

RULES AND REGULATIONS

INFRASTRUCTURE & LARGE EQUIPMENT (INFRA- GEQ) CALL 2024

ADOPTED BY

THE F.R.S.-FNRS BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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CHAPTER I: SCOPE

Article 1

The rules and regulations hereinafter are only applicable to the Infrastructure & Large Equipment instrument (INFRA-GEQ) enabling the funding of research programmes within the framework of the Infrastructure & Large Equipment Call 2024 of the Fund for Scientific Research – FNRS¹ (F.R.S.-FNRS).

Instrument	Duration	Characteristics	Co-promoter participation?
INFRA-GEQ	3 or 6 years	INFRA-GEQ is a single or multi-university programme	Yes

Main promoter: Researcher responsible for the submission of the application. They can ask for budget related to the tasks of which they will be in charge during the implementation of the project.

Co-promoter: Researcher who takes part in the preparation of the application and in the implementation of the project in case of granting. As such, they can ask for a budget related to the tasks of which they will be in charge.

Article 2

The aim of the Infrastructure & Large Equipment instrument is to promote and consolidate the state-of-the-art infrastructure in the French-speaking Community of Belgium by funding the acquisition of large-scale specialised equipment, the setting up of research infrastructures and the upgrading of existing facilities.

Large-scale specialised equipment means any instrumentation or material specifically dedicated to experimentation and research and costing more than €300,000.

Research infrastructure means any specialised facility that provides resources and services to the scientific community to enable cutting-edge scientific and technological research to be carried out in various fields.

Precise definitions are available in [Appendix 1](#).

This funding is open to all areas of research.

Article 3

Research programmes are set to be implemented in one or several universities of the French-speaking Community of Belgium listed in [Appendix 2](#).

Article 4

The main promoter is the person who assumes the scientific responsibility and is in charge of the administrative management of the funded research programme.

¹ The Fund for Scientific Research - FNRS shall be understood as the F.R.S.-FNRS and its associated Funds.

CHAPTER II: APPLICATION

II-A: ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Article 5

The main promoter-applicant of an INFRA-GEQ must be:

- Either a Research Associate (CQ), a Senior Research Associate (MR) or a Research Director (DR)² of the F.R.S.-FNRS who carries out the fellowship at the latest by 15th November of the year in which the application is submitted.
- Or a researcher-promoter of an ongoing Ulysse Incentive Grant for Mobility in Scientific Research (MISU) who carries out the fellowship at the latest by 15th November of the year in which the application is submitted.
- Or a researcher appointed in a university of the French-speaking Community of Belgium (CFB) listed in [Appendix 2](#) and must meet the following conditions altogether:
 - Be permanently³ appointed to an academic or scientific position or on probation in that university.
 - This appointment must have a final and conclusive assent from the competent body to legitimize this appointment in accordance with the Law or the university's regulations at the latest by 15th November of the year when submitting the application.
 - This academic or scientific position must be effective at the latest by 15th November of the year in which the application is submitted.

If the main promoter-applicant who is appointed permanently accesses the legal age of retirement / becomes professor emeritus after the validation deadline set for the academic authorities (rectors) and before the end of the funding if it is granted, the submission of the application shall be subject to prior approval by the Head of institution where the research will be carried out.

The main promoter-applicant permanently appointed who will access the legal age of retirement / become professor emeritus by the validation deadline set for the academic authorities (rectors) is not eligible.

Article 6

A single- or multi-university INFRA-GEQ application allows the participation of co-promoters, including co-promoters from the same university as the main promoter.

All co-promoter-applicants shall meet the eligibility criteria as referred to in article 5.

² Chercheuse qualifiée / Chercheur qualifié - Research Associate (CQ), Maître de recherches - Senior Research Associate (MR) or Directrice de recherches / Directeur de recherches - Research Director (DR).

³ Research logisticians of rank A, as defined by the Royal Decree of 31st October 1953 fixing 'le statut des agrégés, des répétiteurs et des membres du personnel scientifique des universités de l'État', are only allowed to be co-promoter-applicant provided they hold a Ph.D.

II-B: PRE-APPROVAL

Article 7

All applications must be pre-approved by the rectoral authorities of the university to which the main promoter-applicant is attached, based on feasibility criteria (financial, human, and technical) and redundancy (existence of equipment or infrastructure that is already available).

The research administrations are responsible for this procedure within each university.

No document or procedure is required from the F.R.S.-FNRS. Validation by the rectoral authorities will serve as proof of eligibility for the F.R.S.-FNRS.

II-C: ACCUMULATION RULES

Article 8

The number of applications as principal promoter-applicant is limited to 1 per call.

The number of applications as co-promoter is not limited.

Accumulation with other types of F.R.S.-FNRS funding (PDR, EQP, MIS...) is allowed.

As double funding is prohibited, the F.R.S.-FNRS reserves the right to ask applicants for justification if the INFRA-GEQ project submitted is similar to another project submitted under the Credits and Projects call. This justification may then be sent to the members of the two Commissions.

II-D: APPLICATION SUBMISSION

Article 9

The Infrastructure & Large Equipment call is opened following the decision of the F.R.S.-FNRS Board of Trustees and is published on the F.R.S.-FNRS website.

The application can be submitted in French or in English. It must only be submitted through the [e-space](#) online platform dedicated to the calls for proposals.

All INFRA-GEQ applications are submitted to a procedure including successive electronic validations on the dates that will be indicated when the call for applications is published:

- a. The validation by the main promoter, responsible towards the F.R.S.-FNRS administration: it accounts as a confirmation that the application file is complete.
- b. The validation by co-promoters (if any): it accounts as an electronic signature.
- c. The validation by the research administration (or Board of Education) of the university of the French-speaking Community of Belgium to which (co-)promoters-applicants are attached—the authority to which the application file is transferred once promoters have validated the application form. That authority may accept or refuse the application. The validation deadline set for the rectors puts an end to the call for proposals.

Applications that have not been validated within the time frame of the call cannot be taken into account.

No changes or corrections to the proposal will be accepted after the validation deadline for the principal promoter-applicant.

The validation dates are available in the Mini-guide.

II-E: ADMISSIBILITY OF APPLICATIONS

Article 10

After the call for applications has closed, the F.R.S.-FNRS will carry out an administrative check of the applications against the provisions set out in these rules.

Any application that does not comply with these provisions will be deemed inadmissible.

CHAPTER III: NATURE AND DURATION OF THE FUNDING

III-A: ELIGIBLE AND NON-ELIGIBLE EXPENSES

Article 11

The allocated fund can cover 3 types of expenses:

- Personnel
- Operating
- Equipment

Article 12

The F.R.S.-FNRS policy on the eligibility of costs is set out in the [Practical Guide to Costs](#) (only in French).

Within the framework of the INFRA-GEQ, the F.R.S.-FNRS only reimburses eligible expenses in accordance with the general provisions set out in this document, apart from the provisions set out in Articles 13 and 14 which derogate therefrom.

Article 13

Only the following categories of personnel are eligible:

Categories	Work regime	
	Part time	Full time
Non-doctoral Researcher – Salary	x	x
Technician – Salary	x	x
Research Logistician	x	x

The personnel will be employed by the host university.

The (co-)promoter-applicant will contact the relevant department at the host university to determine the status of the personnel requested (mobility status, grant, salary, etc.), their working arrangements and an estimate of their cost based on their seniority.

The duration of employment requested must be **at least one month**. The identity of the personnel is not requested when the INFRA-GEQ application is submitted.

The **Technician** category is intended for technical personnel with a bachelor's degree who carry out operational and maintenance tasks. Holders of a master's degree (or equivalent) or a doctorate, obtained after defending a thesis, are not eligible for this category.

The **Non-doctoral Researcher** category is intended for all personnel at master's level who are not carrying out personal research work with the aim of producing a doctoral thesis during the working hours devoted to this function. Holders of a bachelor's degree or a doctorate, obtained after defending a thesis, are not eligible for this category.

The **Research Logistician** category is intended for personnel who provide scientific and technical support in the planning, supervision and operational management of the infrastructure and its activities, particularly with regard to the use and maintenance of state-of-the-art equipment.

Research Logisticians refer to scientific university personnel whose careers and status are governed by a specific legislative framework.

Article 14

The operating costs requested must relate to setting up, running, maintaining, or upgrading the facility and its activities.

Only the following operating costs are eligible:

- Consumables and other laboratory products or supplies
- Small items of equipment (< €30,000)
- Maintenance
- Rental or leasing
- Other costs related to the nature of the infrastructure's activities
 - Compensation for participants in a longitudinal survey
 - ...
- Consultancy for expertise relating to equipment or infrastructure
- Mobility costs only for consultancy, formation, exchange of expertise, or collection of resources (specimens, archives, samples, etc.)
- Training to develop relevant skills and expertise
- Software
- Office equipment and other support equipment for carrying out activities
 - Desktop or laptop computer for office use
 - Tablet
 - Recorder
 - ...
- Temporary work or student jobs for occasional support tasks
 - Encoding
 - ...
- General services
 - Translation and interpreting
 - Secretarial and logistical coordination
 - IT development
 - Shipping, handling and other transport costs
- Internal services
- Services provided by a partner university hospital
- Sub-contracting
 - Construction of an experimental prototype
 - Conducting interviews
 - Taking samples
 - ...

Travel, accommodation and per diem expenses relating to consultancy, formation, exchange of expertise and resource gathering mobility comply with the rules set out in the practical guide on expenses.

Subcontracting costs are not limited provided they are duly justified in the application.

Article 15

The amount of equipment requested will be supported by one or more price quotations (catalogue, price list, quotations from one or more potential suppliers, etc.).

III-B: FUNDING CHARACTERISTICS AND PROVISIONS

Article 16

The INFRA-GEQ is applicable for 3 or 6 years.

The starting date is set for 1st June 2025.

Article 17

An INFRA-GEQ application allows you to apply for funding of between €300,000 and €800,000 maximum, to be distributed freely over the duration of the application.

CHAPTER IV: EVALUATION PROCESS

Article 18

Criteria that will be taken into account for the evaluation of INFRA-GEQ applications are the following:

CRITERIA
Qualities of the (co-)promoters: <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ CV and publications➤ International recognition➤ Main research achievements
Qualities of the research programmes related to the application: <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Feasibility➤ Methodology and relevance➤ Originality➤ Collaborations
Relevance of the equipment / quality of the infrastructure project: <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Match between the project and the needs of the scientific community➤ Capacity for implementation in terms of available expertise and resources➤ Relevance in terms of access, sharing and use➤ Relevance of other resources requested (personnel, operating)➤ Financial and organisational soundness of the project

Article 19

The evaluation process provides for a remote individual examination performed by external experts, and a ranking established by a Scientific Commission dedicated to the INFRA-GEQ instrument, the composition of which will be published on the F.R.S.-FNRS website.

The justified ranking adopted by the Scientific Commission will be communicated to the F.R.S.-FNRS Board of Trustees.

Article 20

The F.R.S.-FNRS Board of Trustees allocates funds according to the budget that is available. It decides whether or not to grant funding and, if so, the amounts awarded.

CHAPTER V: FINANCIAL PROVISIONS

Article 21

Funding granted through the INFRA-GEQ instrument is subject to a research agreement.

This agreement shall bear the signature of the following parties:

- **The promoter** commits to carry out the funded research.
- **The F.R.S.-FNRS** commits to allocate each year, for the duration of the agreement, grants covering the personnel, operating and equipment costs.
- **The host university.**

In the particular case of joint research carried out by several promoters in several host universities, each institution takes part in the agreement, which contains all the relevant provisions regarding grants management and equipment ownership.

The agreement provides for unilateral termination clauses, which must include a period of notice.

The financial commitment of the F.R.S.-FNRS is limited to the total amount stated in the agreement.

Article 22

Grants awarded to (co-)promoters include the following categories: personnel costs, operating costs, and equipment costs.

Transfers of funds between categories and changes within a category or to personnel hiring periods are allowed.

Any change to planned expenses must be notified to the F.R.S.-FNRS on e-space.

Article 23

Scientific and technical personnel shall be recruited in accordance with the salary scales and regulations in place within the host university.

Research Logisticians are recruited in accordance with the regulations governing this type of personnel at the host universities.

Article 24

Grants may be used for the duration of the agreement, plus a period of 12 months.

The unspent amount will be recovered by the F.R.S.-FNRS.

Article 25

The grants at the disposal of the (co-)promoters are managed by the financial department of the institution to which they are attached.

The financial department of the institution shall send the supporting documents to the F.R.S.-FNRS as soon as possible.

For the personnel costs relevant to a given calendar year, the supporting documents must be sent before the 1st March of the following year.

The supporting documents justifying operating and equipment costs must be sent before 1st March directly following the deadline to use the concerned budget.

CHAPTER VI: MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

Article 26

Any equipment acquired with a credit from the F.R.S.-FNRS becomes the property of the host university, to which the beneficiary of the credit is attached.

The purchase of any equipment must be done with due respect for the provisions defined by the relevant department of the host university.

However, the institution commits to leaving the material in question at the disposal of the researchers involved for as long as is necessary to continue the research for which it was acquired. In addition, the host university commits not to sell or lend the equipment without the prior written approval of the F.R.S.-FNRS.

In the event that the device was purchased with additional funding, the F.R.S.-FNRS Board of Trustees will settle the ownership issue with the competent authorities.

Article 27

Grants are exclusively allocated for the execution of the research programme approved by the F.R.S.-FNRS. Promoters are required to use them solely for that purpose. Any fundamental change in the ongoing research programme must obtain prior written approval from the F.R.S.-FNRS.

CHAPTER VII: RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS

Article 28

Any funded research programme must comply with the legal provisions in force regarding ethics.

Article 29

(Co-)Promoters must submit to the rules imposed by the academic authority of the host university where they work and observe its regulations. In addition, regarding the F.R.S.-FNRS, they must adhere to the regulation on ownership, protection, and promotion of the results of research carried out within the institution.

Article 30

Three months after the end of the funding period, a request for a final report is sent to the main promoter.

The main promoter must upload this final report on their personal [e-space](#) page within two months following the request.

Article 31

Pursuant to the [Regulation](#) 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 of the INFRA-GEQ instrument shall mention the source of this funding as follows:

"This work was supported by the Fonds de la Recherche Scientifique - FNRS under Grant(s) n° [ID number]".

APPENDIX 1

Large-scale specialised equipment is any instrumentation or material specifically dedicated to experimentation and research and costing more than €300,000. This equipment is designed to carry out measurements or tasks specific to a field of research or application and requires a large space and specific facilities as well as particular training or expertise to operate. It may be scientific, medical, technical, electronic or IT in nature.

A **research infrastructure** is a specialised facility that provides resources and services to the scientific community to enable cutting-edge scientific and technological research to be carried out in various fields.

A research infrastructure is expected:

- To provide resources and services that are clearly established and recognised as being at the cutting edge of science and/or technology;
- To have an access policy for external users, based primarily on scientific excellence or on access for the largest possible number of members of the scientific community;
- To be managed in a way that is compatible with a long-term perspective;
- To put in place a legal and/or organisational and governance structure that supports the operation and activities of the infrastructure.

It may be used for purposes other than research, such as teaching or public services, or for industrial or societal purposes.

It can be organised on a single site (a single physical location) or on several distinct sites (several dispersed physical locations but with a single coordinating structure), as well as being mobile (the location of an instrument changes regularly).

A research infrastructure includes:

- large equipment or instrument platforms;
- collections or archives;
- computer facilities or communication networks;
- longitudinal surveys;
- or any other unique research and innovation infrastructure open to external users.

APPENDIX 2

Relevant institutions providing access to the funding of the F.R.S.-FNRS.

INFRA-GEQ instrument

Instrument Infrastructures & Grands équipements / Infrastructure & Large Equipment instrument

(SINGLE- AND MULTI-UNIVERSITY INFRA-GEQ)

<p>Candidat e promoteur rice principal e et candidat e co-promoteur rice d'une université CFB / Main promoter-applicant and co-promoter-applicant of a CFB university</p>	<p>➤ Universités de la Communauté française de Belgique (CFB) Universities of the French-speaking Community of Belgium (CFB)</p> <p>Université Catholique de Louvain (UCLouvain) Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB) Université de Liège (ULiège) Université de Mons (UMons) Université de Namur (UNamur)</p>
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