PROGRAMME 'APPLIED RESEARCH'

GUIDE FOR EVALUATORS

IDEALAB CALL FOR FULL PROPOSALS

These guidelines for evaluators explain how to evaluate proposals in the IdeaLab Call for Full Proposals of the Programme 'Applied Research'.

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Further call information, forms and guidelines are available on:

https://www.ncbr.gov.pl/norwaygrants/pl

https://www.ncbr.gov.pl/en/norwaygrants/en

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Programme 'Applied Research' has been established under the priority sector Innovation, Research, Education and Competitiveness. The objective of the Programme is enhanced research-based knowledge development.

The aim of the Programme is to prepare Project Promoters, project partners and researchers for further research cooperation within the European Framework Programmes for research and technological development and demonstration activities and also for cooperation within other

European programmes and initiatives. The Programme contributes to the development of the European Research Area.

The IdeaLab is an innovative way of generating research projects coupled with real-time peer-review. The crucial element of the method is an interactive and intensive 5-day workshop involving approx. 30 participants from a range of disciplines and backgrounds and a team of external experts (mentors and the director) and stakeholders that is organised in order to drive new approaches to address research challenges on a specific topic.

The topic of the IdeaLab is: 'Cities for the future: services and solutions'. A detailed description of topic is available in 'Description of the call area'. The IdeaLab workshop took place on 2-6 March 2020 in Otwock and was organised by the Programme Operator.

The full proposals submitted in this call should be developed from the project ideas created during the IdeaLab workshop and submitted in a project idea form during the IdeaLab workshop.

2. PEER REVIEW PROCESS

2.1. ELIGIBILITY OF PROPOSALS

In order to be retained, the proposals must fulfil all of the following eligibility criteria:

1. receipt of proposal by the Programme Operator before the deadline date and time established in the call and in compliance with p. 2.6 of the 'Guide For Applicants IdeaLab Call for Full Proposals';
2. positive assessment of the project pre-proposal (project idea) during the IdeaLab Workshop;
3. fulfilment of conditions related to:
   a) composition of the project consortium as defined in 'Guide For Applicants IdeaLab Call for Full Proposals' p. 2.1,
   b) Project Promoter and project partners eligibility as defined in 'Guide For Applicants IdeaLab Call for Full Proposals' p. 2.2 and 2.3,
   c) minimum and maximum amount of grant assistance as defined in 'Guide For Applicants IdeaLab Call for Full Proposals' p. 2.5.1,
   d) maximum project duration and final cost eligibility date as defined in 'Guide For Applicants IdeaLab Call for Full Proposals' p. 2.5.1,
   e) types of activities as defined in 'Guide For Applicants IdeaLab Call for Full Proposals' p. 2.5.1,
   f) currency as defined in 'Guide For Applicants IdeaLab Call for Full Proposals' p. 2.5.2,
   g) cost categories as defined in 'Guide For Applicants IdeaLab Call for Full Proposals' p. 2.5.4,
   h) intensity of state aid as defined in 'Guide For Applicants IdeaLab Call for Full Proposals' p. 2.5.5;
4. confirmation that Project Promoter and project partners:

a) comply with the principle of equal opportunities and non-discrimination, including accessibility for people with disabilities and the principle of equality between women and men,

b) are not excluded from the possibility of receiving funding as defined in 'Guide For Applicants IdeaLab Call for Full Proposals' p. 2.1;

5. completeness of the proposal as required in the 'Proposal Manual';

6. accordance with the scope of the call as stipulated in 'Description of the call area' - the content of the proposal must relate to the topics of the call; a proposal will only be deemed ineligible on grounds of 'scope' in clear-cut cases.

If it becomes clear before, during or after the evaluation phase that due to the new circumstances one or more of the eligibility criteria have not been fulfilled, the proposal is declared ineligible by the Programme Operator and is withdrawn from any further examination.

2.2. PEER REVIEWS

Before the evaluation process, the Programme Operator briefs the reviewers on the evaluation process and procedures as well as the evaluation criteria to be applied, and the content and expected impacts of the research topic concerned.

In the first stage, each proposal is sent to **three reviewers** who are asked to work individually, and give scores and comments for each evaluation criterion. The reviewers also indicate if the proposal deals with sensitive ethical issues.

After the individual evaluation of a proposal, the reviewer completes a '**Review Form**' confirming their individual reading and assessment.

In the second stage (called '**consensus stage'**) the evaluation progresses to a consensus assessment performed by the three reviewers. Scores and comments of this stage are set out in the consensus report approved by all reviewers. Comments are presented in a way to be suitable for feedback to the applicants.

If applicable, the reviewers also come to a common view on the question on ethics, as mentioned under the first stage above.

The outcome of the consensus stage is the **consensus report**, approved by all the experts. In the case that it is impossible to reach a consensus, the report sets out the majority view of the experts but also records any dissenting views from any particular expert(s).

If important changes are necessary, the reports will be referred back to the experts concerned.

2.3. RANKING LISTS

The Programme Operator prepares the preliminary ranking list based on the international experts' evaluation of the proposals and evaluation of the pre-proposals during the IdeaLab Workshop. Due account is taken of the scores received and of any advice from the experts. It will also take account of the available budget, the strategic objectives of the Programme. A suggested grant amount is determined for each of these proposals.

The Programme Committee is granted access to applications and evaluations and presented with the scored lists of proposals the Programme Operator has found eligible, including the suggested financial contribution for each proposal.

The Programme Committee reviews the ranked lists of projects. The Programme Committee may modify the ranking of the projects in justified cases in accordance with Chapter 8. The justification for modifications will be decided unanimously and justified in writing by the PC. The mode of deciding upon the final ranking lists is also described in Chapter 8. The Chair of the Programme Committee submits the lists of recommended projects, together with the reserve lists and the lists of rejected project applications and the reason for their rejection to the Programme Operator.

The Programme Operator verifies that the grant award recommendation of the Programme Committee complies with the rules and objectives of the Programme. The Programme Operator then issues individual decisions to award a grant to projects based on the final ranking lists approved by the Programme Committee.

In case the final ranking lists approved by the Programme Committee reveal that a small amount of funding prevents the inclusion of another project onto the funded lists, the Programme Operator may, acting on a proposal from the Programme Committee, apply minor budget cuts uniformly across all projects, not exceeding 3% of the requested budget.

The Programme Operator notifies the applicants about the results of the selection process within reasonable time and publicizes the results. All unsuccessful applicants are provided with a brief description of the reasons for the decision.

A number of proposals may be kept in reserve to allow for eventualities such as the failure of negotiations on projects, the withdrawal of proposals, or the availability of additional budget from other sources.

2.4. ROLE OF PERSONS INVOLVED IN THE PEER REVIEW PROCESS

2.4.1. Role of Reviewers

Reviewers are **international experts** being resident and working outside Poland, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein. They are working in a personal capacity and in performing the work, do not represent any organisation.

International experts[1] are experts that assessed the project pre-proposals (project ideas) developed during the IdeaLab workshop during the Panel of Experts meeting after the IdeaLab workshop:

1) **The Workshop Director and Mentors:** international experts that participated in the IdeaLab workshop and the meeting of Panel of Experts after the IdeaLab workshop.

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[1] If the experts who participated in the meeting of Panel of Experts aiming to assess project pre proposals are not available for assessment of full proposals (e.g. due to illness, conflict of interests or other important reasons) the Programme Operator can involve in the assessment of full proposal other expert(s) than those involved the IdeaLab.

2) Additional Experts: experts who did not participate in the IdeaLab Workshop but took part in the Panel of Experts after the IdeaLab workshop in order to ensure the impartiality of the Panel of Experts.

Experts are senior international experts that have skills and knowledge appropriate to the topic 'Cities for the future: services and solutions'. The previous experience in the sandpit/idelab/idealab methodology is an important criterion for expert appointment, however experts without such experience can be also involved in the assessment of full proposals.

Reviewers are briefed by the Programme Operator on the evaluation procedure before they start the assessment of the proposals. The Programme Operator concludes an 'appointment letter' with each expert. The appointment letter binds the expert to a code of conduct, establishes the essential provisions regarding confidentiality, and specifies in particular, the description of work and conditions of payment and reimbursement of expenses.

Evaluators are requested to:
- Carefully read the 'Description of the call area' and the present 'Guide for evaluators'.
- Sign in advance a statement on the impartiality and confidentiality.
- Carefully read the project idea form submitted during the IdeaLab workshop as well as consensus scores and recommendation given by the Panel of Experts after the IdeaLab workshop.
- Thoroughly read the assigned proposal.
- Complete and submit a 'Review Form' providing comments and individual scoring of the proposal.
- Complete and submit a 'Consensus Report Form' providing comments and consensus scoring of the proposal assigned to them.

The names of the experts assigned to individual proposals are not made public. However, the Programme Operator shall within two months from publication of the decision to award project grants, publish on the internet the list of experts used for the evaluation of projects in the call.

2.4.2. Role of the Programme Committee

The Programme Committee consists of five persons representing Norway and Poland – members of the research community and main research users. The Programme Committee supports and advises the Programme Operator in all matters concerning the scientific quality and relevance of the projects and activities funded by the Programme. The tasks of the Programme Committee include:
   a) Providing input to the strategic direction of the Programme;
   b) Reviewing and approving the guideline for evaluators in English, the guide for applicants in English and the implementation guide for project promoters and partners in English;
   c) Approving the selection criteria and the texts for the calls for proposals;
   d) Overseeing and approving the procedures for selection of projects;
   e) Discussion of the ranking lists and recommending to the Programme Operator which proposals to select for funding and final awarding of grants;
   f) Reviewing progress made towards achieving the objectives of the research Programme;
   g) Monitoring of the implementation of the research programme by the Programme Operator;
   h) Reviewing annual and final project and Programme reports;

i) Proposing revisions of the research programme likely to facilitate the achievement of the Programme's objectives to the Donor State and Beneficiary State;
j) Liaising with the Programme Operator and Donor Programme Partner; and
k) Liaising with the Programme Committees in Research Programmes in other Beneficiary States.

2.4.3. Role of Programme Operator staff

The Programme Operator staff will support all involved experts during the evaluation process. They will take care that the Programme rules and procedures are respected. The Programme Operator staff do not provide any information regarding the status of the applications to the applicants while the evaluation procedure is in progress and until the final ranking lists have been approved.

3. CONFIDENTIALITY AND CONFLICT OF INTEREST

3.1. CONFIDENTIALITY

All proposals and related data, knowledge and documents communicated to the Programme Operator are treated in confidence. Application documents should therefore be handled with care and treated as confidential before, during and after the evaluation process.

Reviewers, Programme Committee members and observers must not disclose any information concerning application documents or evaluations to outsiders, nor should they use confidential information to their own or any other party's benefit or disadvantage.

Reviewers, Programme Committee members and observers must not communicate with applicants on topics related to applications. Reviewers and Programme Committee members may not communicate their advice on any proposals (given to the Programme Operator) to the applicants or to any other person. The reviewers will be held personally responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of any documents or electronic files sent, and for returning, erasing or destroying all confidential documents or files upon completing the evaluation as instructed. Reviewers and Programme Committee members and observers may not show the contents of proposals or information on applicants to third parties.

The full confidentiality of the information implies that any content of the project idea or full proposal cannot be used for any purposes other than the evaluation process. Withdrawal from the evaluation process does not release the expert from the duty to maintain full confidentiality with respect to the information contained in the evaluated proposal.

3.2. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

All persons involved in the review process are required to declare any personal interests according to the following criteria.

3.2.1. Circumstances in which a conflict of interest may exist

A disqualifying conflict of interest exists if a person:
- took a personal part in the preparation of the participant's application form, or full proposal;

- remains in such personal relationship with the applicant that could raise doubts as to his/her impartiality
- is related to the applicant through marriage, family relationship and affinity up to the second degree
- is or has been linked with the applicant: by means of adoption, custody or guardianship
- remains in such a legal relationship with the applicant which could result in the outcome of the case affecting his or her rights or obligations
- is in any other situation that compromises his or her ability to evaluate the proposal impartially.

A potential conflict of interest may exist, even in cases not covered by the clear disqualifying conflicts indicated above, if a person:
- remained in the three years preceding the date of submitting the statement, in a business relationship or in any other form of cooperation with the applicant, in particular:
  - was linked with the applicant through an employment relationship,
  - provided services for the applicant based on relations under the civil law, which could raise doubts as to impartiality,
  - was a member of the management and supervisory bodies of the applicant,
  - was a partner, shareholder or stockholder of the applicant.
- is in any other situation that could cast doubt on his or her ability to evaluate the proposal impartially, or that could reasonably appear to do so in the eyes of an external third party (e.g. having joint publications with an applicant of the IdeaLab workshop).

Persons involved in the peer review process must also declare if a conflict of interest appears at any time during the process.

3.2.2. Inability to perform obligations and termination

If for some reason the reviewers are not able to fulfil their obligations for a given work, the Programme Operator should be informed immediately. The work cannot be delegated to another person without the prior written agreement of the Programme Operator.

4. SELECTION CRITERION

Selection Criterion of the IdeaLab Call for Full Proposals:

Criterion	Description
the consistency of the full proposal with the project idea	consistency of the full proposal with the project idea developed during the workshop and with the recommendations given by the Panel of Experts during the pre-proposal evaluation

The **total cost requested** in the project idea form cannot be increased at the full proposal stage.

The full proposal should be consistent with the project pre-proposal in terms of:

- the objective of the project,

- research challenge(s) addressed,

- research methodology.

Experts should be aware that the applicant may clarify, specify or refine the abovementioned elements of the project in the full proposal, as the project idea is developed into the full proposal. However, the overall project idea should remain the same as it was proposed in the project idea form and that is the subject of the peer-review process.

Experts should also check during the evaluation whether the applicant addressed **the recommendation given by the Panel of Experts**.

As regards the **project consortium** the following changes may be accepted:

- Removing the Project Partner from the consortium

In the event of a partner organisation being unable to take part in the project, the other partners may submit the full proposal, as long as the minimum requirements for partnership are met. The adjusted work plan must be justified in the full proposal and is subject to the evaluation of the consistency of the full proposal with the project idea developed during the workshop by the experts.

- Replacing the entity (Project partner or Project Promotor) that delegated a person who took part in the IdeaLab workshop

Justification must be provided in the full proposal, and is subject to the evaluation of the consistency of the full proposal with the project idea developed during the workshop by the experts, as the new entity needs to have comparable resources to the one described in the project-idea form, and evaluated during the IdeaLab workshop.

- Adding a Project Partner to the consortium

Adding a new partner that was not involved in the IdeaLab workshop is possible only after receiving a positive recommendation of such a change during the assessment of the pre-proposal by the Panel of Experts.

The provision of false information as well as plagiarism may result in a rejection of the proposal. The Programme Operator reserves the right to pursue further steps according to the respective regulations.

The proposal which contravenes fundamental ethical principles may be excluded at any time from the process of evaluation, selection and award.

5. GUIDELINES FOR REVIEWERS

This chapter describes the tasks of the reviewers, defined as international, independent experts in a specific subject.

Each proposal will be submitted to 3 reviewers.

Before you may access the proposal, you have to sign a statement on the impartiality and confidentiality.

Please read the following documents that will be sent to you:
- The 'Description of the call area' explains the call topics,
- The present 'Guide for Evaluators',
- Project idea form submitted during the IdeaLab workshop as well as consensus scores and recommendation given by the Panel of Experts after the IdeaLab workshop,
- The assigned full proposal.

5.1. REVIEW FORM

You are invited to complete and submit the '**Review Form**' in the online system. Please provide a written evaluation and a scoring for the criterion as requested in the form.

The 'Review Form' contains 3 parts:
- Part 1: Ethical considerations
- Part 2: Evaluation of the proposal
- Part 3: Suggested modifications

5.1.1. Ethical considerations

Please comment if the proposal gives rise to any ethical issues as described in the Article 19 of Regulation 1291/2013[2]:

Particular attention shall be paid to the principle of proportionality, the right to privacy, the right to the protection of personal data, the right to the physical and mental integrity of a person, the right to non-discrimination and the need to ensure high levels of human health protection.

Research and innovation activities carried out under the Programme shall have an exclusive focus on civil applications.

5.1.2. Evaluation of the proposal

Please carefully read the description of the criterion in chapter 4 '**Selection Criterion**' and comment concisely on the criterion to the best of your abilities, professional skills, knowledge and ethics.

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[2] REGULATION (EU) No 1291/2013 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 11 December 2013 establishing Horizon 2020 - the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2014-2020) and repealing Decision No 1982/2006/EC.

Please also consult the style recommendations in chapter 6 as it is very important that the review is based on coherent comments or arguments that will subsequently help to formulate a consensus report and help the Programme Operator to reach a decision. It is therefore essential that the Programme Operator receives sufficiently detailed and coherent assessments for each selection criterion. Both individual Review Forms and consensus report will be forwarded to applicants.

5.1.3. Scoring of the proposal

Experts examine the consistency of the full proposal with the project idea using the following scale:

YES – the proposal is consistent with the project idea developed during the workshop

or

NO – the proposal is not consistent with the project idea developed during the workshop

5.1.4. Suggested modifications

The assessment should consider the compliance of planned research with the research categories (basic research, industrial research and experimental development[3] - please see the definitions below). Each discrepancy should be reported and described.

- Basic research - experimental or theoretical work undertaken primarily to acquire new knowledge of the underlying foundations of phenomena and observable facts, without any direct commercial application or use in view.

- Industrial/applied research – planned research or critical investigation aimed at the acquisition of new knowledge and skills for developing new products, processes or services or for bringing about a significant improvement in existing products, processes or services. It comprises the creation of components parts of complex systems, and may include the construction of prototypes in a laboratory environment or in an environment with simulated interfaces to existing systems as well as of pilot lines, when necessary for the industrial research and notably for generic technology validation;

- Experimental development – acquiring, combining, shaping and using existing scientific, technological, business and other relevant knowledge and skills with the aim of developing new or improved products, processes or services. This may also include, for example, activities aiming at the conceptual definition, planning and documentation of new products, processes or services; Experimental development may comprise prototyping, demonstrating, piloting, testing and validation of new or improved products, processes or services in environments representative of real life operating conditions where the primary objective is to make further technical improvements on products, processes or services that are not substantially set. This may include the development of a commercially usable prototype or pilot which is necessarily the final commercial product and which is too expensive to produce for it to be used only for demonstration and validation purposes. Experimental development does not include routine

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[3] As defined in the Commission Regulation (EU) No 651/2014 of 17 June 2014 declaring certain categories of aid compatible with the internal market in application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty.

or periodic changes made to existing products, production lines, manufacturing processes, services and other operations in progress, even if those changes may represent improvements;

Please clearly indicate any other **modifications** to the proposal that are necessary in your opinion (i.e. budget cuts).

5.2. CONSENSUS REPORT FORM

After the individual evaluation of a proposal, the three experts assigned to the proposal proceed to a common evaluation and complete 'Consensus Report Form'.

The '**Consensus Report Form**' contains 3 parts:
- Part 1: Ethical considerations
- Part 2: Evaluation of the proposal
- Part 3: Suggested modifications

Before drafting the consensus report please consult the style recommendations again in chapter 6.

In order to improve the comprehensibility of the funding decisions, the consensus report needs to fulfil additional quality requirements:
- The arguments in the consensus should be based on the arguments provided in the written reviews. Do not only reiterate individual comments by reviewers but clearly state how the significant individual comments of the reviewers lead to the overall conclusion
- Any new positive or negative argument raised (which does not appear within any of the written reviews) needs to be clearly highlighted and justified with evidence
- The report needs to be coherent throughout the text
- Resolve major conflicting arguments stated within different reviews by proposing a justified opinion/solution
- Factual information which has a major influence on the funding decision needs to be checked on validity
- Criticism should be supported with examples
- Indicate possible modifications or recommendations to improve the quality of the project

Please respect these recommendations as the consensus reports will be forwarded to the Projects Promoters and project partners.

5.2.1. Ethical considerations

Please comment if the proposal gives rise to any ethical issues as described in the Article 19 of Regulation 1291/2013[4]:

Particular attention shall be paid to the principle of proportionality, the right to privacy, the right to the protection of personal data, the right to the physical and mental integrity of a person, the right to non-discrimination and the need to ensure high levels of human health protection.

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[4] REGULATION (EU) No 1291/2013 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 11 December 2013 establishing Horizon 2020 - the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (2014-2020) and repealing Decision No 1982/2006/EC

Research and innovation activities carried out under the programme shall have an exclusive focus on civil applications.

5.2.2. Evaluation of the proposal

Please carefully read the descriptions of the criterion in chapter 4 '**Selection Criterion**' again before providing a written evaluation and a rating for the criterion as requested in the form.

Please also consult the style recommendations in chapter 6.

Write a **short assessment and justify your statements** for the criterion resolving conflicting assessments of the reviewers.

5.2.3. Scoring of the proposal

Experts examine the consistency of the full proposal with the project idea using the following scale:

YES – the proposal is consistent with the project idea developed during the workshop

or

NO – the proposal is not consistent with the project idea developed during the workshop

The full proposal is assessed as consistent with the project idea if at least two of the three experts consider it consistent (score 'YES') with the project idea developed during the IdeaLab workshop.

5.2.4. Suggested modifications

Please clearly indicate any **modifications** to the proposal that are necessary in your opinion and assess the compliance of planned research with the research categories (basic research, industrial research and experimental development).

6. GUIDELINES FOR WRITING EVALUATIONS

The following style recommendations[5] should guide reviewers during the composition of their evaluations:

- The comments must be:
  - Specific to the criterion
  - Clear and substantial
  - Definitive and final (avoid phrases like: "I/we think that, possibly")
  - Consistent with the score awarded, balancing strengths and weaknesses
  - Of adequate length
  - Relative to the proposal as it stands
- The comments must not be:
  - A summary of the proposal
  - Too short, too long or otherwise inappropriate/incorrect
  - Categorical statements, not properly verified

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[5] Inspired by 'Manual for Evaluators; Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions', 2019

- o Discriminating and/or offensive
- o References to details that could easily be a factual mistake e.g. page numbers, amounts etc.

7. THRESHOLDS AND THE RANKING LISTS

To be recommended for funding, the full proposal must be assessed by at least two of the three experts as consistent (score 'YES') with the project idea developed during the IdeaLab workshop and consequently the full proposal receives score 'YES' (consistent) in the consensus report.

Based on the evaluation outcomes (consensus reports) and the ranking list of pre-proposals the Programme Operator draws up the ranking lists of the proposals submitted under Call to be discussed by the Programme Committee.

8. PROGRAMME COMMITTEE

The Programme Operator staff will provide the Programme Committee (PC) members with the ranking lists, individual reviews, consensus reports and evaluated proposals as well as the assessment of project ideas (pre-proposals).

While discussing the ranking lists and making recommendation for funding, the Committee takes into consideration the overall quality of the evaluated proposals, budget of the call and number of proposals to be funded.

The PC will also examine and compare the consensus reports and confirm consistency of the scores.

The PC may decide to change the final score of the proposal received in the consensus report (from 'YES' to 'NO' or from 'NO' to 'YES'). This right shall be reserved only to cases in which the PC unanimously agrees that there is an unjustified discrepancy between the score and written evaluation of the proposal in the consensus report or unjustified discrepancy between the consensus report and individual reviews. Each such case shall be decided unanimously and justified in writing by the PC.

Finally, the PC will approve the ranking lists and recommend the proposals for funding to the Programme Operator.