



**Manual Thematic Call for Research Projects in the field of
"Innovation in the Agriculture and Food Sector"**

Version 2023

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. POSITIONING	3	
1.1. Type of supported research		3
1.2. Research themes		3
1.3. Advisory committee		4
2. PROGRAMME CHARACTERISTICS	6	
2.1. Project applicants (consortium) and users		6
2.2. Supported activities		7
2.3. Project budget and support		8
2.4. Use of the results - ownership issues		9
2.5. Data management		10
3. EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT PROPOSAL	11	
3.1. Important deadlines and project assessment timeline		11
3.2. Assessment framework		12
3.3. Procedure complaints and appeals		12
3.4. Rights and obligations during project execution		13

1. POSITIONING

1.1. Type of supported research

The call aims at turning science-based ideas into innovation and thus funds innovative research, which, if scientifically successful, opens up prospects for later economic or societal applications.

Within this call FWO aims to support use-inspired basic research. Research projects should have a problem-driven and application-oriented focus. This implies that in order to fit this call, a proposal should address a specific economic or societal need or problem.

The term '*basic research*' refers to the requirement to gain knowledge regarding the topic of interest. The call thus distinguishes itself from applied research (or experimental development) because of the need for additional basic research on the topic of interest to come to the intended application. The difference of the research intended in this call with curiosity-driven fundamental research lies in the fact that knowledge generation as such (knowing to know, i.e. acquiring new knowledge without any concrete practical application or use in view) is not the objective of this funding programme.

The program is aimed at the acquisition of new knowledge in a dialogue between the research centres that carry out the research and the societal or economic stakeholders that will subsequently translate the results into concrete applications.

A successful project will result in follow-up R&D and implementation activities, which may (partly) qualify for financial support through, e.g., the industrial research programmes of the Agency for Innovation and Entrepreneurship.

1.2. Research themes

For being eligible for funding, the projects within the "Innovation in the agricultural and food sector" call should be situated within at least one of the following three overarching themes:

1. *Agriculture and food systems within ecological boundaries: sustainable agricultural practices and crops and animal welfare*

Our agricultural and food systems are under high pressure from climate change, but they also exert additional pressure on the environment. Research and innovation to make the agricultural sector in Flanders future-oriented and sustainable within the limits of our planet are essential. We strive, through a systemic approach, not only for climate-neutral agriculture but also for a climate-resilient and climate-smart agri-food system that can ensure food security.

Under this theme, projects can include, for example, the development, monitoring, and evaluation of (alternative) agricultural practices, crops (both land-based and non-land-based), and food systems that take care of soil, biodiversity, water management, animal welfare, environment, and are economically viable. Projects focused on circularity, such as closing loops, solutions for residual streams, nutrient recovery, etc., can also fall under this theme.

2. *Healthy and sustainable food for everyone*

Everyone should have the right to access healthy and sustainable food. Choosing healthy and sustainable food should be the easiest choice. However, there are numerous factors that directly or indirectly determine consumer behavior, such as food environments. Communication to consumers is not always clear either. All these factors make changes to consumption patterns in Flanders challenging. Under this theme, we expect projects that work on the availability of healthy and sustainable food, insights into consumer behavior and the impact of nudging, information provision, labeling, trust in food, etc.

3. *Resilient economy*

Entrepreneurship and innovation are essential to make our agricultural and food systems future-oriented. Only in this way can we focus on sustainable business models and high-value products that meet market demands, creating a resilient system capable of withstanding external shocks. Innovative business models linked to more sustainable production generate significant economic potential for the entire agri-food sector. Sufficient attention should also be given to the possible scaling up of such innovative models. Additionally, increased transparency in current systems and business models can lead to stronger connections and collaboration within the system. Under this theme, projects can also be submitted on pricing, sustainable trade, etc.

All project proposals are expected to indicate in their proposal the domain of the Flemish [Fit4Food research agenda](#) or the objective of the [Food strategy](#) within which the project is situated. Furthermore, project proposals situated within the domain of circular agriculture/circular economy should mention the complementarity or link with the objectives of [the Action Plan on Food Loss and Biomass Residues 2021-2025](#) or with the [Bioeconomy Policy Plan](#). Project proposals focusing on alternative proteins should also state the link to the objectives of the [Flemish Protein Strategy](#).

If a project proposal cannot be directly linked to any of the policy objectives mentioned above, a well-founded argumentation is expected as to why this is not the case and why this project is still relevant in the context of the transformation towards a more sustainable Flemish food and agricultural system.

Project proposals are recommended to adopt a systems approach in their research and to work as much as possible in a multi-, interdisciplinary, and cross-sectoral manner.

1.3. **Advisory committee**

1.3.1. *Composition and requirements*

- An advisory committee (including potential users) has to be set up during the project implementation (this will be a very important aspect in the project evaluation). This advisory committee will serve as a critical sounding board from the user field and is to assist in preparing translation of results into sustainable socio-economic applications. It should ideally cover the whole value chain.
- The advisory committee is open to all interested users, i.e. both companies and organisations (.e.g societal stakeholders), including users outside the Flemish region.
- The project proposal must explicitly specify the users (companies/organisations) that have committed to participate in the committee.
- All users that wish to participate in the advisory committee must back up their commitments by substantiated letters of intent. These letters are an integral part of a project proposal. As these documents will be provided to the external referees, to the respective expert panel, the letters of intent are to be written in English.
- A commitment to a substantive contribution and a time investment to participate in bilateral consultations with the project executors and/or meetings of the advisory committee.
- It is essential that the letters of intent are concrete and properly substantiated and not limited to a general non-binding expression of interest. It should be explicitly specified, in as much detail as possible, what the specific added value of the expected project results is for the respective company/organisations and what further concrete development and implementation projects are foreseen after the project period. The letter of intent confirming membership of the advisory board should be signed by a legal representative of the company to demonstrate internal support for the company's involvement in the advisory committee.
- For a company that wishes to join the advisory committee of project a limited financial contribution: for the duration of the contract with FWO (2 to 4 year project period. all commercial members of the

advisory committee are required to make a monetary contribution of minimum € 250/year in the case of an SME or minimum € 1,000/year in the case of a large enterprise or another organisation. A demonstrable equivalent deployment of personpower and resources for the project implementation may also be taken into consideration, if clearly substantiated and valued. A significantly higher contribution than the minimal required amounts may be positively assessed during the evaluation of the proposal. The financial contribution has to be specified in the letter of intent.

- There is no hard requirement for a financial contribution by scientific institutions, governments, and societal actors within such advisory committee. However, a financial contribution is strongly recommended, considering it a sign of commitment and support by the organisation.
- The composition of the advisory committee, including substantiated letters of intent with commitment to financial contribution by the commercial members of the advisory board, should be finalized at the time of submission of the project and submitted together with the application. Letters of intent that arrive after the deadline or arrive at the premises of FWO are not eligible.
- The project executors have full authority over the execution of the research. They remain the owners of the results and are in the driver's seat for utilisation. The members of an advisory committee are not automatically entitled to the exploitation of the results. The knowledge transfer of results of research centres is open to all companies in the European Union at the end of the project, including those companies that are not a member of the advisory committee. All transfers (exclusive and non-exclusive) should be made at prevailing market conditions.
- Please note that in the context of basic research funding, pre-agreed (exclusive or non-exclusive) licensing arrangements or disproportionate clauses are in conflict with the exemption from EU state aid rules granted to non-economic activities of research organisations. Negotiating a licence or transfer a priori is not acceptable. Companies can, at most, negotiate with the research centres a right of first negotiation. It is important to make arrangements and manage the members' expectations regarding a potential intellectual property partition and IP transfer model before submitting the project proposal. During the project assessment, special attention will be paid to the likelihood and feasibility of the possible applications, which depends, among other factors, on a good understanding between the users.

1.3.2. *Interactions with users before, during and after the -project*

It is important to pursue sufficient interaction between the research centres and the potential users of the project results, both during the pre-project phase, the project implementation phase, and the 7post-project phase

- *pre-project phase*

During the drafting of a project proposal, researchers are urged to contact possible users (organisations and or companies) for bilateral consultation or for a preparatory brainstorming. Conversely, all users may contact researchers to discuss needs, bottlenecks or opportunities for which strategic research could provide an added value.

During the assessment of the project proposals, great emphasis is placed on the active participation of users from the early phase of drafting a project proposal. Interaction with interested users in an early phase allows to tailor the project proposal to the actual needs of the users and thereby maximise the likelihood of future utilisation of the results. The applicants of a project and the members of the advisory committee must provide evidence of such preparative activities as well as substantiate their impact on the project proposal.

- *project execution phase*

During the project execution, a two-way dialogue between the researchers and the user field involved remains essential to achieve the targeted transfer from scientific research to concrete applications. Hereto, users may participate as members of the advisory committee.

Users cannot participate as a funded co-applicant in the research consortium.

In the assessment of the project proposals, good (R&D) interactions between researchers and users may result in a selection advantage.

An example is the situation where the company (as a member of the advisory committee) carries out R&D activities that are substantively linked to the project. This R&D cooperation must be verifiable and should overlap with the planned implementation phase of the project. The presence of such collaboration does not suffice for granting a selection advantage. It is up to the expert panels to give an appreciation about the meaningfulness, relevance and added value of such collaborations.

Societal users can, however, decide to collaborate with the consortium, using their own resources, by:

- the execution, during the project period (from the third year onwards), of application-oriented activities that bridge the gap between the results and their application(s) in the societal field of application. It is however important that the project remains innovative and challenging basic research.
- the execution of parallel R&D activities, related to the topic of the project and the societal application domain of the project, which however do not belong to the societal implementation of the actual results.

In both of the above cases, these R&D activities are not part of the project.

During the evaluation of the project proposals, a selection advantage may be awarded to such collaborations.

- *post-project phase*

A successful project gives rise to subsequent research, development and implementation projects and activities. The focus thereby shifts to the users. These follow-on projects cannot be supported through the FWO, but could qualify for support through the financing channels with the Agency for Innovation and Entrepreneurship (industrial R&D projects, innovation mandate, Baekeland fellowships, etc.).

It is important that possible follow-up projects to be carried out by users are specified already in the project proposal and the letters of intent.

2. PROGRAMME CHARACTERISTICS

2.1. Project applicants (consortium) and users

2.1.1. Project applicants

A project proposal is submitted by at least one Flemish research centre. Based on their mission, this includes e.g., Flemish universities and their university hospitals, Flemish university colleges (in Dutch: *hogescholen*)¹ and the Flemish strategic research centres. Otherwise, all other organisations that meet the definition of a research centre and that are located in the Flemish region² may act as an applicant. A research centre is defined as an entity (such as universities or research institutes, technology transfer agencies, innovation intermediaries, research-oriented physical or virtual collaborative entities), irrespective of its legal status (organised under public or private law) or way of financing, whose primary goal is to independently conduct fundamental research, industrial research or experimental development or to widely disseminate the results of such activities by way of teaching, publication or knowledge transfer. Where such entity also pursues economic activities, the financing, the costs and the revenues of those economic activities must be accounted for separately. Undertakings that can exert a decisive influence upon such an entity, for example in the quality of shareholders or members, may not

¹ See article II.2 en II.3 in: [wet: Besluit van de Vlaamse Regering tot codificatie van de decretale bepalingen betreffende het hoger onderwijs \(citeeropschrift: "Codex Hoger Onderwijs"\) \(vlaanderen.be\)](#).

² Or in the Brussels region if they resort under the authority of the "Vlaamse Gemeenschapscommissie".

enjoy a preferential access to the results generated *as stated in* Framework for State aid for research and development and innovation [2022/C 414/01](#).

If there could be any doubts whether a particular applying organisation meets the definition of a research centre), you should support compliance to this definition, possibly through an independent legal advice.

Two or more research centres together may also form a consortium. In this case, one of the Flemish research centres is appointed as the main host institution.

All applicants (on the level of their legal entity) must subscribe to the principles of the FWO funding in the form of a declaration of intent. This declaration includes a formal statement in which the applicant declares that the organisation fulfils the definition of a research centre (see above). For applicants that regularly submit project proposals to FWO ³, the research coordination or TTO offices have (or will receive upon request) an account in the FWO e-portal, allowing them to submit this declaration online. For others, including sporadic applicants (such as non-Flemish research institutes, ...), the declarations (signed by a legal representative of the organisation) have to be uploaded as attachments to the project application at the time of submitting the proposal via the e-portal. A template is available on the website.

The main applicant appoints a supervisor. The supervisor must be employed by the main applicant and is responsible for the proper execution of the project. The supervisor is the first contact person for FWO. The main applicant ensures that the supervisor has sufficient time and experience to carry out this assignment properly. If the project is submitted by a project consortium, the main applicant represents the applicants towards FWO and, when the grant is awarded, ensures the coordination of the activities of the awarded project grant.

2.1.2. *Non-Flemish partners*

A Flemish research centre can submit a project proposal together with one or more non-Flemish research centre. In this case, it must be demonstrated in the project proposal that the input of this partner is necessary to carry out the research and to achieve the objectives for utilisation in Flanders. The aggregated sub-budgets of non-Flemish research centres being part of the consortium as project partner or intended to carry out specific sub-tasks as preferred subcontractor, may not exceed 20% of the proposed project budget.

Excluded from international collaboration are all Russian and Belarusian research centres. In the light of the growing attention towards foreign interference, applicants that wish to team up with a Chinese university that belongs to the 'Seven Sons of Defence', public research universities who collaborate closely with the People's Liberation Army of the People's Republic of China (in particular: Northwestern Polytechnical University; Harbin Engineering University; Harbin Institute of Technology; Beihang University; Beijing Institute of Technology; the Nanjing University of Science and Technology and Nanjing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics) are strongly requested to contact FWO well before the submission deadline.

2.2. **Supported activities**

The supported activities for research centres include the implementation of the strategic basic research as such and also activities linked with the planned utilisation approach (meetings with the advisory committee, preparation of patent applications, surveys of bilateral follow-up projects with companies,

³ Catholic University of Leuven (incl. University Hospital Leuven), Ghent University, University Hospital Ghent, University of Antwerp, University Hospital Antwerp, Free University of Brussels (incl. University Hospital Brussels), University of Hasselt, Flanders Institute for Biotechnology, Flemish Institute for Technological Research, Interuniversity Micro-Electronics Center, Flanders Make, Prince Leopold Institute of Tropical Medicine.

etc.). This implies that the deployment of people with a task related to utilisation of the project results during the project period can also be incorporated into the project⁴.

2.3. Project budget and support

2.3.1. Project duration and project budget

In principle, a project has a duration of four years. With proper justification, the project may also have a shorter duration.

The project budget is initially set to maximum € 500,000 per year (including overhead costs). Overhead costs are set at a fixed percentage and payed separately. Overhead costs are not included within the budget which is to be provided to FWO. The maximum amount per applicant (excluding overhead) is set at € 425,000 per year. However, if the project is carried out by a consortium, the project budget may be increased to a maximum of € 425,000 per year (excluding overhead) multiplied by the number of legal entities acting as a project applicant that have a share of more than 15% of the total project budget.

This does not mean that each applicant within a consortium must at least commit to 15% of the project budget. The 'minimum 15%' rule refers only to the consortiums' budget advantage, according to which the overall project budget can be increased by up to € 425,000/year (excluding overhead) when this minimum is reached.

The combined sub-budgets of non-Flemish research centres being part of the consortium and non-Flemish third parties intended to carry out specific sub-tasks as preferred subcontractor, may not exceed 20% of the total project budget.

As a guideline, a project budget of approx. 1,7 million euros (excluding overhead) is proposed. Larger budgets are possible if duly substantiated.

2.3.2. Support

The support percentage amounts to 100% of the acceptable costs provided the research centres meet the definition of a research centre (see 2.1.1).

2.3.3. Cost model

The project budget structure and the acceptable costs are described in detail in the [cost model](#). Only the main aspects are described here. An Excel template for preparation of the budget is available on the FWO e-portal. This file makes use of macros to facilitate its completion by the applicant. Its use is mandatory and the version that corresponds to the requested project budget has to be uploaded in the FWO e-portal when submitting the project proposal. *Please note:* Before uploading this file to the FWO e-portal, you need to save this document as an Excel file without macros (due to the FWO server's security measures against uploading malicious files).

⁴ This applies to people who are directly integrated into the relevant research groups of the project consortium, and therefore not to individuals who are employed in interface services or research coordination services and for whom another form of funding is already available (cf. interface decree: decision of the Flemish Government of 29 May 2009 concerning the support of Industrial Research Funds and interface activities of the associations in the Flemish Community).

Personnel costs

The acceptable personnel costs are calculated for personnel directly involved in the execution of the project. Only staff executing research activities or preparing activities related to the utilisation of the project results can thus be taken into account in the project budget. Staffing costs of 'ZAP' members or other personnel that are charged to the general operating resources of the research institutions and governments, cannot be allowed any remuneration or cumulation with their remuneration from the project resources. Likewise, a grant cannot be used to pay civil servant's salaries, unless they are exempted from their usual duties [with (temporary) suspension of salary] to carry out the work in the context of the project proposal. The employer is obliged to ensure that the government does not finance these persons twice for the same work.

Consumables

This section also includes large subcontracting and fees for using core facilities services (if any).

The application must include a realistic estimate of the costs. The level of detail that is required for the justification of the consumables is limited to a list of large categories and their related cost (e.g., materials/commodities, IT costs, travel/accommodation expenses, depreciation of research equipment, preferred subcontractors, etc.). The share of small subcontracting (< € 8,500) in the listing must be clearly specified.

From a cost of € 8,500 onwards, an anticipated/preferred subcontracting needs to be specified separately from the other consumable costs and the necessity of the subcontracting needs to be justified (large subcontracting). The outsourced tasks and cost drivers must be documented. When awarding the actual contract to a subcontractor during the project execution, the applicants should comply with the law on public procurement. The total cost of the tasks proposed to be carried out by subcontractors may not exceed 30% of the proposed budget.

Equipment

Only equipment that is needed for the project and that is specified in the application, can be charged to this category at its depreciation cost over the life of the project and in proportion to its use in the project. The maximum amount for this category is limited to € 150,000 for the entire project. All equipment acquired with a grant of the FWO shall become the property of the research centre.

Cumulation with other government support

For the calculation of the acceptable support, possible parallel subsidy flows from other services of the Flemish or other governments are taken into account, as well as any other non-governmental support (sponsorship, patronage, ...) in so far it covers the same costs. Cumulation or potential cumulation with other (pending) subsidies has to be declared in the application.

2.4. Use of the results - ownership issues

Ownership of the results

The project applicants/executors are the owners of the project results. In the case of a consortium, each partner is the owner of its own share of the results and is not entitled to the results of the partners. For a research group belonging to a university or a university college, the provisions of art. IV 48 of the Higher Education Code apply.⁵

Transfer of the results to existing companies

When intellectual property rights or user rights arising out of research results obtained by a research centre are transferred to a company for the purpose of further utilising the results, the following provisions that guarantee a level playing field in the European single market apply (EU framework for state aid):

⁵ Coordinated decrees on higher education ("Higher Education Code") of 11 October 2013.

- The research results are available for licensing/knowledge transfer on an equal and non-discriminatory basis to all companies within the EU. Pre-agreed (i.e. anytime before the end of the project) licensing agreements or disproportional clauses are in conflict with the exemption from EU state aid rules granted to non-economic activities of research organizations. The research centres and interested companies may agree on a right of first negotiation, provided such agreements are based on a commitment to transfer at market conditions. Therefore always foresee the possibility of a more advantageous offer from a third party with an adjustment of the bid.
- A compensation in accordance with normal market conditions is payable, which is equal for all companies within the EU, including members of the advisory committee and companies taking part in the project execution (as non-funded partners or subcontractors). Any contributions made by the companies to the costs of the research centres in relation to the transferred results may be deducted. Licensing and transfer of commercially valuable knowledge generated in a publicly funded project to a commercial actor cannot take place during the lifetime of the project. In order to exclude indirect funding to commercial entities, this will result in the immediate termination of project funding by the FWO.
- The revenues from the licensing or granted access to knowledge are to be reinvested in the primary activities of the research centre.

Transfer of the results to a new spin-off company

When intellectual property rights or user rights arising out of research results obtained by a research centre are transferred as part of the creation of a new spin-off company, the requirement for compensation in accordance with normal market conditions and the requirement for reinvestment of the revenue in the primary activities of the research centre likewise apply.

Cooperation agreement

When there are several legal entities in the consortium, good mutual arrangements are to be in place between the participating consortium partners concerning what has been agreed on joint working agreements, project management and the allocation of the intellectual property rights (IPR).

As part of the project proposal, the applicants have the choice to indicate to

- 1) accept the model cooperation agreement ([nl/eng](#)) as agreed on by the Tech Transfer Offices Flanders ([Home | TTO Flanders - Technology Transfer Offices](#)) which is made available on the FWO-website
- 2) The consortium partners do not agree with the standard template used by universities and most research organisations.
- 3) have not yet settled an agreement on the main principles of the consortium agreement.

In case the members of the consortium have not yet come to an agreement on the way they will collaborate, applicants should provide a short description of the alternative regulation they envision and give their motivation for the specific adaptation(s) and/or indicate the remaining bottlenecks to be solved in order come to a collaboration agreement.

FWO does not need to receive a signed term sheet between the partners of the consortium in the course of the evaluation procedure. Irrespective the choice made in the application, a full cooperation agreement is requested after granting the project proposal. This cooperation agreement, as well as any changes to it during the execution of the agreement is subject to approval by the FWO.

2.5. Data management

Research data management covers the way research data are managed, from their date of creation or collection, to the moment they are published or used and possibly preserved for the long term. Research data management is therefore an integral part of sound scientific research and thus FWO has made data management a key element of its policy. It covers procedures on the description of research data and metadata, their storage and long-term preservation, the discoverability, the designation of responsible

persons, the handling of highly sensitive data, and the open access to and sharing of research data. The FWO expects researchers to pay due attention to this dimension before, during and for at least five years following their research.

The application form in the FWO e-portal contains several issues that need to be addressed concerning data management:

- the data types that the research will use and/or generate
- the provisions that are in place in order to preserve the data for at least 5 years after the end of the research
- possible reasons to deviate from the principle of preservation of data, sharing and of the minimum preservation term of 5 years
- specific security measures for research data due to ethical issues
- other relevant issues related to data management

The abovementioned issues regarding data management will also be taken into account during the evaluation procedure. If a proposal receives funding, a data management plan will be requested by FWO. More information on data management can be found [Research Foundation - Flanders - Data Management Plan \(fwo.be\)](#).

3. EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT PROPOSAL

3.1. Important deadlines and project assessment timeline

The deadline for submission of a project proposal is indicated on the website. Project proposals are submitted via the FWO e-portal. Any other way of submission is considered ineligible.

The initially submitted project proposal remains the basic document throughout the selection procedure.

The assessment procedure consists of a single selection round:

- For every project proposal, the FWO administration provides at least four international experts who have agreed to evaluate the project (external peer review). For a highly multidisciplinary project proposal, the number of experts may be increased. The assessment by the international experts is based on the assessment framework and covers both the scientific aspects and the utilisation aspects.
- To avoid any conflicts of interest, the applicants may submit to FWO a short list of maximum 3 experts to be avoided. Such a short list must be submitted at the deadline of pre-submission (i.e. transfer of the project proposal to the coordinating office of the main applicant). The short list must be specific, i.e. based on the name of the expert or particular organisation to be challenged. Also a short motivation to exclude an expert should be provided.
- The written expert recommendations are sent anonymously and unabridged to the applicants. The applicants have the opportunity to provide a rebuttal to the expert recommendations. Its length is maximum 3 A4 pages and the timing hereof is indicated on the website. The sole aim of this rebuttal is to clarify misunderstandings originating from the external peer review process and/or to provide an answer to open questions. If necessary for the interpretation and assessment, (a part of) the applicant's response to the referee's comments may be shared with the external experts for additional feedback.
- The project application, expert recommendations and the written feedback from the applicants, is then assessed by internal peer review: a thematic expert panel assigns a consensus score on the scientific and utilisation dimension and then ranks the proposals and submits a proposal for funding for approval by the FWO board of trustees.

3.2. Assessment framework

3.2.1. The assessment

The assessment framework is based on the evaluation of the following criteria:

1. Scientific dimension S
S1 Innovative value of the basic research
- The added value to the international state-of-the-art and to ongoing research - The level of scientific challenges, qualification as basic research with a clear high-risk/high-gain profile - The presence of clear and realistic scientific goals
S2 Quality of the research approach
- A clear description of the research approach for all scientific goals - A thorough substantiation of the research approach - No gaps, shortcomings or superfluous activities in the research approach
S3 Project planning & resources
- A clear and appropriate allocation of research tasks within the individual research groups and/or among the consortium partners, with sufficient mutual interaction - A proper justification of all resources suited for the scientific objectives - A suitable project planning, with clear and realistic objectives, performance measures, milestones and deliverables.
2. Utilisation perspectives U
U1 Relevance/Strategic importance and applicability amongst which in Flanders
- A research approach that is fully aligned with the intended utilisation - The project outcome's utilisation potential, resulting in a major stride forward and well-substantiated socio-economic added value. - A predominant part of the anticipated utilisation value chain located in Flanders
U2 Utilisation approach and knowledge transfer
- The relevance of the project to all users and vice versa. No users, important in the value chain, are missing. The impact of early interactions with these users on the project design is fully substantiated - The thoroughness of the utilisation plan, including evidence for intensive involvement of the users during the project and containing plans to assess and validate the effectiveness of the project's outcomes. - In the user's letters of intent, there is clear self-reported commitment by the users to engage in concrete follow-up R&D&I
U3 Added value of the project in terms of Sustainable Development Goals
3. R&D capacity, competence and infrastructure (C)
C1 R&D capacity and competence; infrastructure
- The available research competences and infrastructure, complementarity and synergy within the consortium
C2 Competence and track record with regard to transfer and utilisation
- Utilisation-oriented focus and track record of the consortium with regard to the socio-economic transfer of research results

The decision model for the overall score and the differentiation of the project proposals is as follows:

- For each of the above mentioned criteria a score between 0 and 10 is given.
- Projects scoring lower than 6 on one or more of the criteria are ineligible for support and will not be considered for funding.
- Projects scoring at least 6 on each of the criteria are ranked based on the sum of the individual scores on each of the criteria. A double weight is granted to criteria S1, S2, U1 and U2. The highest ranked project proposals are supported within the limits of the available budget.

3.3. Procedure complaints and appeals

It is at the discretion of the expertpanels and steering committees of the FWO to assess, in all autonomy, the submitted applications

If you are not satisfied with the procedure followed during the evaluation process, an appeal for review of the decision can be filed with FWO. An appeal for review must be initiated within a period of 30 working days after notification of the board of trustees decision and be based on 'clear and verifiable', such as errors committed to the applicable FWO regulations. The words "clear" and "verifiable" mean that the elements on which the request for review is based must be understandable for a third party or layman, enabling an assessment of its truthfulness/well-foundedness.

If dissatisfied with the way FWO has handled the application, a complaint can be filed at any time in writing or electronically. Complaints are handled within 45 days of their receipt. Complaints concerning a negative appraisal of a project application by the FWO board of trustees may, however, only be submitted after an appeal for review of the decision has been filed with and handled by the board of trustees.

3.4. Rights and obligations during project execution

3.4.1. Agreement

The main obligation of the beneficiary is a commitment of resources: with the help of the awarded resources, the beneficiary will make the necessary efforts to reach and apply the described project objectives through research and development activities to ensure utilisation in Flanders.

3.4.2. Final cooperation agreement

The final cooperation agreement must include at least the following aspects:

- designation of a main applicant and a supervisor;
- designation of the research activities to be performed;
- joint working agreements and project management
- agreements regarding ownership and user rights to background knowledge and project results for implementation of the utilisation plan;
- procedure for settlement of mutual disputes;
- reporting obligations.

The cooperation agreement must concur with the FWO regulations, and in particular with the provisions regarding the utilisation of the project results. The final legally signed cooperation agreement must be submitted to FWO within 4 months of the date of receipt of the board of directors decision on the support.

3.4.3. Follow up, reporting and payment of support

If the project is approved, the beneficiary will have to report at regular intervals on the proper scientific and utilisation progress of the project. An annual meeting must be held, to be attended by the members of the advisory committee. The FWO must be invited to this meeting and the minutes of the meeting must be sent to the FWO. These minutes are an integral part of the mandatory reporting.