

Defence-related Research Action - DEFRA

Call for proposals 2023

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

PARTNER COMPOSITION

- 01 Is there an obligation to include (a) defence research institute(s) in a proposal?
The Belgian Defence research institutes (Royal Military Academy (RMA), the Military Hospital Queen Astrid (MHQA) and the Defence Laboratories (DLD)) can be a coordinator/partner in a proposal. It is not mandatory to have one of these institutes as a project partner; it will neither have a beneficial effect on the evaluation result (no bonus). Only for the theme-CYBER it is required to have the Royal Military Academy as a partner.
- 02 Is there a restriction to the number of project proposals a given institute/company/researcher/person may participate in as partner and/or coordinator?
No, there is no limitation to the number of proposals a given Institute/company/researcher/person may participate in as partner and/or coordinator.
- 03 Will the fact that a given researcher acts as coordinator of several project proposals be taken into account in the evaluation?
The fact that a given researcher acts as coordinator of several proposals may be taken into account in the final strategic selection of projects to be financed.
- 04 Can someone who is hired as subcontractor also appear as staff?
No. Someone engaged as a subcontractor cannot appear as staff.

- 05** **Is it necessary to identify the subcontractor in the proposal?**
No, only the subcontracted task(s) need(s) to be described. The specification of the particular company/institute is not mandatory. It is recommended not to mention the name unless it is certain.
- 06** **Is it possible to link a PhD student from a given university to the proposal?**
Yes, this is possible. If the PhD student is to be financed by the university, then the candidate's tasks must be included in the Gantt chart and Work Plan (under Other sources). If the PhD student is to be financed by the DEFRA programme via the project, then the candidate must be included within the budget as staff, and his/her tasks included in the Gantt chart and Work Plan. Remark: tax free doctoral scholarships are not accepted for PhD students in charge of the DEFRA programme.
- 07** **Is it possible to include a civil society organisation as financed partner?**
No, civil society organisations cannot be included as official financed partners to the project. They can only be financed as a subcontractor.
- 08** **Can we add a partner in the Full Proposal that was not mentioned in the Pre-proposal?**
Once your Pre-proposal is selected to submit a Full proposal, the data of the partners will appear by default in the Full proposal. Changes in the partnership (i.e. removing or adding partners) require the explicit approval of the RHID.
- 09** **How are large/medium/small companies defined?**
Article 2 [of Regulation \(EU\) 2021/697 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2021 establishing the European Defence Fund and repealing Regulation \(EU\) 2018/1092](#) is applied, which refers to Article 2 of the [Annex to Commission Recommendation 2003/361/EC](#).
Staff headcount and financial ceilings determine enterprise categories within the SMEs:
1. The category of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) is made up of enterprises which employ fewer than 250 persons and which have an annual turnover not exceeding EUR 50 million, and/or an annual balance sheet total not exceeding EUR 43 million.
2. Within the SME category, a small enterprise is defined as an enterprise which employs fewer than 50 persons and whose annual turnover and/or annual balance sheet total does not exceed EUR 10 million.
3. Within the SME category, a microenterprise is defined as an enterprise which employs fewer than 10 persons and whose annual turnover and/or annual balance sheet total does not exceed EUR 2 million.

'Middle capitalisation company' or 'mid-cap' means an enterprise that is not a SME and that employs a maximum of 3 000 persons, where the headcount of staff is calculated in accordance with Articles 3 to 6 of the Annex to Recommendation 2003/361/EC.

The 'large-cap' enterprises employ more than 3 000 persons, where the headcount of staff is calculated in accordance with Articles 3 to 6 of the Annex to Recommendation 2003/361/EC.

10 Must the project partners be Belgian institutes / companies?

Indeed, the call is open to Belgian public and private non-profit research institutes and private companies.

*From the **public research sector**, all Belgian universities, colleges of higher education, federal scientific institutions, defence research institutes and other public research institutes are eligible partners.*

***Private non-profit research centres** must have operational and/or research activities in Belgium. They must have legal personality and their registered office in Belgium.*

*From the **private sector**, companies (including SMEs) complying with the following criteria are eligible partners:*

- The company must have operational and/or research activities on the Belgian territory.*
- The company must have a legal personality and its registered office in Belgium. The legal personality is required at the latest when signing the research contract.*
- At the moment of signing the contract, the company must have fulfilled its obligations to pay its taxes and social security contributions.*

11 Must subcontractors be Belgian as well?

Subcontractors can be foreign but should preferably come from a European country.

BUDGET

01 Is it possible to hire staff with a given degree for more than the stipulated maximum (5.100€/month technician, 7.200€/month master, 7.900€/month master degree engineering, 9.500€/month PhD)?

Yes. It can be done, provided the person to be hired is identified by name in the proposal. Then, a higher salary will be accepted.

02 Can personnel hired under the project be 'shared' between two partners in terms of time and budget?

Yes. The time and cost of personnel can be shared by two institutions, but it must be explained within the proposal. Should the proposal be funded, the institutions are responsible for how they apply this arrangement.

03 What rules apply if there are staff changes along the way during the execution of the project? Is it possible to affect part of the staff budget to other partners/budget category?

Once the contract of the project has been signed, changes can be made via an amendment to the contract. Amendments can include shifts in budget categories and also - in case of a network project - budget shifts between partners.

04 Is it possible to include salary, operating and/or equipment costs under 'Subcontracting budget'?

It is possible to include salary and operating costs under 'Subcontracting budget', including the budget for equipment use/hiring. The purchase of equipment is not allowed.

05 How many proposals will be awarded per theme?

The number of selected and funded proposals per theme will depend on the quality of the proposals and the budget requested per proposal. RHID aims to fund at least one proposal per theme and more if the overall DEFRA budget allows it.

06 Will private companies be fully paid for the project?

See section 3.7. of the information document. This call is subject to the European legislation on State Funding (Art 107 (1) TFEU and the General Block Exemption Regulation in particular. Financing a private company is limited to a maximum of 65% of the eligible costs for LargeCap enterprises, to maximum 75% for MidCap and to 80% for SME.

07 Must VAT be included in the budget?

Yes, all amounts must be VAT included if applicable. In no case, the budget of your proposal will be increased to cover VAT expenses.

ANNEXES TO THE (PRE-/FULL)PROPOSAL

01 Is it possible to annex CV's to the proposal?

No, CV's in annex are not accepted. Space is provided within the (pre-/full) proposal template for the description of the profile of the project partners.

02 Is it possible to include annexes to the (pre-/full) proposal description?

For the pre-proposal, companies, a(i)sbl and foundations must add the extract of the Ultimate Beneficial Owner (UBO) register as annex.

For the full proposal, 2 forms are provided to annex to the full proposal:

- GANTT chart - compulsory
- Cash or in-kind commitment letter - non compulsory

03 Is it possible to annex the agreements for in-kind contributions of the project partners to the proposal?

No, this is not accepted. The in-kind contributions of the official project partners should be mentioned in the proposal description

04 Is it possible to annex support letters to the proposal?

No, letters of support are not accepted. However, should institutions/organisations/companies which are not partners of the project wish to make an in-kind or cash contribution to the project, there is a template at your disposal:

Cash or in-kind commitment letter. Should you wish to upload several of such letters, you must merge them into one single PDF document to be uploaded in the introduction platform.

EVALUATORS

01 Do proposed evaluators have to be European?

We ask you to propose at least 2 Belgian evaluators and at least 2 foreign evaluators. The latter are preferably European. However non-European evaluators are eligible as well.

02 Do I need to have the agreement of the 'proposed experts' in order to include them in the pre-proposal?

No. You do NOT need the agreement of the researchers that you want to include in the pre-proposal as 'proposed experts'. In fact you must NOT contact the foreseen experts at all:

- You must NOT tell them that you are preparing/sending the proposal
- You must NOT ask them to be 'proposed experts'

It is the task of BELSPO and RHID to contact the experts.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

01 What are the evaluation criteria for these proposals and the weights of the different criteria?

The evaluation procedure is described in section 5 of the information document. Evaluation criteria and their respective weights are listed in the evaluation matrices for pre-proposals and full proposals.

PLATFORM

01 Why can't the partners and/or collaborator of the proposal Log In to the platform?

Only the coordinator of a proposal can create and submit a (Pre-/Full) proposal. Partners included in a proposal will not have access to the given (Pre-/Full) proposal.

02 Is it possible to have access to the proposal template without logging in to the platform?

Pre-proposal template: in order to have access to the template and online fields that compose the pre-proposal, you need to Log In to the platform. All entered data may be changed (or deleted) at any time before the pre-proposal is submitted. You can always decide not to submit your pre-proposal. Non submitted pre-proposals will not be considered for evaluation.

A PDF version of the pre-proposal template is available on the DEFRA website for information purposes.

Full proposal template: a copy of the full proposal template is available in PDF-format on the DEFRA website for your information. However, in order to have access to the Word-file of the full proposal template, the other documents (Gantt chart; Cash or in-kind commitment letter) and online fields that compose the proposal, you need to Log In to the platform. All entered data may be changed (or deleted) at any time before the proposal is submitted. You can always decide not to submit your proposal. Non submitted proposals will not be considered for evaluation.

03 How can I delete my proposal?

In order to delete the proposal you must follow the instructions provided within the Platform Submission Guidelines document.

04 Is it possible to edit my proposal, once submitted?

If your proposal is submitted before the deadline, exceptionally, BELSPO will be able to un-submit your proposal, and you may continue to edit it. After the deadline, there will be no possibilities of editing submitted proposals.

05 I've submitted a pre-proposal and would like to prepare the full proposal. I cannot find the template for the full proposal on the platform.

For each theme, maximum 5 pre-proposals will be invited to submit a full proposal. Only for the selected proposals the DEFRA platform will become accessible for the submission of the full proposal.

A copy of the full proposal template is available in PDF-format for your information on the DEFRA website. Note however that in order to have access to the Word-file of the full proposal template, to the other documents (Gantt chart; Cash or in-kind commitment letter) and online fields that compose the proposal, Log In to the platform is necessary.

06 Can one account be used to submit multiple pre-proposals?

Yes, it is possible to submit more than one pre-proposal with the same account.

DURATION OF THE PROJECT

01 Is it possible to submit a 3-year project?

Yes, projects must have a minimum duration of 2 years and a maximum duration of 4 years.

LENGTH OF THE PROPOSAL

01 Will the proposal be deemed ineligible for evaluation if the 'Proposal description' exceeds the established length limits?

Yes.

02 Do the length limits established for the 'Proposal description' include also other online forms (i.e. GANTT chart, Cash or in-kind commitment letter ...)?

No. The limit is only for the 'Proposal description' template.

PROJECT REQUIREMENTS

- 01 What kind of reporting will be required from the projects?
All mandatory reporting is described in section 6.4 of the information document

PROJECT RESULTS

- 01 Who owns the intellectual property (IP) at the end of the project?
As described in section 7.2 of the information document all aspects regarding IPR are covered in Annex II "General Conditions" of the contract (see DEFRA website: documents: [Basiscontract - Netwerk: Bijlage II / Contrat de base - Réseau: Annexe II \(belspo.be\)](#))
- 02 How is follow-up R&D / commercialization / implementation based on the results of the projects seen?
For multiple reasons, such as different markets for different themes, there is no "one fits all" answer to this question. This being said, there is a definite interest in valorisation of the project results. Ad hoc solutions will have to be established.

PERMISSION TO SUBMIT A PROPOSAL

- 01 Do I require the signature of my director/rector/CEO in order to submit the project proposal?
No, the signature of the director/rector/CEO is not mandatory for the funding authority. However, you must have the agreement of your hierarchical authority for the submission of the proposal.
- 02 Are there particular requirements regarding the electronic signature of the documents that must be submitted?
No, there are no signatures required to submit a proposal.
- 03 Must researchers sign specific clearance documents to participate in a project?
For some themes a security screening by Belgian Defence might be imposed in the contract on ALL partners of the project. See section 7.3. of the information document.

SPECIFIC QUESTIONS ON THE THEMES OF THE THIRD CALL

- 01 **ALL THEMES:** What's the TRL level of the solutions you're looking for (at the beginning & at the end of the project)?
The TRL-levels mentioned in the information document are indicative. The TRL of the envisaged project result will not be used as an exclusion criterium during the evaluation. As a general rule, the end TRL should be 4/5, but there might be good reasons why this cannot be achieved although the project is still of high value.

The evaluation will consider the innovative character of the project.

- 02** Will the 2023 themes be included again the 2024 DEFRA call?
Not all interesting themes can be fitted into one call. For every year a new set of topics is selected. We cannot give a guarantee that the current themes will be expanded or excluded.
- 03** Is the theme “Open call SMEs” limited to the proposals with CBRN or Improved Ammunition Systems?
No, the theme “Open call SMEs” is open to any research for defence across a broad spectrum within the following Defence focus areas: Space technologies, Communications, Sensor Data Processing and Sensor Fusion, Big Data, Cybersecurity, Intelligent Autonomous Systems (and platforms), Novel Weapon systems, Protection of personnel, systems and infrastructure, Sustainable New Generation Energy Systems, Advanced Military Health, Human Systems and Behaviour and Security & Defence Policy.
- 04** Should a research project on protective material that is working as a sensor or that makes use of sensors be submitted under theme 4 or under 5?
The proposal should be submitted under the theme that fits best with the research scope and expected impact as described in the information file. Proposals can only be introduced in the “open theme SMEs” if the subject and or content of the proposal does not correspond with the subject and or scope of the other four themes.
- 05** Theme 1: Cyber, which type of software?
The proposal solutions should consider a wide range of software types, from generic Information Technology (IT) applications to more specific Operational Technology (OT) used in Cyber Physical Systems (CPS). The technology demonstrator can focus on one specific example within this wide range of possible software types.
- 06** Theme 4: Advanced sensor systems, which type of platforms? ground-based, air-based sensors?
We wouldn't rule anything out. It is important that different types of platforms (including sea-based) are included. All “domains” can be taken into account, including the “Maritime domain”. Space is also allowed, and of course bistatic combinations where, in the case of active sensors, the transmitter(s) and receiver(s) are on different platforms.

NOT FOUND WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR? E-mail to DEFRA@BELSPO.BE