FAQs
FAQ
CORE 2020 CALL

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Note
Please carefully read our updated programme description and our updated application guidelines. If you need additional support or if you require further explanations while preparing your application please contact the FNR staff.

Useful websites
- Call relevant information is available on the CORE website
- Call relevant documents as well as reporting and peer review documents can be downloaded from our FNR Download Center
1. Proposals

1.1. The link to the revised National Research Priorities

The FNR implements the “National Research and Innovation Strategy for Luxembourg” as retained by the Government on 20th December 2019, by integrating the revised National Research Priorities for Luxembourg in the CORE 2020 Call.

Previous priorities will no more be valid. Applications not complying to the revised National Research Priorities for Luxembourg will not be eligible.

1.2. Is it better to submit a small project or a large project?

In general the FNR believes that a project should have a well-defined hypothesis and clearly defined research objectives. The FNR is looking for the scientific merit of the proposal but also the socio-economic impact which in first instance (very important) involves the training of people (i.e. PhDs) and the strengthening of the research team itself (and subsequently the institutions). In view of providing non-established PIs with an adequate framework for first project applications, the FNR has developed a ‘Junior Track’ within CORE. The CORE Junior Track targets early career-stage researchers who have been awarded little or no own project funding as yet but who wish to establish their independent research line. The budget of a large proposal must be in relation to the scientific merit and the socio economic impact (training, advancement of the institution).

1.3. Resubmissions

The FNR allows only one resubmission for each application. Projects which have been submitted to FNR in previous calls and have not been retained for funding may be resubmitted once and only after the project has undergone substantial revision. It is absolutely necessary to take the previous reviews and panel conclusion into consideration. The FNR reserves the right to exclude projects which have not undergone substantial changes in the resubmitted application. Disguised resubmissions can be rejected as well.

1.4. Do resubmitted proposals have better chances of getting funded?

No. Resubmitting a project is not a guarantee of getting funded. The proposals need special care in view of updating the current state of art as things change over the years. Furthermore, the FNR advises you to respect the comments of the peers in this new proposal (you will need to comment this issue anyway in the proposal form). Of course, the proposal will undergo the whole evaluation procedure again just like any other proposal.

2. Principle Investigator (PI)

2.1. May a Principle Investigator (PI) submit more than one proposal?

The answer is twofold depending on the nature of the CORE project.

The answer is ‘NO’ for young PIs who choose to submit under CORE Junior track. They may only submit one proposal per call.

The answer is ‘YES’ for PIs who choose to submit under the regular CORE track. Up to two proposals may be submitted per principal investigator.

As a general rule: It is possible to submit proposals every year regardless of whether a previous proposal has been accepted or not.
2.2. What status does the PI/Co-PI need to have?

The PI must hold a PhD degree at the CORE/Core Junior submission deadline. As a general rule, a PI applying for research grants must be employed (full or part-time) at latest at project start at a FNR beneficiary organisation in Luxembourg for the full duration of the project (PIs entering retirement before the end of the project are therefore not eligible). Within the 2020 call, the FNR formally allows more than one PI on CORE project grants. To include a "Co-PI" is the decision of the applicant’s institution and investigators, and must be based on the needs of the proposed research project. The same rules though apply to potential Co-PIs.

As an exception to the general rule, a PI seconded from a different institution (e.g. hospital, administration, institute abroad) to perform research at a beneficiary organisation is also eligible. In this case special conditions apply. Please refer to the Application Guidelines.

2.3. Can there be two PIs on a project?

No. One PI has the lead of the project and manages its implementation. Within the 2020 CORE Call it is however possible to associate a Co-PI to the project.

2.4. If a PI submits 2 projects as PI, can she/he be a Co-PI on additional projects?

Up to two project proposals may be submitted per PI (as PI or Co-PI or as a mix of both; the limit of up to two proposals remains). The experience of the previous CORE calls shows that PIs should concentrate their efforts on one single application.

Only one application is allowed for CORE Junior Track applicants. A CORE Junior PI cannot be a Co-PI on another project. No Co-PIs are allowed on CORE Junior projects.

2.5. How much time does the PI need to spend on the project?

The FNR has not set a minimum requirement concerning the amount of time a PI needs to spend on the project. The PI leads the project and manages its implementation. The PI therefore plays the key role in the success of a project and the PI’s suitability to run a project (experience and credentials) is an important element of the evaluation of the project proposal.

Special rules apply for CORE Junior applications.

2.6. May I submit a proposal as a researcher abroad?

Yes. The FNR maintains that, at the start of the project, the PI must be under working contract with the public research institution in Luxembourg (beneficiary institution) for the full duration of the project.

3. CORE Junior

3.1. May a junior investigator/post-doc submit a project?

Yes. If the beneficiary institution permits the person to submit a project.

In order to encourage young or early career stage researchers to submit research projects, the FNR has implemented the ‘CORE Junior Track’. Details about the ‘CORE Junior Track’ can be found in the application guidelines.
3.2. Does a junior PI have to submit under the ‘CORE Junior Track’?
No. It is up to the applicant to select if the proposal should be submitted under the CORE Junior Track or under the regular CORE track.

3.3. Can a CORE Junior project be of lower scientific quality compared to the regular CORE projects?
No. There will be no compromises on the scientific quality. During the evaluation, the track record and the experience of the CORE Junior PI will be taken into account.

3.4. Can a CORE Junior PI be listed on other projects?
Yes. The CORE Junior PI can be listed on other projects, but not as PI in FNR funded projects of course.

3.5. Does it make sense to have a second CORE Junior project after a first one has been successfully completed?
Not really. The FNR expects that the PI has gained sufficient experience after having successfully completed the CORE Junior project. He/she could then apply for a regular CORE project.

3.6. Are human resources cost for the local supervisor eligible?
No. These costs are not eligible. The person*months of the supervisor don’t have to be included in the 2 FTE working on the project.

3.7. Is it possible to hire a full-time person on a CORE Junior project?
Yes. According to the CORE Guidelines, the total working time to be covered by the young PI and other staff may not exceed 2 full-time-equivalents (including the PI’s own contribution).

3.8. Are there any particularities about the external mentor abroad?
Yes,
- The mentor cannot be a workpackage leader.
- The mentor must not be the PhD supervisor if there is a PhD student on the project.

3.9. Is there a limitation on human resources in CORE Junior projects?
Yes, for CORE Junior projects human resources are limited to 2 FTE (full time equivalent). They include the PI’s own contribution as well as FNR funded and not FNR funded staff. For PhD candidates on the project, 36 person months are counted. The additional up to 12 person months for the 4th year’s PhD extension are not counted in the 2FTE limit. The local supervisor and the mentor abroad are not counted in the 2 FTE as well.

4. PhDs on the Project

4.1. Does the FNR have a rule of a minimum or a maximum number of PhD students and/or Postdocs on a CORE project?
No. It is not required to have PhD students and/or Postdocs on the CORE projects, it is however recommended.
4.2. How should the PhD supervision be organised?

The FNR expects the PI of the project to be the PhD supervisor and to be hosted at the same institution. ([http://bit.ly/PIandsupervision](http://bit.ly/PIandsupervision)). Supervisors of FNR-funded PhDs must fulfil the requirements of PI and must have adequate supervision rights, i.e. they have been formally entrusted by the degree awarding institution with the supervision of PhD candidates. For prospective supervisors whose application for supervision rights is in the process of evaluation, supervision rights must be available at the latest when the FNR-funded project starts, otherwise the FNR reserves the right to cancel the PhD budget.

In case the PhD supervisor is based in Luxembourg and the degree awarding institution is a university abroad, the university rules for external supervisors and the practical arrangements with the degree awarding institution need to be described in the project proposal and are subject to evaluation by the FNR.

Please read Section 1.7.3 Quality Framework for Doctoral Training in the CORE Application Guidelines.

5. Other Staff on the Project

5.1. Can new staff be funded in the CORE programme (i.e. research scientists, Postdocs, technicians, etc.)?

Yes. New and existing research staff can be funded through a CORE project.

PhD students who are involved full-time and from the beginning on the project are eligible for CORE project funding.

The FNR recommends that a large majority of the staff should be in place at the beginning of the project. A project where a larger proportion of new staff needs to be hired may score low on the feasibility criteria. Therefore it is advised to indicate potential candidates in the proposal and/or the means employed to recruit new staff of appropriate quality and in sufficient time for the project start.

5.2. Is it possible to submit a project where at project start 50% of the required staff is not yet in place?

Yes. But it is strongly recommended to start the recruitment process as soon as possible. The FNR might reject a project where an adequate part of the workforce is not in place and brings about a delay in the project start.

5.3. Does the FNR want to have information on the profiles of future PhD students?

Yes. Include the profile description for the PhD positions that you foresee and indicate the name of the local scientific advisor. If already available at submission deadline, please also indicate the name of the PhD candidate, the supervising professor and the university which is allocating the certificate.

5.4. When working in a team: Is it necessary to document the experience of every person involved (CVs)?

No. In order to have a view of the project team, the CVs or envisaged profiles of the main researchers on the project must be available at submission time.
5.5. What is the meaning of full-time-equivalent (FTE)?

A full time equivalent (FTE) of 1 means that a person is working full-time on the project. A FTE of 0.5 shows that the person is working half-time on the project.

6. Partners on the Project

6.1. Is the mentor (under the CORE Junior Track) a ‘non-contracting partner’?

No. According to the CORE guidelines, costs associated with mentoring should be indicated in the budget heading ‘Subcontracting’.

The restrictions on IP and publication rights for subcontractors do not apply to the mentor.

6.2. Is it required to include the non-contracting partners in the IPR/consortium agreement?

Yes. The IPR/consortium agreement must include all the partners of the project. The applicant should ask his/her administration for internal guidelines and assistance.

6.3. Signatures at submission: What has to be submitted?

The FNR does not require a partner signature form by the non-contracting partners at submission stage. However, in case the project gets funded all partners, included the non-contracting partners, have to be included in the IPR/consortium agreement.

Please note that for CORE Junior projects it is required to provide a signed support letter by the mentor abroad (no template provided by FNR). This letter has to be uploaded at submission stage of the application.

6.4. Is it required that the third party services (subcontracting) sign the submission documents?

No.

6.5. Acknowledgements of subcontracting partners in project publications needed?

The subcontractor (person or institution) has no IP rights and the subcontractor has no publication rights on tangible project outputs (except for the mentor abroad of a CORE Junior applicant; see question 6.1.).

6.6. Is industry participation a ‘must’?

No. The FNR welcomes however collaborations with the private and public sector within and outside Luxembourg.

Luxembourg companies may receive funding by the Ministry of Economy (MECE) for research and development projects (active participation in research activities are a must) through a specific programme. The FNR and Luxinnovation/MECE aim at synchronising their funding decisions. Please contact the FNR upfront to be able to assist you.

7. Budget of the Project

7.1. How much ‘overhead costs’ will be funded by the FNR?

The FNR applies the Full Cost with Flat rate model (FCF), where direct costs are reimbursed on the basis of the actual incurred (real) costs and overheads are reimbursed on the basis of
a flat-rate (up to 25% of direct costs minus subcontracting). The FNR provides a standard flat rate for overhead costs of up to 25% of the direct cost (not including subcontracting) for all newly funded projects. Overheads cannot be claimed by public administrations.

7.2. Is there a limit for subcontracting costs?
Yes. They are limited to a maximum of 25% of the FNR requested funding (without overhead costs).

7.3. Is there a need to provide co-funding to the project?
No. A project can be funded up to 100% by the FNR provided that the costs are eligible.

7.4. Are travel costs for non-contracting partners eligible project costs?
Yes. But solely travel costs for attending meetings and conferences in Luxembourg within the project are covered.

7.5. Is it required to indicate the external financial contribution, even if some sources of funds are not yet attributed?
Yes. Please indicate if this is planned, and if so, if it is already approved.

7.6. Is top-up funding over the project an eligible project cost if the person receives a grant (e.g. AFR, other funding)?
No. Top-up funding will not be covered by the project.

7.7. Are ‘overhead costs’ on subcontracting eligible costs?
No. Lump sum calculations for overhead costs may not be applied to subcontracting costs.

7.8. Does the PI have to pay for having patented his/her findings within a project funded by FNR?
No. Neither the PI nor the public research institution will have to reimburse the FNR for patents or licenses.

7.9. Does the FNR have a limit for PhD funding when the salary is covered by the CORE project?
No. There is no such limit. The FNR pays the salaries for PhDs which will be paid by the institutions (full-cost basis).

7.10. Is it possible to combine AFR and FNR budgets to pay one PhD student?
No. The applicant/host institution must make a choice: either AFR or FNR project budget (CORE).

7.11. Can budgets for consumables be spent in partner institutions outside Luxembourg?
No.

7.12. Are publication costs eligible?
Open Access fees and other fees (e.g. page charges) related to scientific articles are no longer eligible for funding as part of FNR funded projects. Article processing charges (APCs) of Open Access publications (scientific articles or monographs) can only be refunded through the FNR’s “Open Access Fund”, and if fulfilling the FNR requirements. See
the Open Access webpage for more information. The FNR requires that all scientific articles related to FNR-(co)funded projects are published in Open Access and that scientific monographs are published in Open Access whenever possible.

However, costs for other scientific publications such as conference proceedings, PhD theses, book chapters and scientific monographs related to the project remain eligible.

8. Submission Process

8.1. Is it allowed to submit a proposal without using the FNR online grant submission system?

No. All CORE applications have to be submitted through the FNR Online Grant Submission System.

8.2. Is the 72,000 characters limitation of the CORE project description counted with or without spaces?

The 72,000 characters are counted including spaces (indicated in Count Anything as Chars) and including the headings.

9. Review Process by the FNR

9.1. How does the FNR choose its reviewers?

The FNR chooses its reviewers within the international research community. The selection is done in accordance with international standards (see also the ‘Peer Review Guidelines’). The names of the individual reviewers will not be communicated to the applicants.

9.2. Can the PI indicate names of reviewers which he/she does not want the FNR to be contacted?

Yes. The applicant has the possibility to send an email to the FNR with a list of maximum 3 experts which should not be contacted as reviewer for this specific project. The email, sent to submission@fnr.lu before the submission deadline, has to list maximum 3 experts and their contact information and explain why these experts should not be contacted to review the proposal. It is however the FNR’s right to select the reviewers for the evaluation.

10. International Co-funding through Collaborations with DFG, SNF, FWF, EMBL, NCBR, FCT.

10.1. Can a CORE Junior PI apply under the international co-funding scheme?

Yes. However, the FNR strongly recommends being an experienced PI when submitting a project which is seeking for international co-funding through collaborations with DFG, SNF, FWF, EMBL (‘Biomedical sciences’), NCBR (‘Innovation Services’ only) and FCT. There is substantial effort needed to manage an international project and a CORE Junior PI, who might even be a first time project applicant, might be overstrained.

10.2. Are the funding decisions for the bilateral projects communicated at the same time?

No. The result of the FNR evaluation will be communicated to the partner funding agency for decision. This will lead to a delay of several weeks or even several months in the
communication of the funding decision for bilateral projects with respect to unilateral projects. This is an agreed-upon procedure between the Lead Agency funding agencies.

10.3. How is the review process for projects submitted under the international co-funding scheme?

Projects submitted under the international co-funding scheme are evaluated within the FNR CORE review process. They are in competition with all other projects submitted in CORE. In principle, the foreign agency aligns its funding decision according to the FNR’s funding decision. The evaluation is though done by one agency, in the present case, by the FNR. It happens however that, due to reasons which are out of the responsibility of the FNR, a foreign partner funding institution does not align with FNR’s funding decision.

11. Extension (up to 12 months) for PhD Candidates, Conferences and Publications

11.1. Can the PhD candidate make a conference presentation during the extension period, if there are still travel allowances, initially foreseen for conference participation, available?

Yes. If the travel allowances are not entirely used from the initial budget.

11.2. Are personnel and overhead costs relating to the publications and to the organisation of international conferences eligible during the extension period?

Yes. All costs foreseen in the initial budget are eligible.

11.3. Personnel and overhead cost foreseen for the writing of the final report are they still eligible during the extension period which means after the end of the project?

No. The final report has to be written during the three months following the end date of the project. This date (end of project + 3 months) is indicated as closing date for the cost coverage of the project.