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FEDERAL SCIENCE POLICY

RESEARCH PROGRAMME FOR EARTH OBSERVATION STEREO IV

(SUPPORT TO EXPLOITATION AND RESEARCH IN EARTH OBSERVATION)

SPECIFIC INFORMATION ABOUT OPEN CALL FOR PROPOSALS:

DEVELOPMENT OF APPLICATIONS

PROPOSAL SUBMISSION DEADLINE: *BEFORE THE END OF 2026*

INTRODUCTION

- This document features specific information for teams wishing to take part in the open call for application proposals in the "STEREO IV programme".

- For general information about the STEREO calls (thematic priorities, programme structure and implementation, projects implementation and budget breakdown) please consult the general information package for open call proposals.

- Steps involved in submitting a proposal:
  1. Submitting an expression of interest (mandatory)
  2. Submitting a request for a pre-study (optional)
  3. Submitting of the actual project proposal

- Proposals can be submitted any time and should be written in English.

- The proposals will be evaluated at least once a year.

- Applicants must make sure that there is no overlap with grants from other regional/national/European programs.

- Applicants are required to observe the rules laid down in the information packages for this call, otherwise their proposals cannot be taken into account by the Belgian Federal Science Policy Office.

For further details about the programme and this call for proposals, please get in touch with:

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1 OBJECT OF THIS CALL

DEVELOPMENT OF APPLICATIONS

These are small scale projects for knowledge transfer based on a verifiable user need.

- The goal of these projects is a transfer of technology and knowledge from scientific institutions to Belgian companies or public administrations.
- **The company or public administration will be named ***Coordinator*** in the remainder of the document.**
- The proposal must result from a critical need of the Coordinator or its customers and end users.
- These applications can be products, services, software codes or procedures.
- Potential gains in resources, efficiency or turnover must be clearly demonstrated.
- In terms of content, the proposals must have a bearing on the four priority research themes.
- A maximum of three scientific teams, solely from Belgium, are responsible for the implementation of the project for a period of 1 to 3 years.
- The programme pays solely for the scientific partner(s). The proposal must be submitted by the Coordinator who should also oversee the project.
- Potential end users must be involved in the project for defining and testing the finished product.
- Projects may be designed as 'pre-operational', thereby implying further fine-tuning paid for in full in a subsequent phase by the Coordinator itself, in the light of the assumed market outlook.
- Residency and training of scientists at the Coordinator's institution is recommended.
- The actual proposal may be preceded by a pre-study (see 4.2.)

Both the submission of a pre-study proposal and a full-fledged proposal should be preceded by an expression of interest.

2 WHO CAN GET FUNDING?

- Only following Belgian partners qualify for funding of a development of applications project:
  - Universities
  - Public research institutions
  - Non-profit research institutions

3 BUDGET

- There is no fixed budget earmarked for development of application projects. Projects can be submitted at any time before the end of 2026.

4 SUBMISSION

Submission is a three-stage process:

- first the submission of an expression of interest,
- then, optionally, the submission of a pre-study financing request and
- finally the submission of an actual research proposal.

Solely those who submit an expression of interest are entitled to submit a proposal later on.

4.1 EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

- Expressions of Interest (EOI) should be submitted solely via the form intended for this purpose, which can be accessed via the STEREO website https://eo.belspo.be/en/stereo-call-proposals

- Solely those who submit an expression of interest are entitled to submit a pre-study financing request or a comprehensive proposal later on.

- The EOI must be submitted by the Coordinator.

- Only a word version of the EOI should be submitted, in English, to the Belgian Federal Science Office via schy@belspo.be and vdab@belspo.be.

4.2 PRE-STUDY FINANCING REQUEST

  - This preliminary study is optional and is meant to:
    - verify that the application is feasible,
    - clearly define the user needs,
    - settle the intellectual property rights,
    - consolidate the partnership and
    - draft a solid proposal.
  - The originator of the concept, the provider of the data or information and the user should be involved in this preliminary study.

- For the pre-study, the coordinator may be funded as well.

- Funding for a preliminary study is possible on a one-off basis and for a maximum budget of 10.000 euros for all partners.

Both the submission of a pre-study proposal and a full-fledged proposal should be preceded by an expression of interest.

- The advisability of a pre-study should always be discussed first with the programme managers prior to the submission of a pre-study financing request.

- Pre-study financing requests should be submitted solely via the form intended for this purpose, which can be accessed here: https://eo.belspo.be/en/stereo-calls-proposals .

4.3 PROPOSAL

- Proposals should be submitted solely via the form intended for this purpose, which can be accessed via the STEREO website.
- The proposals can be submitted anytime but before the end of 2026.
- Applicants are required to meet the conditions set forth in the information documents.
- Attachments to the submission file will be disregarded during the assessment and selection procedure.
- Proposals should be submitted in English.
- Only a digital word version of the proposal should be submitted to the Belgian Federal Science Policy Office via schy@belspo.be and vdab@belspo.be.

5 ASSESSMENT

5.1 EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

After reception of the expression of interest, the programme managers will give a non-binding feedback (recommendations and/or remarks) about the compliance of the expression of interest with the guidelines of this call and the advisability to submit a pre-study financing request.

5.2 PRE-STUDY

The request for a preliminary study will be assessed by the STEREO programme board.

5.3 DEVELOPMENT OF APPLICATIONS PROPOSAL

Note that proposals will not be considered for evaluation if they do not meet the requirements of the call.

The evaluation of the proposals is divided into two steps. The **first step** is a written evaluation by 3 international experts. The criteria used for this first part of the evaluation are:

- Compliance with the guidelines of this call and the programme aims

- Scientific quality of the project proposal:

  - innovative character of the proposal (improved or new product, system or service)
  - clarity of the aims and the tasks
  - relevance of the methodological approach
  - positioning of the proposal viz. existing applications in the field in question

- Quality of the proposed partnership

  - role and involvement of the Coordinator
  - relevant expertise of the applicant(s)
  - complementary relationship of the partners
  - distribution of tasks
  - balanced distribution of the resources among the partners
  - cooperation methods
  - organisation and management of the network and management capability of the Coordinator

- Feasibility of the proposal

  - realistic preparation of the work plan (including SWOT analysis)
  - realistic assessment of the resources required (duration, budget, staff)
  - need for the application
  - user-friendly character of the proposed application
  - credibility of the market assessment (including knowledge about European competitors or existing cooperation with European industrial stakeholders in this area) (for collaboration with private sector only)
  - contribution to operational use of satellite imagery in Belgium (if applicable)
  - possible contribution to increasing Belgian industrial competitiveness (if applicable)

- Implementation plan / business plan (for collaboration with private sector)

- Capacity of Coordinator to integrate application in operational procedures

The **second step** of the evaluation consists of an oral defence in front of the STEREO programme board. This second step is only carried out for the proposals that successfully passed the first step of the evaluation.

6 SELECTION

At the end of the day the proposals are selected and recommended for funding by the STEREO programme board on the basis of the written evaluation, the oral defence and the budget available.

The final decision is taken by the Minister in charge of Science Policy upon advise by the Inspector of Finances.