

## MINI GUIDE FRFS-WELBIO INVESTIGATOR PROGRAMME 2021

### 1. SCHEDULE

**Opening** of the call on the web-based application of the F.R.S.-FNRS [e-space](#) for the online submission: **TUESDAY 12<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBRE 2021**.

| FRFS-WELBIO CALL - INVESTIGATOR PROGRAMME 2021   |  |  |
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| STAPES   | RESPONSIBLE PERSONS/BODY   | INSTRUMENT <sup>1</sup>                              |
|  |  | STARTING (STG)                                       |
| DEADLINES FOR ELECTRONIC VALIDATION <sup>2</sup> | PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR (PI)  | Thursday, 25 November 2021 - 2pm                     |
|  | RECTOR   | Thursday, 2 December 2021 - 2pm                      |
| PROJECTS' ASSESSMENT STAPES                      | INDIVIDUAL ASSESSMENTS BY EXPERTS AND CONSOLIDATION BY THE SCIENTIFIC COMMISSION | December 2021 – March 2022                           |
| INTERVIEWS OF STARTING CANDIDATES                | SCIENTIFIC COMMISSION  | 24 and 25 March 2022*                                |
| MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS FRFS           |  | April 2022   |
| START OF CONVENTION                              |  | 1 June 2022  |
| END OF CONVENTION                                |  | 31 May 2024<br>(31 May 2026 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 which funds the fundamental research of excellence in strategic axis, within the framework of a mission assigned by the Walloon region.

The FRFS-WELBIO (Walloon Excellence in Life sciences and Biotechnology) is the FRFS strategic axis in life sciences.

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

WELBIO's mission is to support excellence in fundamental research through rigorously selected programmes carried out by WELBIO Investigators in the universities of the French-speaking Community of Belgium, and to promote the translation of scientific discoveries into medical, pharmaceutical, and veterinary biotechnology applications.

Through the FRFS-WELBIO, Wallonia grants significant resources over several years to WELBIO Investigators in support to ambitious research programmes that pave the road to new scientific

<sup>1</sup> See section "Characteristics of the instruments"

<sup>2</sup> All times are Brussels local time.

breakthroughs. These programmes constitute a pillar of the WELBIO Investigators' laboratory and are flexible, allowing adaptation of the research focus over time as needed.

WELBIO Investigators must demonstrate a combination of scientific excellence, an awareness of unmet medical and technological needs in their field, and a willingness to seek opportunities for application of their discoveries.

### 3. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE INSTRUMENTS

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The call WELBIO INVESTIGATOR PROGRAMME 2021 enables to apply for funding through 3 instruments:

#### ➤ Starting

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

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 or Continuation Starting Grant in a previous FRFS-WELBIO call, regardless of their seniority, are not concerned by this category.

#### ➤ Advanced

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

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 or Continuation Starting Grant in a previous FRFS-WELBIO call, regardless of their seniority.

Applicants who were funded under the FRFS-WELBIO 2017 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 2017 call: Advanced or Continuation Advanced Grant; Starting or Continuation Starting Grant.

The FRFS-WELBIO 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-WELBIO and in the absence of serious ethical or productivity breaches (article 34).

### 4. ELIGIBLES COSTS AND VAT EXEMPTION IN THE CONTEXT OF CLINIC-UNIVERSITY PARTNERSHIPS

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

- Personnel
- Operating
- Equipment

Categories related to the **personnel**<sup>3</sup> are detailed in the table below:

| Categories   | Activity       |           |
|--|----------------|-----------|
|  | Part time      | Full time |
| Doctoral Researcher – Grant <sup>4</sup> or Salary | x <sup>4</sup> | x         |
| Postdoctoral Researcher <sup>5</sup>               | x              | x         |
| Non-doctoral Researcher – Salary                   | x              | x         |
| Technician - Salary                                | x              | x         |

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.

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 commitment lost, may not exceed the end date of the agreement by more than 6 months. The duration of the commitment initially granted may not be exceeded.

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

- Consumables
- Costs for small scientific and technical equipment
- Costs for equipment<sup>6</sup> maintenance and insurance
- Internal services
- Costs related to services by a university hospital eligible for VAT exemption
- Trainings
- Missions<sup>7</sup>
- Overhead costs equals 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

The decision related to the process of involving university clinics applies to the FRFS-WELBIO INVESTIGATOR PROGRAMME 2021.

<sup>3</sup> *For all personnel*, the promoter 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 this Regulation.**

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

<sup>5</sup> The promoter 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.

<sup>6</sup> Only equipment acquired with WELBIO funding

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

The implemented measure allows university clinics to invoice their services without VAT when they are involved as true research partners in their own right in the programme. To do so, the involvement (task description) of the university hospital targeted by the collaboration must be described in the scientific part of the application.

The involvement of a university clinic must be documented via a collaboration agreement, which can be free format, uploaded in the electronic application form or sent by e-mail ([credits-projets@frs-fnrs.be](mailto:credits-projets@frs-fnrs.be)) at the latest by the deadline for validation by the academic authorities (rectors). This agreement must, at a minimum, include the following elements: name of the university hospital, clinical department, head of the department concerned, name of the financial director and name of the university with which the university hospital collaborates.

Please note : Only services provided by a university hospital or a department of a university hospital listed in the Appendix 3 of the regulation are eligible for VAT exemption.

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)

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The evaluation and the selection of programmes submitted under FRFS-WELBIO INVESTIGATOR PROGRAMME 2021 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 and of WELBIO asbl. The FRFS BoT decides on the allocation of funding after taking into account the proposals of the Governing Board of WELBIO asbl.

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 2017 call:

- scientific results obtained;
- valorisation actions undertaken.

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

## 6. OPEN ACCESS POLICY

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The Board of Trustees of the F.R.S.-FNRS has decided to endorse the principle of Open access to publicly funded research. This support has led to the implementation of an institutional mandate providing Open access to publications from F.R.S.-FNRS funded research projects and researchers under the "Open Access Green Road" business model.

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 Fonds de la Recherche Scientifique - FNRS for the FRFS-WELBIO under Grant(s) n° (agreement number).*

PIs, WELBIO researchers, F.R.S.-FNRS researchers / members of the university should mention their double affiliation in each of their publications or communications.

## 7. RESULTS VALORISATION

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WELBIO asbl 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 WELBIO asbl, 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 WELBIO asbl.

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>**