straightforward processes
  • Year 2: Administrative process to request a prolongation for years 3 & 4 (subject to available funding)
  • Year 4: Phasing out period in case of non-renewal (at constant budget, max 6 months)

WELBIO INVESTIGATOR PROGRAMME
EVALUATION CRITERIA

Quality of the applicant
• Curriculum vitae
• Most important publications of the PI over the last 5 years (max. 5) + explain why
• European & international grant applications + current status (applied, funded)

Scientific excellence of the proposed 4-year programme

Focus on valorisation of the intellectual property
### WELBIO INVESTIGATOR PROGRAMME

**« FOCUS ON VALORISATION » IN THE APPLICATION FORM (I)**

**Intellectual property of the PI**
- Patent applications, know-how, software, …

**PI’s experience in knowledge/technology transfer**
- Licensing, industrial collaboration, spin-off, other (search in patent data base, POC funding, …)

**Transparency statement (mandatory)**
- Declare any impact from the above on freedom to use any future intellectual property that could emerge from the proposed programme
- If not applicable, please indicate “not applicable”

### WELBIO INVESTIGATOR PROGRAMME

**« FOCUS ON VALORISATION » IN THE APPLICATION FORM (II)**

**Projected potential valorization for future intellectual property that could emerge from the proposed programme (mandatory):**
- Indicate important unmet needs in health in your field of research
- Describe an application/invention that could potentially stem from your programme
- Which steps would you take to develop such an application/invention and how would you finance them?
- Following your answers above, who are the main competitors globally in the development of similar products or technology?
- What would be your strategy for protecting your intellectual property?
- If you had previous contacts with the industry, did you receive any feedback that helped mature your current proposal?
WELBIO INVESTIGATOR PROGRAMME

ELIGIBILITY

The five universities from the French-speaking community:
- Université Catholique de Louvain (UCLouvain)
- Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB)
- Université de Liège (ULiège)
- Université de Mons (UMons)
- Université de Namur (UNamur)

Standard FNRS eligibility criteria of the PI apply

The WELBIO programme can be cumulated with other FNRS fundings

WELBIO INVESTIGATOR PROGRAMME

STARTING & ADVANCED CATEGORIES

Starting Grant
- 200K €/year max.
- For early-career researchers with 0 to 12 years experience post-Ph.D.

Advanced Grant
- 350K €/year max.
- For established researchers leaders with > 12 years experience post-Ph.D.
- Those previously funded through a Starting grant, regardless of seniority
**WELBIO INVESTIGATOR PROGRAMME**

**EVALUATION CRITERIA**

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**Scientific excellence of the proposed 4-year programme**

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**CALENDAR**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Call milestones</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sept 12, 2023</td>
<td>• Opening of the call on my e-space</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct 19, 2023 at 2:00 PM</td>
<td>• Deadlines for electronic validations – Principal Investigator</td>
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<td>Oct 26, 2023 at 2:00 PM</td>
<td>• Deadlines for electronic validations – Rector</td>
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<td>Nov 2023 – March 2024</td>
<td>• Evaluation by individual scientific experts</td>
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<td>• Consolidation by the Scientific Commission</td>
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<td>• Selection of Starting grants for interview</td>
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<td>Between March 25-28, 2024</td>
<td>• Scientific Commission meeting</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Interviews of selected Starting grants</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 2024</td>
<td>• Funding decision</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 1st, 2024</td>
<td>• Start of conventions</td>
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DEcision mechanism

Proposal
Individual scientific experts
Starting candidates preselection
Scientific Commission
WELRI Governing Board
FRFS Board of Trustees
Feedback
Start of the programmes

October 13th, 2023
March 25th-28th, 2024
April, 2024
April, 2024
June 1st, 2024

WEB-BASED APPLICATIONS VIA FNRS E-SPACE

Online form
Scientific part
• Preliminary data, proposed research programme, limitations & alternatives, methods, focus on valorisation

Source of funding
• Available resources, European & International grant applications last 5 years, national grant application related to the proposed programme

Main collaborators
• Helpful to avoid conflict of interest when selecting reviewers

CV and full list of publications

FNRS E-SPACE
**FUNDED WELBIO INVESTIGATOR PROGRAMMES**

### Budget
- Each 4-year programme is divided in two 2-year funding periods.
- Detailed budget for years 1 & 2
- Budget strategy for years 3 & 4
- Total budget years 3 & 4 ≤ years 1 & 2 -> administrative reconduction

### Ethics
- When applicable, programme can start only after approbation by the ad hoc ethical committee. The universities are responsible for the collection of the forms and ethical approvals.

### EX-POST & DMP
- Collected in parallel during the lifespan of the research programme
- Via e-space
- Same language as the research plan
- Intermediate reports: annually - by the end of January following the funding year
- Final reports: at the end of 4-year programme

### Applicable flexibility measures
- Transfers between budget sub-categories are free
- Transfers between budget categories (personnel, operating, equipment) need prior authorization of the FRFS-WELBIO
- The hiring of personnel does not require prior authorization of the FRFS-WELBIO
- For the years 1 & 2, a deferral of max 6 months of the employment of staff planned but not effective at the start date of the programme is allowed
- Changes in personnel should be notified to the FRFS-WELBIO by email to credits-projets@frs-fnrs.be or via the annual report following these changes
- At the end of the 4th year, a phasing out period (max 6 month at constant budget of years 3 & 4) can be determined with the PI if the programme is not renewed

### Restrictions
- Each 2-year funding period is subject to a distinct research agreement
- NO EXTENSION of the use of the budget after the end of the research agreement*
- Positive balance at the end of one research agreement CAN NOT be transferred to the next research agreement

*Except in case of the deferral of staff costs for the years 1 & 2 and the phasing out period at the end of the 4 years programme
INFORMATION FOR THE 2023 WELBIO CALL AVAILABLE IN THE MINIGUIDE AND RULES & REGULATIONS

www.fnrs.be
welri.org

CREDITS-PROJETS@FRS-FNRS.BE