

## **UKRI-FNR LEAD AGENCY AGREEMENT**

### **OPERATIONAL GUIDANCE**

## **SECTION 1 – GENERIC GUIDANCE**

### **Background and Scope**

1. UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and the Fonds National de la Recherche Luxembourg (FNR) are charged with fostering and supporting academic research within their own communities in their respective countries. Both UKRI and FNR recognise that the best research may be delivered by working with the best researchers internationally.
2. FNR and UKRI have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to welcome, encourage and support collaborative applications that may cut across UK and Luxembourg national boundaries and involve international collaborative teams. The MoU provides for a 'Lead Agency Agreement', which has been active since 2013, whereby UKRI will receive and assess joint applications from eligible applicants on behalf of both organisations.
3. The UKRI Research Councils participating in this agreement are the Arts and Humanities Research Council ('AHRC'), the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council ('EPSRC'), the Economic and Social Research Council ('ESRC'), the Medical Research Council (MRC) and the Natural Environment Research Council ('NERC'), the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council ('BBSRC'), the Science and Technology Facilities Council ('STFC').
4. The Agreement does not represent a separate stream of funding, but rather it allows for joint UK-Luxembourg applications to be submitted to existing 'Responsive Mode' funding opportunities, issued by the participating UKRI Research Councils. Under the terms of this agreement, it is also envisaged that UKRI and FNR may co-fund applications submitted by invitation to UKRI Councils' targeted calls.
5. This Agreement will apply until the termination of the existing MoU signed between UKRI and FNR on 5 June 2027. Successful projects that extend past the end of the MoU will continue to be supported by UKRI and FNR.
6. UKRI and FNR are committed to the Agreement and will periodically review its implementation with a view to streamlining and harmonising as far as possible. Applicants should ensure they have consulted the most recent version of this Operational Guidance and/or Council before submitting a joint UK-Luxembourg application. Further details can be found on page 6.

## Eligible Applications

7. Applications must be submitted to the UKRI Council funding opportunity by an eligible Principal Investigator (PI) employed by a UK research organisation eligible for UKRI funding and follow the applicable Council and funding opportunity guidance. Researchers based in UKRI research institutes should check their eligibility with the relevant UKRI Council.
8. Information on institution eligibility to receive UKRI funding can be found in [UKRI's website](#) or in the funding opportunity guidance to which an application is being submitted.
9. Applications are welcomed in any single or cross-disciplinary area which fits within the remit of the relevant UKRI Council. Further details on the remits of the UKRI Councils can be found on [UKRI's website](#). Interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary applications which cross the remit of more than one UKRI Council will be processed according to the [UKRI Cross-Council Remit Agreement](#).
10. Applicants from the UK and Luxembourg must ensure they have read the relevant UKRI and FNR guidance documents, prior to submitting an application and satisfy the eligibility criteria of the relevant UKRI Council and FNR, respectively.
11. In order to benefit from FNR funding, Luxembourg applicants need to be from FNR eligible institutions, i.e. public research centres, the University of Luxembourg and public bodies, departments and establishments in Luxembourg with an authorisation to undertake research in their areas of competence. Further information on the eligibility of the Luxembourg applicants can be found in [FNR's INTER Application Guidelines](#).
12. The relevant UKRI Council is responsible for informing FNR of the applications received.

## Submission of applications

13. Under the UKRI-FNR Agreement, joint UK-Luxembourg applications can be submitted to the UKRI Council's 'Responsive Mode' funding opportunities, in some cases named Standard Research Grant opportunities. **SECTION 2 – UKRI COUNCILS SUMMARY GUIDANCE NOTES** includes further information on the funding opportunities eligible for submission of joint UK-Luxembourg applications for each UKRI Council. Applicants should refer to Section 2 for further guidance and information on how to submit an application – including which participating Councils require applicants to submit an Expression of Interest prior to application submission.
14. UKRI will accept applications via the [Joint Electronic System \(Je-S\)](#)<sup>1</sup>. As there are some differences in the Je-S format between Councils, applicants should ensure they follow the relevant guidelines and requirements for the Council covering the remit of their research. Further information on how to submit an application via Je-S can be found in the specific funding opportunity guidance and the [Je-S Handbook](#).
15. When submitting applications under this opportunity, Luxembourg applicants will need to be included as International Co-Investigators in applications submitted to AHRC, ESRC and MRC, and therefore are required to have an active Je-S account. EPSRC, BBSRC, STFC and NERC

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<sup>1</sup> UKRI is currently developing a new Funding Service to replace Je-S. A launch date has not been set; however, future funding opportunities may use this system. This guidance will be updated for how to submit an application in the system accordingly in due time.

do not require Luxembourg applicants to have a Je-S account, as they are to be added in the Je-S submission as Project Partners.

16. The title of all applications submitted through Je-S should begin with '[Council]/FNR:', for example AHRC/FNR.
17. Joint applications submitted to UKRI under this agreement must also be submitted to FNR by the Luxembourg applicant no later than seven days after the submission to a UKRI Council, including a copy of the application submitted to UKRI and a project plan. Further information on application submission to FNR can be found on [FNR's website](#) and [INTER Application Guidelines](#).
18. UK and Luxembourg applicants should ensure that their joint applications are well balanced, with clear roles and objectives attributed to both sides of the collaboration. Within the joint applications, the UK collaborator should be the lead applicant contributing with a slightly higher research effort.

### **Cost of Applications**

19. Costs to be incurred by UK and Luxembourg applicants must be clearly differentiated in the application and compatible with existing financial practices pertinent to the UKRI Councils and FNR, respectively.
20. Costs for the UK applicant should be requested by completing the relevant finance fields of the Je-S form. All costs being requested from UKRI must be eligible under normal Research Funding Rules.
21. Costs to be requested from FNR by the Luxembourg applicant should follow the guidelines established by FNR. The budget requested from FNR needs to be detailed and justified in the proposal submitted to UKRI.
22. Costs being requested from FNR by Luxembourg applicants should not be entered into the UKRI Je-S fields. Luxembourg applicants should complete the FNR-specific forms noted below on costs to be requested from FNR. These documents are available on [FNR's website](#), and should be sent to the UK PI, who must upload the completed forms as 'Other Attachments'<sup>2</sup> to Je-S.
  - An INTER Budget Sheet (Excel workbook).
  - An INTER Budget Justification (Word document).
23. All costs requested from FNR should be eligible under the general rules and procedures for FNR research grants, following [INTER Application Guidelines](#). In general terms, costs which can be claimed from FNR include Personnel, Equipment, Consumables, Travel, Other Costs and Overheads.

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<sup>2</sup> 'Non-UK Components' for applications to NERC.

## **Processing of applications**

24. Joint UK-Luxembourg applications submitted to UKRI and FNR will be primarily managed by the UKRI Council, which will lead on the processing and assessment of the application on behalf of both organisations.
25. UKRI and FNR will complete eligibility checks for the UK and Luxembourg applicants, respectively, and agree whether an application is to progress to assessment stage.
26. FNR agrees in principle to accept the results of the peer review process as presented by the UKRI Council and to fund the Luxembourg component of successful applications, in accordance with their existing financial processes and procedures. FNR will confirm any budgetary constraints on submitted applications within two weeks, prior to a final decision being made by the UKRI review process.
27. The UKRI Council will approach the relevant number of peer reviewers according to normal scheme rules and procedures. It is anticipated that reviews will be obtained from a minimum of three reviewers, unless the scheme involves a streamlined assessment process. UKRI Councils may also approach FNR for the nomination of peer reviewers.
28. Once peer reviews are completed, applications will be sent to the decision-making/advisory body of the UKRI Council to determine whether an application will be successful or rejected. A FNR nominee/representative may be able to observe the decision-making process either virtually or in person depending on the nature of the funding opportunity, and the number and value of the applications received.
29. The UKRI Council will notify FNR once the assessment has been completed, share the evaluation documents of successful projects via a secure transfer mechanism, within a reasonable timescale, and request FNR's confirmation for funding.

## **Assessment Criteria**

30. UKRI funds research on a competitive basis employing independent expert peer review. This system is regarded as an international benchmark of excellence in research funding, and this provides a guarantee of the quality of UK research.
31. Applications will be evaluated according to normal UKRI procedures, plus any specific assessment criteria set out by the relevant UKRI Council and the funding opportunity to which an application is being submitted. Further information on any assessment criteria can be found in the relevant funding opportunity guidance document.

## **Announcement of Decisions and Issuing of Awards**

32. Once a final decision has been reached, in case of a positive funding decision, the UKRI Council will agree award start dates with FNR and applicants will be informed of the results. UKRI will issue a letter to the UK applicant on behalf of both organisations, which will confirm the proposed start date and state that FNR will be in contact with the Luxembourg applicant about issuing an award for the Luxembourg component of the project. FNR will be notified of the positive outcome.

33. In case of a negative funding decision, the relevant UKRI Council will issue a decision letter to the UK applicant on behalf of both organisations. FNR will be notified of the negative outcome.
34. The UKRI Council will issue an award for the UK component to the UK applicant's institution according to normal processes and procedures.
35. The FNR will issue an award for the Luxembourg component to the Luxembourg applicant's institution according to normal processes and procedures.

### **Post Award Management**

36. Award holders should contact both FNR and the UKRI Council concerning any changes to any of the award holders' institutional affiliations or other aspects of the grant during its lifetime. If necessary, the funding UKRI Council and FNR may consult with each other before agreeing any changes to the grant's status. This will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

### **Progress and Final Reports**

37. Where Progress and Final Reports are required by the UKRI Council and/or FNR, they will be submitted according to the normal procedures of those organisations. The required reports will cover the development of the whole project, including any work developed in the collaborator's country. Any additional requirements for reporting on the effectiveness of the international cooperation will be detailed in the relevant Research Council's and FNR's guidelines for applicants.

### **Intellectual Property**

38. It is the responsibility of the research organisation, and all engaged in the research, to make every reasonable effort to ensure that the outcomes obtained in the course of the research, whether patentable or not, are used to the advantage of society and the economy. Research outcomes should be disseminated to both research and more widespread audiences, for example, to inform potential users and beneficiaries of the research.
39. Unless stated otherwise, the ownership of intellectual property, and responsibility for its exploitation, rests with the organisation that generates it. Where the grant is associated with more than one research organisation and/or other project partners, the basis of collaboration between the organisations, including ownership of intellectual property and rights to exploitation, is expected to be set out in a formal collaboration agreement. It is the responsibility of the research organisation to put such an agreement in place before the research begins. The terms of collaboration agreements must not conflict with FNR and UKRI terms and conditions.
40. Arrangements for collaboration and/or exploitation must not prevent the future progression of research and the dissemination of research results in accordance with academic custom and practice. A temporary delay in publication is acceptable in order to allow commercial and collaborative arrangements to be established.
41. The grant holder should, subject to the procedures laid down by the research organisation, publish the results of the research in accordance with normal academic practice. Publications

and other forms of media communication, including media appearances, press releases and conferences, must acknowledge the support received from UKRI and FNR, quoting the grant reference number if appropriate.

42. Applicants in receipt of awards from UKRI and FNR must follow the Open Access requirements of the respective organisations. The specific requirements are dependent on the type of publication. For further information on UKRI's Open Access policy, please refer to [UKRI's website](#). For further information on FNR's Open Access policy, please refer to [FNR's website](#).
43. The research organisation must ensure that all those associated with the research are aware of, and accept, these arrangements.

## Data Sharing

44. Data, including personal data, is shared between UKRI and FNR to enable the secure and efficient processing and assessment of applications via a secure transfer mechanism, as appropriate. Information shared may include applicant and reviewer information, application details and reviewing documents.
45. UKRI and FNR are committed to maintaining data confidentiality, protection and privacy and intend to fully abide by their own applicable laws and policies concerning the sharing of data in collaborative activities. UKRI and FNR carry out the processing of personal data in accordance with the applicable national and EU Data Protection laws.
46. Further information on how UKRI processes personal data can be found in the [UKRI Privacy Notice and Data Protection Policy](#).

## General Contact Points

For further information regarding each of the participating UKRI Council's implementation of the UKRI-FNR Agreement, please contact:

- AHRC: [international@ahrc.ukri.org](mailto:international@ahrc.ukri.org) – please include AHRC/FNR in the subject line;
- BBSRC: [bbsrc.iru@bbsrc.ukri.org](mailto:bbsrc.iru@bbsrc.ukri.org).
- EPSRC: [International@epsrc.ukri.uk](mailto:International@epsrc.ukri.uk)
- ESRC: [international@esrc.ukri.org](mailto:international@esrc.ukri.org).
- MRC: [international@mrc.ukri.org](mailto:international@mrc.ukri.org)
- NERC: [leadagency@nerc.ukri.org](mailto:leadagency@nerc.ukri.org).
- STFC: [International@stfc.ukri.org](mailto:International@stfc.ukri.org)

Enquiries concerning the Je-S application, should be addressed to the Je-S helpdesk at [JeSHelp@je-s.ukri.org](mailto:JeSHelp@je-s.ukri.org) or via +44 (0) 1793 444164.

Enquiries regarding FNR's process or implementation of this agreement should be addressed to Dr Helena Burg, Head of International Relations at [helena.burg@fnr.lu](mailto:helena.burg@fnr.lu)

## SECTION 2 – UKRI COUNCILS SUMMARY GUIDANCE NOTES

### Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC)

- The AHRC accepts applications under the terms of the UKRI-FNR Agreement to [AHRC's Standard Research Grant Scheme](#). Other AHRC Schemes might also accept applications under the UKRI-FNR Agreement.
- Applicants should refer to [UKRI's Funding Finder](#) page for further details on individual AHRC funding opportunities.
- All Luxembourg applicants must be listed as International Co-Investigators in the Je-S system. No staff costs should be included for the Luxembourg applicants in the Je-S form.
- Applicants should refer to **AHRC's Application and Je-S Guidance** for further information on how to submit an application to AHRC funding opportunities under the UKRI-FNR agreement.

### Biotechnological and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC)

- The BBSRC accepts applications for funding under the terms of the UKRI-FNR Agreement to its [Standard Research](#) funding opportunity. Further information on how to submit an application to BBSRC can also be found in [BBSRC's Research Grants Guide](#).
- Applicants should refer to [UKRI's Funding Finder](#) page for further details on BBSRC's funding opportunities.
- Up to £1.6M total funder contribution (equivalent to £2M fEC) can be requested for applications submitted to BBSRC's standard research grants mechanism. This refers to the total BBSRC and Luxembourg contribution combined.
- All Luxembourg applicants must be listed as Project Partners in the Je-S system. Funding requested from FNR by the Luxembourg applicant should be listed as in-kind costs within the Je-S system by the applicants.
- Applicants should contact BBSRC **BEFORE** submitting a joint UK-Luxembourg application in order to discuss eligibility and handling an application under the Agreement.

### Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC)

- The EPSRC will accept applications under the terms of the UKRI-FNR Agreement to its [Standard Research](#) funding opportunity. For further guidance, applicants should refer to [EPSRC's Standard Research guidance](#) and, for further information on the submission of joint applications, applicants should refer to [EPSRC's guidance on working with overseas scientists](#).
- Applicants should refer to [UKRI's Funding Finder](#) page for further details on individual EPSRC funding opportunities.
- Applications received under the terms of this agreement will be subject to the same terms and conditions and assessment procedure as all EPSRC Grants.

- All Luxembourg applicants must be listed as Project Partners in the Je-S system. Applicants should note within the Je-S system the funding requested to FNR by the Luxembourg applicant as in-kind costs.
- Applicants are required to submit an [Expression of Interest to EPSRC](#) **BEFORE** submitting a joint UK-Luxembourg application, under this agreement. The Expression of Interest should include a short summary of the proposed research and indicative costs of both the EPSRC and FNR components. Full guidance may be found on [EPSRC's page on the Lead Agency Agreement](#).

### **Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)**

- ESRC accepts applications under the terms of this Agreement to [ESRC's Research Grant Scheme](#). Other ESRC funding opportunities also utilise the Agreement. Applicants should refer to [UKRI's Funding Finder](#) page for further details on individual ESRC funding opportunities.
- All Luxembourg applicants must be listed as International Co-Investigators in the Je-S system. No staff costs should be included for the Luxembourg applicants in the Je-S form.
- Applicants should refer to **ESRC's Application and Je-S Guidance** for further information on how to submit an application to ESRC funding opportunities under the UKRI-FNR agreement.

### **Medical Research Council (MRC)**

- The MRC will accept applications under the terms of the UKRI-FNR Agreement to its [Partnership](#), [Programme](#) and [Research Grant](#) funding opportunities. For further information on MRC's funding opportunities applicants should refer to [UKRI's Funding Finder](#).
- Applications received under the terms of the agreement will be subject to the same terms and conditions and assessment procedure as all MRC Grants.
- All Luxembourg applicants must be listed as International Co-Investigators in the Je-S system. No staff costs should be included for the Luxembourg applicants in the Je-S form.
- Applicants are required to contact the relevant [MRC Programme Manager](#) **BEFORE** submitting a joint UK-Luxembourg application. Programme Manager details can be found by clicking the link and selecting the relevant research area. Further information can also be found in the MRC Funding Opportunity to which an application is being submitted.

### **Natural Environment Research Council (NERC)**

- NERC accepts applications under the terms of the UKRI-FNR Agreement to the following [Discovery Science](#) (Responsive Mode) funding opportunities:
  - Pushing the Frontiers.
  - Large Grant.

- The [NERC Grants Handbook](#) provides further information on the funding opportunities listed above. Information relevant to specific funding opportunities is also available via the [UKRI Funding Finder](#).
- All Luxembourg applicants must be listed as Project Partners in the Je-S system. Applicants should note within the Je-S system the funding requested to FNR by the Luxembourg applicant as in-kind costs.
- The requested funding amount of joint UK-Luxembourg applications is required to fit within the scope and scale of the call an application is being submitted to.
- Joint applications may also be submitted to NERC Research Programme calls upon prior agreement between NERC and FNR.

### **Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC)**

- STFC will consider applications under the terms of the UKRI-FNR Agreement for any of its funding opportunities. Information relevant to specific STFC funding opportunities are also available via [UKRI's website](#).
- All Luxembourg applicants must be listed as Project Partners in the Je-S system.
- Applicants should contact the relevant STFC Programme Manager **BEFORE** submitting an application in order to discuss the strategic fit of the proposal with STFC's science strategy.