

MINI GUIDE FRFS-WELBIO INVESTIGATOR PROGRAMME 2023

1. SCHEDULE

Opening of the call on the web-based application of the F.R.S.-FNRS [e-space](#) for the online submission: **TUESDAY 12TH SEPTEMBER 2023.**

FRFS-WELBIO CALL - INVESTIGATOR PROGRAMME 2023			
STAPES	RESPONSIBLE PERSONS/BODY	INSTRUMENTS ¹	
		STARTING (STG)	ADVANCED (ADV)
DEADLINES FOR ELECTRONIC VALIDATION ²	PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR (PI)	Thursday, 19 October 2023 - 2pm	
	RECTOR	Thursday, 26 October 2023- 2pm	
PROJECTS' ASSESSMENT STAPES	INDIVIDUAL ASSESSMENTS BY EXPERTS AND CONSOLIDATION BY THE SCIENTIFIC COMMISSION	November 2023 – March 2024	
INTERVIEWS OF STARTING CANDIDATES	SCIENTIFIC COMMISSION	Between 25 and 28 March 2024*	
MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS FRFS		April 2024	
START OF CONVENTION		1 June 2024	
END OF CONVENTION		31 May 2026 (31 May 2028 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 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 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.

¹ See section "Characteristics of the instruments"

² All times are Brussels local time.

The Investigators within the WEL Research Institute must demonstrate a combination of scientific excellence, an awareness of unmet medical and technological needs in their field, and a willingness to seek application opportunities for their discoveries.

3. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE INSTRUMENTS

The call WELBIO INVESTIGATOR PROGRAMME 2023 enables to apply for funding through 2 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 2019 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 2019 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 for the WELBIO strategic axis and in the absence of serious ethical or productivity issues (article 34).

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

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**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

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-WELBIO program for the duration of their employment.

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

- Consumables
- Costs for small scientific and technical equipment
- Costs for equipment⁶ maintenance and insurance
- Internal services
- Costs related to services by a university hospital eligible for VAT exemption
- Trainings
- Missions⁷
- 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

³ *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.

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

⁵ *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.*

⁶ *Only equipment acquired with FRFS-WELBIO funding*

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

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 2023 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 the WEL Research Institute. The FRFS BoT decides on the allocation of funding after taking into account 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 2019 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 Fonds de la Recherche Scientifique - FNRS for the FRFS-WELBIO, with the support of the Walloon region, under Grant(s) n° (agreement number).

7. RESULTS VALORISATION

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>